

October 23, 2018  
Sermon for the Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
Ecclesiastes 5:10-20

*J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus*

Ecclesiastes 5:10–20 (ESV)

<sup>10</sup> He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. <sup>11</sup> When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, <sup>14</sup> and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. <sup>15</sup> As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand. <sup>16</sup> This also is a grievous evil: just as he came, so shall he go, and what gain is there to him who toils for the wind? <sup>17</sup> Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger. <sup>18</sup> Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. <sup>19</sup> Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God. <sup>20</sup> For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Jack was a man who lived a life of great material success. He had served valiantly in World War II and, like so many of that great generation, returned home to his wife and children and became a businessman. Jack came to believe that life was a game called "Whoever dies with the most toys wins." For him, the evidence of his value was that he drove the best and biggest car in town. If someone else had a bigger car, he would head to the dealership and get a newer, better one. It all ended quite sadly, however. One day, he left the ignition on while opening the trunk and, in a freak accident, the car slipped from park to reverse and ended his life. The very possession that characterized his life, the biggest car available, ultimately took his life. If the meaning of life is found in any of our possessions, then we are in trouble.

We human beings all want to find meaning for our lives. The things of this world can be quite alluring and tempting as tangible proof that our lives have meaning.

It's sort of shocks us when the writer of Ecclesiastes condemns all our efforts with the rather strong "vanity." And we don't really like it. In other words, all is absolutely meaningless if God is excluded in our lives. But when He is present, in place of hopelessness and death, God enables us to know the meaning of life.

Is meaning only in earthly treasures that are seen?

Is meaning known by our search for peace?

There are exceptions, but most of us do not want a life of conflict. We would rather have a life that is peaceful and quiet. We want to be at peace with ourselves and others. Why invite conflict if everything is going fine?

And our culture holds up financial success as the key to peace—if you have enough of the things of this world, you will be insulated from conflict. You'll have nothing to worry about. But our materialistic culture proves this to be wrong. After all, how much is enough? Just a little bit more.

Money does not buy peace with others—in fact, it can increase conflict.

Ecclesiastes says: “*When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes?*” (v 11).

An interviewer spoke with several lottery winners after they had won their prizes. An elderly woman who had once won the lottery and went from a modest income to being a millionaire shared her story. She commented on how many long-lost relatives she had rediscovered since winning the money. So many, in fact, that she moved and had to shut off her phone service just to have some peace from others.

Money can't buy money buy internal peace either.

Ecclesiastes warns us, “*The full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep*” (v 12b).

When earthly possessions are the most important part of a person's life, they can quickly take over one's mind and bring restlessness and worry and sleepless nights. As I mentioned earlier, it seems that we can never have enough wealth or possessions. And

it seems like the more possessions that we have, the more we worry about them.

All the riches of this world cannot buy peace. "*Meaningless,*" says Ecclesiastes.

So is our meaning known by our search for eternity?

We have all seen buildings and monuments that bear the name of the wealthy person who gave the money to erect the building. All of the millionaires from the 18 & 1900's liked to build buildings with their names on them. Some still do today.

The thing about these structures is that they do not last forever. They will crumble and fall and, on the Last Day, be destroyed with all the earth. Some don't even last that long. (Trump Tower in Panama City)

So much for money buying anything eternal! "*Meaningless,*" says Ecclesiastes.

What about leaving a legacy of wealth for a person's descendants?

Some set up trust funds for their children and grandchildren so that their wealth can continue past their own lives. Ecclesiastes reminds us that he has seen where "*riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand*" (v 14).

Look at Europe. On the continent, there are descendants of once wealthy nobility who today possess grand titles but whose family fortunes have been lost for generations.

All this is "*meaningless,*" says Ecclesiastes.

We all have heard the expression: “you take it with you”. Another expression says: “Have you ever seen a trailer hitch on a hearse?” Although, I have seen one of those.

As Ecclesiastes puts it, “*As he came from his mother’s womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand*” (v 15).

All the riches of this world cannot buy eternity. “*Meaningless,*” says Ecclesiastes. So what is at the root of all this “meaninglessness” of earthly possessions? Does that mean that wealth and earthly possessions are bad? Well of course not. They are blessings from God that He expects us to be good stewards of while we are on this earth.

