

INTRODUCTION:

1. [Image] In 2002, a West Virginian building contractor named Andrew Jackson Wittaker Jr won the Powerball lottery. His prize was \$315 million dollars, which was the largest amount someone had won at that time. Jack rarely played the lottery because he was the president of his construction company and was already worth \$17 million dollars. But even after taxes, his winnings were \$113 million. He quickly tithed 10% to church, donated millions to charity, gave the cashier who sold him the winning ticket \$43,000, and drove through his neighborhood throwing cash out the window. Despite his generosity and knowledge of how to handle millions, he eventually lost it all. He was repeatedly robbed. His granddaughter was murdered and they never found who did it. He was sued by a Casino for bouncing checks. His daughter died under weird circumstances. His house burned down, but it was uninsured. Within four years he had lost everything.

2. [Need] As good Christians we might say that money can't buy happiness. We even know that when we die it all stays here. And yet most of us would still like a chance at winning the lottery to see if we could handle it better than Jack. Because deep down all of us love money. To varying degrees of course. You might object and say that you don't, but I don't think anyone in our church has taken a vow of poverty. We do still love it even though we know it doesn't satisfy us.

3. [Subject] This morning we are going to talk a lot about wealth. Our journey in Ecclesiastes has us pondering how we spend our lives in light of our coming death. So this morning my primary question for us is do you love money or Jesus? We all know how to say the right answer, but I am not sure we know how to live the right answer.

4. [Text] Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:12

5. [Preview] We will talk about two dangers of loving money and then we will look to Jesus.

Loving money destroys others and ourselves. Money destroys others and ourselves.

This is one of the first dangers of money and wealth.
It does just disappear when you die,
It actually harms you and others right now.
It promises to make your life easier, but it kills.

Loving money and wealth often go hand in hand.
You typically don't have lots of something unless you love it.
My love for books is revealed by how full my bookshelves are.
The more that we collect and hoard our money,
the more we prove our love for it.

But this love for money destroys.
First it destroys others.

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 are yet higher ones over them."**

He tells us that if we see the poor being oppressed.
If we see poor people being locked up because they couldn't afford a good lawyer, while the rich go free.
If we see stories like Brett Farve and other government figures stealing from welfare programs designed to care for the poor so they can build sports stadiums.

If we justice and righteousness violated.
If we see stories of people abandoning the Bible and God's ways because they don't like it.
If we see stories of pastors and religious figures violating the righteousness that they claim to preach by abusing people.

When we see all these things.
"do not be amazed at the matter."

I just love the brutal honesty of this book.

Solomon just says "Duh what did you expect?"

When you see people destroying each other for money don't be shocked.

This is normal.

This is the world.

And he goes to explain "**for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them.**"

There is sin and injustice everywhere because of greed.

The people in charge and in power are greedy.

They are allowing injustice and oppression because it lines their pockets.

And this watching out for one another is not positive, but negative.

They are watching out to protect each other.

Each higher official is watching the official below them

They're watching them to make sure that they can still get their money.

They want to make sure that those below them don't step out of line and slow down the flow of money into their pockets

Verse 9 "**But this is gain for a land in every way: a king committed to cultivated fields.**"

I think this verse is a proverb

It is saying how different it is when the highest authority is not driven by a love of money but is committed to the land

He is committed to the good of others.

Because whenever greed and the love of money drive our leaders it filters all the way down and it destroys us.

The love of money and wealth destroys society.

We see this all the time don't we?

We see this when businesses cut Corners in order to make as much money as possible.

They remind us they make a much worse product as long as they can make more money.

Or in the way a business will underpay its workers so that the executives can get a bigger bonus

It doesn't just destroy society and others it also destroys ourselves
Primarily it destroys our ability to be satisfied.

The promise of having enough money or wealth

Is it that it's going to feel good once you get it.

Once you see that number on your checks,

Once your salary gifts that many zeros each year,

Once your retirement account is that number.

Then you'll be satisfied.

