

Harris Creek Baptist Church  
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Series: Family Matters  
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## The Curse and Blessing of Wealth

Ecclesiastes 5

### **Fulfill Your Vow to God**

**1 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.**

**2 Do not be quick with your mouth,  
do not be hasty in your heart  
to utter anything before God.**

**God is in heaven  
and you are on earth,  
so let your words be few.**

**3 A dream comes when there are many cares,  
and many words mark the speech of a fool.**

**4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. 5 It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it. 6 Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the temple messenger, "My vow was a mistake." Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands? 7 Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore, fear God.**

### **Riches Are Meaningless**

**8 If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. 9 The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields.**

**10 Whoever loves money never has enough;  
whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income.  
This too is meaningless.**

**11 As goods increase,  
so do those who consume them.  
And what benefit are they to the owners  
except to feast their eyes on them?**

**12 The sleep of a laborer is sweet,  
whether they eat little or much,  
but as for the rich, their abundance  
permits them no sleep.**

**13 I have seen a grievous evil under the sun:**

**wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners,**

**14 or wealth lost through some misfortune,  
so that when they have children  
there is nothing left for them to inherit.**

**15 Everyone comes naked from their mother's womb,  
and as everyone comes, so they depart.**

**They take nothing from their toil  
that they can carry in their hands.**

**16 This too is a grievous evil:**

**As everyone comes, so they depart,  
and what do they gain,  
since they toil for the wind?**

**17 All their days they eat in darkness,  
with great frustration, affliction, and anger.**

**18 This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them—for this is their lot. 19 Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God. 20 They seldom reflect on the days of their life, because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart.**

Good morning, Church! It is good to be here with you today. Back in Ecclesiastes if you brought your Word, your Bible. Turn to Ecclesiastes 5, that is where we are going to be today.

So, I will just start by telling you that a lot of people when they graduate from college, they cannot find a job. When I graduated from college, I had two jobs. No big deal, but it is true. I worked for Johnny Carino's waiting tables – RIP – and Champs Sports. I was selling shoes at Champ Sports at Richland Mall. And I was living with my best friend's parents because my lease was up at my duplex. I was just trying to figure out life honestly. What am I going to do when I grow up? So, I am waiting tables, I am selling shoes and you know the biggest W-2 I've had in my life at this point was \$7,900. That was the most. There was one year where there were a lot of commissions from the shoes. So, I was ballin' out of control. And I am trying to figure out what I want to do, and I am staying with my best friends' parents.

So, one day I wake up. I put on some khakis and a polo; I even tuck it in. I am like, “I am going to find a job. I am going to go get a job.” So, I left the house early in the morning. I am driving around Waco and I am just trying to think through, “Ok...what is it? Where do I go?” Do I knock on a door and just say, “Hey, will you please employ me?”

I went to TSTC, which is one of the best colleges in Waco. Top 4 for sure. And they had said, “If you go here and you graduate then we will find a job for you.” Well, I was so terrible at all things academically that they couldn’t. They were like, “You are hopeless. Good luck.” And so, I am driving around Waco and I do not know where to go so I go to the Richland Mall. That is the only place I know. So, I go up to see if I can try to find a job, but the door is locked because it is not even open yet.

So, I am sitting in the parking lot, and I just prayed. I am like, “Lord, would you please help me find a job.” Which is interesting because this was actually before I was walking with Jesus. But there I am, and I am just like, “Would you please God, please God give me a job. Please help me find a job.” And when the mall eventually opened, I went in, I am walking down the hallway in between the stores and this person comes up to me and says, “Hey what is your story?” I said, “Hey my story is I am looking for a job.” She said, “Do you want to manage an Abercrombie and Fitch?” And I said, “Yes I do!” And she said, “Where?” And I said, “How about Dallas?” And she said, “Okay great. I will get you an interview.” And I was like, “Is this how prayer works?? This is amazing! I should do this more often.”

