

# THE VANITY OF MATERIALISM

**ECCLESIASTES 6: 1 – 7**  
**BRO. SUNDAY EYANRIN**  
**(EVANGELIST)**

## INTRODUCTION

Solomon's kingdom, Israel, was in its golden age, but Solomon wanted the people to understand that success and prosperity don't last long (*Ps 103:14-16; Isa 40:6-8; Jas 4:14*). All human accomplishments will one day disappear, and we must keep this in mind in order to live wisely. If we don't, we will become either proud and self-sufficient when we succeed or sorely disappointed when we fail.

Solomon's goal was to show that earthly possessions and accomplishments are ultimately meaningless. Only the pursuit of God brings real satisfaction. We should honour God in all we say, think, and do.

### ***Ecclesiastes 6:1-2***

The Preacher's first disappointment related to people's possessions. The satisfaction, he saw, is not guaranteed: *"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 honour, 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"*).

The man in these verses seemed to have it all. Not only was he worth a fortune (he has *"wealth, possessions"*), but he was also famous (he has *"honour"*), which many people value even more highly than money.

Yet for some unspecified reason he was unable to enjoy what he had. Martin Luther called these verses *"a description of a rich man who lacks nothing for a good and happy life and yet does not have one."*

Of course, he means that he lacked nothing as far as earthly possessions or approval is concern, but he lacked a good and happy life because it was not given to him by God.

Unlike the man described at the end of *Ecclesiastes 5*, the man in chapter 6 had the acquisition without the satisfaction. In the end he lost everything, and thus he never had the chance to enjoy what he worked a lifetime to gain.

Perhaps he lost his property in wartime or through theft or threw it away in some risky investment (see **Ecclesiastes 5:13–14**). Maybe he was too sick to make good use of his money or died before he reached retirement (see **Ecclesiastes 2:18**), as many people do. But for some providential reason, someone who seemed to have everything that he could want never had the chance to enjoy it.

Why is Solomon hammering away at the disappointment and frustration of life? Even with money and fame, there is no enjoyment. Why not? Solomon is wanting us to become desperate enough that we will look up and seek our satisfaction in God.

### **Ecclesiastes 6:3-5**

*'If a man beget a hundred children, and live many years so that the days of his years are many, but he is not himself filled with good, and moreover he has no burial. I say that a stillborn child is better than he.*

*For it comes in meaninglessness and departs in darkness, and its name is covered with darkness. Moreover, it has not seen the sun, nor known it. This has rest rather than the other. Yes, even though he lives a thousand years twice told, and yet enjoys no good. Do not all go to one place?'*

The begetting of children was seen as a great blessing (**Psalms 127:3-5**). Here the man has 'a great many children, more than the norm' (the significance of 'a hundred'). A long life was also seen as a blessing (**Deuteronomy 11:21**).

But if his days are not enjoyable and he lacks essential provision or he is bowed down with illness (he 'is not filled with good'), or in some other way his life is not good because for example of family feuds, (and then he adds to make matters worse - '*and has no burial*'), then the baby who dies at birth is better off than he.

And this is true for the man, if during that time he actually receives no 'good', even if he lives for a thousand years and moreover he has no burial.' Not to be buried properly was looked on as something deeply humiliating and to be avoided at all costs (**2 Kings 9:30-37; Isaiah 14:19; Jeremiah 22:19**), and especially for a man with many children, whose responsibility it was to bury him. Perhaps here the thought is that his hundred children were alienated from him and wanted nothing to do with him in the day of his death, adding to his other problems.

So being rich is not always the answer. '*A still birth is better than he. For it comes in meaninglessness and departs in darkness, and its name is covered with darkness. Moreover, it has not seen the sun, nor known it. This has rest rather than the other.*' Such a life is even worse than that of a stillborn child. That is bad enough. The child comes in meaninglessness, and dies in the darkness of the womb, never having seen light, or the sun, and its name is never mentioned.

But it has more rest than this poor rich man. And in the end, they go to the same place, to the place of the dead. Both are the same in the end, it is simply that the stillborn child has escaped the misery.

The lesson is that both these men described had not in the end been given the blessings of God's allotment, even though outwardly it had seemed so, emphasizing again how important to the enjoyment of life was the walk with God. The writer no doubt shared the popular viewpoint that not to be blessed was a sign of not being in right relationship with God.

### ***Ecclesiastes 6:6***

**Even though he should live a thousand years, twice over, yet enjoy no good. Do not all go to the one place.** This verse continues the journey through a fairly bleak outlook on life.

If there is no God, if this life is all there is, and Ecclesiastes chapter six specifically is talking about somebody who has everything this world has to offer. In the very beginning, it talks about a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honour, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires.

Then in verse six, what I read just a minute ago, even though he should live a thousand years, twice over, so he could have all the world offers for a thousand years, and then do it all again. Yet. There's a phrase, yet he enjoys no good. That goes back to verse one where it says, he has all these things, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them.

### ***Ecclesiastes 6:6 Shows Us the Emptiness of This World***

We see the emptiness of things in this world, even the best things in this world, if we separate them from the God who gives us those things and praise and glory and honor and gratitude to God. Things in and of themselves, even good things, are empty apart from the author of those good things.

Then this phrase, do not all go to the one place, this verse is such a clear reminder of how empty life is if this is all there is. If everybody, regardless how much they have or don't have, how much they enjoy those things, or don't enjoy those things, even how wise they are or how foolish they are. The author of Ecclesiastes is saying, in the end, what does it matter if this world is all there is, and we all go to the one place, then to use his language, meaningless, meaningless vanity. It's all vanity.

***Ecclesiastes 6:7, All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied.***

Very literally, the word for appetite is the word for the soul. He's saying all the work we do with our hands is to feed our mouths, to feed our bodies. Yet our soul is not satisfied. We're not talking about physical hunger. We are talking about the

appetite; we are talking about the hunger of our soul for something good. This is not filled. This is not satisfying. No matter what you're able to do in life, you will not satisfy the depths of your soul's craving for good in this world.

So, is there a fix for this? Is there a life hack where maybe we can side skirt this inconvenient reality? And the answer is in verse eight. Well, wisdom isn't the answer. This will be discussed in the next discussion on our series.