



The Vanity of Acquiring Riches – Ecclesiastes 4:7-8

7 Again, I saw vanity under the sun: 8 one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, “For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?” This also is vanity and an unhappy business.

The choices that we make throughout our lives often involve a trade-off between the building up of familial and other personal relationships and the building up of a professional career. That is not to say that the two are mutually exclusive. It is just to note that we have a finite amount of time to invest where we chose and what we nurture through that investment of time may well mean that we are not able to invest in other places that we might otherwise like to have invested.

When we chase after material wealth, we seem to think that having just a little more will make us satisfied. Yet, when asked people at every income level have that same belief. Just a little more. The trouble is that every little more plants the seed in us to desire just a little more again and again. We never seem to reach the point where we find satisfaction.

Solomon talks about “one person who has no other” in v. 7. This person has wealth but no one to share it with. In v. 8, Solomon notes the reflection of such a person asking, “For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?” May very successful people look back on their lives regretfully after having chased after wealth at the expense of relationships with friends and family. It can leave one with a rather hollow feeling to have chased after professional fulfillment only to question the vanity of such a pursuit. Like Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, surrounded by material wealthy yet utterly alone, the wealth may find that this chasing after material wealth and success lacks any true and lasting ability to satisfy.

The reverse is also often true. Mission trip experiences have revealed to many youth and adults how the people that they came to serve, who seem to have so very little, are some of the happiest people that they have ever met. Rather than seeking satisfaction from material wealth, these people instead find more lasting happiness by trusting God more directly to sustain them and those that they love. This does not mean that wealth or the lack thereof is the primary issue, but rather how we arrange our priorities.

Thoughts for Reflection

How can you best maintain your priorities and put God, family, and friends on your list in a way that brings lasting fulfillment?