Then you will feel rich and wealthy and content.

But we are warned

Verse 10 **"He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity."**

It never works.

You can love money and wealth all you want

but it will never love you back.

If you love and want money you will never have enough.

You will never make enough money.

You will never hold enough in your hands.

It is vanity and vaporous.

We are like dogs chasing our tails.

Or greyhounds chasing that metallic rabbit they are never going to catch.

Verse 11 **"When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes?"**

The goods increasing is your wealth and your money.
Simply put "the more money you have the more money you spend."

When your income goes up so do your taxes and cost of living.
You make more money and think that maybe I can get out of renting now
while buy a house that is going to satisfy.
Sure you aren't paying a rental company or landlord now.
But now you pay the plumber in the handyman when things break because
your bills have gone up.

You buy a bigger house in a bigger car but now you have a bigger gas bill
pay more on utilities.

For now you have more extra income so you go out to eat more.
This is why it says what advantage is it?
See that there are some more zeros there, at least before they go away
6:1 **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 honor, 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.**

Someone can have all of the wealth that they could possible imagine.
But it will not satisfy.
They will not be able to enjoy it.
There is no amount of money you can find that will scratch your itch.

Verse 12 **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.**

Loving wealth will destroy our ability to rest.
The promise of wealth is that it will bring you freedom and goodness,
But instead, it only brings a heavy burden on your back.

So if you lay awake late at night worrying,
Plotting about how you can get more.

It isn't that the poor don't worry.

Is that those who are not in love with money and wealth still can find rest.
And I don't think it is just that loving money will affect your sleep.
While that is absolutely true.

More significantly loving money affects your ability to enter into the
Sabbath rest of Jesus.

Following Jesus is an easy burden where his yoke is light.

It is the place where we can find true rest for our souls.

But you will never enter into the rest of Jesus

If you are serving a different master.

Money destroys.

6:3 "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."

6:4 "For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered."

6:5 "Moreover, it has not seen the sun or known anything, yet it finds rest rather than he."

6:6 "Even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no good—do not all go to the one place?"

He compares two people in 6:3-6.

First, he talks about a man with 100 children.

In the ancient world that's true wealth and prosperity.

Because the man with 100 children,
his name is going to live on.
He will have a legacy and a dynasty.
And he lives a long prosperous life.

He contrasts this to a stillborn child.
For those of you who have miscarried, had a stillbirth, we're lost children
this metaphor might have been a little painful for you.
It was for me the first time that I read it.

Because a child that does not survive is a great tragedy.
Like many of you are I seen the news of the three-year-old in our
community who was murdered.
As I read to obituary I'd still in my kitchen weeping not because I have any
connection to the family but because it's a horror.

With these verses are trying to tell us is not that the death for the stillbirth
of children is a glorious good.
He is using an extreme example to make a c if there is a deeper tragedy in
front of our face all the time.

We are meant to picture the person who has it all.
The person with a loving family and beautiful children.
The CEO of a company that they started all by themselves and climb to
the top.
Even though they were born in a log cabin there now a billionaire.
The one who is everything that they could imagine yet his soul is not
satisfied.

Solomon says that's also a tragedy.
Did we should look at lists of the most wealthy and the rich and weep for
them.
And they couldn't find all of the newest medical technology and live for a
thousand years,

what are monies will not satisfy them and they will still die.

But the unborn children find rest.
Not in the Sun
Or in fancy toys and song,
but they find rest in satisfaction in Jesus.

The wealthy and rich are not people to envy but to weep for.
Because they will never be satisfied.

6:7 "All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied."

We will never be satisfied by money because our appetites always grow.

The love of wealth is like a parasite or a tapeworm that attaches itself to your stomach and you gain and you get you work harder thinking that it is going to feel you

The only thing you are feeding is the parasite that's growing larger and larger while you grow hungrier and hungrier never understanding why you don't have enough.

We don't have time to hit all the verses in chapter 6.
They all follow this theme.
Wealth destroys us.

