

Solomon is such a drag, right? I mean, someone needs to go and give that guy a hug or something. For weeks now, he's been saying the same thing from different angles, that all of us have this longing for fulfillment deep in our soul. We want to be and feel complete. And that's something that we can all feel and that drives people to seek answers in all kinds of ways.

And Solomon just steps into that scenario and he's just blasting it apart. He takes all the good and wonderful things in life, and he says, hey, these aren't bad things. He says, they're good, that we should enjoy them, but they aren't the answer to the longing in your heart. And he goes piece by piece through all the good things, and he just lays them down so money won't do it, and success doesn't last. Pleasure runs out.

And then he says, not only is it not one thing that you're missing, but there's no combination of things that's going to fix the problem. And deep down, we already know this is true. We all know what it's like to feel, to long for something, then to get it, only to find out that it wasn't what you thought it was going to be. I mean, your garages and your attics are full of hobbies and activities and things that you just had to have, things that you knew were going to last, and they're just rotting away. And that's true for all of us, but it goes even deeper than that, because sometimes we get what we want, and it's awesome.

We love it. The problem is that even then, the satisfaction doesn't remain. So think about a meal that you don't get to have anymore, something that you just love. Maybe something your mom used to cook, maybe something from a favorite restaurant that closed down. Whatever.

And then we were to tell you that next week you're going to get to eat that meal again. That's what you're going to have for dinner. And you think about it all week long. You get all ramped up. The night comes, you sit down, and it's perfect.

It's everything that you thought it was going to be, everything that you remembered it was. And then imagine that you get that same exact meal every day for the next five years, right? The food doesn't change, but your satisfaction in it changes dramatically. What was once something that you long for, something that brought you great joy and satisfaction, something that was special, becomes just ordinary. Or even worse, something that you don't like anymore at all.

And you can do that. With anything. You know, when people buy boats, they think they're going to use them all the time, but they don't. When you get a house with a stunning view, you know, maybe right on the water, you think you're never going to take that for granted, but you do. And that's what Solomon has been telling us, that the answer isn't something external, it isn't something in your circumstances.

And that leads us to the question we need to answer today, which is why doesn't that work? Because it seems like it should. And that's why people spend their whole life chasing after. Just

makes sense that good things would bring us lasting satisfaction, even though your entire life testifies that that isn't true. And so that's what Solomon lays out here.

And he's not really introducing new ideas as much as he is pressing deeper into these same things. But what he does is he moves beyond observation to explanation. From saying this is what we experience to saying this is why it doesn't work the way we think it should. As we begin at verse 10, it says, he who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income. This also is vanity.

And Solomon isn't being poetic here, he's just saying that there is a built in limitation on what money can do for the human soul. And he's talking about somebody who loves money. But that truth extends beyond cash to all things that we love and chase after. And the point is that even when those things increase, and this can be anything. So maybe success or vacations, even family, whatever it is, maybe your goal is just to have a bunch of kids and have them thrive.

It doesn't matter. Even when you get more and more of whatever it is that you desire, your satisfaction doesn't increase with them. Life doesn't scale that way. The heart doesn't scale up like that. And so what happens is that life can actually become more full and still feel empty.

So you can have more possessions, more responsibility, more activity, more opportunity, and yet no sense of rest or contentment. And Psalmist continues, in verse 12 he says, 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. So the guy at the bottom of the food chain who's digging a ditch, he sleeps great. And the guy who has tons and everything he could ever want, he doesn't. In other words, you can have everything that you think can bring you peace and still toss and turn all night long.

And all of this is Solomon just pressing deeper into what he's been saying. You can't find rest, peace, satisfaction, or fulfillment in the things of this world. That isn't new, right? That's been the drumbeat of the entire book of Ecclesiastes. And you might be thinking, man, this is repetitive.

He just keeps saying the same thing over and over again. But that is exactly the point. The wisest man in the history of the world is trying to beat this truth into us. Because it is easy to agree with it intellectually, but much, much harder to live that out practically. Because even when we realize that one thing doesn't satisfy us, our natural bent is to turn to something else.

And the angle he's taking here is to show us that more and more good stuff isn't the answer. Now, we've all had times when money was tight. So think back over your life. We've all had times where we've had less. We've certainly been there.

I remember Renee and I going to the gas station where we had points saved up from buying gas to go on a date, somebody to watch. The kids didn't have any money, so we went there to get

gas station pizza. Buying it with points, right? That was our big night out. Now, my favorite food is lobster.

