

The Secret of Real Consumer Satisfaction

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to turn now to God's Word, and we are resuming our series in Ecclesiastes. So do turn in your Bibles to Ecclesiastes, and we are reading from chapter 5, Ecclesiastes chapter 5 and verse 8.

So do turn that up, and we'll read through to chapter 6, verse 9. Ecclesiastes 5 and verse 8.

If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness, do not be amazed at the matter, for the high official is watched by a higher, and there is yet higher ones over them.

But this is gain for a land in every way. A king committed to cultivated fields. He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income.

This also is vanity. When goods increase, they increase who eat them. And what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes?

[1 : 1 9] Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much. But the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep. There is a grievous evil I've seen under the sun.

Riches were kept by their owner to his hurt. And those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but it has nothing in his hand. As he came from his mother's womb, he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand.

This also is a grievous evil. Just as he came, so he will go. And what gain is there to him who toils for the wind? Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness and much vexation and sickness and anger.

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.

[2 : 3 4] 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. There is an evil that I have seen under the sun and it lies heavy on mankind.

A man to whom God gives wealth, possessions and honour so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them. But a stranger enjoys them.

This is vanity. It is a grievous evil. If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with life's good things and he also has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he.

For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered. Moreover, it has not seen the sun or known anything, yet it finds rest rather than he.

Even though he should live a thousand years, twice over, yet enjoy no good, do not all go to the one place? All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied.

[3 : 52] For what advantage has the wise man over the fool? And what does the poor man have who knows how to conduct himself before the living? Better is the sight of the eyes than a wandering of the appetite.

This also is vanity and a striving after the wind. Amen. Well, may God bless his words to us this morning.

Well, turn with me, if you would, to the passage that Paul read to us there in Ecclesiastes 5 and 6. The passage all about the secret of real consumer satisfaction.

The truth is that as individuals and indeed as whole societies, we live in a world full of spin, of half-truth and deception about so many different aspects of life.

My goodness, that certainly has come into very sharp focus, I think, this last year or two. And we may complain about it, but the problem is we are complicit in it.

[5 : 09] Collusion in delusion is the hallmark of humanity. And that's certainly the clear teaching of the Bible. It is a fundamental mark of what sin really is.

That's what the apostle says very plainly, isn't it, in Romans chapter 1. The truth about God and his world is plain, because God has made it plain. But, says the apostle, by their unrighteousness, human beings have suppressed the truth.

Notice that. Censorship, suppression of the truth, is always a hallmark of evil, sin. But we do that, says Paul, by nature as human beings.

We've become, he says, futile in our thinking. Our foolish hearts were darkened. And that, friends, is what explains our world.

Collusion in delusion and in self-deception. Claiming to be wise, says Paul, we've become fools. And it is the sheer folly of this rebellion that the preacher here in Ecclesiastes expresses so ruthlessly.

[6 : 24] Eugene Peterson's image, remember, is that the preacher's constantly repeating phrase, hevel, vain, empty, ephemeral. He says it's like a broom that he uses to sweep away the folly of delusion that so pervades our human thinking, our fantasies, sweeps away the illusions that we cling to, the deceptions that we hide in, to expose the real truth about life and about this world.

That's what he's doing. And remember that the preacher's primary audience is not the secular world outside. Of course the secular world is exposed by his words.

But it's first and foremost directed at God's people, at his church. It's amazing, isn't it, how often as church people we don't really want to face the real challenge of God's piercing words to our own hearts.

We love evangelistic messages, whatever that might be. Things directed at the outsider. But we're often not so keen, are we, when the Bible actually comes very close to home and challenges us.

But the fact is, virtually every part of the Bible is addressed, first of all, to those who profess to believe and trust in God.

[7 : 40] And that's certainly so here. Remember chapter 5, verse 1. It's aimed at those who do go to the house of God. So it's challenging us very starkly.

