

Ecclesiastes 6:7-12 - Two Special Gifts: Wisdom and Reality

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: I am not sure what your most expensive gifts were this past December – if you bought any or if you received any really expensive gifts. But I wished someone could have bought me two really good gifts that I really need: wisdom and reality. We could all use these two gifts... gifts that don't break, need batteries, or get tossed aside when new things come next year, and the warranty is for eternity. But since these gifts are not sold in stores and they did not come under your tree, you will hear from God's Words how special these gifts are, how you should desire them, and how you are able get them – for free.

Our headings are: **Wisdom is Better than Money**, and **Reality is Better than Dreaming**.

Our goals are: That **you learn, as those with a heavenly inheritance, to desire the better gifts and pursue those better gifts that come to you for free through the sacrifice of Jesus for sins.**

Wisdom is Better than Money

7 All the labor of man is for his mouth, And yet the soul is not satisfied.

1. Most people enjoy eating so they might spend a lot of their hard-earned money and travel long distances for food. And because selling food is so financially profitable, millions of people teach others to cook. Some people's job is simply to critique评论 foods so people know which restaurant is worth the money. And knowing that people would spend their hard-earned money on interesting new foods, there are people who spend their entire lives making up new recipes. You need food for life. But eating is a most basic pleasure for most of mankind. This is why Solomon used "food" to represent all the pleasures of this world that you can buy with money.

2. The problem is that no food, as good as it might be, satisfies the soul. No caviar 鱼子酱, or cream cheese, or coffee comforts the soul. No soup, salad, or sandwich satisfies the soul. On the contrary, there were men with satisfied souls who had no fancy foods. Elijah was contented 满意 with plain cakes and water, Elisha was contented with wild plants, Daniel was contented with vegetables, John the Baptist was contented with locust and wild honey. Even Martin Luther was satisfied with a couple of herrings. These men ate to live; they did not live to eat. And yet, with little money, their souls were satisfied...very satisfied. Foods go to the stomach, but not to the soul.

1 Timothy 6:8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

Proverbs 30:8 Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches--Feed me with the food allotted to me;

3. But Solomon was not only speaking of man working for food. No. Solomon only used food because it is the most common desire in man to satisfy his stomach. The truth is, man tries to buy all kinds of other things to satisfy his human desires. What are other things that man could purchase with hard-earned money to satisfy his human desires?

a. He works hard so he can get money...because he thinks he can get a prettier wife.

b. He works hard so he can get money because he wants to buy the toys he wants...and I am talking of grown men...the boats, the cars, the tools, the phone...the electronics...the clothes...

c. He works hard so he can get money to buy his way into the upper echelons of society...or to buy friends...and get famous...

d. He works hard so he can retire young and enjoy his time doing fun things.

e. He works hard so he can have the best house in the neighborhood...or maybe a 2nd house...or a cottage.

All of these things are emotional foods that cost a lot. Jesus warned about be bogged down by worldly cares...

Luke 21:34 "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing 狂饮, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.

4. The reality is that in spite of all of the wealth a man may have in this world his soul is never satisfied. Food does not satisfy his soul and neither does the prettier wife, the big man's toys, his positions in society, his free time, and his big house. He wants to satisfy the appetite of his soul but finds that he can't do it with cash. The foolish man says: You give me money and I will be happy. What he means is he can buy temporary pleasures with his money. He can enjoy a good steak, or enjoy comfortable clothes, or a nice boat, or get important people to notice him, but all of that soon passes. He has to keep getting money to satisfy these desires...and often it is a better steak, a prettier wife...a nicer boat...

8 For what more has the wise man than the fool? What does the poor man have, Who knows how to walk before the living?

5. To further explain the futility of trying to buy satisfaction with money, Solomon pointed out that the rich man (the so-called "wise man") doesn't have much more than the poor man. For example: The poor man doesn't worship less. The poor

man also has love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. He is a member of the same church. He has the same heavenly Father. And in fact, when a man is wealthy he often loses interest in these gifts from God's Holy Spirit. Further, most rich people are less generous proportion 比例 wise than a godly poor person...even though the rich can afford to be more generous. Often rich people tend to become arrogant 傲慢 and not care how they live in front of others. So in a way – a way that really matters to the Lord, the poor man may actually be richer than the man who is rich by this world's standards. By godly living – which is wisdom, the godly shows he is better than the rich who only has money a little godliness. Wisdom is therefore better than money. But don't look under the Christmas Tree for it. Look to the one who died on the Tree of Life.

Reality is Better than Dreaming

9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.

1. Some people have desires for things that don't belong to them. They covet 垂涎 another man's wife, his money, his position, his influence, etc. When they do that they go into an eerie world of sin. Their minds wander, they are deceived, and they lust for things which they cannot have or things that don't belong to them. So Solomon here warns them that it is futile 无用的 to have wandering desires – wasting time desiring things they cannot have. It is grasping for the wind.