And so, I get the interview. I go to Dallas and at North Park Mall I meet with this guy. I am interviewing to manage an Abercrombie there. And I come back, and it seems like all of the rest of my life hinges on this decision. And so, I am asking all my friends to pray, my best friend to pray. I am like, “Would you please pray that I get this job?” I am at his parents’ house when I get the phone call. They say, “Mr. Pokluda?” I’m like oh yeah...yeah...I guess that is me. And they are like, “Hey, we would like to invite you to join our team as an assistant manager at the North Park store Abercrombie and Fitch.” And I am just like, “Oh my goodness. This is the greatest news ever!” And he says, “And we are prepared to offer you a salary of \$23,000 a year.” And I get off the phone and my best friend runs in there and I look at him and I go, “I’ve made it! I’ve made it!” And we do this awkward high-five/hug. We embrace way too long. I am crying. I am sniffing into his neck. I am like, “Dude!” And we separate and he goes, “What did they offer you?” And I go, “23 G’s.” And he says, “What are you going to do with all that money?” And I said, “I don’t know!?” I was like, “Bro, this is incredible!”

And so, you fast forward, I pack up all of my things, I move to Dallas. I work at Abercrombie, and it is terrible. I quit 2 months later. I am working out at 24 Hour Fitness. I get a job there selling gym memberships – it is commission based. I am making more money selling gym memberships. And it really began this journey of me just looking for the next best thing. This guy walks in to buy a gym membership, he is in a suit and well-dressed. He throws his BMW keys on my desk, and he buys the McDaddy membership. The \$1,600 prepaid, you are a member for the rest of your life. Go to any club at any time you want. And I am like, “What do you do for a living?” And he says, “I am in Telecom.” I said, “That is really interesting because I have always wanted to be in Telecom.” And he said, “Great! Call this guy.”

And I just start trying to climb the corporate ladder. For the next several years of my life I was in Telecom. Moved from company to company. Ended up with SBC and AT&T. And now I am at this place in my life where I am making 10x what I was at Abercrombie, and it is not enough. It had fed something in me. It had awakened something in me where I was constantly trying to feed this machine. I had tasted greed, right? I had tasted that I could kind of be the champion of my destiny if you will. And it awakened something in me that was not good. And I don't know that I would have ever stopped off that treadmill had God and His mercy not have called me into vocational ministry in the way that He did.

And so I tell you that, in the specifics (I know that when you share numbers and things that it can be a little awkward) but I tell you that in the specifics to say that where we are going to be in the text today I have lived it. I have journeyed it. I have seen both the blessing and the curse that money affords us. And that is what we are talking about today. Just this idea to not waste wealth under the sun.

We are going to learn from King Solomon. We call this series subtitle "The Search for Meaning" because what has happened is he is looking for meaning in his profession, in education, in projects, in pleasure. Right? And today he is going to look in wealth. He pulls up his wealth and he is looking for meaning deep inside this "box" under the sun. And we just said that under the sun means "apart from God". Asking if outside of a right relationship with the Creator of the heavens and the earth can we find meaning in this life. I will give you the conclusion up front, the answer to the question is absolutely not. Your atheist friend cannot find a right purpose in this world apart from God. The only people who can live a life according to their calling are those who have a right relationship with God through His son Jesus Christ. We are the only ones that can find any kind of meaning under the sun.

And so just to tell you that Solomon has the credibility to say what he is going to say to us today. If you Google, the richest people in history #4 is Andrew Carnegie. As you move through that list you will get to #2 who is John D. Rockefeller. Rockefeller was worth 663.4 billion dollars. And if you keep moving down the list on that little Google search you will get to this guy (picture on screen). They could not find an actual photo of him so here is an artist's rendering of King Solomon whose net worth is 2.1 trillion dollars. The reason I show you that is because if you take Solomon's net worth and you divide it by three, he becomes 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place on that list. No one has ever come close to him. So, as he is talking to you about the futility of wealth, he has all of the authority and all of the credibility to say that. Because this man, in his last days, in the musing of the miserable he is depressed. He is despairing and he tells us not to make the same mistakes.

We said that one of the dumbest things we could do is to leave here, go back to our cars, and spend the rest of our lives rummaging through these boxes trying to find something in them that is not there. He is telling you, "I have looked, and it is not there." Searching for meaning under the sun...

73% of Americans rank finance as the #1 stress in this life. For a lot of you this is central to your concerns, your worries, and your arguments. Younger generations – Gen Z and Millennials – are

even more stressed about finances than older generations. Americans believe it takes a net worth of 2 million dollars to be considered wealthy. 43% of adults say that is important to be wealthy. Jesus talked about money more than any other single subject other than the kingdom of God. And the reason He did that is because often He would say, “Hey this is what might prevent you from the kingdom of God. This is what will keep you from realizing your need for a Savior. You will think that you have comfort and security in this life, and you will try to make your home here. You will not in turn long for another kingdom. He did that lovingly for us.

