

Well, shall we go back to our Scripture there in Ecclesiastes 5, as we continue with Solomon in his search for life apart from God as he, in his later years, really walked away from the Lord and yet he had great wisdom. He just didn't use it. And so these are his journeys and notes and conclusions and observations as he sought to find life where the world does.

There is a butterfly years ago, that we looked at in school, that was very unique in that it laid its eggs on wild thyme in the jungles, and the caterpillars that were born fed on the soft tissue of the flower. But eventually, it fell to the ground, and this blue butterfly - it's beautiful - its Latin name is *Maculinea arion* - big thing. But when it landed on the ground, it laid there molting, and it laid there waiting for a species of red ant to find it. And when the ant came, it was attracted by a gland on this caterpillar that secreted a very sweet liquid. And so the ant would hang around and feed itself on this liquid for three or four hours before this caterpillar would inflate its skin behind its head, and it would swell up and kind of mimic an ant grub. And so the ant would be taken in by the mimicry, and it would pick it up with others and carry it down to its nest and place it amongst the ant colony's own brood. And so the caterpillar would find itself there, and then it would begin to eat ant grubs. It made itself delightful, I guess, and it was taken down into the hole and all. And this blue butterfly-caterpillar would hibernate in the ants' nest, and it would stay there for a long time. It would typically eat 500-1000 ant grubs before it would be emerging in late June or July, and then it would only last three or four weeks, and it would just die. People that like evolution - "Well, it just happened." Really? Did that just happen? It's a phenomenal story if you ever get a chance to look at it - *Maculinea arion* is the name of it.

But like the ant, who so likes what he tastes and has to have it and takes it home, and it becomes his own destruction, there are certainly lots of folks today who will give up home and health and life itself to gain for themselves some of the sweet nectar that the world has to offer. Whether it is wealth or whether it is gain or just material goods, somehow we equate all of those things with the "good life." And there is certainly a push in the lives of many to get at all costs - that for some, money supremely matters. It dominates their life. It drives their thoughts

and their efforts. It steals their spare time and their spare thoughts - to get the elusive pursuit of wealth.

Solomon, at this time, was such a person. The Bible tells us that his base salary - in gold alone - was 666 talents. At today's value - \$1.5 billion a year. That was just his draw. His throne, according to 1 Kings 10, was made of pure ivory. If that isn't nice enough, he overlaid that with gold. I don't know why he put gold over ivory, but he did. I guess because he could. His silverware was gold ware - silver was not an issue in his day. The shields of his elite guards in the palace were overlaid with pure, beaten gold. This is what is recording in 1 Kings 10:23 and 27, "King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. He made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedar trees as abundant as the sycamores which are in the lowland." Solomon had it all. There was no one more wealthy, more powerful, more wise than he. And if you really want to know what God has to say about wealth, then you go to a guy who's had it all and then the guy that God puts in front of us, and He has him write a book so that we might know His opinion. Billy Graham, years ago, said if a person gets his attitude towards money straightened out, everything else in his life will straighten out too. He saw that as a controlling interest.

So, this morning in our study, Solomon spends time talking to us about wealth and the wisdom about wealth that we should know as Christians - starting with his observation about poverty.

And we'll give you four points to think about this morning - starting with this first one: poverty is all around us. Verse 8 says this, "If you see the oppression of the poor, and the violent perversion of justice and righteousness in a province, do not marvel at the matter; for high official watches over high official, and higher officials are over them. Moreover the profit of the land is for all; even the king is served from the field." He starts by saying, "Look, if you see the oppression of the poor and violent perversions of justice, that shouldn't surprise you. Do not marvel at that." Solomon says, "It's just the way the world works. A higher authority watches over things for his own benefit. He doesn't watch over for the benefit of the poor or the people that he is serving. Because of sin and the way that man is, position is used for gain. And if that isn't bad enough, there's always someone higher than he watching over him, as well, for the same purpose - to get gain and benefit. And you can trace it all the way to the top - to the king himself." The reality is, in the world, that those in power will most often serve themselves