Verse 8 what does it matter if you are wise with money, or dumb with it?
Because we all going to die and you can't take it with you.

[Transition] The tragedy of loving money is that it won't last.

Our third point is that **The money we love will fade. The money we love will fade.**

This is the universal truth that all of us know.
We know that we cannot take wealth with us.
You might be able to get enough money to create generational wealth for your children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren.
But you'll never take any money with you.
It fades and it does not last.

Solomon begins by using the example of a man's investments

5:13 *There is a grievous evil that I have 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 he has nothing in his hand.*

He describes somebody who has riches.
He has a lot of will and means and so he invests them.
Because that's what people who have lots of money do I just find ways to invest that money to make even more money.

But unfortunately all of those riches were lost.
Doesn't seem like he just didn't get a good return on his investment.
It's not that he's lost a little bit but if he holds out on it'll come back.
All of those riches are lost and gone.

And even though this man is a father and has children to support
He has lost all of his wealth and has nothing in his hands.

It is not just that all of our money will fade one day when we die.
It is also that your money can fade today.
It can all disappear quickly.

Even if you're smart and wise and try and do all of the right things.
You follow all of the advice.
You save your money and have an emergency fund

You invested so they can get good returns

But it can still all disappear and leave you with nothing.

One bad medical diagnosis can wipe out all your money even if you have what you think is good insurance.

One accident could leave you disabled and unable to work.

A Pandemic can come.

A recession or depression can wipe out the nation's economy.

Natural disasters can come and steal everything you have.

Like the many people in Florida lost their homes, lost their businesses, lost much of their riches.

We can try and be wise and have insurance,

We can do our best to be prepared in case of disaster.

The insurance company could still deny your claim

And all of your riches can fade away.

I've experienced this a little bit.

Earliest I can connect with this example of a man losing everything.

The few times that I have tried to invest money it's going poorly.

And I think I'm fairly financially savvy.

I'm good with money and we're fairly wise for expenses and how much we save.

And we saved a lot so I thought you know Brianna I've been reading, trying to learn, and it seems like we should be investing some of our money.

We need to start saving and investing for retirement good for our children to help pay for school.

So instead of just letting a lot of our money save and sit in the bank we should invest it so that can help us.

Now every time I've done that the nation's economy has collapsed not long after.

So don't come to me for financial advice on how to get more wealth.

I clearly do not know what I'm doing.

If I've mentioned to you that I recently invested some money it'd probably be a good idea for you to take yours out.

But it just makes me laugh.

Because you can do all of the right things.

You can follow all of the right Financial steps.

And your money still will fade.

It will disappear like dust in the wind

5:15 "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."

If for some reason your money doesn't fade while you're still breathing it will all fade when you go into the ground.

Like Job, all of us came into the world naked

And we will leave it with nothing.

There is nothing they can put in your casket or in your urn.

Nothing that our loved ones can clothe us in or put in our hands.

All of our riches and wealth will stay here.

Then our families will fight over it.

The government or the bank might come and collect on our debt

Some will go to pay the expenses because dying is not cheap.

Then whatever is left we get sold for pennies or thrown in a fire.

But wherever any of it goes it's not going with you.

5:16 **"This also is a grievous evil: just as he came, so shall he go, and what gain is there to him who toils for the wind?"**

This is why Solomon asks what gain is there?

What is the point of living your life trying to get money?

What can a few more stacks of green paper bring you?

What can a few more ones and zeros when a computer screen do for your soul?

Nothing. Money fades.

This is described as being this evil

Because human beings destroy each other for dust that fades.

We sacrifice our families in our lives for the wind.

Vanity Vanity.

Meaningless meaningless.

Vaporous.

Trying to hold on to riches is like trying to hold on to handfuls of sand in a tornado.

It's all going to fly away you can't keep it.

But it is not just a waste of our time,

Instead it destroys our souls.

5:17 **"Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger."**

He repeats himself again here in 17.

Those who are striving after the wind we'll only find vexation and sickness and anger.