He taught about 40 parables – 11 of them centered around the topic of wealth. More than 25% of the stories that He told were around the subject and the topic of wealth. And you and I, we are here in church on a Sunday, in America, we have a lot of things going for us and we do not heed His warning. We just do not think about it enough. It’s like we don’t trust Him, we don’t believe Him, we have to figure it out for ourselves. We leave here and we will get Starbucks every day and we won’t think about it. We will just swipe the card, we have the gift card, we are earning the points. You know? You will get your nails done for about \$50. You will get your hair done at \$100...30...20. Whatever it is. You will go and buy \$200 in ammo, and you will not even think about it. Right? You won’t even think about it – it is just the air that you breathe.

On one hand you may think that you never think about money and on the other hand it so consumes you that you do not realize that a day has not gone by where you don’t think about money. It is in the air that we breathe here. So, why do we so badly desire something that Jesus so sternly warns us against? Why? We need to answer that question. Why is generosity so hard for us? Why is it easier to give \$1 away when you only have \$10 than it is to give \$1 million away when you have \$10 million. Because money has weight or mass, and mass has gravity in it. It pulls us off course or it certainly can.

Why was \$23,000 plenty and \$230,000 not nearly enough? How do we get stuck in this rut of discontentment where we have more than what we need and yet we lack the ability to enjoy life? So here is the question I want everyone in here to answer today. And I mean with a numeric value. Everyone – no matter your age. IF you are in college or high school even. Whatever your age I want you to answer this today. How much is enough for you? What is your number? Where you would say, “Hey if I get there then the rest I will release. Whatever above and beyond that I will release for Kingdom work.”

In Ecclesiastes 5, if we have time, I am going to go and get through some of 6 as well. I am skipping verse 1-7 where they talk about the power and the sovereignty of God because I will come back and pick that up in a future chapter. Remember Solomon has a real circular writing style. So, he touches on a topic, he moves past it, comes back, and expounds on it – writes some poetry on it, writes a song about it. Right? This is kind of what he does. As we move through this section here in Ecclesiastes 5. I will start in verse 8 and quickly get to 10. We are going to look at five ways that wealth can be a curse; how God can make it a blessing; and where to invest your wealth. Before you leave here, I am going to give you some financial advice, some investing advice.

We will start in verse 8: **If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. 9 The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields.** Let me say this about verse 9. There may be an asterisk in your Bible or a footnote. Verse 9 is one of the most complicated Hebrew texts for interpreters to interpret. We really do not know exactly what that is saying but moving through the commentaries and trying to understand this section. This little section I would summarize and simply say to you that we are all a part of a pyramid scheme. Every one of us that are employed work in multi-level marketing. There is someone at the top of that pyramid and they make a lot and there are those beneath them who make less and then those at the bottom – who are doing much of the work – that make a fraction of that still. Which is fine. There is nothing wrong with that. That is a right and okay way to exist. UNLESS the person in authority over you has an ulterior motive. If they abuse their authority over, you to take some more from you so they gain more than their fair share that would not be good.

This is what he is saying, do not be surprised when you see that under the sun. If somebody not controlled by the Holy Spirit rips you off, do not ever be surprised by that. That is their job description. If this world “under the sun” is all they have, why would they not try to capitalize that. To not be unequally yoked with unbelievers – proceed with caution.

So, let’s talk about how wealth can be a curse.

### *1. Wealth can be a curse.*

What I mean by curse is that it can complicate life. I am going to give you some specific way from the text – directly from the text – how it can complicate life. It is difficult for us to believe and see what we really desire as a curse. But let’s go. Verse 10: **Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless.** So, the first thing that wealth can curse is satisfaction.

*Wealth can be a curse to satisfaction.*

Much like other desires, when you feed it, it grows. If I feed lust, my lust grows stronger and bigger. If I feed greed, I become greedier. So, it is the same reality \$23,000 is plenty - \$2,000 a month is plenty – I am celebrating because I have more than what I need. \$20,000 a month...not enough. I need more. I have to feed the machine. I am going to starve to death if I do not get after it. This is the picture. And I strongly believe that Paul, when he is penning a letter to Timothy, had Ecclesiastes 5 on his mind when he said, **Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.** **1Timothy 6:9-10** Money is not evil...the desire for money will take you to evil places. Do you desire to be rich? To answer that you want a death grip and understanding. Do I desire wealth?

