

**Sermon - 10/19/2024 - The 22nd Week After Pentecost**

**Text: Ecclesiastes 5:10-20**

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

**THE EVIL SICKNESS OR THE GIFT OF GOD?**

You may have heard of the old adage, **“The love of money is the root of all evil.”**) This is a quote from the Scriptures in 1 Timothy 6:10. Money in itself is not the issue, but the love of money truly is the issue. Our reading from Ecclesiastes truly exemplifies this one verse even further, or rather this verse summarizes this passage since Ecclesiastes came before the first letter to Timothy. Solomon writes Ecclesiastes in his old age and begins from experience by saying, **“He who loves money will not be satisfied with money and he who loves abundance will not be satisfied with income; this too is vanity.”** That word vanity is one which we are not as familiar with in general. It refers to an excessive pride which leads only to a truly worthless feeling in us. That worthlessness falls in direct contrast with the money and abundance, yet they are still together so that the person who loves money will also be filled with worthlessness and they will never be satisfied. Solomon continues, **“When goods increase, they increase the consumption, so what profit does the owner have except to look at it with his eyes.”** The deep root of the love of money and the worthlessness to which they lead is ever-increasing so that no amount of money would be able to satisfy the amount that is consumed. Indeed, when goods increase, the only profit that could be

achieved is that you are able to look at your goods and wealth. The amount that someone looks at his wealth then causes certain issues. As Ecclesiastes continues, **“Sweet is the sleep of a working man whether he eats little or much, but the satiety of a rich man will cause his restful sleep to come to nought.”** A man who works hard to earn his money will sleep sweetly no matter how much he is able to eat.

However, the man who is full in belly or in abundance of good will have his restful sleep slip away and come to nought. Not even could his sleep satisfy the desires of his heart. So what are the desires of his heart? Solomon once more shines light on the state of man here as well; saying, **“There is an evil sickness under the sun which I have seen; wealth, being kept by its owner toward his own evilness.”** This reminds me of a specific movie. In the Hobbit movie trilogy: The Desolation of Smaug, when the Dwarvish king named Thorin begins to go mad with dragon sickness. He is paranoid that someone has stolen his greatest jewel and treasure and seems to never rest. He is then confronted with either war or give to the people who helped him a fare share of the abundant so that they may not live in poverty. Thorin chose war and even says something that the dragon had said about the treasure. He said, “On my life, I will not part with a single gold coin. Not one piece of it.” The director even uses the voice of the dragon during this line as Thorin said this.

When you love money this much, it is truly an evil sickness. Yet, this evil sickness is not just part of our love of money, it goes down within each of us to the core so that we each are infected by a similar evil sickness against which we would rather lose sleep or fight rather than give up our specific and evil sickness. However, the issue underlying our own evil sickness is that it does not only impact each of us individually. Those closest to us are often hurt. The one who loves wealth will escalate his addiction until he begins taking huge risks with his wealth and with his life until he loses everything so that he is not even able to give one coin to his son whom he begets. This is how Solomon by the Holy Spirit chose to write the condemnation against the man with the great love of money. It was consuming him and making him lose sight of the needs of those closest to him. Families are impacted by those specific evil sicknesses which we all have. Yet, know that you are not able to take your money with you into heaven and the only profit you will have gained is attempting to grasp the air with your hand on a windy day.

Whatever your evil sickness is in your life, it is that which Solomon writes that it eats in darkness and causes **“vexation and sickness and wrath.”** If you ever find yourself trying to avoid family so that you can do something else that is not necessary, then maybe you have an evil sickness that you feed in the darkest and loneliest places. If you find that you are anxious to the point that you cannot sleep

because you would rather do something else, then the evil sickness has taken hold of you. If you become sick because you attempt to stop an addiction, then it is called withdrawal. It is the effect of partaking in something that is detrimental to both you, your health, and likely the lives of anyone around you. Finally, if you have an irritation that is easily triggered into wrath, then your evil sickness has clung closely to your flesh and engaged your fight or flight response to defend your own sluggish and evil desires.

However, I want to give you hope and the Gospel message just as Solomon did in verse 18, **“Here is what I myself have seen, it is good, that which is beautiful; namely for one to eat to drink and to look at the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life...”** Yet, we may ask at this point how this is good and beautiful or different from that which the man who loved money did, for he too looked at his wealth. However, this new and changed man is different for in regards to wealth he acknowledges that God gave him all, so he rejoices in what he has whether it is much or little. And the reason behind this is that God Himself is that man’s portion. To be able to recognize this is a true gift of God, **“For he will not remember how much he makes in the days of his life because God causes him to be occupied with the joy of his heart.”**

Certainly, God indeed is the portion of all Christians throughout the world. We do not separate from other people to feed our evil sickness in darkness. We do

become easily angered or engage in activities which will cause a sickness or a hangover, nor do we let our lives be controlled by an action that cause us great anxiety so that we lose sleep. Instead, let us recognize every gift and blessing that God has given to us and let us treasure those things dearly. In fact, more precious than all the wealth in the world is the holy and precious blood of Christ shed for you on the cross. Christ is truly your portion in the very body and blood of Christ for forgiveness of your sins, and that wealth which we receive as a result is a wealth more precious than gold or jewels. It is a wealth which shall not see corruption. Therefore, if this wealth of life and salvation are truly your treasure, do whatever it takes to safeguard your salvation as St. Matthew says, **“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Amen.**