



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Contentment

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Ecclesiastes 6:1-9

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6 There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind: ² 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. 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. ⁴ For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered. ⁵ Moreover, it has not seen the sun or known anything, yet it finds rest rather than he. ⁶ Even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no good—do not all go to the one place?

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

(Pastor prays)

We are halfway through Ecclesiastes and it's as if the preacher has been reading our mail. How does he know how empty we sometimes feel inside? How did he find out about that hollow, dark place in your soul? How does he know that, although you have every reason to be happy, you still seem to come up short? How does he know you are not completely content? How does he know that you keep thinking there's got to be more than this? Here in chapter 6, the preacher has brought us back down to life here on earth or as he describes it, life under the

sun. And he looks at his riches and his women and his power and his own standing as the wealthiest man in the world and says, is this it?

Remember, Ecclesiastes doesn't *lack* the Gospel. It's here to show us our *need* for the Gospel. Chapter 6 looks further into our souls than any chapter. Yet, as he silences all the noise and the clatter and the busyness of life, he says, it's your soul. You catered to every part of who you are except your soul. And part of what the preacher is saying in this passage is, if you don't get the soul work right, then none of the other successes and enjoyments in life will matter. So for the next few moments let's use this passage to examine our discontented souls. Because...

A Discontented Soul Will Never Be Satisfied

Let's take a look at this discontented soul.

A discontented soul won't deal with the real problem

Let's read verse one slowly and notice a few things. **6** *There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind:* there is an evil that I have seen "under the sun," here on earth, in everyday life, this is what I've seen. And it lies heavy on mankind or it covers all of mankind, no one escapes and no one is exempt.

Now the preacher will further pinpoint what he's talking about in verse 2, but for right now he brings up the universal problem that is common to every person who has been born since the fall of Adam, and that is that we are sinners and that sin lays heavy on us. It's in the air we breathe, in the water we drink, in the food we eat, in the people we love and in the actions we take. All of it is tainted with sin. It's good to remember that you are not so different than everyone else. Sin has weighed heavy in your life, blurred your vision, affected your decisions and is at the very root of discontentment.

Solomon writes this as an older man who has made a mess out of his life, and he sees at the root of all societal, relational and vocational issues the fact that we are sinful people. I think this is part of what is lacking in Gospel preaching today, pointing out the root of our issues from racism to narcissism to boredom. It's the insidious nature of sin that has gone into the very DNA of who we are. And until you come to grips with your sin and the depth of it, you can never really know how unbelievably good the Gospel of Christ is.

The Gospel. When I say the Gospel, what I mean is that God is holy and created man in His own image. As an image bearer of God, you are due respect but the image of God in me and in you is disfigured because of sin. The Bible says we are dead in sin, completely separated from God. And God in His love, not because we have done anything, but by sheer grace and nothing else, He has sent Jesus to die for the sins we commit. There at the cross, Jesus died in the place of sinners, all sinners who will ever be saved. God raised Him from the dead and the call is to believe that! To come to Jesus! There in your pew or you watching at home, you can actually ask God to save you based on the merits of what Jesus has done.

If you are already a Christian then do what John Owens said: be killing sin before it kills you. You should be fighting sin. Let's deal with the real problem of your discontentment. Some questions you might ask are: Is in fact, Jesus Lord? Have you surrendered your life to the Lordship of Jesus? Is there evidence in your life to show that? Do you have some unconfessed sin? Do you struggle with idolatry? Do you complain? When you are complaining, you are actually saying that you don't think God is running things right. Do you trust even though it hurts? A discontented soul won't deal with the real problem. And the root of that problem is sin.

A discontented soul doesn't recognize the real solution

When you read verse 2, you won't see it at first but hidden in the preacher's description of the problem is the real solution. And it's something that's been tremendously helpful to me in the last year. Let's read it and talk about it.