He goes on to say, verse 11: **As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owners except to feast their eyes on them?** Another thing that is complicated or cursed by wealth is relationships.

*Wealth can be a curse to relationships.*

The wealthy can be surrounded by friends, but how do they know if they are really friends? I think about Floyd “Money” Mayweather. He notoriously has an entourage. He will go into a store, clear it out, and give it to his entourage. He went into a dealership once and spent over \$1 million on vehicles. He bought an entire fleet of cars for his boys, those running with him, his running buddies. And he has got to think when he goes to bed tonight, “Are they really my friends? Do they like me for me or do they like my lake house? Do they like me? Do they love me for who I am or do they like what I can do for them?” So, it curses or complicates relationships.

Verse 12: **The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep.**

*Wealth can be a curse to sleep.*

It can curse sleep. You can have all the money in the world and not be able to cut off your mind. You lay in bed at night, and you are like, “I have forgotten how to shift to sleep mode. I do not know how.” All the worries...when you had nothing you did not worry about losing it. Now that you have lots you wonder “Is it FDIC insured and what if the market crashes and look at oil. What are we doing? Land values...we should have got in the game earlier. Why didn’t we do that? We should have bought that thing that I told you about from your brother.” Just me? And you can buy Ambien, you can tranquilize yourself for sure. Tylenol P.M. – pop them every night not realizing 7 years have gone by and now you are completely dependent on it. Maybe it is a couple of glasses of wine for you. You are now a machine – you need something to get you up and something to put you down. But you do not have rest. You do not have rest.

Verse 13-14: **I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners, or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when they have children there is nothing left for them to inherit.** He is saying, “Easy come and easy go.” You put it all on black and it can vanish. Right? You bet it like it is in a casino. The market crashes, planes fly into buildings, who knows what is going to happen. Verse 15-16: **Everyone comes naked from their mother’s womb, and as everyone comes, so they depart. They take nothing from their toil that they can carry in their hands. This too is a grievous evil: As everyone comes, so they depart, and what do they gain,** (which is that word profit, what do you have at the end of it all that you can take with you) **since they toil for the wind.** You know what is cursed by wealth? For some it is death.

*Wealth can be a curse to death.*

I know... the inheritance. The changing of money. When we were poor, we were siblings, and everyone was happy, and everyone got along. But now, there is a lot there and we are going to share it... and “Wait! Why are you talking to Mom? What are you doing over there?” The

scheming begins – get the knives out. You have seen the movie. How does this get divided? It gets weird. I have seen it time and time again. It can get really weird, really fast.

Verse 17: **All their days they eat in darkness, with great frustration, affliction, and anger.** That word for affliction could directly translate to English or most directly translate to English as mental affliction or mental illness. So, something that wealth can curse is sanity, your ability to think straight.

*Wealth can be a curse to sanity.*

You can have a lot of money and lose your mind. You can have a lot of money and lose your memory. In Daniel 4 there is a king named Nebuchadnezzar – the most powerful man in the land, also the wealthiest – who says, “Build a 90-foot-tall statue of me made out of gold and when you play this music worship it.” And there were these three guys, Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego who would not do it. You may know the story. But what was interesting about the wealthiest man in the land is that he lost his mind. He crawled around a field on all fours eating grass like he was a cow. He had lots, but nothing up here (pointing to the brain) to direct it.

So, this is not a real curse, it is really simple – if you cannot find satisfaction and you begin to question your relationships, and you don’t sleep, and life gets complicated all of the sudden you lose your mind. You find yourself in this place where you long for simpler times.

Why do we so desperately desire what Jesus so sternly warned us against? Because I think all of us – you are like not me... Have you ever driven by the billboard, \$340 million this week, and think okay I am just going to go get one ticket, no big deal? Hopefully I do not bump into anybody from church there. Maybe a little scratch off – you are worn down by the kids and it is kind of fun to drive on the road trip. Get a penny, scratch it off and let’s see and you just think “what if? What if? If I won the lottery” I know you guys, you’d just give it all away. You start to think “what if I did this, what if we did that, we wouldn’t have to worry about this or that anymore. Life would be so much simpler, so much easier if we just won the lottery”, statistically that is just not true.

