

PP Ecclesiastes: Satisfaction...How?

Ecclesiastes 6:1-9, Part 6 (p. 554 Pew Bible)

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Musician John Mayer, in his song Something's Missing, sings, **PP** *"I'm dizzy from the shopping mall I searched for joy, but I bought it all; It doesn't help the hunger pains, And a thirst I'd have to drown first to ever satiate; Something's missing, And I don't know how to fix it Something's missing, And I don't know what it is, No I don't know what it is At all... Friends (Check), Money (Check), A well slept (Check), Opposite sex (Check), Guitar (Check), Microphone (Check), Messages waiting on me when I come home (Check) How come everything I think I need, always comes with batteries? What do you think it means?"*

Solomon writes about the universal dilemma with humanity's failure at finding satisfaction And he is about to use the now-familiar technique of spiraling, as he returns to something he said earlier in chapter 2

***"There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from Him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God."* 2:24-26**

Deep, abiding, satisfaction is only available to those who know God, and to those who do not, there'll be a constant **'striving after wind'**, fleeting moments of happiness, no satisfaction Without God, Martin Luther once said, **PP** *"The wicked begin their hell in this life."*

PP 1-The universal experience of dissatisfaction

***"There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind: 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."* 6:1-2**

The evil that Solomon refers to is the inability to be satisfied with what we have It **'lies heavy on mankind'**, likely meaning that it is an inescapable experience for all humanity What we have is given to us by God, and is more than material possessions, but also **'honor'** Are you successful, well-respected, having acquired a fame in life...this too is a gift from God And they are gifts from God to not just His people, but all people in different measures The point of Solomon is that what you have, when you unbox it, has been given to you by God in the exact measure He chooses

Complaining about what you have is a complaint toward the God Who gave it to you But in a world of free choice, in a country of pragmatic options, how can that be?

It's one thing to be born in a caste society like in India, but here in America?

We're told to believe in yourself and work hard and you can get whatever you want

Walt Disney told us, *'If you can dream it, you can do it.'*

Didn't Survivor sing to us that success depends on ourselves...**PP** *"Risin' up, straight to the top, Had the guts, got the glory, Went the distance, now I'm not gonna stop, Just a man and his will to survive, It's the eye of the tiger, it's the dream of the fight"*

But Solomon is saying, Stallone, you may have the Eye of a Tiger, but look at things for one second from God's perspective and you'll see you didn't get your dream from doing sit ups from a Soviet barnloft, and running through snow, it was a gift from God I don't know too many things more at odds in our world than God's sovereign control

So Solomon introduces us to a man who had everything he wanted, yet no satisfaction because God withheld from him one thing...the **'power to enjoy them'**

He's like the donkey forever walking after the dangling carrot but never reaching it I wonder if that donkey ever brays out the Stones', (*I Can't Get No) Satisfaction?*

PP *"I can't get no satisfaction, 'Cause I try and I try and I try and I try, I can't get no, I can't get no"* (what is it with musicians and double negatives??)

Jagger is echoing what threads through the music and movie world...a vain search for satisfaction God had given this man all he wanted, but because He wanted nothing to do with God, he lacked what makes everything we have settle into our souls...satisfaction and contentment He never received power from God to enjoy what he had, simply because He wouldn't have God It is not so much that God held the dog treat too high for the dog to jump, but because God sat down on the couch with a treat in His hand, and the dog refused to come to him to eat

But then something happens: like death, or stock market crash like in 2008, or a Bernie Madoff scheme implodes...and suddenly ***"a stranger enjoys them. This is vanity; it is a grievous evil."***

Whatever happened, this man's honor and possessions hit a roadblock at the grave

Perhaps he retired and then died before he's able to live the 'good life'

Maybe he went from 'America's Dad' to prison like Cosby

The most-heralded college player, to an NFL bust like Johnny Manziel

PP *"We may have life and liberty, but the pursuit of happiness isn't going so well. We constantly hanker after...fatter paychecks-and initially, such things boost our happiness. But the glow of satisfaction quickly fades and soon we're yearning for something else."* Jonathon Clements from Wall Street Journal

PP 2-The cause of dissatisfaction

PP Moviestar Bo Derek once said, *"Whoever said money can't buy you happiness simply didn't know where to go shopping"*

"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. For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered. Moreover, it has not seen the sun or known anything, yet it finds rest rather than he. Even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no good—do not all go to the one place?" 6:3-6

