

Put Money in its Place

✠ not a lord to serve (vv.10-17)

✠ a resource for serving the Lord (vv.18-20)

In the name of Jesus, our heart's greatest Treasure, dear fellow redeemed:

Ah, "the American dream" – *If only...! If only I could win the lottery! If only I was born into a rich family! If only I had my health! If only I had a second chance at marriage...raising my kids...getting an education....* King Solomon in Ecclesiastes is like a keynote speaker who's had it all. Wealth, wisdom, power, private pleasures....and his conclusion? *Meaningless vapor... "never satisfied."* His life was like a can for baby formula which after all his hard work was only filled with sawdust.

Once again this is **HARD TRUTH** from Jesus Christ who is "*the Way and the Truth and the Life....*" Through Christ alone we come to the Father in heaven. (John 14:6 EHV) Jesus says, "*You cannot serve both God and money,*" that false god **Mammon**. (Luke 16:13 EHV) This **HARD TRUTH** can save your life from heartache and frustration here, and next week we'll hear about the hereafter. God grant us this grace today to **Put Money in its Place**. First of all to realize that here in time, **Money** is...

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"Anyone who loves money is never satisfied with money, and anyone who loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is vanishing vapor." Greed is a nasty boss. One old Rockefeller was asked, "How much money does it take to satisfy a person?" He snapped back, "Always a little more!"¹

More wealth, more clingers: *"When goods increase, so do those who eat them. What profit, then, does the owner get, except to see these things with his eyes?"* A thousand wives like Solomon makes for lots of mouths to feed and plenty of jealous squabbling. Too busy to use your own stuff? Satisfied?

Simple living is healthy: *"The worker's sleep is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but a rich person's abundant possessions allow him no sleep."* One wealthy investor walked out of his house in tears. "What's wrong?" I asked. "In just a few seconds I lost \$5000." More like \$50,000 in today's money. A "healthy" portfolio may not be healthy for you.

It's a *"sickening evil,"* Solomon says, *"wealth hoarded by its owner to his own harm, or wealth that is lost in a bad investment. Or a man fathers a son, but he has nothing left in his hand to give him."* Hearses don't have trailers. After an entire life of hard work, you don't even have a hearse's tires! *"This too is a sickening evil: Just as he came, so he will go. So what does he gain, he who works for the wind?"* You end up with a can of sawdust that blows away in the wind.

"Besides this, during all his days he eats in darkness, with great frustration, sickness, and anger." If **Money** can't buy happiness, why keep chasing it? The Lord's Apostle Paul wrote, *"Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge them into complete destruction and utter ruin."* (1 Timothy 6:9) Just what our greed deserves!

You want *satisfied*? See Jesus Messiah, the Suffering Servant of the LORD fully *satisfied* with the new life His death produced. By suffering in our place for our sins, Jesus well deserves feelings of victory for all He has accomplished for humanity. Humans are Christ's portion and inheritance. (Isaiah 53:12) God's Servant + Our Savior fully was fully *satisfied* to **Put Money in its Place**...as a valuable...

¹ Quoted in Ehlke, R. C. (1988). *Ecclesiastes, Song of songs*. Northwestern Pub. House.

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The Lord's mercy keeps us *serving* Him. Gracious promises, mighty acts of deliverance treasured up in the Holy Scriptures of the Bible strengthen our faith and perseverance. Christ's resurrection shouts: ***"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."*** (1 Corinthians 15:58 NIV84) And though we owe God full and heartfelt service as our Master-Creator (Luke 16:1-13; 17:10), He is not unjust (Hebrews 6:10) but generously remembers and grants us undeserved rewards of grace. When you **Put Money in its Place**, life becomes an adventure with God.

While we're **serving the Lord** with **Money as a resource**, God piles on blessings of satisfaction in life, priceless contentment that **Money** can't buy. King Solomon (v.18): ***"Here is what I have seen to be good: It is beautiful to eat, to drink, and to look for good in all a person's hard work which he has done under the sun, during the few days of his life that God has given him, for that is his reward."*** Work is still a blessing God created for Adam in that beautiful Garden, his first home. A taste of that blessed contentment still clings to God's gift of work well done for God's glory. ***"Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we certainly cannot take anything out. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be satisfied."*** (1 Timothy 6:6-8 EHV)

So much easier to talk about it, than to live it. But having Jesus as Lord and Savior by faith is truly its own reward. You wake up worried about money and feeling guilty. But confessing your sin to Christ, means you get to hear God forgive you again and again. ***"Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD. Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow. Though they are as red as crimson, they will be like wool."*** (Isaiah 1:18 EHV) Jesus was afflicted for our guilt to lift off that terrible load. Truly Jesus can say, ***"My yoke is easy and my burden is light."*** (Matthew 11:28-30)

Satisfaction in life is a gift! ***"Likewise, for everyone to whom God has given wealth and riches, if God has also given him ability to eat from it, to enjoy his reward, and to rejoice in the results of his hard work—this is a gift of God."*** (v.19) To *enjoy* is to literally to *lift up* like a trophy or a medal or a diamond engagement ring. Such happiness and joy comes from God's blessings on our labors and celebrates these rewards of grace guilt-free. And it helps at night! ***"I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety."*** (Psalm 4:8)

Jesus was revealing God's heart of hearts: ***"Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices. Even my flesh will dwell securely because you will not abandon my life to the grave. You will not let your favored one see decay."*** (Psalm 16:9f EHV) Jesus anticipated great joy in His triumph over sin, death and hell, even though He could see so vividly His own bitter suffering and death for our sins. Foremost in His mind was the joy He would bring to us. It was ***"for the joy set before him [that he] endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*** (Hebrews 12:2 NIV84) The Light of Christ brings great joy to hearts and homes, enjoying communion with God.

Everyone who lives by faith in Jesus ***seldom reflects on the days of his life, since God keeps him busy with the joy in his heart."*** (v.20) ***"Keeps him busy"*** is the same Hebrew word as *affliction*. Isn't that interesting? God weighs you down with concern for others in joyful contentment. You're busy working for God, eager to **Put Money in its Place as a resource for serving the Lord**.

The tiny "American dream" in pursuit of happiness gets replaced by God's heavenly reality in Psalm 23: ***"Surely goodness and mercy will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever."*** ***"The ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them,"*** i.e., catch up with you! ***"And sorrow and sighing will flee away."*** (Isaiah 35:10 NIV84) **Put Money in its Place!** God does not want any of His gifts and blessings to come between you and Him or anyone else for that matter. A life of **serving the Lord** with money as **a resource** now means will welcome you home to heaven. Love and joy await with all whom we reach with the Gospel. And that treasure won't blow away ever! Amen.

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