

Contentment in Christ

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Introduction.

- A. After we got home from services Sunday night a couple of weeks ago, Lauren and I flipped on the TV, and as we so often do because there is absolutely nothing else on, we ended up turning the channel to HGTV. The evening's offering happened to be a show called "National Open House," with which all of you HGTV junkies are doubtless familiar. The show reveals what increasing amounts of money can buy in three locales across the country, in this case, Honolulu, Savannah, and Moorestown, NJ. It started off by showing what was available for the—to me, at least—respectable sum of \$250,000. It then upped the ante to \$500,000, \$1 million, and finally, \$3 million. Let me tell, you, folks, even in Honolulu, you can get A LOT for \$3 million.
- B. Even as Lauren and I were watching this show, though, I started wondering if this was something I needed to be watching. Certainly, there's an element of harmless escapism to sitting in our one-bedroom apartment and ogling somebody else's 12,000-square-foot home, but there's an element to it that's NOT harmless. Friends, I don't need a 12,000-square-foot home. In fact, I don't think ANYBODY needs a 12,000-square-foot home, but the devil really wants all of us to want one and to devote our lives to getting it.
- C. Here's the thing: there's nothing at all wrong with having money and nice things. Indeed, God wants us to have them. The problem is, though, that we can easily allow our desire for material blessings to take priority over everything else in our lives. We start coming home late at night so we can earn some overtime, we start skipping services when we have some special project to work on, and when the money we earn still isn't enough to feed our appetites, we sacrifice our futures by racking up risky mortgages and credit-card debt. We wind up with no time, all sorts of bills to pay, and a pile of stuff that we don't have the energy to enjoy. That might be the American way these days, but let me tell you, friends, it's a foolish way to live, and one of the first things to tell us it's foolish is the Bible. God's word warns us that if we choose to love money instead of loving God, it will destroy us. Let's consider the Bible's words on this subject this morning, to see what we can learn about the misery of loving money and the contentment that we can have in Christ.

I. Love of Money Never Fulfills.

- A. The first thing we need to recognize about the love of money is that it never fulfills us. No matter how much money we have, no matter how much stuff we have, we will continue to want more. Consider the words of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 5:10. Now, if anybody knows about what material possessions can and cannot bring, it would be Solomon. Solomon was the Bill Gates of his day. He had more money than anyone else on the planet. Nonetheless, Solomon says of money that if you love it, however much you've got is never going to be enough. The man who has one dollar wants two. The man who has one million dollars wants two million.
- B. The same thing is true of material possessions. There are all kinds of things in the world that are nice to have that we want, but none of those things can ever bring us contentment if we're not contented already. This is a lesson I first started to get a glimmer of when I was about 7. Back then, the coolest toys in the whole world to have were the Transformers, and the coolest Transformer to have was Optimus Prime. Any guys here remember Optimus Prime? Instead of having just one piece, Optimus Prime came with three. He was unique.
- C. There was one problem, though: Optimus Prime cost twenty bucks, and I had no money at all. I whined at my parents for months and months, but they always told me no. Finally, the next year for Christmas, I unwrapped one of my biggest presents, and it was Optimus Prime! I thought it was awesome for about three weeks, and then after I'd played with it a lot, my friends had played with it a lot, and my friends had started breaking pieces off of it, I started losing interest in Optimus Prime. Today, I don't even know where Optimus Prime is. If I had to guess, my mother tossed him in the garbage years ago. Now, Optimus Prime was just a kid's toy, but doesn't exactly the same thing happen to our grownup toys? Doesn't the car that we thought was so wonderful eventually turn into a hunk of junk? Doesn't the house we slaved to buy start paling in comparison to that other house one block over? Do we keep loving ANYTHING as much as we did when we first bought it? Money can't buy contentment, and it can't buy things that bring contentment either.
- D. By contrast, when we consider what we have in Jesus, we realize that He can bring contentment. Look at the words of our Lord in John 6:35. Once we find Jesus, if we realize what we have, we'll never start looking for anything else. Jesus is the best and greatest man ever to live, and the more we learn about Him, the more we realize there is to learn. He gives us a way of life that will bring happiness, and He also gives us hope for when our lives are over. There is just nothing on this earth better than Jesus. Only He can satisfy us.

II. Love of Money Never Ends.

- A. In addition to failing to fulfill us, love of money also never ends. Look at Solomon's words in Ecclesiastes 5:11. As good things increase, those who consume them also increase. Basically, Solomon is saying that as our

possessions increase, so do our needs. When we spend money on something, whether we bought it on credit or not, we keep spending money on it. If we buy a car, we have to spend money on title, registration, insurance, gas, upkeep, repairs, and a hundred other different things. The more expensive the car, the more expensive all those other things will be. If we buy a house, suddenly we've got everything from mortgages to homeowners' insurance to keeping the lawn mowed to deal with. If we have enough stuff, we can easily get to the point where we are the slave of our possessions. Once we start spending money, we have to keep spending it. We have to maintain the things we have rather than enjoying them.