Is our corporate worship marked by the reality of faith or is it just the ritual of fantasy? That's what we looked at last time.

Are we really coming to listen to God or to just prattle to God about ourselves? To get God to do what we want him to do. Of course our real worship is far more than just the gatherings that we have as the church.

Certainly not less than that, but it is much more. It's our whole lives, isn't it? Lived before God. As one scholar puts it, the life of real worship involves not only what comes out of our mouth, but also what enters our mouth and how it does so.

In other words, our worship is not just about what we confess. It's about how we consume. And that's the key concept in view here in the rest of chapter 5 down to chapter 6, verse 9, which ends, by the way, the first half of the book at verse 9 there.

[8 : 53] It's the last occurrence of that catchphrase all the way through this first half, a striving after the wind. But the focus here is on eating, on consuming.

Sometimes it's translated here enjoying. That's the key focus in this passage before us this morning. It's all about living as consumers in this world.

And about the stark difference, the radical difference that there is between the way of true faith, that is, living for eternity with an anchor firmly fixed above the sun, not in this world, the contrast between that and a life that doesn't.

And that kind of real faith will have a contented attitude to all material needs and wants.

And therefore it will consume or eat, verse 18, enjoy, verse 19, consume material things with joy and with satisfaction.

[9 : 56] But by contrast, you see, the way of fantasy faith, the way of self-delusion, which is really, actually, just living rooted in this world and seeking for gain that is just fleeting, is ephemeral.

That way is burdened by a craving appetite of consumption. But, look at verse 2 of chapter 6, it has no power to enjoy or to consume with any real satisfaction at all.

See, we're all consumers. We all live, don't we, in this material world, a world of things, a world of wealth, a world of possessions, a world of consumables.

But what is the secret of real consumer satisfaction? In this world. That's the question. And that's the subject the preacher is talking about in these verses.

So let's look a bit in detail and try and get hold of his message, which God has preserved for us, for our wisdom, for our learning. First of all, in verses 8 and 9, he introduces his theme, the prevalence of material consumerism in society.

[11 : 11] He's taking up the theme that he began in chapter 4. Do you remember at the beginning where he talked about the oppressiveness of the materialist consumer ethic? And remember, he noted there that all toil and success is driven by a man's envy of his neighbor.

Chapter 4, verse 4. And now he's pointing out how endemic, how systemic this mindset is in society as a whole. Oppression of the poor and violation of justice and righteousness is institutionalized in our world.

That's the point of verse 8. Look. It's the very fabric of the way our world works. And it shouldn't surprise us as Christians that that is so.

Do not be amazed, says the preacher. Be realist. Don't be naive about this. This is our world. It is a world of structural, systemic oppression.

Layers of bureaucracy. Look. One official above another. Well, whether it's the private sector or the public sector, which is even worse, there are hierarchies, aren't there, of power and influence.

[12 : 22] And everyone, as he says here, is watching. Watching out for himself and his own gain. And in the end, the income flow is only ever one way, isn't it?

Upward. Right to the top dog, verse 9. To the king himself. You'll see from the footnote there that verse 9 is hard to translate. It's rather ambiguous. You can translate it quite positively like our ESV does here.

That it's gain. That it's a blessing for a land. To have a king who perhaps is somewhat above all this kind of self-seeking. Maybe to restrain unfettered exploitation and injustice.

But actually, in the context, I think it is much better to translate verse 19 negatively. The authorized version has the king himself is served by the fields.

Or the NIV, the king himself profits from the fields. I think the New Living Translation gets it best of all. Even the king milks the land for his own profit.

[13 : 26] You can maybe paraphrase it like this. At the end of the day, it all amounts to this. The whole economy serves the pockets of the top dogs. I think that's what the king represents here.

Remember, way back in 1 Samuel, Samuel warned the Israelites, didn't he? When they clamored after a king like all the other nations have. And he said, he'll take your sons for soldiers.