It'll eat you up from the inside out.

Pencil picture of a miserable troll eating alone in the dark.

And a place devoid of all light and love.

That is where the love of money will leave all of us.

[Transition] It will destroy others and then yourself is it fades away and it's everything that is good and godly about you fades. But how can we resist?

Our love for Jesus should change how we love money. Our love for Jesus should change how we love money.

Jesus warned us in Matthew 6 that we can't serve two masters.
We will either love Jesus or love money.
We will either love God or love our wealth.
We cannot do both.

We love money because of what we think it can give us.
We believe that it will provide for us.
We believe that it will give us safety and security.
We believe that it will bring us satisfaction.
We believe that it will give us joy.

But it can't.
Only Jesus can.

5:18 "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."

Now, this does not just mean that we should love a little money instead of being greedy.

It means that our love for God should change and impact how we view our possessions and all that we have.

5:19 "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."

We should recognize that what we have is a gift from God.
It is not god.
It cannot satisfy our hearts, only God can.

And following Jesus satisfies.

I love the classic line from st. Augustine 4th Century North African church father "our hearts are restless until they find rest in you."

Notice the difference in verse 19 compared to 6:2.

The power to even enjoy and be content with what we have is God-given.
You cannot do that yourself.

5:20 **"For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart."**

God is the one who can give our hearts joy.

You can either love money or Jesus.

And there was only one of those who can actually restore us and satisfy us without fading away.

And that's Jesus.

He told the woman at the well that he has the water of everlasting life
Those who drink of it will never thirst again.

Those who drink from the well of riches and money will keep having a drink and drink and drink and drink and drink until their stomachs explode.

But those who ran to Jesus will be satisfied.

They will find true Joy and everlasting peace.

Loving Jesus changes the way that we love everything else.

Your love for Christ must transform the way that you feel about wealth and riches.

The restoration and satisfaction of Jesus are eternal.
While money fades, decays, and depreciates, a life lived for Jesus is the best investment.

There's no place you can invest your money here now that will last.
But we can invest our lives in Christ and live forever.

The hope of the Gospel in the resurrection of Jesus it's not just that when we die we will get to live again.
It is also that our life now spent and love of Jesus.
Spent obeying Jesus and following Jesus.

Everything we do even in the small moments of just being content with what we are given will reap Eternal Rewards.
Not because of us but because of the grace of Christ.

So practically how can we do this? How can we love Jesus instead of our money?

One of the big ways that we can do this is by giving our money away.
We don't talk about money a lot here at Tanglewood.
I don't know how to preach a sermon on this passage without talking about it though.

One of the marks of Christians throughout the New Testament is that they are generous people.

The Rich Young Ruler was supposed to give away everything he had.
When Zacchaeus repented and followed Jesus he gave away much of his wealth to the poor and to those he had wronged.
The disciples left their jobs and all riches behind to follow Jesus.

Those early believers sold what they have been distributed it to those who were in need.

Even the poorest churches take up collections for believers in a famine.

A good spiritual practice is regular generosity.

And not just giving from your excess but giving continually.

Giving in a way that keeps you from becoming wealthy.

Giving in a way that takes away from your fund money and extra spending.

One way to do that is by tithing giving to a local church.

But we should also give other places.

We should give when we know they're people in need in our community or in our church family.

We should give to too many of the wonderful nonprofits that serve the needy in our community.

I knew one couple that decided early in their marriage to increase the percentage of their giving every year.

Instead of getting more things, bigger houses, nicer cars, they were more generous.

And by the time they were getting ready to retire they were giving half of what they owned away.

Not because they were rich, they were an ordinary couple.

But because they loved Jesus more than anything on this earth.

That isn't the only way we should live, but we must live in a way that makes it clear Jesus is our master, not money.

CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] The love of money destroys others and ourselves. It will all fade either before you die or after. And your love for Jesus should change your love for money.
2. [Challenge] Do you love money or do you love Jesus? Because if you love Jesus it should change everything.