2. On the contrary, Solomon teaches that the man who is contented with what he has in front of him – what he sees with his eyes - is better off than the man with the wandering desires – the luster. He is contented with who he is. He is Mr. Contented. He takes the writer of Hebrews seriously. Hebrews 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

10 Whatever one is, he has been named already, For it is known that he is man; And he cannot contend with Him who is mightier than he.

3. This man who faces reality knows the limits of his ability: He is mortal and he is miserable. He is a mere man – not a god. He follows God's Word which constantly reminds him of his mortal and miserable nature. Adam forgot and wanted to be like God, so God now gives you many reminders in the Bible. To try to be God or to fight with God is futile. Consider some of these warnings:

Isaiah 31:3 Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; And their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out His hand, Both he who helps will fall, And he who is helped will fall down; They all will perish together.

Psalms 9:20 Put them in fear, O LORD, That the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah

Psalms 82:7 But you shall die like men, And fall like one of the princes."

Ezekiel 28:2 "Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, `Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because your heart is lifted up, And you say, `I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, In the midst of the seas,' Yet you are a man, and not a god, Though you set your heart as the heart of a god...8 They shall throw you down into the Pit, And you shall die the death of the slain In the midst of the seas. 9 "Will you still say before him who slays you, `I am a god'? But you shall be a man, and not a god, In the hand of him who slays you.

4. What must man's response then be to this knowledge that he is limited by his nature and by God's decrees? Man must therefore not to complain about what comes from God hand. Man knows if he is poor and must live within his means. He spends what he has...and nothing more. He does not go into debt. He doesn't promise what he cannot deliver to his wife and children. And he is at peace. (This doesn't mean that he won't work hard. It simply means he knows where he is limited by God and by his abilities.) There is a tendency to look for heroes. Men often dream of being great – greater than all the rest. Women often look for the Knight in Shining Armor. They become lost in a fantasy world. In other words, the wise man knows who he is and what he knows and doesn't live in a fantasy world. He rejects wandering in his mind for riches, for strength, or for power and authority, and he accepts what God has given to him in life. He does not fight against God – as the covetous person does.

Job 9:3 *If one wished to contend with Him, He could not answer Him one time out of a thousand.* 4 God is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who has hardened himself against Him and prospered?

Job 33:12 "Look, in this you are not righteous. I will answer you, For God is greater than man. 13 Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give an accounting of any of His words.
Romans 9:19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"
20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?"

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

5. Because the good man faces reality, he can enjoy his days in tranquility. He is not better by dreaming of getting more. The good man seeks for better things which are only found in Christ. Only Christ satisfies the needs of his soul. Aren't you glad that Christ has called you as his own? On the other hand, in V11, you see that the man who covets is not better off. His vanity hurts him.

12 For who knows what is good for man in life, all the days of his vain life which he passes like a shadow?...

6. Ultimately, man of himself does not know what is best for him. This is why it is foolish to let your mind dream about things that you cannot have. Let me illustrate: Are riches better for you personally? Many have destroyed themselves with riches. Is poverty better for you personally? Many have used poverty to do evil... Isn't poverty what the communist used to rob the rich? So it is easier to be contented with what God has given to you – accept your lot in life.

12 ...Who can tell a man what will happen after him under the sun?

7. Further, the man facing reality knows these days don't last forever. He knows that life is but a shadow that soon passes away. He knows that at any moment he can die. So he spends his time doing things that are meaningful...living life like it might be his last day. He is not mean to his wife. He spends time with his children. He worships regularly. He thinks about what to say when someone cuts him off on the road. He is kind to the cashier who can't count change to save her life. When the snow ploughs push the snow from the road on his driveway he doesn't get a stroke screaming at the driver. He knows only God controls the future. Even animals could predict earthquakes and tsunamis. But no man is able to predict life – which is often filled with vanity, brevity, and uncertainty. If you do not believe in Christ, you have good reason to be depressed.

Conclusion:

First, wisdom is infinitely better than money. Money might provide some joys for your belly and joys for your brain, but those things fade like the sunshine in the evening. Wisdom makes you please God and wisdom causes you to save up heavenly things for the future... Second, accepting what you have is better than lusting for things that you do not have. It is better to be content with that which God has given you than to follow after desires that can never be satisfied.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Only those who have been transformed by the work of Jesus Christ – those who have been saved by faith in Christ's life and death- can accept the sovereignty of God, that he his gives riches and poverty to whomever he pleases. Only those who have been transformed by the work of Jesus Christ and trained in truth are able to fight against the desires to lust...and fight against the desires of becoming pre-occupied with the simple pleasures of this life that are purchased with money. Only those who have been transformed by the work of Jesus Christ and know the wealth you already have are able to labor for eternal treasures where moth and rust do not destroy. Praise God you are in Christ.

Finally, fighting against God's purposes in life is like an animal hanging with a noose around his neck: the more he wriggles, the more worse off he is. If you have been fighting God's purposes, stop. Surrender. It is the only way you can enjoy God's blessing in this life and in the life to come. It is the only way you can be saved from the fires of hell.