He'll take them to plow his ground and reap his harvest. He'll take your daughters to be cooks and bakers and perfumers. He'll take the best of your fields and your vineyards and your orchards.

You read it in 1 Samuel 8. And that's what happened. And precious little changes, does it? Personally, I thank God for our queen.

I grieve for her recent frailty. But of course, in our world today, our monarchs, they're just titular heads of state, aren't they? They're not our real rulers. Our real rulers are the politicians.

[14 : 31] Increasingly, the oligarchs of the global elites whose vast wealth owns virtually all the media, all the big tech, controls most of the academia in the Western world, the banking system, the central bankers, much else besides.

And their gravy trains are very well-laid, aren't they, with the profits that come from field and factory. In other words, the taxes of ordinary people. After the great financial crisis in 2008, all those busted banks with their bonus-laden executives, they were bailed out, weren't they, by governments.

The officials watched by the higher officials. But of course, it was the taxes of ordinary people that paid for it all, you and me. And the quantitative easing, the money printing that has been going on ever since, gushing like a tap.

That has seen the greatest transfer in wealth in the whole of human history, from the poor to the already very asset rich. The greatest transfer of that is until this last year, when of course, the COVID magic money tree has added more billions to the billionaires than ever before.

And more billions than you and I could ever count if we lived to a thousand years old. And even that is now going to be surpassed by the trillions and trillions of dollars and pounds that are being funneled into pockets of green energy entrepreneurs.

[16 : 03] And those investors are able to make one-way bets in all of these new renewable technologies. Vast, vast fortunes are going to be made.

Well, many, many ordinary people are actually going to freeze to death because they won't be able to afford their electricity bills. Or because the wind won't be blowing and there won't be any electricity from the windmills. Don't be amazed at these things, says the preacher.

No matter what the age, no matter what the political philosophy, the prevalence of this material consumerism is perpetual. And the flow is only ever upwards, verse 8, to the high and to the higher and to those who are higher still over them.

That is just the mammon worship of a consumer society. But notice the second half of verse 8 because there's clear recognition, isn't there, of why this is.

For, he says, everyone is watching everyone else and watching for themselves. Society is the way it is because of the people who make up society.

[17 : 24] That was actually the point that Margaret Thatcher was making in her very often misquoted and infamous speech back in 1987 where she was accused of denying that society even exists. It was interpreted as saying, look, it's just everyone out for themselves and never mind anybody else.

Actually, she was saying something quite different. Let me quote because I think it's interesting. She said, too many people have been given to understand that if they have a problem, it's the government's job to cope with it.

They're casting their problem on society. And you know, there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women. There are families. And no government can do anything except through people.

And people must look to themselves. It's our duty to look after ourselves and then to look after our neighbor. People have got their entitlements too much in mind without their obligations.

There's no such thing as entitlement unless someone has first met an obligation. Well, whatever you thought of Mrs. Thatcher if you were alive then, and she certainly made many mistakes as most leaders do, that at least, what she's saying there is clearly in line with what the preacher is saying here.

[18 : 37] He's saying you can't just blame a sort of nebulous force of society out there that you have nothing to do with. You can't even blame your bogeyman group within society whichever ones they are.

You've got to reckon that we're all part of it. And we've all got individual personal responsibilities for society because we are the people who make up society.

It's our attitudes, it's our appetites that shape society. And the truth is that by nature we're all watching out for ourselves.

We're eyeing up our gain, we're eyeing up our place in the system and protecting it rather than watching out for our neighbor and for his needs and concerns and for our responsibility for them, not just for ourselves.

It's interesting that this word here watched in verse 8 is the same word that's used in Genesis 4 verse 9 when Cain says to God am I my brother's keeper? Am I my brother's watcher?

[19 : 45] And the answer of course is yes because that is what God made us to be, to love our neighbor as ourself, to watch out for him. But you see we've reversed that as verse 8 says.