- B. On the other hand, once we have brought Jesus into our lives, there isn't anything that comes with Him that distracts us from developing our relationship with Him. Look at what Paul says about the completeness of God's work in Ephesians 1:3. Through Christ, God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. There aren't any hidden maintenance fees associated with being a Christian. All we have to do to keep being a Christian is exactly what we signed on for. We just have to keep loving God and trying to live like Jesus. Sure, that might seem like drudgery to some, but to the true child of God, doing what's right is like what working on a car is to an auto buff. There is labor involved, but the labor is enjoyable and contenting.

III. Love of Money Never Rests.

- A. Once we realize this, we can turn again to the writings of Solomon to learn about the third problem associated with love of money: it never rests. This is Solomon's message in Ecclesiastes 5:12. This passage illustrates what happens when a lover of money lays hands on some money. Sure, he gets the money, but the money also gets him. Some poor working schlub out in the field has to work all day to support himself, and sometimes he doesn't get as much to eat as he likes, but when he comes home, he rests easy because he doesn't have anything to worry about. Not so for the rich man. He is prevented by his riches from enjoying the peace that his poor neighbor does. He lies awake all night, worrying about what's going to happen to his money. Is it going to be there in the morning? Is there going to be even more of it? Basically, if we succumb to the love of money and get everything we thought we wanted, sooner or later, we're going to learn that having money creates just as much stress as not having money and wanting it.
- B. However, if we seek our satisfaction in Jesus instead, we will receive peace in what we desire. Look at what our Lord has to say in John 14:27. When we are in Christ, we receive peace from Him. This peace is different from the peace that the world desires because it continues with us, even when everything around us is filled with conflict. This peace is the repose that comes from knowing God and trusting in His promises, and once we have achieved this peace, we don't have to worry about anything. We can find rest in Jesus.

IV. Love of Money Never Fulfills.

- A. Now that we understand that love of money and material things cannot provide us with fulfillment, contentment, and rest, we can consider the forth truth about greed, which is that it never profits. Ecclesiastes is a book that was written at the end of Solomon's life, a time when he realized how foolish it was for him to love the pleasures of the world more than God. As a result, the book has some very bitter passages in it. Of these passages, however, none is more biting than Ecclesiastes 2:18-19. Think about that! Solomon had tasted every earthly delight, but he says that he came to hate life, all because he couldn't take his possessions with him. Instead, he had to leave them to some other man, who might well prove to be a fool. Indeed, Solomon's misgivings were well-founded. Almost as soon as Solomon's son Rehoboam came to the throne, he lost almost his entire kingdom because of just a few foolish words. Solomon's work went for nothing.
- B. Friends, we can't take it with us today any more than Solomon could, so, really, what's the point? Two of the richest men of our time, Warren Buffett and Bill Gates, have been making headlines recently. Both of them have willed by far the largest part of their fortunes, billions and billions of dollars, to Bill Gates' philanthropic foundation. Now, don't get me wrong. I think giving to charity is a wonderful thing, but I still have to wonder just what in the world those two men were doing with their lives. They didn't enjoy all the money they earned. Their kids won't get to enjoy all the money they earned. Really, what was the point of earning it in the first place? I don't think Bill Gates founded Microsoft with the idea of donating the money to someone else. I think he didn't really think about it at all. He just started making money, turned out to be very good at it, looked up, saw the Grim Reaper on the horizon, and said, "Whoops." That's not failure, exactly, but it isn't success either.
- C. Let's be honest: none of us will ever have as much money as Bill Gates or Warren Buffett. None of us, if we put our trust in riches, are going to achieve even the uncertain victory that they achieved. Let's get smart from the beginning. Let's put our hope for victory in Christ where it belongs. Look at 1 Corinthians 15:56-58. We have a promise from God here, that whatever we do for God will not be in vain. The good things we do now will produce an eternal blessing. Can Bill Gates say that? Sure, he's got lots of money. Sure, everybody's heard of him. But he doesn't have Jesus, and that's the only thing that matters. If I had every dollar in the world, if my name was on the lips of everyone on earth, I would trade it all in a heartbeat to have God honor my name and reward me with treasure in heaven. Let's work for treasure that actually profits.

Conclusion. If you've been seeking something other than Jesus, come back to Him today.