

# Ecclesiastes: Everything is Vapour

## Part 8 – “How can I find satisfaction?”

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:9

Delivered at Central Baptist Church on March 1, 2020, by Pastor Steven Edelman

### **(SLIDE 1) INTRODUCTION:**

**How many of you know what a bucket list is?** A bucket list is a number of experiences or achievements that a person hopes to have or accomplish during their lifetime. What are some of the things you want to experience or enjoy before your time is up? **What is on your bucket list?** It may be seeing the Grand Canyon with someone you love. Maybe it's going to Disney Land or backpacking across Europe. Maybe you are a little more adventurous and want to go sky diving or bungee jumping! Who has that on their list? Some of the seniors just put up their hand! Or maybe it's building a business, finding financial freedom, or renovating your home or finding that special someone. What is on your list? What are some of the good things that you believe would help you find satisfaction and enjoy the time you have in this life?

We live in this **mirage** in which we trick ourselves into believing that if we have something or do something, we will be deeply satisfied! The 60's rock band, the Rolling Stones summed it up well in their song “**I can't get no satisfaction, I can't get no satisfaction, 'Cause I try and I try and I try and I try**” The irony is that the Rolling Stones got exactly what they wanted including girls, fame, and wealth, but all these things didn't satisfy. Or the lyrics of U2 hit, “**I still haven't found what I am looking for.**” The lyrics of both these songs really hit the heartbeat of the nation. It is the endless quest to find satisfaction in life. Freddie Mercury says, “**Does anybody know what we're living for?**” Princess Diana said, “**Being a princess is not all it's cracked up to be.**”

Just like the rich and famous, we all struggle to find satisfaction. Finding satisfaction is like chasing a mirage, which is an optical illusion in which something appears real or possible but is not so. We keep grasping and consuming to fill a need. We all feel it. We may not even know exactly what it is we are looking for, but we keep searching like we search for our lost car keys. We can't rest. We try to find satisfaction by pouring our energy into things like making more money, working hard, seeking

pleasure, sex, careers, and possessions. While these things may bring some satisfaction, they usually do not provide a deep and lasting satisfaction. In the end, we find ourselves chasing a mirage.

We are in the middle of series in Ecclesiastes called “Everything is Vapour,” and today, we are on part 8 called “How can I find satisfaction?” This morning I want to answer the question, **“What is going to bring deep and true satisfaction?”** What needs to change in our life so that we can pursue things that are going to hit the spot, fill the bucket, and really satisfy us in the end! What is going to bring satisfaction?

### **1. MIRAGE #1 – MONEY TALKS, BUT DOES’T DELIVER (SLIDE 2)**

Money talks. It’s portrayed in Music Videos and movies as something that is going to elevate your life. Our culture shows us images of guys and girls flicking money around because they had so much of it. These images give us the impression that they are living a satisfied life. The rich life! Just like the song, “Money, Money, Money!” The preacher in **Ecclesiastes** reminds us to guard our hearts because **“money talks but doesn’t deliver.”**

#### **a) Money creates an unquenchable appetite (5:10-12) (SLIDE 3)**

In Ecclesiastes 5, verses 10-12, the preacher once again is talking about the abuse of power and this dissatisfaction is right in the DNA of all of humanity. We see the problem of wanting more in all government and leadership structures on earth. People are struggling to find satisfaction in all areas of life as they can’t get enough. The problem of wanting more affects all social and economic classes. This is the lead into how money creates this unquenchable appetite.

**(SLIDE 4) SIDE NOTE:** Before we continue, let me describe how the text before us is structured as there is a pattern which is called a chiasm. Here is a picture of a triangle that shows the parallel ideas. Idea A is the same as idea A, but it comes later. I idea B is the same as idea B. In the center is the main idea or the idea that we are driving towards. **Think of a sugar-coated jelly donut. On the top and the bottom, we have a layer of sugar (two layers), then two layers of dough (top and bottom), and in the middle, we have that sweet center.** The first reflections at the beginning and

the end are similar. I am going to rearrange the parts so that the climax in verses 8-12 come at the end for us linear Western hearers. The sugar is the first mirage that Solomon is talking which is money.

Again, money creates an unquenchable appetite.