We've made it all about watching out for ourselves to make sure that we keep our place in the system at the expense of our fellows if need be. And that's why our world is as it is isn't it?

We're the problem and that's why the world will always be the way it is until until the people of this world can be transformed to be as we're meant to be.

And of course the Bible's utterly realistic about that isn't it? That's not something that can ever be under the sun. That's not something that can ever be ushered in by any particular political agenda whatever color it is or by any ideological dream.

In fact history teaches us doesn't it? That whenever these ideological dreams have been put in motion very quickly they've turned into nightmares. Now you see the ruinous nature of sin is so prevalent in our world it can only ever be sorted by a recreation of the entire universe.

- [21 : 09] The recreation that comes through the redemption in Christ Jesus. And that's the true Christian hope that's what we long for when the Lord Jesus returns.
- But you see for now until then we've got to be realists about this world. Do not be amazed at the way society is. It can't be any other way with the people that it's made up of.
- A people whose foolish hearts are darkened. Who have turned away from the way of righteousness and truth. But we've got to live in this world haven't we?
- While we wait for the new creation. And it's very easy even as believers for us to be drawn into this short-sighted this worldly kind of materialism consumerism.
- I certainly find that I'm sure you do. So powerful isn't it? Just because of the sheer prevalence of consumerism materialism all around us.
- [22 : 11] So the preacher turns here to a critique of materialism so as to warn us away from that path of folly. In verses 10 to 17 look he wants us to see the pain that material consumerism inflicts.
- Wealth he says can be a terrible curse. And notice it's not just a question of how much you have it's a question of how much you want to have and how badly you want it.
- Your desire your love your worship of material consumption. However much or however little you have. verse 10 states the principle materialism will not and cannot ever satisfy.
- He who loves money will not be satisfied with money nor he who loves wealth with his income. Material things cannot satisfy ultimately because they are not ultimate.
- And our deepest appetites are for the ultimate for the eternal. God has put eternity into man's heart. Remember chapter 3 verse 11. And so our hearts can never be satisfied by the merely temporal.
- [23 : 25] And furthermore having material things just awakens in us an insatiable desire for more and more just because we can't get satisfaction in them. But look at how he puts his finger on the truth.
- because of this misplaced appetite looking for satisfaction in the wrong place wealth and consumption will hurt you often whether you have wealth or whether you don't.
- Look at verses 11 to 13 they tell us that riches kept can hurt you. Verse 13 riches were kept by their owner to his hurt. And that sums up verses 11 to 13 which tells us that mammon worship becomes a self-perpetuating religion.
- But it's a dreadfully dissatisfying one. Verse 11 goods increase but so do the consumers. I just think of the lottery winner.
- Immediately they're surrounded aren't they by all the hangers on and the scroungers. Money certainly talks but as one wit said it only ever seems to say goodbye.
- [24 : 40] And that's verse 11. Look all the poor owner can do is watch with his eyes as he becomes a money pipe hosing his wealth away to others who consume it.
- Well many many a successful businessman or woman gets up the ladder in the firm their salary gets bigger their bonuses get bigger but then so do their spouse's clothes budget and their cars and their property and their investments and soon you're paying accountants and tax lawyers watching your stocks and bonds and you can't sleep with all the worry with all the complexity of it all especially when the footsie plummets as it did on Friday with the latest scary end of covid being announced and then soon he's shelling out even more money on private therapy to help him cope with it all and on it goes verse 12 you see the full stomach the satisfaction of the rich will not let him sleep well isn't that our consumer society don't we recognize ourselves to a degree in that even if not in the extreme that's portrayed here most of the ill health in our society today comes from over consumption doesn't it one way or another we can't deny that

