

Ecclesiastes 5-6 COMMUNION

Good morning and thank you for joining us! We're continuing our vbv study through the book of Ecclesiastes, so would you please turn in your Bibles to Ecc chapter 5? This morning we'll reach the halfway mark through this book that is full of life lessons for us

Remember King Solomon is writing these words that are born out of utter frustration. And we've mentioned with each study that Solomon's problem is that he keeps saying under the sun.

He's looking at his life, his circumstances, his wealth, his wives, and nothing is satisfying the deep longing in his soul. He's wandered from God, and found himself grasping, unable to find contentment.

We're gonna study chapters 5-6, and the title of this mornings message is Back to the Cross

Let's pray

How does the wisest, richest man in history, who started off his rule as king so well, get to this place of endless despair in his heart, in his mind? **1 Kings 11 1 But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites— 2 from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. 3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his**

heart. 4 For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David. 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. 8 And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

Molech...

And now with a life that is full of everything, but has nothing, Solomon gives some interesting observations...

1 Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; Walk prudently simply means to watch your step.
...1 and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. **SHOW PIC** No doubt Solomon is watching people go in and out of the temple just like it's some religious turnstile, **CLOSE PIC**

This is reminding us it's important that we come to gatherings like this with open hearts, ready to hear and willing to obey what God speaks to us.

1 Sam 15:22 So Samuel said:

“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
As in obeying the voice of the LORD?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.

Nobody should be going to the house of God because it's routine.
You're not going there because you're supposed to go there.

Spiritually, take some inventory and be ready to hear because
God will speak to you if you come and your heart is open.

Look, I've been doing this long enough to know that more people
come to church when we're studying exciting books like John or
Revelation, but some folks will be like-well Ecclesiastes, or SOS,
I'm not really all that interested in that.

We're not part of some Jesus club for an hour a week. Remember
God paid the highest price in the death of his Son so He could
gather us to Him. That fact should never just become routine.

Look, we have God's word in our hands, we should never be so
filled with pride to think-well that book doesn't do anything for me?
That's the epitome of a prideful heart.

Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,
A broken and a contrite heart—
These, O God, You will not despise.

2 Do not be rash with your mouth,
And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.

For God is in heaven, and you on earth;
Therefore let your words be few. Have you noticed how often our emotions dictate our lips? When we speak to God, there should be a reverence there. Not just going through the motions.

Matthew 6 5 “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.[fn] 7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

Solomon in his wisdom says don't speak rashly. Now he didn't say 'don't say anything.' Just be wise with your words, let your words be few.

3 For a dream comes through much activity,
And a fool's voice is known by his many words.. I love the old saying-'Better to keep quiet and let people think you're a fool, then to open your mouth and remove all doubt!'
4-7 deal with making a vow

4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it;
For He has no pleasure in fools.
Pay what you have vowed—
5 Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

6 Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse[fn] and destroy the work of your hands? 7 For in the multitude of dreams and many words there is also vanity. But fear God. Jesus addressed this in Matthew 5 33 “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ 34 But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; 35 nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

See here’s the problem with making a vow. When we make a vow, what we’re actually doing is we’re trusting in the flesh.

We’re saying ‘God you can count on me!’ It’s so much better to depend on God’s promises and God’s faithfulness rather than our own.

8 If you see the oppression of the poor, and the violent perversion of justice and righteousness in a province, do not marvel at the matter; for high official watches over high official, and higher officials are over them. Look there’s always injustice, and always will be injustice because we have human institutions. There will always be corruption because the people in leadership have a pulse.

But I hope you know, there is one authority that's higher than everyone, and He sees everything. Aren't we glad about that?

SHOW PIC We hear of the Supreme Court. That's really not the right name. That ain't the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court only has 1 judge, And I know He's not liberal. The Supreme Judge is in grace and truth. **CLOSE PIC**

9 Moreover the profit of the land is for all; even the king is served from the field. Its amazing when you ponder it. The kings of mighty nations are just as dependent on grain as the poorest guy in the world is dependent on grain.

Now as we go through these next verses Solomon is going to give us a series of exhortations on how wealth, materialism can't really satisfy any area of our hearts.

And we need to listen to this b/c we can subtly fall into the trap of materialism. Think about it, name 3 Christmas gifts you got 2 years ago? This world is always telling us that we need to accumulate more and more.

