

Ecclesiastes 5.8 – 7.14

Better Off Dead?



PAINTING – Quentin Massys’s “The Money Lender and His Wife”

Husband & Wife Sitting Together at their TABLE

He is Examining his COINS – She TRYING to Read DEVOTIONAL Book

BOTH Husband and Wife TURN Away from God to FOCUS ON MONEY

Looks like Me when Try to Read Bible when Smart Phone within REACH

1. Problem with Money

a. People Take it Away

1) Oppressive Government

v. 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.

WATCHED – Surveillance? CCTV Cameras? Or PROTECTING? Watch Out

“Unless there is some Solomon to exhort and console him, government crushes the man, extinguishes him, and utterly destroys him.” Martin Luther

REALISTIC about LIFE in the FALLEN World

WHY should we NOT be Surprised by All this INJUSTICE

INJUSTICE from STRUCTURES of Society:

Oppression & Injustice at Every Level

POOR People always get the WORST End of the Bargain

We see the gospel as primarily rescuing us from hell and getting us to heaven. We have lost sight of “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” John M. Perkins

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

KING is Part of the PROBLEM – NOT the Solution – Claimed Profits of LAND
BEST Gov’t – has CHECKS & BALANCES – because Know People SINNERS
Be FRUSTRATED BY Looking to Government to SOLVE our PROBLEMS

2) Hungry Mouths at the Table

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

Solomon had 1000's of People to Feed Daily

Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy.
1 Kings 4.20

b. It will Keep Us Up at Night

v. 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.

HARD Working Laborer SLEEPS SOUNDLY –

Indulgent, Over-Eating Rich Cannot

Insomnia is much more likely to occur in the fancy houses on the hilltops than in the small cottages in the valley.
David A. Hubbard

c. Here Today, Gone Tomorrow

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

Spiritual Struggle > VANITY of MONEY

NOT Sure if its ADVANTAGE or DISADVANTAGE >

As I TOWER Over Most of People standing with SUBWAY

I can SEE what they're doing ON Phones > Of course, ALL have PHONES

SHOPPERS always make me Smile – Shoes! Dresses! Purses!

As FAST as their FINGERS Can Fly: Colors! Styles! Sizes! Buy, Buy, Buy!

When our desires are running ahead of our needs, it is better for us to sit down content where we are, than where we hope to be in the delusion of our insatiable desire.
Charles Bridges

v. 13-16 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.

Father has NOTHING to LEAVE his SON

Father died LEFT Me \$5000 usd – Pastoring in Hawaii – Chinese Accountant
 from HK in Church – I can Multiply That – Invest Canadian Mining Stock
 Excited SPENT that Money in my MIND > Send 3 Sons to UNIVERSITY
 MINE was CLOSED – LOST all the MONEY!

God permits the very riches in which people trust to bring about the ruin of those
 who own them. Martin Luther

d. Cannot Take it with You

vs. 15-16 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 shall he go, and what gain is there to
 him who toils for the wind?

Job: “Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return.
Job 1.21

for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the
 world. 1 Timothy 6.7

“If anything is worse than the addiction money brings, it is the emptiness it
 leaves” Derek Kidner

NOT just MATERIAL Emptiness but SPIRITUAL Darkness

Someone asked PROFESSIONAL Golfer if Anything was AFRAID of...

“Death. I’m in a position now where I can pretty much do as I want...Dying
 would not be good now.” Simon Dyson on European Tour

“As I shall forsake my riches when I die, so I forsake them while I am living.”
Martin Luther

Love way ZGC shows in SMALL Way – Bring things to GIVE Away to Others
 Practical HELP to own CHURCH Family and LOCAL Families in NEED

e. Always have Appetite for More

vs. 7-9 All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied. 8For 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 the wandering of the appetite: this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

When ASKED one of Richest Men in World – HOW Much Money is Enough?
 “Just a little bit more”
 John D. Rockefeller

Eat FOOD give us DAILY Strength --- but we NEED Keep Doing it Every Day
 NEITHER WISDOM or POVERTY proves to be Advantage

Desire is a tramp. Never content to stay at home, it always wants to go out
 wandering.
 Philip Ryken

2. Path of Misery

a. Satisfaction is Not Guaranteed

v. 1,2 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.

DESCRIPTION of Man who LACKS Nothing for Good/Happy Life

But DOES NOT have It!