Derek Kibner says this we offer an unconscious comment on it by our modern exercise machines and health clubs for it's one of our human absurdities to pour out money and effort just to undo the damage of money and ease he wrote that about 40 years ago by the way long before people shelled out two and a half thousand pounds for a peloton riches are kept all too often by their owners to their hurt and what a contrast that is to verse 12 look the sweet sleep of the laborer whether he eats whether he consumes little or much puts his feet up thanks God for a good day's work whether he's hungry or full he sleeps the sleep of the faithful there you see the consumerist attitude doesn't have that sweet sleep and the thing is it's not just having wealth that hurts you that's your mentality it's a thought of losing your wealth that haunts you as well and that's verses 14 to 17 once you've had material things and by the way it's not just possessions and money is it it's status it's power it's pride in your education or your intellect which you might treasure very greatly for yourself or desire very greatly for your children and a whole host of things once you've had these things very hard to lose them and that thought can haunt your whole life can't it and that often happens look at verse 14 these riches are lost the ESV has in a bad venture but better it's just in the unhappy business the unhappy business of life it's the same phrases in chapter 4 verse 8 he just means the general complexities and the facts of life they can rob us of any material gain that we think that we've accrued in life and life itself will ultimately consume our gain whether that gain is great or small in chapter 4 do you remember he spoke about the lonely miser but here look in verse 14 it's the family man with children but regardless of that verse 15 in the end he too will go naked to the grave as he came from his mother's womb he shall go again naked the wind just blows it all away life will consume all that we have accrued in the end through taxes through losses or through the other great inevitability in life which is death one of the curses of prosperity in our age is that we live longer and then that consumes our wealth the NHS budget only goes one way doesn't it upwards always and it will do forever one politician said recently that Britain is now a health service with a country attached to it well that's right isn't it and individually our wealth drains from us as we'll have to pay for our care bills just as an aging prosperous society will be gradually impoverished by these things that's the unhappy business of life under the sun and when you face that honestly you see if your attitude is all about these things then it's going to haunt you in your life that's what verse 17 is saying puts a dark cloud over the whole of life all his days he eats he consumes in darkness

see reality is painful and that of course is why people collude in fantasy and delusion to hide from the truth that's why no politician will ever reform our NHS or our care system all they will do is kick the can a little bit further down the road far enough that the problem comes when he's out of office just keep the delusion going because we all collude we fill our lives with the now and we banish the future we banish talk of death because if we allowed that reality into our thinking well it can only lead to verse 17 much vexation and sickness and anger as we're haunted by all the thought of the inevitable loss that is to come and that's reality of the pain that an attitude of material consumerism inflicts on us well must we hide from reality is that the only way no says the preacher because it's not the material things themselves that bring pain or indeed that bring pleasure either no it's a matter of our attitudes to them and our appetite for them and that is what really matters and the secret to real consumer satisfaction in this life lies in seeing that and so he puts before us two ways two contrasting attitudes to life for us to consider and the first in verses 18 to 20 is supremely positive he shows us that there can be real pleasure in godly consumption that's the third thing what we what we really need you see is not the material things themselves but verse 19 do you see the power to enjoy literally the power to eat to consume and find joy and that he says is something that comes from god alone verse 19 this is the gift of god the bible's answer to materialism is not asceticism it's not the hair shirt of the hermit or the indian holy man flagellating himself naked now that's the deceitful teaching of demons we saw that a few weeks ago in first timothy four now the bible's answer is godliness indeed it's god himself the power to consume with joy comes from god alone it's his gift verse 19 but you see you can find this gift only only if you're in love with god not in love with mammon with this material world and that's what's good and fitting verse 18 literally fitting beautiful it's the same word as in chapter 3 verse 11 to consume with joy whether you have little or much whether it's the simple things in life of verse 18 food and drink and your daily work or verse 19 the great things in life wealth and possessions what you need in either case is not just the things but it's the power to enjoy them the power to literally consume them to eat them rightly and that is the greatest gift of all that's what will bring real joy to your life whether you've got lots or whether you've only got a little but you see that gift seems so rare doesn't it and that's not because