10 He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity. If you love riches, you won't ever be satisfied.

SHOW PIC Some of you may be thinking-we'll let me just try for a little while and see if this is true! **CLOSE PIC**

We cant fathom the kind of wealth Solomon possessed. It tells us in **2 Chron 9: 20 All King Solomon's drinking vessels were gold,**

and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Not one was silver, for this was accounted as nothing in the days of Solomon.

But you remember, how much money is enough? Just a little bit more.

Jesus tells us in Luke 12:5 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness,[fn] for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

Nobody knew that more than Solomon. This is at the end of his life. He's got more money than anybody can imagine. He also had 700 wives and 300 Concubines. Lord knows what else he had going on, and he's saying you think you're gonna be satisfied, you know, let me tell you from where I sit on my pile of gold, it's never gonna satisfy you. It's an illusion. Don't believe that wealth brings satisfaction.

We're told the same thing in the New Testament. 1 Timothy 6:6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

11 When goods increase,
They increase who eat them;
So what profit have the owners
Except to see them with their eyes?

Have you noticed that when your pay increases, somehow your expenses go up as well? Including your taxes!

SHOW PIC As that great theologian biggie smalls once said, mo money, mo problems! CLOSE PIC

12 The sleep of a laboring man is sweet,
Whether he eats little or much;
But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep.

Solomon says. Look, I'm the richest man that ever lived. And the farmers got one up on me because he goes to bed at night and he can fall asleep.

Solomon has so much, he has that much to think and worry about, so he can't get any sleep. There's no peace of mind.

13 There is a severe evil which I have seen under the sun:
Riches kept for their owner to his hurt. So here he's gonna talk about those who are rich who are unwilling to share

Interesting because sometimes people think if I had more money, I could be more generous. Lord, give me a raise so I can support missionaries. Lord, let me hit the lottery. **SHOW PIC** God I'll make a deal with you, let me win the lottery, because if I had 80 million bucks I could be much nicer to people. **CLOSE PIC**

The truth is, if you're not generous when you only have a little bit of money, you won't be generous when you get money piled up in your garage. Because generosity is an attitude of heart. **2**

Corinthians 9:7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

And look, money is a great servant, but it is a poor master. And you can tell whether money is your servant or your master by whether you're willing to give it away. If you're willing to give,

money is your servant. If you aren't willing to give, money is your master.

14-15

14 But those riches perish through misfortune;

When he begets a son, there is nothing in his hand.

15 As he came from his mother's womb, naked shall he return,
To go as he came;

And he shall take nothing from his labor

Which he may carry away in his hand. Wealth can disappear suddenly—a stock market crash, a bankruptcy, you name it. But even if we're able to avoid financial disaster, ultimately we lose all of our wealth in death.

16 And this also is a severe evil—

Just exactly as he came, so shall he go.

And what profit has he who has labored for the wind? Solomon understood that great wealth ultimately means nothing under the sun. We come with nothing into the world and leave the same way.

Remember when Jesus was speaking to the rich young ruler, he told the man

Matthew 19:21 Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

We can't take our wealth with us when we die; but we can send it on ahead by generous giving to God's work.

17 All his days he also eats in darkness,
And he has much sorrow and sickness and anger. It doesn't matter how much stuff you have, even the very wealthy experience the troubles of life we all face. We all get sick, we all experience sorrow, we all experience anger. Money doesn't solve those issues

So now in the rest of the chapter Solomon gives instruction on how to make the best of a bad situation under the sun.

18-20

18 Here is what I have seen: It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage. 19 As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor—this is the gift of God.

20 For he will not dwell unduly on the days of his life, because God keeps him busy with the joy of his heart. Now the reality is that everyone of us in this room are rich. We are incredibly wealthy when compared to the rest of the world. We should give God thanks and enjoy what He's blessed us with. And ask God to show you each day to show you how rich you truly are.

Chapter 6 riches with no enjoyment

1-2

1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men: 2 A man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor, so that he lacks nothing for himself of all he desires; yet God does not give him power to eat of it, but a foreigner consumes it. This is vanity, and it is an evil affliction. He makes the observation that the wealthier a man becomes, the less able he is to enjoy what he has.

It's a tragic irony that those who have the most are often able to enjoy it the least.