Is lobster better than gas station pizza? Absolutely it is. There's no question that it's better. But you know what? I love those gas station pizza dates.

And if we were to go out to a really nice restaurant now, the food would be better than that pizza was, but our satisfaction was. Wouldn't increase. There is a cap on it. There's only so much fulfillment you can get from anything. So maybe you love cars.

Maybe, you know, whatever your dream car is. Maybe it's a Lamborghini or a classic Mustang, a Rolls Royce, whatever. If somebody were to gift you that car today, it would be amazing. But then if you got another one tomorrow and then another one, do you think that having 10 of them would make you feel better than having one of them? It just doesn't work that way.

Satisfaction doesn't scale with quantity. And the point is that we've all lived long enough to see things that we thought were going to complete us utterly fail. They just become normal over time, and they can't bear the weight of our satisfaction. And Solomon's point here is that that isn't the exception to the rule. That is the rule.

That is how life under the sun works. Which means that the problem isn't something that you haven't found yet. And it isn't something that you need, a better version of what you already have. It is nothing in this world, no matter how good, no matter how abundant, none of it has the capacity to finally satisfy what your heart is searching for. And what does that say about us?

If nothing in the world can truly satisfy us, if more never becomes enough, if every good thing eventually loses its shine, then the problem isn't what you have. The problem is what we are. Take a look at verse seven. It says, all the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied. That is humanity.

In one sentence. It doesn't matter how hard you work or what kind of things you acquire, your appetite will still remain. And this isn't just talking about food here. It's talking about desire itself. There is something broken deep within us that creates this longing that nothing under the sun can fill.

And the reason why is that our heart is disordered. Jeremiah 17, 9 says, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. Who can understand it? And that doesn't mean that we only desire bad things. That's important to understand.

Most of the things that we chase after aren't inherently bad or inherently sinful in and of themselves. Money isn't evil. Success isn't evil. Good food and vacations and hobbies and homes and accomplishments and whatever, they aren't evil things. The problem is that our hearts take these good things and try to turn them into ultimate things.

We are expecting created things to carry the weight of our fulfillment, and they simply can't do it. Take a look at Jeremiah 2:13. It says, for my people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves. Broken cisterns that can hold no water.

This is the perfect picture of the human condition. See, back in Jeremiah's day, a fountain or a spring was highly valued because it provided a constant source of clean, fresh water. It never had to be filled, never runs dry. It provides exactly what they needed to thrive and to live. But those are rare in the Middle East.

So what they did is they made cisterns. And a cistern was basically a man made storage tank. So they dug out a space, they filled it with water, and then when the dry seasons came, that's the water they used. Now think about what this is saying about us. The people had access to a fountain, an endless supply of living water, but they ignored that.

And they spent all their time digging holes in the ground and making their own cisterns. And not even good ones. They were broken. They couldn't even hold water. That is us.

God offers Himself, and yet we keep looking for satisfaction elsewhere. That's what Jesus was saying to the Samaritan woman in John 4. He said, Jesus, Jesus answered. He said, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, give me a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.

The water that I will give him will become in Him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. You see, the living water is available to all of us, and yet we keep trying to quench our own thirst with junk. We just dig a new cistern and we try something else. And the crazy thing is we just keep doing it over and over and over and over again. One thing fails us, it disappoints us, so we just move on to the next thing.

Then the next thing fails us and disappoints us, so we move on again. It is an endless cycle of futility. New job, new relationship, new hobby, new house, new experiences. And every single time, we believe the lie that we tell ourselves that, hey, this one's going to do it. That is why your heart is disordered.

We desire the wrong things. We keep looking horizontally for what can only be found vertically. Augustine said that our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God. And that is exactly what Solomon is exposing here. There is a restlessness built into humanity that can't be cured by anything under the Sun.

In Romans 1, it says, for although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to Him. But they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the mortal God for images resembling mortal men and birds and animals and creeping things. And this verse applies to all humanity. The context is that the beauty of creation declares that there is a God that.

And that he is powerful beyond measure. But each and every one of us has rejected him and gone our own way. It says that humanity exchanged the Creator for created things. That's the issue. We were made for God, but we keep trying to satisfy eternal longings with temporary things.

That's why Ecclesiastes feels so heavy. Solomon just keeps ripping away these lies we tell ourselves concerning reality. You get the things you want and it doesn't fix you. You reach the stage of life you thought would satisfy you, and the ache is still there. And that's because the problem was never external.