while the poor are the casualties of everyone else striving for personal gain at almost every level. It's just the way it is, and Solomon uses the words, "Don't be surprised." "Man, did you see what they're doing?" "Don't be surprised." "Have you read what the Congress is...?" "Don't be surprised. Don't be surprised." In every society, the rich rule. They usually are afforded the best education and opportunity. They know how to financially leverage their way through. They assume leadership, and according to Solomon, they will often rule selfishly and even corruptly to serve themselves. It's an observation of life from Solomon in the world. And Solomon says, "If you see this, don't be shocked by it." He's not saying forget about it or ignore it or pretend it doesn't exist or even approve of it. That's not what he's saying, but he says, "It's just the way it is." He is saying that every form of human government will be so structured that man's selfishness will drive it to that point, and the poor will be oppressed, and the rich will be favored, and that's just life in the world. And it's very difficult to argue with that. You get Obamacare. The Congressmen have voted they don't get it. The sequestering issue on the news today is all about who suffers. I guarantee who won't suffer - the politicians. It's just the way it is. Don't be surprised. "Don't marvel," says Solomon - at all. No matter how abusive or how abused you have been, don't be surprised because that's the way it is in the world.

Now, verse 9 tells us that everyone from pauper to king, though, is, in reality, dependent upon their sustenance from the land - a reference, if you will, to the reduction of everyone in power to their dependence upon God to bring rain, to cause growth, to bear fruit. Ultimately, we are dependent upon God. They don't see that. We should. And no matter how you have suffered in this life, God will eventually be answered to by every man, but don't marvel that you see this in the world. You and I should be different. We should live differently, certainly, because God has delivered us from covetousness. That's something that His Spirit would like to rid us of. And that self-drive that pushes ahead these high and higher authorities to only serve themselves, God's people value spiritual things. That's our interest, right? We're interested in eternal things over the temporal. God has given us a heart of compassion for the poor. Jesus said in Matthew 26:11, "For you have the poor with you always." That's not an approval, but it's a word of fact, knowing the corruption of man. You're always going to have the poor. However, the Bible is filled with injunctions for the saints to do their best to alleviate the poverty of those that you can - to make a difference. And certainly the people of God are called to help out - not to give handouts, necessarily alone, but to bring people to a saving knowledge of God. David was able to write in Psalm

37:25, I have never seen "his descendants begging bread." You give your life to the Lord, God will begin to provide for you and guide you. But the Bible is filled with injunctions for the church to care about the poor, and yet, in the world Solomon sees it differently. The Proverbs 31 woman "extends her hand to the poor" (verse 20). "Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. She extends her hand to the poor." (verses 10 and 20). Paul, meeting with the leadership in Jerusalem, received their right hand of fellowship to go to the Gentiles, but they said, "There's only one thing we ask of you. Don't forget the poor". And Paul said, "No, no, no. I am more than happy to remember the poor." And he mentions that there in Galatians 2:10.

So, look, we live in a fallen world ruled by sinful men, which should tell us that whatever government we find ourselves under, it will be fallen as well. And though one form of government might be preferred to others, all of them are pretty inadequate, and Solomon says, "Don't marvel" because you really can't expect more from a world that's living and being driven in sin. It doesn't matter who you elect. They're going to fail. No matter who you're for, they're going to let you down. They're not going to measure up. God's chosen form of government is not a democracy. It's a theocracy - where He rules. He makes the rules, He applies them, He gives the orders, He makes the laws, He calls the shots. But that's coming, and then we'll be satisfied. Until then, we have to walk with God.

Even in the Law, there was great provision made for the poor and for the needy. You were told, for example, in Leviticus (19:10) that if you were a landowner and you were harvesting a crop, that you shouldn't pick every fruit off every tree or off of every hanging branch. You should leave some behind so that the poor could later come through your fields and glean it - not give them welfare in the sense of doing nothing, but give them an opportunity to work and to gain and to maintain their self respect. It was an option that was to be provided through the Law. You can't eradicate poverty, but you can help. So, in the world Solomon says, "It's not a surprise." People are getting the short end of the stick, but it shouldn't be so among us. And here are a couple of things you might think about in verses 8 and 9 - in terms of personal responsibility. Notice he said, "If you see it, don't be surprised." I would say to you, when it comes to people that are hurting, see it rather than ignore it. I don't know if you've ever spent five minutes driving around your neighborhood and finding places where people are struggling. You shouldn't ignore it. You should see it. How can you help? Lord, what would you have me to do? You have blessed me so. Maybe there's another city nearby. There's a

country. There's a place that you go, and folks are hurting, and you're committed to letting God use you. See it rather than ignore it.