Now verses 3-6 deal with a difficult subject matter. Solomon has this again fatalistic view, so it gets pretty dark but we're gonna spend some time on 'em

3 If a man begets a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with goodness, or indeed he has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better than he— 4 for it comes in vanity and departs in darkness, and its name is covered with darkness. 5 Though it has not seen the sun or known anything, this has more rest than that man, 6 even if he lives a thousand years twice—but has not seen goodness. Do not all go to one place? Now v 3 he says if a man begets 100 kids. That sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? Unless you have 700 wives and 300 concubines. We don't know for sure how many kids Solomon had.

We do know that Solomon's son Rehoboam had 18 wives and 60 concubines and 88 kids. So Solomon easily could've fathered

100 or more children. Who knows how many kids were running around there?

Now Solomon gets really down here. He's saying if you have 100 kids, it's supposed to be a blessing. And if you live a long life that's supposed to be a blessing too. But you could live 2,000 years and still have this unsettled heart because nothing under the sun satisfies.

And he says better to be a miscarried baby, to never see the light of day than to be born and see all the pain. You can feel his anguish and frustration can't you?

Now, by the way, this is Solomon's opinion. Without the new birth, without Jesus Christ, without heaven.

We know that life begins at conception. And because life begins at conception, then every miscarried child is in glory. And look if you've ever had a miscarriage, Kim and I know what that's like, and you trust in Christ you're on your way to a reunion.

That also means that anybody here that's ever had an abortion, know that child is secure with the Lord. And if you're a Christian, you are forgiven. That's the power of the cross of Christ,

Look Jesus said. If you're angry at somebody, you're already guilty of murder in your heart. How many of us haven't done that?

If you've lost a child, you have a little one that's gone on and is waiting for you, and you're going to meet them someday and spend eternity with them.

This is more than just an optimistic viewpoint. We know this throughout the scriptures. In the book of Deuteronomy, the Lord judged the unbelieving Jews and they wandered the wilderness without entering the promised land. It was their kids who entered into and possessed the promised land.

David, when Bathsheba gets pregnant in adultery with David after he killed Uriah. Remember God said that baby was gonna die. You remember what happened? For 7 days David was praying and fasting for his sick child. On the 7th day the child died...

2 Samuel 12 21 Then his servants said to him, "What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food."

22 And he said, "While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether the LORD[fn] will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' 23 But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

So David says. I know where my little child is, and I'm gonna see him again some day.

You know, I believe one of the great testimonies of the rapture around the world is that every culture, every system is the kids are going to be gone. It's gonna blow the mind of the whole world.

7 All the labor of man is for his mouth,
And yet the soul is not satisfied. We work for the very bread we eat, but it doesn't satisfy the soul. Solomon sensed what Moses had already said and Jesus later repeated **Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "[fn]**

There's more to life than just satisfying our physical needs and desires. We saw last week in chapter 3 God has created us with a longing for eternity with Him!

8 For what more has the wise man than the fool?
What does the poor man have,
Who knows how to walk before the living? For all the superiority of the wise man compared to the fool, they both get hungry. Again Solomon realizes that ultimately we all face the same issues no matter what our financial status may be.
9-10

9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire.
This also is vanity and grasping for the wind. Being content with what we've got instead of always daydreaming about what we could have.

10 Whatever one is, he has been named already,
For it is known that he is man;
And he cannot contend with Him who is mightier than he.
Solomon recognizes he can't wrestle with God and expect to win.

11-12

11 Since there are many things that increase vanity,
How is man the better?

12 For who knows what is good for man in life, all the days of his
vain life which he passes like a shadow? Who can tell a man what
will happen after him under the sun? Solomon has everything the
heart could ever dream of, but he can't predict the future.

And it's a reminder that we don't see what God sees. He sees
the whole picture, and of course, we do not. There's lots of things
that we don't understand. Lots we don't know. But one thing I
know beyond a shadow of a doubt is that God loves me so much
He died for me on the Cross. And because God loves me that
much, I know that what He's doing in my life-regardless of
whether or not I understand it-is for my good and His glory.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good
to those who love God, to those who are the called according to
His purpose.

Look if you're struggling, go back to the cross. Back to that place
where you remember God's perfect love. Remember how rich we
are in Him

Luke 22 19 And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and
gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of Me."

Luke 22 20 Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying,
"This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.