God is mean or nakedly in giving this gift it's simply because you can't receive this gift from him into hands that are taken up with grasping and consuming the things of this world it's the paradox at the heart of human life you cannot love this world and ever be satisfied in this world only if you love God only if you're detached utterly from the things of this world can you find the real enjoyment the real rejoicing in this world's things that God wants us to have and that way of detachment that way of real satisfaction is not in revering material things looking to them for what they can never give to us finding significance in these things nor by contrast is it rejecting all of these things as wrong in themselves some Christians can be very perverse about that they can think well if I really love something then God must be against it or if I really want to do this thing in my life then it must be not the right thing for me no no no that's totally perverse we're not to revere this world's pleasures as God but we're not to reject them either as anti-God no what are we to do we're to receive all that

[35 : 12] God presents us with with rejoicing second half of verse 19 look again accept our lot accept our reward is the word and rejoice in our toil our work because this is the gift of God to us that's the secret that's the key to living life to the very fullest satisfaction verse 20 not always preoccupied with life's worries and cares because God keeps us occupied with joy in our hearts and the good gifts that he has given us that's exactly in line isn't it with the new testament teaching we saw that in first sympathy in first sympathy four to six Paul tells Timothy that everybody enters life and leaves this world naked just as here he warns about the dangers of craving for things of this world he says that causes many people to wonder away from the truth but he tells

Timothy as an answer to that not to be ascetic but to be detached to receive God's good gifts with thanksgiving he tells us that God has given us every good gift to enjoy including meat and marriage and procreation the things that some wanted to prescribe as they do today but you'll only find that joy says Paul if your hope is not set on these earthly things but it's set on God himself and ultimate things it's just the same as what the preacher is saying here it's when our hearts are most fixed on eternal treasures that we're most liberated to enjoy to enjoy the real joy of God's good gifts in this passing world because we've learned to be satisfied with joy and with thanksgiving even in the incomplete satisfaction that this world's things can give us never more and if we can get a hold of that friends that really will transform our lives it will will be able to truly rejoice in the incompletely satisfying things of this world like our jobs like our marriages like our family situation and our church life and our bank balances and our pension pot and all these other things but so often we don't do we we want something better just that bit more but the reality is it's not better jobs better relationships and better marriages and better things that we need it's greater power to enjoy what God has already given us isn't that right and if we don't have that then sadly however much we have all will ever be is what verses 1 to 7 of chapter 6 picture for us which is a total contrast isn't it to the real pleasure of godly consumption it's the real poverty of what is in the end just godless consumption verse 1 an evil says the preacher which lies heavy or better which is common among mankind people who seem to have everything and yet it's not a blessing it's a curse verse 2 a grievous evil because they don't have power to enjoy it you lack the power literally to eat or consume in a way that does bring satisfaction so verse 2 you see you can have wealth and possessions and honor you can have real status real identity in this world but without the gift that only god can give do you see it's just vanity it's a grievous evil and that gift you see isn't automatic it's all dependent on our desire either our real desire is for god himself and therefore we will be satisfied whatever we have on this earth whether it's great or small or actually our real desire is just for god's gifts and then we'll never be satisfied however many gifts he does give us which of those attitudes describes me which of those attitudes