There are 2 things to see here: good provision and hard providence. ² *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.*

Good provision. In verse 2, God gives wealth, possessions, honor, and all that you need. There is a God-centeredness and awareness here that most of us don't have. We just assume provision. What if God stripped you bare of everything, every article of clothing, every particle of food, every stick of furniture, every friend or relative or convenience that you haven't thanked Him for? Dissatisfaction is the enemy of gratitude and gratitude is the killer of dissatisfaction! By gratitude to God I mean to live in a constant awareness that all of this is God's and in His kindness He has provided for us just for a little while. And because His plan is perfect, and this world is His, and because He is the potter and I am the clay, that which is being molded won't

say to the molder: why have you done this? I wonder how much of your life and attitude and lack of contentment would change if you started recognizing God's immediate provision in your life. This whole verse is packed with God's good provisions but then it takes a turn in verse 2 into the other thing I want you to see here.

Hard Providence. Let's go back to verse 2 and read it through. ²*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.*

Something happens, you have all these great things and then God takes them. It could be a loss of income, death, something happens. Either way, someone else is enjoying all the great stuff mentioned at the beginning of verse 2. It's a reminder that all of our best and coolest and most valued possessions will one day end up in a garage sale. And the preacher calls it a grievous evil. It's a sickening feeling but it brings us back to providence and worldview.

This book really has a lot in common with Job. Remember when the Sabeans come down and fall upon his children and the fire of God burned up all his sheep and a great wind knocked down the house his children were in and it devastated him? I mean it crushed him but remember what he said in Job 1:21–22. *And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."* ²²*In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.* And remember in the next chapter when Job's wife tells him to curse God and die? Job says, *"Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?"* Listen, if you are hurt and bitter or confused or even angry at God because of some terrible thing that has happened, I think it's time for you to ask God to help you, forgive you and give you eyes to see and a heart to trust in His constant and good provision and His hard providence. And if you can't see that clearly, go to the cross. There is love and forgiveness and healing in the wounds of Jesus. There's the solution. There's your satisfaction, in Jesus. A discontented soul doesn't see the real problem. A discontented soul doesn't see the real solution.

A discontented soul will never be satisfied without Jesus

I want you to see what the preacher does in verses 3-7. He's going to take all the traditional markers of a happy life and just knock them down. Let's read verse 3. 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. He's saying you could have 100 children and live many years (in verse 6 he will talk about 2000 years) and still be discontented in your soul. The preacher says it's a really bad fate for you. And verses 3-5 say even a miscarriage is better. Some of you know the brokenness and quiet suffering of a miscarriage. The preacher says even *that* is better than not being content in your soul.

Maybe you find great satisfaction in work and in the work you do, you are able to do things you are able to accomplish much. In verse 7 the preacher says that's fine, but you missed the whole point of life. It's your soul. In verse 8, the preacher says everybody is going to die, the wise and fool, the rich and poor. It's your soul. And then in verse 9, he closes, bringing up the sad plight of the wanderer. ⁹ *Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite: this also is vanity and a striving after wind.* That's the soul that has gone prodigal. When everything good was right there in front of him, a wandering soul is a discontented soul.

But it doesn't have to be like that. God has seen our affliction and the trouble we are in and that trouble is unsolvable outside of Christ. Let me tell you what God has done. God has seen the people created in His image, so disfigured and separated from Him. And yet, in love, He comes. He sees the trouble we are in is unsolvable outside of Jesus who lived perfectly, died on the cross for sinners. God raised Him from the dead and God has given Christ to us. And He says, come, come to Jesus. Come wanderer. Come those discontented in your souls.

Before I close the sermon out, I would like to ask you a couple of questions. Will you pray with me? Do you need Christ to save you? In your pew or those at home, will you just call out to God to save you based on what Jesus has done for you on the cross? That is the only way that God saves you. Do you believe that?

Do you need help as a discontented soul? You need God to heal you, to remove the bitterness and hurt, worry and anxieties. Now is just a good time to ask Him.

So Father, I pray for the people you have given me to serve and shepherd. Provide healing and hope. Restore joy, remove depression, take away worry. Alleviate anxiety. We pray that you

would remove bitterness. We pray that you would call people to yourself. Thank you, Lord, for hearing our prayer. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.