Business insider tracked 14 lottery winners; I’ll tell you about some of them:

Willie won 3.1 million dollars, but he lost his wife, his kids, was charged for attempted murder and today is addicted to crack cocaine.

Michael won \$15 million, he spent it all on cocaine, prostitutes, and parties. He is currently trying to get his job back with waste management.

Billy Bob was a preacher, of course he was, Billy Bob. Preacher Billy Bob won \$31 million, he bought a lot of things and gave a lot away, but he lost his marriage and committed suicide.

William won \$16 million, he was sued by his ex-girlfriend, his brother hired a hit man to kill him. In 1 year, he was \$1 million in debt and today he lives on food stamps valued at \$450 a month. And we think “not us, wouldn’t happen to me, I would be different”.

Verse 18: **This is what I have observed: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink**



**and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them - for this is their lot.**

What a verse, there is a great summary statement, here you go. Work hard, earn a good wage, use it, and find enjoyment in what it allows you to do. Understand the lot that has been entrusted to you. Don't want somebody else's lot, just live in your lot, bloom where you are planted, stay in your lane.

**Verse 19-20: Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil – this is a gift of God. They seldom reflect on the days of their life because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart.**

It's a beautiful picture here of someone who has a lot, and their content. I think so often we think in two categories, rich and poor. There are really four categories, biblically speaking, there are those who are righteously rich, and those who are unrighteously rich, those who are righteously poor and those who are unrighteously poor. Money is not bad in and of itself, in fact money can do a lot of good, but money can easily pull you off course. So, the more you have the more accountability you are going to want. The more transparency you are going to need. A greater grip upon the gospel you are going to need to have. Because the enemy will use what you perceive as a blessing as curse in your life to pull you out of a right relationship with God. To distract you with the things of this world. The scariest verse to me is Luke 12:48 – **to whom much is given, much is expected.** Man!

And here we have been given a lot! It is so easy to think when I say wealthy, "Ah, well that is not me." Right? Not me. But the truth is the average income across the world is about \$9,500. In Waco, the average income is \$21,000. So, I do not know where you are at – somewhere between \$9,500 and \$21,000 – I do not know what that looks like for you, but I am telling you, globally speaking, because of where you were born you are wealthy. Because of what is available to you. If you are a college student here and you have no money, simply because of where you woke up this morning you are wealthier than the vast majority of the world.

So, when we are talking about stewardship and wealth, we are talking to all of us. And I want you to know that only God can make wealth a blessing.

## *2. God can make wealth a blessing.*

Only God, this is what the text is saying, that it is a blessing from God, the ability to enjoy wealth. It is good to enjoy good things. Jesus enjoyed things. Always communally. You never really saw Jesus by himself hoarding things for himself. It was always a sharing. At the center of his character is generosity. Always sharing, always giving. If He was at a meal, it was communal. On Wednesday night we went to Ninfa's, we splurged and got the fajitas. It was sizzling on the table, and we paired it with a great beverage. We sat with friends, four couples, and I believe God was looking down from heaven, I believe with all my heart, thinking "those are my people man." He was smiling on us. It brought Him great joy – the topic of conversation was centered around Him, His goodness, and what He has done for us.

There is a time for that – to enjoy. But I think that we should wrestle, “Lord, should I get the steak, or should I go burger? It is your money, what do you want me to do today?” And we would think about it in ways in which some of us are just conditioned not to think about it. “Is today Starbucks or is today, Folgers, God? What would you want me to do? It is your money. How do you want me to steward your resources?”

It is great to enjoy things, just do not make them Ultimate. It is not going to go well for you, to worship the false gods in this world, it’s not going to go well. It says, “God keeps them happy not their wealth”. That’s so key to understanding this text, that the contentment that we long for it actually comes from God. Let me show you, because you have Solomon here, he has so much, but he is so depressed, sad, despairing, and miserable. Then there is this other guy in the New Testament, the apostle Paul, he’s in prison and he pens this letter to the church in Philippi. This verse is really well known. Philippians 4:11-13: **I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret (there is a secret) of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all of this through him who gives me strength”**

This is the verse that we want to put on blast. I can hit the homerun, through him who gives me strength. I can score a touchdown through him who gives me strength. That is not what it’s saying. I can suffer all things because Jesus and he gives strength. I can hold this world loosely because I’m promised to another world. He [Paul] says, “I’ve learned the secret of contentment while hungry”. How can you be content and hungry at the same time? That is an oxymoron, it’s a contradiction in terms of being content and hungry. The secret he’s learned is that when I’m hungry I can use my hunger to push me deeper into a relationship with Jesus who is readily available at all times. When I lack, I still have Jesus, and I can find satisfaction in him.