I wonder really describes you I think our prayers are probably a good clue how often do we pray asking for god to give us things or do things for us compared to how often we ask god to give us contentment even if we don't get any of the things that we're asking for I think often when Christians feel let down by god disappointed in god or feel in a way so god has failed them somehow the problem is it's not god who's in the wrong it's us and actually we're not worshipping a real god at all we're just worshipping a false idol of our own making of consumerism to feed our consumerism that's not just a novelty of the modern church of course all through the bible you see god's people setting up idols deceiving themselves disguising what is really just crass consumerism as if it were true faith but just see the sheer poverty of that verse 3 look you can have in answer to your prayers all the blessings of life a great long life children galore a hundred of them goodness but if you can't be truly satisfied if you haven't learned the real secret in life in knowing the eternal god and living in his presence throughout life for eternal gain then you've got nothing he says verses 3 and 4 a stillborn child is better than you although it's nameless although verse 5 he doesn't see a single day of life the light of the sun or verse 6 even the opposite in fact even if you do live twice times a thousand years yet your eyes haven't been open to enjoy or literally you'll see as the footnote says to see the good that is to see the great eternal reality that alone will give meaning to everything if your eyes haven't been open to see that you've got nothing in your twice a thousand years of life listen to that by the way mr.

billionaire trying to find the secret of everlasting life in the end look all go to one place to the grave even if it's a twice a thousand year life and the sad reality is friends if you haven't found contentment in life you won't find it in death a discontented life just ends in a discontented death verse 7 all the toil of man is for his mouth consumption and yet his appetite is not satisfied literally it is unfilled that's the poverty you see of godless consuming and you know that there are Christians sadly who in the end discover that they have just been living their life for the most part seeking just earthly satisfaction only never to find it and dying sad and bitter and disappointed people it's tragic and the preacher is saying to us it needn't be like that it needn't be like that look at verses 8 and 9 we don't need to be like the fool we can be like the wise man notice verse 8 however poor he might be he can be a poor man but a very wise man because you see it's not about wealth is it it is about wisdom it's about knowing how to conduct yourself you see literally to walk through life the land of the living here on earth and verse 9 shows the vast gulf that there is between the way of wisdom and the way of folly between the way of true faith and that which is just the way of a self-deceived materialist underneath it all better says the preacher do you see is the sight of the eyes that is seeing the good the enjoyment in what you have same as in verse 6 same as in chapter 5 verse 18 and having power to enjoy to consume whether you have little or much power to enjoy with joy and thanksgiving the power of a contented attitude whatever you have content with whatever God does give to you or with whatever God withholds now in this life because we're living with an eternal horizon because we see and we long for what is above the sun and so we're liberated to be satisfied now with what may be very incomplete in this life that's the power of a contented attitude in life and far better that says the preacher than the opposite you see verse 9 the wandering of the appetite the opposite of the contented attitude is a consumerist attitude and appetite always seeking always chasing worshipping satisfaction now in this world's things and this world's terms but alas you see the one who desires that kind of satisfaction and lives for it will never be satisfied will never find it preacher says it's vanity striving after wind so there's only two ways to live the real wisdom of faith or the sheer folly of sin that's the choice always isn't it before us but here's the question can we really do anything about that ourselves because the preacher says here doesn't it the power to know this contentment

this joyous satisfaction this he says is the gift of God so how can we choose something that is not in our power to give or to have and it's true the preacher is right the key to life and eternity is God's gift and God's alone but you see the wonder of the Christian message is that the Bible tells us that our God is a giving God and that he will give to everyone who asks him to give as we close listen to the preacher the one to whom everything this preacher says points to God himself speaking in the flesh in Jesus Christ to everyone who will hear him listen to what he says ask and it will be given to you seek and you will find knock and the door will be opened to you for everyone who asks receives and the one who seeks finds and to the one who knocks it will be opened that's the promise of God to you and to me whether you're a long-term follower of

[47 : 44] Jesus Christ or whether you're just encountering him for the very first time seek first says Jesus the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you the power to consume to enjoy to live life in the joy of all goods gifts now if you ask the Lord Jesus Christ to fill your heart with the joy of his kingdom he will always and then you will see that that is the secret to real satisfaction in this world and in the eternal world forever and ever amen let's pray together everyone to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them and to accept his lot his reward 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 and so God who has prepared for them that love thee such good things as past man's understanding pour into our heart such love toward thee that we loving thee above all things may obtain thy promises which exceed all that we can desire through Jesus Christ our Lord amen