Second of all, verse 8, Solomon says, "Don't marvel." Respond is better than react. Marvel is a reaction like, "Oh, my God. Look what's going on!" That's a reaction. Reactions are useless. Planned responses are far better than knee-jerk reactions. So often people see homeless folks on the street, and they react. "Well, let me give you a few dollars to make me feel better about me." You don't know where that money's going. It could just make things worse. Is that really the best way that you could help? Maybe there's a better way. And so, I think there's something to be said for us being wise, you know? Will you work for food? Will you come and clean? Can I drive you to the unemployment office? Do you need some clothes to go on a job interview? If you really want help.....and a lot of folks don't. You'd be surprised how many folks just are satisfied doing nothing.....then come. It drove us to have the Thrift Store. We just think it's been so helpful to so many folks. It's been such a blessing.

And notice in verse 8 as well that it talks about the high official watching over the other official and even down to the king in verse 9. You should elect officials rather than elect to be uninvolved. I am not a big proponent of politics in the pulpit because the only politician I'm voting for is Jesus because He has never let me down. He's coming again, He's going to rule forever. So I'm gonna vote for the one who's gonna win. I like picking winners. He's gonna win. On the other hand, personally I have worked in campaigns, written letters on behalf of Congressmen, written letters to my Congressman. I think there's an absolute responsibility that you should have personally to pursue the Lord in those things. I just think the church is not the place for it, and so we avoid it here. But if you don't vote, you can hardly complain. If you don't get involved, how can you grumble? So, elect those who are best representative of who you believe represent best God's heart. Don't stand on the sidelines. So, poverty is all around us. That's what Solomon sees.

Second of all, verses 10-12, prosperity will never satisfy us. "He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance with increase. This also is vanity." Emptiness, it goes nowhere. "When goods increase, they increase who eat them; so what profit have the owners except to see them with their eyes? The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep." Now the Bible says much about

money, earning, investments, hard diligent work and its rewards. In fact, Jesus goes into great details about money and our attitude towards it. If you take every verse in the gospels - 16 1/2 % of them revolve around income, wealth, ownership and attitude towards it. It's just the examples that the Lord uses more than anything else because it hits so close to home with us. One terrible misconception is that wealth brings satisfaction. Though wealth, in and of itself, is not evil, we are told in Timothy (1 Timothy 6:10) that the love of it is, or the preoccupation with it is. Solomon says here in verse 10 that loving money will bring no satisfaction. "If you love silver, you're not gonna be satisfied. If you love abundance, you're never gonna be satisfied there. And since it is the loving of it, rather than the having of it that's the real problem, the warning is to both rich and poor. It's about loving wealth. David was wealthy. He wrote in Psalm 62:10, "If riches increase, do not set your heart on them." Don't let that be your life or that which drives your life.

God, after all, ultimately will determine what you have or do not have. There are certainly hard-working, honest, godly folks in the world who never have much money. There are those who are slackers and hate God that are extremely wealthy. Ultimately it falls in His jurisdiction - other than the diligence being called upon and the hard work and not sitting on the sidelines - but beyond that, it is the Lord's determination that drives us. So we're told to work hard and to do what we can - that there's attached a reward to those who labor hard. "In all labor there is profit," we read in Proverbs 14:23. Or in Proverbs 13:4 it says, "the soul of the diligent shall be made rich." "The hand of the diligent will make you rich" (Proverbs 10:4). There's some profit to be found in diligence, and yet, nowhere in the Bible will you find that the motivation for that hard work is to be gain. It should always be to honor the Lord, to be a witness for Him, to do all things well for His glory. And then, if riches come as a result, you're not taken in by them because that was never your goal. Your goal was - honor the Lord. And then you can be a good steward of what God gives you.

Abraham was an extremely wealthy guy. He had 318 people living in his house - to take care of him. Right? Household servants. How many of you have 318 household servants? None of you. Job was extremely wealthy. He lost it for a time of testing. But in the end, God gave back to a faithful man twice what he had, and those riches were directly attached to the blessing from God. Joseph was one of the richest men who lived. He was second in control of the world. None of them

loved money. They loved the Lord. And that's the distinction. Wealth will not produce satisfaction.