Surely a man goes about as a shadow! Surely for nothing they are in turmoil;
 man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather! Psalm 39.6

We may have life and liberty, but the pursuit of happiness isn't going so well... We constantly hanker after fancier cars and fatter paychecks – and initially such things boost our happiness. But the glow of satisfaction quickly fades and soon we are yearning for something else. Jonathan Clements, *Wall Street Journal*

b. Better off Dead

v. 3-6 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?

CULTURE Valued Children as GIFTS from God > Man had 100

NONE of them Around to GIVE him a PROPER BURIAL

NON-EXISTENCE is Better than this GREAT SHAMEFUL Reality

“Life leads to nothing, and every pretense that it does not is deceit.”

British Humanist Association

HEAVEN is a Deception – Eternal Life is a LIE

MANY People DIE with Great UNCERTAINTY

“I am off in search of the great Perhaps” Rabelais

“death is the last voyage, a great leap in the dark” Thomas Hobbes

NO Good News – No Matter how MUCH ACQUIRE or LONG LIVE – Vanity

Some wonder WHY go on LIVING when GOING to DIE Anyway?

The present day unbeliever is crazy because he finds himself born into a world of endless wonders, having no notion of how he got here, a world in which he eats, sleeps...works, grows old, gets sick, and dies...takes his comfort and ease, plays along with the game, watches TV, drinks his drink, laughs...for all the world as if his prostate were not growing cancerous, his arteries not turning to chalk, his brain cells not dying by the millions, as if the worms were not going to have him in no time at all.

Walker Percy, *The Second Coming*

c. Life just Same Old, Same Old...

v. 10-12 Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he. The more words, the more vanity, and what is the advantage to man? For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?

Come to MIDDLE of Ecclesiastes – Qohelet SAME Meaningless MOAN

Need to KNOW our LIMITS – Can NEVER Out-TALK God

He has FIXED a Perfect PLAN for HIS GLORY and OUR GOOD

Who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” Romans 9.20

LIFE is SHORT – Like a CLOUD floating Across the SKY

Impossible Questions about MEANING of LIFE and the AFTERLife

Has NO CLEAR Answers from PERSPECTIVE Under the SUN

3. Ponder Your Mortality

End of Ch 6 – Asks How can we LIVE WELL During our FEW & Passing Years

Ch 7 – Answers with ‘better than’ comparisons > Exercise Discernment

Ecclesiastes gathers Wide Variety of Sayings / Proverbs from Ancient Near East

In secular society death is the obscene mystery, the ultimate affront, the thing that cannot be controlled. It can only be denied. Susan Sontag

Wisdom for Understanding Great Matters of Life and Death

7.4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

Better to go to a FUNERAL than a FESTIVAL

Death has MORE to TEACH Us

One thing MISSING in BICF – Pastored church at Least 1 Funeral a Month!

7. 2-3 It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.

WEST – Death is SANITIZED – Call Someone, Take Body Away!

House of Mourning – Kazakhstan – Dead Body in Coffin in Living Room

Africa we got together and DUG the Grave and Lowered Friends Down

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. Psalm 90.12

7. 1 A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth.

“In the day of his birth he was born to die, but in the day of his death he dies to live.”
Thomas Boston

“Death is our entrance into glory...on that day believers...reach their port , all danger over, and come to their desired haven”
Charles Spurgeon

Hanging on to the edge of a precipice, engulfed by terror, is not the time or place to learn about emergency rock-climbing; you have to learn about them before you start the expedition. Likewise, we have to start learning about death now, while we are still healthy...before we are blinded by denial and fighting valiantly for hope.
Walker Percy, *The Second Coming*

CONTRAST between Wise and Foolish Hearts

7.5 It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools.

WISDOM's Rebuke is Better than FOLLY's Laughter

This is NOT what Most People WANT to Hear – Rather Sing song of Fools

Charles Ward – Sergeant in Union Army – 32 Volunteers from Massachusetts
Wrote words to his Mother from the Battlefield...

“I hope I may come home again but life her is uncertain”

Few Days later sent to Gettysburg – Terrible Battle – Ward was Shot

Lived One more Week and Wrote One more Letter to his Mother...

