

“God’s Gift—Joyful Contentment!”—Ecclesiastes 5:18-20

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “God’s Gift—Joyful Contentment!”, is Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 → *Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God. For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Advertisements. It seems that we are bombarded with them at every turn of our lives. We see them in electronic media of every sort, in newspapers and magazines, on billboards and posters. We hear them over our radio stations and encounter them on every website we open on the computer. Why?

In an effort to sell products advertisements seek to “wet your appetite” in such a manner that you’d consider acquiring the product. In one sense, the purpose of advertisements is to make you discontent—to create a desire for something for which you had no

previous desire. They are meant to create a need where there was no previous need. After all, discontentment leads to sales. Advertising works so well that some may consider it the heartbeat of our economic system. It keeps the money flowing as it exchanges hands. While discontentment may be considered an asset to the economy, it is also a very powerful dynamic of life which can lead you into many destructive, sinful behaviors or even prove a detriment to your soul.

Contentment is a state of being which is very difficult for us sinners to achieve. How many times have you really wanted something and then worked hard to get it, only to discover your contentment with it to soon wane. Maybe there was something about it that just wasn't quite right and didn't produce your desired expectations. A person who is joyful, excited and even grateful for finally landing a job may find himself complaining and griping about it within a short time. What was considered a gift—work—can soon be considered a bane.

In our text, King Solomon reflected on contentment and joy in life **from a human perspective**, specifically as he observed people's pursuit of money and material goods in their toil and labor. In Ecclesiastes 5:10 he observed that the person *who **loves** money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who **loves** wealth with his income.* He actually hit at the very heart and root of discontentment in our lives—**our sinful hearts.**

Jesus referred to this in Matthew 6:21 → *Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*. He is speaking about idolatry. Idolatry is determined by the object of your faith. When your heart's devotion is directed to something or someone other than the LORD (cf. Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37), it will lead you into discontentment and even despair. Why? Because there is only one almighty, all-powerful, Lord of the universe Who can carry you through your sin-stricken life into eternal glory—the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, being God is a HUGE responsibility and believe me, your stuff or any person is not up to the task. They make lousy gods and will not fulfill your expectations and bring you the joyful contentment your desire in life.

Solomon observed the basic fact of life that everything for which we toil and strive throughout our lives is fleeting. A search for contentment and joy in life based upon the acquisition of wealth or stuff will prove a meaningless endeavor which brings no lasting joy in the end. He contemplated the fact that all toil, striving, work and luxury from a human perspective leads to the same end—death. Since death is so final in this life, it all **seemed** fruitless to Solomon **from a human perspective**. He observed in Ecclesiastes 5:15 that naked you *came from your mother's womb* and naked shall you depart into death, taking *nothing for your toil that you may carry away* with you. Seems like Solomon was quite a pessimist . . . or was he?

While Solomon was a realist he was also a man of faith, recognizing in Ecclesiastes 3:11 that Yahweh *has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, He has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.* Thus, since we are still living this life under the eye of the LORD, Solomon's advice is *to eat and drink and find enjoyment in* (i.e. to see good in and find satisfaction with) *all the toil with which you toil under the sun the few days of this life that God has given you* (verse 18). And as far as your stuff is concerned he advises in verse 19 of our text: *Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept your lot and rejoice in your toil—**this is the gift of God.***

Contentment comes from recognizing Who is the author of life and to Whom it belongs—the LORD. Such faith in Him and His plan of salvation for sinners in Christ Jesus views life and toil, no matter how meaningless it may appear to you at the moment, to be a gift from God. It is possible for you to rejoice in all those activities in life which demand your toil because you know life to be that which **God has given** to you and He is Lord over it all. Joyful contentment is a gift of God even in the midst of the ho-hum, hum-drum, boredom, daily activities of your life.

A faith where the Lord Jesus is the object turns your perspective of

life around. Instead of looking to people, possessions, power and positions to bring you satisfaction and contentment in your life—something they're not built to do in this sinful world—instead **you bring** peace and contentment with God your heavenly Father into those dynamics of life. Instead of simply seeking for your life to be a blessing to you, you strive to bring the blessing of God's gracious providence and salvation in Christ into life and the lives of others. Instead of striving to find purpose in life you simply live by faith in Jesus, the Author of life (cf. Acts 3:5), both physical and eternal, recognizing you are a purpose in your daily life, vocations, tasks, relationships and so forth. In this way, as Solomon says in verse 20 of our text, *you will not much remember the days of your life because God keeps you occupied with joy in your heart.*

But what happens when so many contentment kill-joys are beating you down during the day as you simply strive to do your stuff with joy as a gift of God? The fellow employee who is constantly on my case; the teacher who yelled at me in class; the person constantly bullying me; the stuff that just doesn't work smoothly when I'm trying to accomplish a task; my "bad day," where no matter what I do, everything goes wrong; as well as the spiritual battles and temptations to sin that you encounter regularly each day. Joyful contentment isn't usually even in our radar at those times. How many

times have you felt that it would be better to just go back to bed in the hopes of waking up to a better day?

Such dynamics of life are areas where the devil can get a foothold and tempt you to breed the sins of contempt and hatred toward others as well as grumbling and complaining against the LORD about your lot in life. It certainly doesn't feel like a gift at these moments. It is imperative to remember that those people or the particular day or even yourself are not your enemies. The ultimate contentment kill-joy enemy is the devil. The place to be is not in bed but rather in prayer, confessing your sins and looking to the promises of Jesus, Who says to you: *These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.* (cf. John 15:11) You can still have joy in the midst of the struggles because Jesus has defeated your enemy (i.e. the devil) and crushed his power.

Joyful contentment is a confession of your relationship with and trust in the LORD. It is a confession that your contentment in life is a gift of God, not something of your own making. It is not something which you can "find" based on your own searching and your own criteria. It is something which is given based upon the LORD's gracious love for us sinners in Christ Jesus revealed in His written Word. It sets your hope *on God, Who*, as 1 Timothy 6:17 says, *richly provides us with everything to enjoy.*

When you belong to God through faith in His greatest gift—
forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord—your
perspective and attitude toward your toilsome labor under the sun is
transformed. Your work, with all of its good and bad dynamics,
becomes an avenues through which you can bless others as a
Christian. Thus, you don't have to sit around trying to figure out the
purpose or meaning of your efforts in life. Instead, you simply trust
God to use those efforts, and even the "stuff" they produce, to His
glory in service to others and thank Him for His gifts in joyful
contentment. Amen.

*Keep your life free from love of money,
and be content with what you have, for God has said,
"I will never leave you nor forsake you."
So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper;
I will not fear; what can man do to me?"*

(Hebrews 13:5-6)

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