For some of you that’s super-cerebral, you’re like “Oh, that’s a good Sunday school message, but what does it mean? I so desperately want to find satisfaction in Jesus. How do I do that?”. You look to the cross, look at what He has done for you, look at what you gain through Him. Look at what is promised to you and loosen your grip on this world. Hold your hands open and begin to find life in sharing. Begin to find life in sharing Him. Use the worldly things that he has given you to make much of Him. Solomon can’t learn this lesson, but Paul is learning. I’ve said the rich are far better off than the poor, while the poor think money can buy them happiness the rich know better. I’m telling you the content is infinitely better off than both, those who find contentment. The ability to enjoy wealth is up to God. You are stewarding His things.

You guys know the name Bernie Madoff, remember that name some of you? Why do we know that name? Ponzi Scheme, biggest one in history. He died earlier this year, Bernie did, but not before he schemed \$64 billion from people who entrusted their wealth to him. Could you imagine how upset you’d be, you had this big windfall, I don’t know if it’s inheritance, or you took your company public, you had this big IPO, you know something goes your way, you sell a lot of land, and you have this large sum of money. Then you hear about his financial advisor who’s really good. All the wealthy people go to him. So, you go “Here you go Bernie, earn a great return for me” and he takes that, and he uses it for his scheme, to pad his pockets. Then you

find out that all the money that you entrusted to him is now zero. He lost it, it wasn't real, he did what he wanted. How upset would you be? Because that is not what a financial advisor does, when you entrust your money to them you think they are going to steward it well.

What I want you to know is that God has invited all of us to play the role of his financial advisor. He's taken all his money, the cattle on a thousand hills that belong to him, and he's dispersed different amounts to each of you. That is what has happened, and he says, "the reason I am giving you this is, so you get it where I want it to go, so make sure you consult with me before you take it" and you just spend it all on you. Make sure you know what God desires for you to do with it. You're not going to know that apart from spending some time with Him. I say this because some of you are like "nuhuh, no no no, I earned that money, I worked and put in long hours. I did the work. It was a grind" Who gave you the ability to work? "It was my education, 4.0" Who gave you the ability to think the way you do to go to that school? "It's where I was" Who made you were born there, you could have been born in rural Haiti where you never had seen an automobile, you could have been that. God who directs all things had you raised up wherever you were raised up. To give you the relationships, and opportunities that you have been given, for Him. There is nothing that you have that is good that hasn't been entrusted to you from the Father of heavenly lights who gives good gifts to his Children. That's James and Matthew 7, this is all from God, He has entrusted it to you for Him. How can we learn that lesson and forget that lesson so fast?

We should pray about decisions, "God, you want me to get steak tonight?". Consult with our life group, we're Americans we don't like constraints. We want to do what we want to do when we want to do it, the problem that is slavery. You do things and you find yourself in a place where you can't stop doing them. You've fed greed and it's consumed you and you've found yourself at the top of the ladder, but all by yourself. There is no one there to enjoy it with you and you're just like Solomon.

I remember when I learned this lesson that is all His. When I would go to a hotel room, I would always crank the air down low and leave the lights on. I figured, it's not on me I'm going to pay a fixed bill no matter what. I remember going through this biblical worldview course and learning all things are Gods. Now I think if it's all God's then when I leave the hotel room, I'm going to turn the air up to a reasonable setting and I'm going to turn off all the lights. Because all resources are God's and what you do with someone else's resources is really what you do. You get that per diem from your company, and you spend it a little bit, you order a little bit different. "Might as well, getting \$100 a day" What if you just thought about "how do I be a good steward of all resources?" That is a different mindset. If all resources are God's, it changes things, it shifts our values, it shifts the way we spend.

Chapter six now. Just as a reminder, the chapter breaks are not inerrant or Holy Spirit inspired, these happened later, and I believe that this section goes with chapter 5. It is the same school of thought; the same thinking and many scholars agree with me, so we'll just continue.