The problem is that your heart is bent in the wrong direction. So Solomon, he's doing something far more radical than simply saying, hey, don't love stuff too much. If you walk away, and that's what you've heard, you've missed it. He's showing us that the issue isn't just what we reach for, it's what reaches within us. Because the problem, if the problem were only that we were chasing the wrong things, the solution would be so simple.

It would just be chase better things. It's that kind of thinking that drives people to self righteousness. You see, when someone pays real close attention to their life, they realize that something is off inside and that circumstances don't fix it. They inevitably assume that the solution must be to correct ourselves from the inside out. So we start trying to become a better version of who we are.

That's the impulse behind so much religious activity. It's this idea that if I can just get disciplined enough and moral enough and spiritual enough, if I can do that, then I'm going to feel whole. And we see this all the time. You see, with guys like the Pharisees, they were intensely committed people. They took external righteousness to an extreme level, but it didn't solve the problem right.

Jesus said, he said, woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self indulgence. In other words, you, you can do things that look good and righteous to everybody else, but you aren't solving the problem inside you. And you can trace this through. Every religion in the world, every false religion out there is about doing enough or being enough. Only Christianity is grace.

But even here we have this same tendency. And you could trace that right through. Like the monastic movements, we saw people try to withdraw from the world in order to be pure. You can see it with all the extra rules that people in churches love to pile on that aren't anywhere in scripture. Like, hey, don't dance, don't go to the movies, don't use playing cards, and on and on.

It's all the same stuff. It's an attempt to measure up on our own. But here's the issue, it can't work. Scripture is brutally honest. Here Isaiah 64 says, we have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.

We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind, take us away. The very best that you have to offer isn't enough. It's unclean, like a polluted garment. If I were to hand you a glass of water, the most pure spring water in the world, and told you it just had a single drop of poison in it, would you drink it? Right?

It doesn't matter that it's 99.99% pure. 1 drop changes everything. That's the problem with our righteousness before God. It doesn't matter how much good stuff you do, it doesn't erase the bad stuff. Here's the reality. You.

You can't be good enough. At the end of the day, self righteousness is just another form of the same problem that Solomon keeps trying to help us to see. It's still chasing satisfaction in the wrong direction. It's still trying to draw life from something that God created. Only now the created thing is ourselves.

Now, there's one big question that flows from this. That's why. Why is it that nothing truly satisfies us? Why do we desire the wrong things and chase the wrong things? And the language that I've been using is that something is broken in us, and that's intentional.

See, Scripture isn't vague in its answer to this question. It goes all the way back to. To when sin entered creation through the rebellion of Adam and Eve. And when that happened, it didn't just produce bad behavior. It corrupted human nature itself.

Everything just bent out of shape. Our minds became darkened and our desires were distorted. Our relationships were fractured. We've all pushed a shopping cart with one bad wheel, right? Doesn't matter how hard you try to push that thing straight, it's always going to hook to the right.

That's humanity. After the Fall, we still function. We can still do good things, but we're no longer aligned the way that we were designed to be. In the Fall, every corner of creation was subjected to futility. That's what it says in Romans 8.

It says, for the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but but because of him who subjected it and hope. That's why the world feels broken. It's because it is. That's why you feel broken. It's because you are.

And that doesn't mean that every person is as evil as they could possibly be. Sin doesn't mean that people are incapable of kindness or love or generosity. What it means is that sin really reaches into every single part of who you are. None of it is untouched. All of you has been affected by sin.

Certainly how you think, but also your emotions and Your desires, they've all been twisted from their original purpose. Ephesians 4 lays this out nicely. It says in starting verse 17, now this I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do. And in the futility of their minds they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of heart. You hear the language here.

Futility of mind, darkened understanding, a hardened heart. That's exactly what Solomon has been unpacking in Ecclesiastes. That is what sin does. It cuts us off from the very source of life itself. So we end up spiritually starving, even while we're surrounded by good things.

And then we try to feed that starvation by consuming more and more created things. So more money or experiences or comfort or success or pleasure, whatever, none of it works. Because the issue is, isn't external. The issue is that we are alienated from God. Isaiah 59 says, but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God.

And your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. This is where we need the good news. This is where the gospel shines so gloriously. Because Christianity isn't some kind of self improvement plan. It isn't Jesus saying, try harder, clean yourself up.