We have popular TV shows today, especially the reality TV shows which have gotten so popular, all driven by money. It started with the "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?" show. You might remember that. Now there's "Survivor" that's on twice a year - for a million dollars. Folks that sing for recording contracts, "American Idol," "The Voice," "X Factor." Just sign me, man! I want to be popular, and I want to be rich. What would you do for a million dollars?

To the lost, money and gain are what Christ should be to the believer. To the lost, money and gain are what Christ should be to the believer. He should be what you desire more than anything else - what you strive for, what you long for. They, who trust in money as their refuge and their hope; you and I, who trust in Him. And Solomon, the billion-and-a-half-a-year man is here to tell us, and he should know, that money's not it. He told us a few weeks ago that we were made by God with eternity in our hearts (chapter 3:11), and no temporal goal or gathering will satisfy us. We're made by our Manufacturer to find satisfaction in nothing else than Him. That's how you were created. That's how you were made. So when Jesus comes along, and He says in Luke 12:15, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses," hear Him! Your life is not what you have, not what you own, not what you've bought. To love money or gain or wealth is to love something which can never satisfy you or return the favor of your commitment. It's never going to give you back what you gave to it. It's just going to take life from you.

There is another misconception in verse 11 about wealth, and that is that wealth solves every problem. "Man, if I had money, I'd be set!" In reality, wealth creates problems. When the rich become rich, mysteriously they find they had friends they'd never knew and offers to help manage that money and spend that money and account for that money. Phone calls from people you haven't seen in years, descending upon your life like vultures. Taxes, alarms, insurances, new suit, bigger car, better neighborhood, fancier haircut. "I got stuff to do! My life has become extremely complicated." And Solomon says here, at the end of verse 11, "At best, the owner gets to watch his riches for a time as they fly out the American Express door. And they spend more and more time paying those who are now part of the team." "This is now what I have. I've got a guy to clean my house, and a guy to cut my lawn, and a guy to paint the window, and I've got a guy to take the car out, and

I've got a guy".....and boy you got guys. No, those guys got you now. And that's what Solomon says. "When goods increase, so do those increase who eat them. So what profit does the owner have? Well, he just gets to see that he has it." It doesn't solve every problem.

Thirdly, the misconception that wealth brings is that it brings peace of mind. "I don't need to worry about where I'm going to get my money to pay for what I want." What does verse 12 say? "The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much. He sleeps just fine. But the guy who's abundant, the rich man, that abundance keeps him from sleeping." The more you own, the more you have to worry about. I know that somehow we don't have a hold of this as a concept very well. We think, truly, as we're young - just gotta get wealthy, gotta work hard, gotta lay up, gotta get ahead. Then you get there and go, "Man, there's a lot of problems." Solomon had it all. But here's what Solomon says, "The guy who is simple and works 8 to 5 and punches the clock and just gets by is satisfied in his life. He can sleep every night. But the rich guy, he is constantly laying awake worrying about what he has." You might covet a rich man's life. But the rich man could very well be coveting yours. "Oh, I wish I could just live that easy life. Simple life. Hard work. Come home. Love the kids. Eat the dinner. Watch TV. Go to sleep. Sleep like a baby." Not the rich. They're up day and night - pursuits and lawsuits, ventures and investments, handlers and overseers, lawyers and holdings. "No sleep for me."

John D. Rockefeller, at 53 years old, was the only billionaire of his time. He was the first billionaire - at least modern. And his salary at that point, at 53, was a million dollars a week. It's a lot of money in 1953. Well, it's a lot of money today. But imagine sixty years ago. He was a devout Baptist. His favorite quotes were always from Wesley. But he wrote in one of his books, "Gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can." And man did he give like few others in history. Here's a poem that he wrote at 86 years old - "I was early taught to work as well as play, my life has been one long, happy holiday. For all full of work and full of play, I dropped the worry on the way. And God was good to me every day." He died at 98, or just short of 98 - 97.9.

