

# Everything Minus God Equals Nothing

Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

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Introduction: On October 29th, 1929, the United States Stock Market plummeted to an all time low. Along with other factors, the drop in the stock market spiraled the nation into what is know as the Great Depression. The U.S. economy has experienced other drastic economic downturns. None quite as long lasting. But in October of 1987 and as recent as 2008 the economy has experienced crisis leading to many people losing substantial portions of wealth and possessions. Many of you may have experienced tremendous loss during the 08 recession. There were many people during these times who felt their only way out of crisis was to end their life. For example, in the 1930's the mortality rate was on the rise. Meaning, people were living longer. However, the suicide rate in the U.S. saw the largest increase it had seen up to that point. **What is the point? There are a vast majority of people who put their identity in stuff. But the point that we will see from Ecclesiastes this morning is the we can have it all by the world's standards, but if we don't have God, then we really have nothing.**

Main Point: Only God can bring satisfaction and understanding to our hearts.

Breakdown: 3 Insufficiencies

1. The Insufficiency of prominence. v. 1-6
  - A. There are several examples that are invoked here that depict prominence, wealth and influence. Solomon is writing to talk about the evil that exists of not enjoying the things that God has given.
  - B. Verses 1-2. Bear in mind that these verses are still in the same context of chapter 5 and the warnings about loving money. In this passage we are confronted with the reality that enjoyment in these things can only happen if God intervenes. **Derek Kidner is particularly helpful: The verses do communicate God ignoring violating the rights of man, rather God is exposing the depth of man's need.**<sup>1</sup> We need God. The person who has it all and lacks

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<sup>1</sup> Derek Kidner, The Message of Ecclesiastes from The Bible Speaks Today series, page 60.

nothing, but does not have God, trust God, or believe God actually has nothing. We need God to intervene in our lives to find satisfaction and understanding. That intervention is primarily our need for the gospel and salvation.

- C. Verse 3. Solomon speaks about a man fathering 100 children. In that day, children were a sign of wealth and security. The more children, the more people there were to care for you, your land, and your resources as you age. Solomon, of course, is speaking in hyperbole to make his point clear. He also refers to length of life. That a man would live many days to the point where he may live forever. **There is dispute over where the expression he has no burial belongs.** I am inclined to think that Solomon is again invoking a hyperbole to make his point. He then brings in a shocking comparison. **The still born child is better off than the man who has many years or no death but does not find satisfaction or enjoyment in life.** How?
  - D. Verses 4 and 5 explain that the still born child has not experienced the appetite of this life. The still born has only known the dark safety of the mother's womb and the dark rest of the grave. **What this is not saying: the passage is not saying that the loss of infant life is good or not a tragedy.** Solomon is invoking a comparison. Verse 5 also speaks to the rest that the still born finds. Remember, in verse 3, the comparison is about the soul of the one who has it all. **I am inclined to think that still born finds rest for the soul in eternity where as the one who dies apart from God has no rest.**
  - E. Verse 6. No matter how many years we have on this earth, life leads us to one place—death. We are all going to die. Our bodies will be placed in a grave. The looming question: where is our eternal destination.
  - F. Transition: what does it profit a man to gain the world and lose his soul (Mark 8:36)? The most important thing we can find is rest for our souls. Do you know how we do that—in Christ alone. Jesus is the one who gives us peace (John 14:27). Prominence is not the only thing insufficient to save.
2. The Insufficiency of a Satisfied Appetite. v. 7-9
- A. Verse 7. The example is quite clear. We work so that we can buy food to feed our hungry stomach. But eventually our stomachs will hunger again. Around and around the cycle goes.

- B. Verse 8. Solomon makes this even more pointed here where he clarifies how ubiquitous this vanity is. It does not matter how wise you are or how foolish you are, your stomach will hunger and your toil will be in large part to satisfy your appetite. Solomon says that this too is vanity. Sight is better.
  - C. Verse 9. To see something connotes a type of possession or ownership. There is coming a day where our faith will become sight. For now, we must be contented to walk by faith knowing that in this life we will not know the fullness of the joy of our relationship with God. **(2 Corinthians 5:7, Habakkuk 2:4).**
  - D. Transition: to one day see and be satisfied is far better than the appetite that will wander from vain activity to vain activity. Rest in the promise of Ecclesiastes 5:18-20, it is good to find enjoyment in life and be occupied by joy as we rest in Jesus and in Jesus alone. For every other attempt at satisfaction will fall short.
3. The Insufficiency of Knowledge. v. 10-12
- A. Verse 10. The picture here is the refrain Solomon has used before that there is nothing new under the sun. There is no new knowledge. There is no new power. There is no new evil. There may be new platforms to display evil. But there is nothing new. **Man is not able to contend with He who is mightier.** There is likely a play on words here. The Hebrew word for man is the word *Adám*. It is likely that Solomon is referencing the very beginning of time Adam could not contend with God (the one mightier) and neither can we.
  - B. Verse 11. The more words we spill trying to contend with God, the more vanity. What advantage does this have. The implied answer is absolutely nothing. There is no advantage in knowledge. There is no advantage in feeling like we have gained something new. **Why? Because people have been trying and failing in that venture since Adam and because there is nothing new under the sun.**
  - C. Verse 12. Invokes a question about what comes next. Verse 12 draws our attention to the brevity of life and what is good in life. Solomon has already answered these questions for us back in 5:18-20. These verses serve as a transition where Solomon will begin talking about what really matters for the believer.
  - D. Transition: suffice it to say that God is the one who knows. God is the one who ordains our ways and the days we have on earth. Thus, it is imperative that we yield to Him. All the possessions, all the worldly satisfaction, and all the worldly knowledge is utterly insufficient to answer life's big questions.

Conclusion: let me return to our opening illustration. There have been many people over the years who have thought that they had it all. They thought they had the world by the tail. But when the bottom fell out there was nothing to stand on because their hope was in all the wrong things. What about you? What are you hoping in this morning? What really matters to you? Do you want to know what matters to you? Ask yourself how would I respond if \_\_\_\_\_ was taken from me? My health, my wealth, my position, my family, my ministry, my comfort, my security, etc. if those things were suddenly gone, how would you respond. If the response would be sin or crisis, then we have placed our faith and security in the wrong things and we must repent and run to Jesus.