“Dear Mother, I may not see you but do not fear for your tired soldier boy. Death has no fears for me. My hope is still firm in Jesus. Meet me and Father in Heaven with all my dear friends. I have no special message to send you but bid you all a happy farewell. Your affectionate soldier son, Charles Ward”

Follow this EXAMPLE – Lay Death to HEART – Look Ahead to God's Plan for
you in Christ – then you will Live WISELY – and DIE WELL

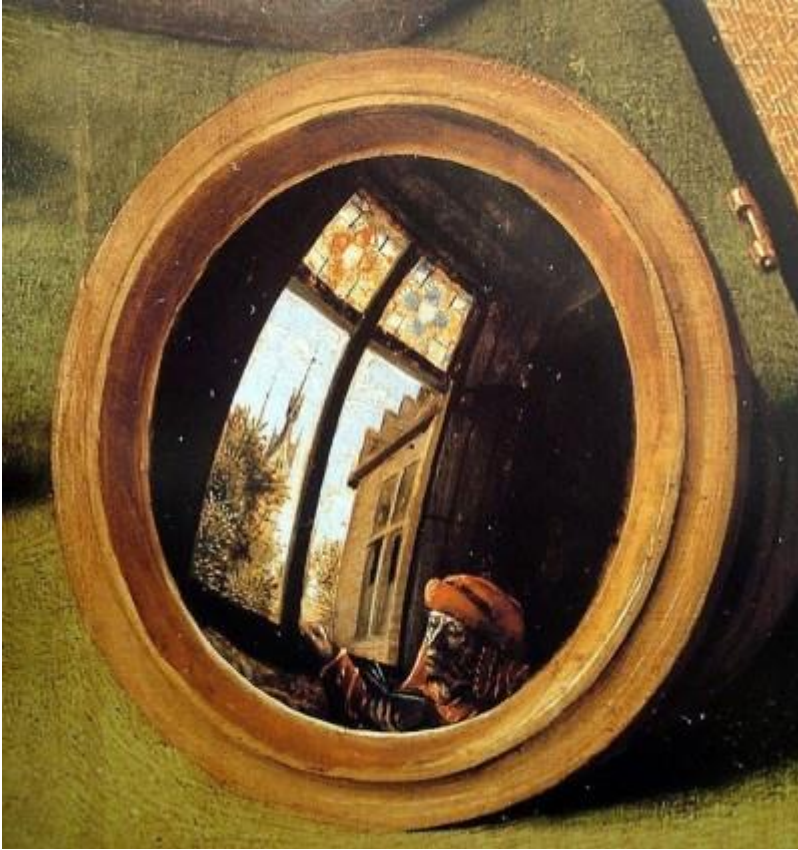
Quentin Massys “The Money Lender and His Wife”



Husband & Wife Sitting Together at their TABLE

He is Examining his COINS – She TRYING to Read DEVOTIONAL Book

BOTH Husband and Wife TURN Away from God to FOCUS ON MONEY



MESSAGE of Gospel HOPE

MIRROR on Table – Reflects SCENE – PAINTER himself Reaching to CROSS

Reach out to CROSS – Jesus gave his LIFE for our GREEDY SINS

FEAR of Lord is Beginning of Knowledge & SOURCE of Satisfaction

HOLD on to JESUS and find Fullness of JOY and SATISFACTION in HIM

Ecclesiastes 5:⁸If 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. ⁹But this is gain for a land in every way: a king committed to cultivated fields. ¹⁰He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. ¹¹When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? ¹²Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep. ¹³There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, ¹⁴and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. ¹⁵As 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. ¹⁶This 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? ¹⁷Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger. ¹⁸Behold, 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. ¹⁹Everyone 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. ²⁰For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart. ⁶¹There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind: ²a 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. ³If 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. ⁴For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered. ⁵Moreover, it has not seen the sun or known anything, yet it finds rest rather than he. ⁶Even though he should live a thousand years

twice over, yet enjoy no good—do not all go to the one place? ⁷All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied. ⁸For 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? ⁹Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite: this also is vanity and a striving after wind. ¹⁰Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he. ¹¹The more words, the more vanity, and what is the advantage to man? ¹²For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun? ⁷¹A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth. ²It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart. ³Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad. ⁴The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. ⁵It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools. ⁶For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fools; this also is vanity. ⁷Surely oppression drives the wise into madness, and a bribe corrupts the heart. ⁸Better is the end of a thing than its beginning, and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. ⁹Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the heart of fools. ¹⁰Say not, “Why were the former days better than these?” For it is not from wisdom that you ask this. ¹¹Wisdom is good with an inheritance, an advantage to those who see the sun. ¹²For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it. ¹³Consider the work of God: who can make straight what he has made crooked? ¹⁴In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.