The Gospel is that Jesus came to rescue people who couldn't fix themselves. Romans 5, 8 says, But God shows his love for us and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us on the cross. Jesus stepped into the brokenness that sin created. He bore our guilt, he took our judgment and he died in our place. And then three days later, he rose again, victorious over sin and death.

And everyone who turns to Christ in faith repents of their sins, is not merely forgiven, they are made new. Second Corinthians 5 says, Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold, the new has come. That is the answer to the problem Solomon keeps exposing. The answer isn't better circumstances or a better you.

The answer is to become a new person. Because notice what God does in salvation here. He doesn't just change your destination eternally, although he absolutely does that. He changes you in the now. He gives you a new heart, new desires, new affections and new priorities.

And when you're redeemed, you're indwelt by God's spirit and he begins reshaping you from the inside out. And your heart slowly begins to reorder itself around God instead of around Idols and created things. You begin to love what honors him. You begin to desire the things of God. You begin to treasure Christ above the things of the world.

And you know what's really amazing is that when things stop being ultimate in your heart, that's when you're finally free to enjoy them properly. See, without Christ, we try to use God's gifts to replace God, and that crushes us because those gifts were never designed to carry that weight.

But in Christ, these things, they no longer have to be ultimate. They can simply be good gifts. And that frees you up to enjoy them with gratitude instead of desperation.

If you look at verse two, it says, 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. Hope you caught that.

Enjoyment itself is a gift from God. Solomon is saying here that two people can possess the same things and one enjoys them and the other doesn't. The difference isn't what they have, it's whether God grants them the ability to. To enjoy. See, apart from God, we don't know how to truly enjoy things because we take these good things and we demand too much from them, and then they fail us.

But in Christ, something changes when your soul begins to find satisfaction and rest. In God, you no longer need created things to complete you in the book of Ecclesiastes. And it's working hard to confront how you live and how you view this world. And it's not about trying to win an argument, it's trying to shatter an illusion. And once we get it, once we understand that nothing in creation will satisfy us, the only honest response left is to decide what we're going to do with that truth.

So what does that look like? First, you need to stop expecting created things to do what only God can do. And this sounds obvious, but it's astonishingly easy to live like it isn't true. That's why this just keeps popping up week after week. You want to enjoy life.

You want to be fulfilled and experience true joy. To get there, you have to start by cleansing out all the things that you keep trying to put in that void. You need to stop having things be your source of satisfaction because they will always collapse under the weight of it. Then the second thing is, you need to receive what you have as a gift from God. See, one of the themes of this passage is that enjoyment itself isn't automatic.

Two people get the exact Same things. One of them is content, the other is restless. Solomon says that's in God's hands, which means that gratitude becomes a spiritual discipline. You don't assume enjoyment, you ask for it. You don't grasp tighter to things.

You open your hands and that changes how you live. Instead of constantly asking, what do I need? What is going to take care of me? You begin to ask, how can I be faithful and grateful for what God has already given me? That's a radically different posture.

One is driven by craving, the other by contentment. And listen, contentment isn't the natural bent of sinful people. It is something that you have to cultivate inside of you. And it grows when your heart is anchored somewhere deeper than your circumstances. The apostle Paul said in Philippians 4, he said, I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. And in any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me. This is the apostle Paul, and notice what he says. Contentment wasn't automatic for him either.

He had to learn it. And the secret wasn't better circumstances. The secret is Christ. There are so many voices out there telling you that satisfaction is available in other ways. There's even lots of churches and preachers out there that are offering health and wealth and saying, hey, if you follow Jesus, everything's going to be awesome.

That's wickedness. The Bible doesn't say anything like that. But the beautiful truth of what Solomon is telling us is that you can't find, or that you can find true joy no matter what your circumstances are. You can find joy in the help that you have, even if it's failing. You can find joy in the things that you have, even if you have nothing.

That's the difference. See, the Gospel isn't that Jesus smooths everything out, makes life easy. No. But when you're in Christ, the pressure comes off everything else. And you're free to enjoy the things of this world without putting that extra weight on them.

And that means that your circumstances no longer define you. So this morning, the question is, what is it that you think will make your life complete? And Solomon's message is simple. It isn't going to work. It won't satisfy you, but Christ will.

So turn to him, trust in him, and discover the joy that the world has been promising you but can't deliver. So please stand for our closing hymn. It's number 337 in the hymnal. Nothing but the Blood.