Solomon is brutally honest here...someone who has it all but fails to find satisfaction is worse off than a baby that dies at birth

That baby finds 'rest', which is a reference to eternal life with God

The one who fails to find satisfaction will never experience rest...but will grasp for more and more to fill the soul and fail at every turn

Solomon said, ***'he also has no burial'***, for this man will not be laid to rest, not even in death

If you could ask a person in Solomon's day what was the key to a happy life, the answer would be: *a long life with many children*

So Solomon offers a fictional example of a man with 100 children, and living 2,000 years, but ***'his soul is not satisfied with life's good things'***

There have been many articles written on why rich and successful people are not satisfied, with solutions ranging from meditation, medication to generous donation

But the data is misinterpreted, and in the 17th century, Blaise Pascal had brought it into light

PP *"There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus."* Blaise Pascal

The mad scramble for more, the dissatisfaction with what we have, the belief that we would be happy if we just had (insert name here), it all comes from a soul starving for the only true source of satisfaction...God

I have a Pressure Washer at home, and the problem with them, is that you must run them with water hooked up, and continually spraying out the nozzle

Otherwise, the heat builds up, and often cracks the seals and gaskets

Humanity will break down with a relationship with God, and even Christians will break down without continually walking with Him

This is the curse that God has place on everything 'under the sun'...it must pass to us through the hands of God, or it disintegrates in value

Imagine you receive a large inheritance and it's waiting for you in a bank vault safety box

You go, and the manager takes you back into the vault, points out your box and then leaves

But there's a problem, you don't have a key, or password...the items are not accessible to you

The key to unlock the satisfaction in what we have is the power to enjoy them, and the only way you can get it is through a relationship with God

Solomon goes on to explain that dissatisfaction comes from a bottomless appetite:

"All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied. 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? Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite: this also is vanity and a striving after wind. Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he. The more words, the more vanity, and what is the advantage to man?" 6:7-11

Solomon means far more than a love for food when he said, ***'his appetite is not satisfied'***

The word ***'appetite'*** refers to the desires of the soul and sin inflates desire beyond a level that is right, and healthy, outside of God's boundaries

And this ravenous, insatiable desire is in the wise and the fool, the rich and the poor, all people

But it is so much to want and be satisfied with what you have: ***'Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite'***

Be content with what God has given you!

Maybe Jagger and the Stones learned something, because 4 years after (I can't get) No Satisfaction, they released another song with these lyrics: *"You can't always get what you want. But if you try, sometimes you might just find you get what you need."*
 But of course, the question we want to ask is this: **PP** *How can we learn to be satisfied in life?*

PP 3-The means to find satisfaction

True gain comes one way...when it passes through the hands of God
 When God brings that girlfriend or boyfriend into your life...He brings you gain
 When God moves your boss to give you that raise...He brings you gain
 When God orchestrates an even painful job loss, to prepare you something else...you gain
 Every time or season that passes through God's will to you...that will satisfy your soul
 Listen to a poem by model and actress, Cara Delevingne...

PP *Who am I? Who am I trying to be? Not myself, anyone but myself.
 Living in a fantasy to bury the reality, Making myself the mystery,
 A strong facade disguising the misery. Empty, but beyond the point of emptiness,
 Full to brim with fake confidence, A guard that will never be broken,
 Because I broke a long time ago. I'm hurting but don't tell anyone.
 No one needs to know. Don't show or you've failed.
 Always okay, always fine, always on show. The show must go on.
 It will never stop. The show must not go on, But I know it will.
 I give up. I give up giving up. I am lost. I don't need to be saved, I need to be found.*

The final line of her poem is a cry for relationship, and Solomon would say it is the cry for her soul to know and be known by her Maker

Yet Solomon would tell her, as he does us, that relationship must be on His terms, not ours

"Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he. The more words, the more vanity, and what is the advantage to man?" 6:10-11

God has decreed it all before we came into being and we cannot alter that one bit
 He is sovereign, He is stronger than we are, and no matter how much we complain, or pray for a different outcome, His will stands forever

Our problem with the sovereignty of God is one of distrusting His goodness

God's power must never be separated from His goodness, mercy and grace, or we are left with an all-powerful potential terrorist

And Solomon understands this better than any of us, and appeals to God's attribute of goodness

"For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?"

6:12

The answer is Jesus...He knows what is good for us, for He declared it in the Garden of Eden

He came to earth to declare not only what is good, but what will happen after we die

He knows because He came from heaven, died, came back to life and will return one day for us

Amen?

Pray