Poverty is all around us. Prosperity will not satisfy us. Third point - productivity could ruin us, verse 13. "There is a severe evil which I have seen under the sun: riches kept for their owner to his hurt. But those riches perish through misfortune; when he begets a son, there is nothing in his hand. As he came from

his mother's womb, naked shall he return, to go as he came; and he shall take nothing from his labor which he may carry away in his hand. And this also is a severe evil - just exactly as he came, so shall he go. And what profit has he who has labored for the wind? All his days he also eats in darkness, and he has much sorrow and sickness and anger." Verse 13 - another misconception about wealth - it provides security. And yet here Solomon writes riches that are kept or hoarded by the owner, to serve himself, turn into extreme hurt - to his hurt, an evil. Solomon calls it a "severe evil" - someone who gets wealthy and it's all about me, myself and I, and it isn't long before that security that he has is no longer his security. Hoarding riches is extremely destructive, and it's oftentimes what leads to great misfortune. So much so, Solomon says, that by the time this hoarder of wealth for himself has a child, he really has nothing to leave him. All of that wealth comes and goes in one generation. There's nothing left for the heir. In fact, he writes in verse 14, "Misfortune awaits him." Trouble, affliction, sadness and grief.

We've seen it recently, right? A dip in the Dow, a bad investment, a turn in the housing market, a collapse of a bank - and the rich aren't so rich anymore. In fact, now there's just not enough to pass along to the kids. That's the way wealth works. Remember MC Hammer - "Can't Touch This" - remember that guy? Thirty million bucks he made in the early nineties. He was a quick wonder, wasn't he? So he purchased a \$12 million mansion, he had a 200-person staff, he had a 40-person entourage he went everywhere with, and he had to file for bankruptcy. Mike Tyson, one of the most feared boxers in modern times, earned \$400 million or so in his career - but he had to have the mansions and the wild animals run on the property and the large entourage. And then he had some shady management company, an expensive divorce, and he filed in 2003 for bankruptcy. He made \$400 million; he was in debt \$27 million. "I need more!" Do you?

The very pursuit of wealth that promises security can become your ruin - which is why the Bible tells us to have a light touch in the world, not to have that be our goal. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then God will add what you need to your life. Or that 1 Timothy 6:9 verse about "those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition." That applies to everyone. Money is a good servant. It's a terrible taskmaster.

In 1929, if you go back and read of the times of the Great Depression, many business executives committed suicide because they couldn't handle losing it all. There was a fellow in the 1929 newspapers who had a house fire, and he ran into his burning house to get his expensive painting, and he died. Really? There was a woman, recently, who was an owner of a safe deposit box in Europe that had \$750,000 in cash and all of her jewelry, and the bank was robbed, and her safe deposit box was one of the ones that was taken. And on the news she declared, "My whole life was in that box!" Well, if your whole life is in that box, then there's a great chance you may lose it all.

Solomon called it a "severe evil." He said it in verse 13. He says it again in verse 16. "Severe evil" - not just evil - severe. And what he says, when he turns in verses 15, 16 and 17 is, "You can lose stuff here, but that stuff only lasts for a while. What is worse is if you lose eternity." Right? If you leave this place - that in the process of chasing the temporal, you lose life itself. And so Solomon takes us to the ultimate reality of life - to death, to the funeral of the hoarder - whose life was his possessions which so filled his heart and mind and brought him, what he thought, satisfaction. And he says in verse 16, and in verse 15 as well, "You're not carrying anything away. You're gonna leave exactly how you showed up. What profit is then if your whole life has been laboring for the wind? You're just gonna now eat in darkness and have much sorrow and sickness and anger." Paul said to Timothy (1 Timothy 6:7), "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." That's a pretty sobering reality, isn't it? You're not going to be able to take it with you. Once you die, that's it. If you look at a dollar sometime - I won't have you take it out, you'll think we're taking an offering but we're not - but you look at it later. (Laughing) On the back corner of a dollar bill, there's an eagle with wings. I look at it, and it always reminds me of Proverbs 23:5, and it says this, "Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle toward heaven." Remember that. Every time you look at that dollar. You're not going to have that for long. Proverbs 23:5. Let that burn in your head - Proverbs 23:5. And yet many people will forsake ministry and spiritual fruit to gain some temporal income, and then they will die. And Solomon said that's that "severe evil." Money talks - it says goodbye. (Laughing)