**Ecclesiastes 6:1-2 I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on mankind: God gives some people wealth, possessions, and honor, so that they lack nothing their**

**hearts desire, but God does not grant them the ability to enjoy them, and strangers enjoy them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil.**

Who do you think he is talking about here? He is saying “Hey, there are some people that have a lot of things, but they haven’t learned to enjoy them. I think there is a little self-reflection going on for king Solomon. He’s kind of asking “what’s wrong with me, I have everything. I should be happier” That is a step in a really miserable direction. “I should be happier”.

Verse 3-6 **A man may have a hundred children and live many years;** (We read that and think, “oh he’s talking hyperbole” here is reality, Solomon probably had hundreds of children. That is crazy to think about. He probably had hundreds of kids. We know four of them by name, but more than likely he had at least a hundred kids.) **Yet no matter how long he lives, if he cannot enjoy his prosperity and does not receive proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he. It comes without meaning, it departs in darkness, and in darkness its name is shrouded. Though it never saw the sun or knew anything, it has more rest than does that man - even if he lives a thousand years twice over but fails to enjoy his prosperity. Do not all go to the same place?**

Keep in mind, he is talking about under the sun. Don’t both go to the grave, aren’t both buried. This is a really sad picture. You talk about the depth of despair for King Solomon. He says, “I would have been better off never being born. At least I would not have felt the depression and the despair that I feel. I have got to have all these things, but there is just despair there. I do not know how to enjoy them anymore. Like I have forgotten how to sleep, I have forgotten how to enjoy things. I would have been better off not being born.” And so, you have to learn to enjoy the things under the sun according to the will of God. How is that done? Well Jesus tells us. We invest in His kingdom. We invest in eternity.

R.G. LeTourneau is a man of great wealth. He invented earth movers - big bulldozers if you will. And he was known for his generosity. He was a believer. And his legacy is generosity. And he said this, “They say that you cannot take it with you. But I say that you can send it on ahead and have it waiting for your credit when you get there.” And I think this is a picture of a person who took Jesus at His word. What we do is we collect it and we put it in closets. We put it in storage. Hey friends I want to tell you something, you do not enjoy anything in storage. There is nothing sitting in storage that you enjoy. You would be better off selling it, liquidating it, and deploying those resources for kingdom purposes.

As a matter of fact, you do not enjoy anything that is collecting dust. But we just have this big funnel in, and we collect. Like one day we will get to Jesus and say, “Dude you have got to see my baseball collection. It is amazing!” He is going to be like, “Oh yeah, I remember when I made those people.” “You have to see my shoe collection Jesus. It is awesome!”

### *3. Invest your wealth beyond the sun.*

Invest your wealth beyond the sun, not in storage. R.G. LeTourneau also said, “I shovel it out and God shovels it back in. He just has a bigger shovel.” I know that there is a part of that that seems a little scary cause it can smell like Prosperity Gospel - you just give to receive. Prosperity

Gospel is a tool of Satan, but I will tell you that God blesses obedience. Sometimes in life, always in eternity. God blesses obedience and I have seen this. I have seen God entrust, to people, great wealth who use it according to His will. And I get it, I get why God gave them that. I would too if I was God. I would entrust a lot to them. There is a guy who I have met twice. He texts me encouraging things all the time. Just always things like, "Hey man, stay in there. I know it is hard. Hey, go to my lake house this weekend - take the kids fishing." There is nothing I can do for him, he has everything. There is nothing I can do for him. I don't even go to his church anymore - the church he goes to anymore. He is just constantly trying to figure out how he can encourage others with what God has entrusted to him and I am not confused why God has blessed him in that way. And there is another person I know who has a lake house and I have never seen it, because they worry so much about their stuff being messed up. They worry so much about something being broken. So much about something going wrong. And they are just live-in constant fear and wealth to them is a curse. For some it is a blessing and for some it is a curse, and it all comes down to a right relationship with God.

Jesus said this in Matthew 6, **Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.** Here is your homework assignment - read Matthew 6 with your Life Group this week and ask "Do we really believe this? What did Jesus mean right here? What is He really saying? Let's dive in, start to pull back the Greek, and try to see if we can really understand what He means when He says do not store up treasures for yourself on earth." What does that mean? It is so confusing? He is all mixing His words around - talking about earth and treasures. What does it mean? Why did the Holy Spirit preserve that?