Remember the words of our text, “*He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity*” (v 10).

There is that key word, “love”—that is, not “love” as a mere affection or emotion, but as devotion that reflects God’s love for us in the love we are to bear to Him. When we replace our love and trust in God for our love and trust in money is where the problem begins.

One of the most misquoted verses of Scripture is 1 Tim 6:10, which is wrongly cited as “money is the root of all evil.” In fact, Paul wrote that “*the love of money*” is the root of all evil.

And so it is. Whatever one trusts in and loves so much that it is the most important thing in his or her life has become that person’s god. Remember the catechism

on the First Commandment, “*You shall have no other gods.*” What does this mean? “We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.”

This is the heart of the problem in a search for the meaning of life. How you answer the question “Who or what is your god?” makes all the difference in whether life even has meaning.

Is meaning in treasures that are not seen?

True peace is, in fact, meaningful. If money doesn't bring peace, then what does?

Our earthly possessions are not in and of themselves evil. “*Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God*” (v 19).

All that we have is a gift from God. To know this is to understand that all good things are gifts to be enjoyed. After all, we confess, “I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,” and in so confessing we acknowledge that God's creation is good.

You see, to enjoy real peace is possible only through knowing that God is at peace with you. And this is His greatest gift: the gift of His Son's words “*Peace be with you.*”

No, not peace as the world thinks of peace, but peace with Him.

The peace of God isn't bought with silver or gold. Rather, it is bought with something far more precious—the holy, precious blood of Jesus.

Eternal things are indeed meaningful.

An earthly life lived in God's peace cannot and will not be tied to things that perish. You have an eternal soul, and that eternal soul is bound to the eternal God. God has loved you and has bound your life to that of His own Son.

In Baptism, you were bound to the Son of God in all that He is.

His earthly life was not one of earthly riches; He was, after all, born in a stable, and His only possession, His garment, became the prize for a game of lots played by the soldiers who crucified Him.

It could have been very different if Jesus had come as He deserved but His earthly life was not one of selfish gain, but of sacrificial giving of Himself to the poor, the needy, the hurting, the afflicted.

In Baptism, you were bound to Christ and his righteousness replacing your unrighteousness. The shedding of His innocent blood frees you and me and the world from condemnation. Even His lifeless body was placed in a tomb He did not own, given by another.

But that tomb could never hold Him, for He is the Lord of Life. On Easter morning, the angels' words changed all eternity for you and me: "*He is not here. He has risen!*"

So Christ is Risen!

And He who rose again even now intercedes for you as your great High Priest.

His salvation became your story, your victory, your life in and through the water of Baptism.            So what, finally, is the meaning of life?

It can never be discovered in possessions, whether they are great or small.

It is found only in that which brings peace and eternity: to know God as your heavenly Father who embraces you through the love of His Son revealed by the Spirit in Word and Sacrament.

The God who created you and redeemed you does not wait for you to discover the meaning of life by looking for Him. No, His love is far greater than that.            He searches and finds you!

No matter who you are, how confused your priorities may be, or how much you have trusted in your possessions and substituted them for God as the object of your love—He is even now, reaching out to you! By the power of His Holy Spirit in His Word!

He engulfs you with His baptismal water.            He speaks with the sweetest words a sinful human being can hear: “Your sins are forgiven.”            He invites you to a meal that brings His own marriage feast to you right where you are as He gives you His body and blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of your sins!

So what is the meaning of life? It is not in the silver and gold of this world or the things they buy.            It is in knowing God and His goodness and grace that keep you every day and fill your life with hope, peace, and joy that last to eternity.

Whether you have much or little of this world's wealth, you have the wealth that matters, for you have God your Father embracing you through the love of His Son established by the Holy Spirit. And that gives meaning to everything!

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!

Amen.

*S. D. G - Soli Deo Gloria*

To God alone be glory

### **Sermon Outline**

#### **The Meaning of Life**

#### **Ecclesiastes 5:10-20**

1. Is meaning in earthly treasures that are seen?
2. Is meaning known by our search for eternity?
3. Is meaning in treasures that are not seen?