Finally, point four, verses 18-20, priorities will preserve us. Verse 18, "Here is what I have seen:" Solomon says "It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of

his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage. As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor - this is the gift of God. For he will not dwell unduly on the days of his life, because God keeps him busy with the joy of his heart." Now here's Solomon's counsel. He calls it, in verse 18, "good and fitting." Literally, "Here are some proper priorities for us." Verse 18 - the priority of enjoyment. God does want you filled with joy. The Bible is filled with that truth. And if your lot in life is to be a laborer, and you're never going to be wealthy - it's just your way, and this is where God has placed you - then enjoy that place. Serve God. Don't long for another place. Long for Him. You get opportunity to move forward, great; but never to the extent of losing your sight upon serving the Lord. Even he says here in verses 19 and 20, "If God gives you riches and wealth and the power to enjoy them, realize that they are gifts from God so that you can find your joy and pleasure not in what God temporarily gives you but to know Him. Be busy serving God, who is the joy of your heart. Receive all He gives you with blessing accordingly, and be thankful." So, there's a priority of enjoyment. God wants you to be filled, not always chasing a carrot. "Oh, I've only had, I wish I had that.....Ooohhh" - always living like that. No, no. Enjoy what God has done.

There's a priority of contentment. We have to learn to be content. Paul said to the Philippians in chapter 4:11-13, "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." And Paul went on to say in Philippians that contentment has nothing to do with what you have, but it depends on who you know. So Paul said, "I've had a lot, and I've had a little. I'm content either way." So enjoying the simple things in life and whatever portion God gives you is a gift to you. Be satisfied. Be at rest. Because what you have is eternal riches, don't you? You have a relationship with God through His Son. You lack nothing! So quit complaining. Be content. Rejoice. Be at rest. The complainer certainly brings dishonor and shame to the Shepherd. And the world's certainly not going to want what you have if all you do is complain. I think it was David who said, "The LORD is my Shepherd." What's the next part? "I shall not want." I shall not want. "The LORD is my Shepherd. I shall not want." (Psalm 23:1) That's a spiritual truth. Jesus said in John 10:10, "I've come to give you life, that much more abundantly," and that's not a physical statement.

So let me ask you something this morning. What you have - is it enough? Is it enough? And when will it be enough? And what do you do with what you have? How do you go about using it? Do you serve yourself with endless created needs and wants? Move up the ladder, more expensive purses, more expensive shoes, more expensive everything? Or do you just say, "Lord, thank You for putting me in this spot. What do you want me to do now?" We see how the world treats those who have not. We certainly see the investments and personal gain. Do you give generously, or do you have just a simple heart of wanting to hoard it and keep it close to the vest? Will you invest in spiritual works? Or are you just interested in having what you have now believed you deserve because you've worked so hard for it, and "the world owes me all that I've got?" It's a gift from God. That's what I read. And He alone is to be the joy of my heart.

Read verse 20 again. "He will not dwell unduly on the days of his life." Why? "Because God keeps him busy with the joy of his heart." If you live like that, you'll never regret your choices when you get to the end of your life. I'm not going to unduly be caught up in this life. I'm going to pursue the joy of my heart - to serve the Lord. Paul will write to the Hebrews in chapter 13:5, "Live your life without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have." It all depends on what kingdom you're interested in - yours or His. You know, there are some who live predominantly for this kingdom. They rarely end up in church, and if they are, they're out of here as quickly as possible, and yet they will spend hours pursuing life in the world. It's terrible. Sad. What you have is His gift. And you can have it as you place Him first as the joy of your heart, and the Lord will meet every need. There are all of these misconceptions. Solomon saw it in the world. Someone once said, "Money is like manure. If you pile it up, it'll stink. If you spread it out, it'll make things grow." I don't know.

Let me read to you this one last little thing. This is your dollar speaking to you - George Washington. Here's George, the guy with the eagle on the side. Money. What is it? Proverbs what? 23:5. You'll remember. Here's what George would tell you this morning. "You hold me in your hand and call me yours. But may I not as well call you mine? See how easily I rule you. To gain me, you would all but die. I am invaluable as rain, essential as water. Without me, both men and institutions would die even though I do not hold the power of life for them. I am futile without the stamp of your desire. I go nowhere unless you send me. For me, men will mock love and scorn character. And yet, I am appointed to the service of the saints in their charge to make Him known. I can provide education to the growing, food to

the starving bodies of the poor, and I am set to provide the good news of the gospel to a lost and dying world. My power is terrific. But handle me carefully and wisely lest you become my servant rather than I become yours." I think Solomon might have said, "Amen" to that.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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