I think that we think that it would be easy to be generous if we were just rich. I have never known a generous rich person who wasn't generous when they were poor. I just don't. And so, do you remember the question - how much is enough? I want you to answer that. Because the temptation later will be that you are on Amazon and you are going to think, "I need more." You are going to be walking in the store and think I need more. There is something else that I have got to buy that will make me happy. Let's say this together, "I don't need that." I don't need that. That is right...keep saying it. I do not need that. Keep repeating it when you leave here, and you are by yourself. Because you do not enjoy anything you just spend money on - it will bring you a moment of pleasure. It is a way to try to escape, a coping mechanism when you are by yourself. That little package is going to show up and it will give you about 7 seconds of joy and then you will open it and be like, "What did I buy? I don't even remember." You are going to open it up and then be like, "Oh that. That is going to look cute in the closet."

In summary, wealth cannot afford you satisfaction, friends, sleep, security, or sanity. The ability to enjoy is from God and so invest your wealth beyond the sun, in the kingdom. There is a guy I did life with, so I know details I would not usually know, but I was there shortly after he graduated from college, and he set his number. He said, "Here is how much I need." And so, he put his numbers down. And he said, "When I get married, I am going to change it to this, and I

will adjust for inflation.” And he chose his number. And I was doing life with him still when he was making \$172,000 and I watched him just get to be generous. He gave away more than I long to make at a time. And he would talk about how loud it was to show up to church all by yourself and drop a \$30,000 check in the giving box and hear it leaf left to right and hear it hit the bottom. And no one would know.

And we hear that, and we think, “Man that is really constraining him.” And I would tell you, “No, it was unbelievably freeing for him.” It still is to this day - I had lunch with him this week. It is still incredibly freeing for him to go through life knowing I always have what I need. And I have seen God bless him, professionally. Continue to give him. He shovels it out and God shovels it back in. He may not, it is not a promise - that is not what I am saying, and it is not the point. You do not give to get. We should give what we have determined in our heart. Is having a number Biblical? The Scripture says that it is. That we should give what we have determined in our heart beforehand for the Lord loves a cheerful giver, not one who gives to receive.

I am telling you that at the center of the character of God is generosity. **For God so loved the world that He gave...** His only son. And the Son so loved you that He gave His life. He did not tithe his blood. Jesus did not get up on the cross and say, “Hey take 10% of me.” He gave everything. Right? The Spirit of God then gives your new life; gives you gifts to be used for God and secures you for the kingdom - eternal life. So that in 100 years from now you know you will be with God and 100 billion years from now you will still be with Him. So, you can hold this world loosely, in its essences of belief. You want to know if you really have a faith? How do we live? Do we hold this world loosely? There is another world that we have been created for. That we are waiting to be with God for forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever. Because sometimes I think that if we really thought we would be with God in heaven forever then why would we do that? And I wrestle with that. We are constantly wrestling with that, and I want to make sure that as a body we are constantly wrestling with that. That we would understand that God has given us eternal life and this life is found in His son, Jesus Christ alone.

So, the last thing that I want to do is to guilt you into being generous. That would not be generous, that would be guilt. What I do want you to do is to live with the right biblical understanding. Knowing that you have received all things through God the Father who loves you. The death of His son Jesus Christ, who He has raised from the dead giving you the promise of eternal life. And if that is true, what are we here for? What are we doing?

Let me pray that we would understand.

Lord, I know that we will not regret anything we have given for you; any sacrifice we have made for you. And Lord, there is just something about this message in me that I have this insecurity that the wrong people are going to hear the wrong things, or the right people are going to hear the wrong things. That the information is not going to get to the right hearts. So, would your Holy Spirit sort that out Lord? Would you take those who need to be challenged in this message and would you challenge them appropriately. And those that need to be spurred on, just a word of keep going, there are a lot of people here that have been generous towards your kingdom Lord. I pray that you would encourage them. That their heart would be inspired right now. And those

who are experiencing a season of poverty, but it is matched with envy, jealousy, bitterness that you would fix that right now. Even as we sing, that you would shift something within their hearts. That the body of Harris Creek would be one of righteous wealth and that if you entrust poverty to us that it would be one of righteous poverty. That we would steward whatever lot you have given us. all the while knowing Jesus is our portion. Jesus is our portion. Would you help us believe that? In Jesus' name, Amen.