Look with me at verse 5:10, *“He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.”*

Now let’s jump to chapter 6:7-9. Notice the parallel example or bookend of the text. Look with me at chapter 6:7-9, which says, *“7 All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied. 8 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? 9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite: this also is vanity and a striving after wind.”*

Do you see the same themes in both texts? The parallel themes are saying no matter how much money we have, we never quite have enough.

The Preacher is warning us that the pursuit of money will not satisfy in the end. You always want more. Wealth seems to have pull or power over our hearts. It tricks you into thinking once you have a certain amount, you will feel fulfilled. However, it’s unquenchable. It’s like chasing a mirage, and when we get to a certain point, we want more.

**(SLIDE 5)** The actor and comedian, Steve Martin, says, **“I love money. I love everything about it. I bought some pretty good stuff. Got me a \$300 pair of socks. Got a fur sink. An electric dog polisher. A gasoline powered turtleneck sweater. And, of course, I bought some dumb stuff, too.”**

Many people spend their life chasing dollar bills and, in the end, regret it because it ultimately doesn’t satisfy or fill that void. Why? Let’s keep going.

**b) Money brings more headaches (5:11) (SLIDE 6)**

Look with me at verse 5:11 *“11 When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes?”*

**When wealth and goods increase, so does the consumers.** When people become rich, they hire a maid to clean their house, a gardener to trim their lawn, a nanny to watch their kids, a chauffeur to drive their car, an accountant to keep their

books, a broker to invest their money, a bodyguard to protect themselves and their family. All these people and more have to be paid. It all sounds perfect until the headaches set in.

We all know what it's like to be used or manipulated? Just imagine what it would be like to be a billionaire. All the owner can do is "to see them with his eyes." The owner merely gets to watch as others consume his goods. A number of wealthy people have told me stories of how the charities and requests never stop. It becomes difficult to determine who your true friends are as people start to use you for gain. Also, people with immense wealth face greater temptations as their access increases. Which creates larger marriage and family problems. An increase in stress. The preacher is saying there is no gain.

Next, money does not bring true peace of mind,

**c. Money does not bring true peace of mind (v. 12) (SLIDE 7)**

Look with me at verse 12, which says, "*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.*"

**Money cannot provide a good night's sleep or peace of mind.** Usually, it is common laborers who get the best night's sleep (v. 12<sup>a</sup>). These individuals are often so tired that they can lay down their heads in peace. Their possessions may be few, but so are their cares. The rich, however, worry and sleep little (v. 12<sup>b</sup>). The responsibilities that accompany their money are on their minds, and their responsibilities keep them awake.

**ILLUSTRATION:**

Money is like a shovel; it's quite neutral. You can use a shovel to build a house, hit someone over the head or even dig our own grave. The shovel is never the problem, rather the heart of the person handling the shovel is always the issue. So, it is with money. You can worship *with* your money by tithing generously, caring for your family, and helping those in need or you can worship your money. That is why the Bible never speaks poorly of money, but always speaks poorly of the "love of money."

**APPLICATION:**

**What would you do if you won a million dollars? What is the first thing that comes to mind? How many times have you gone shopping to make yourself feel**

**better? How long did that good feeling last? How many new upgrades have you experienced over the years? How long does that good feeling last?**

**(SLIDE 8)** Derek Kidner says, **“If anything is worse than the addiction money brings, it is the emptiness it leaves.”**

If the love of money is a root of evil, then we need to get to the root of the problem, stop the rot, and kill the evil. People who invest their hearts and their affection in money and material wealth will never receive total satisfaction or fulfillment in return. Their wandering desire always wants more and more. **Money talks, but it doesn't deliver. It's a mirage that comes up empty as if one had been “chasing after the wind.” This is why we need to guard against the love of money as it does not satisfy.**

**Secondly, MIRAGE #2 – THE HOARDING SQUIRREL. We need to guard against evil people who do not enjoy life as they will not satisfy.**

## **2. MIRAGE #2 – THE HOARDING SQUIRREL - who can't enjoy God's good gifts** **(SLIDE 9)**

We have a number of squirrels that run through our backyard on a regular basis. I watch them bury their food in my lawn. I have also watched my cat attempt to take out a squirrel or two. The Eastern grey squirrels are "hoarders" and toil to hoard their food where they can (as far as seven acres) so they don't have to share with others. They are hoarders who don't enjoy God's gifts with others.

### **The Preacher reflects on how quickly wealth can vanish (5:13-17)**

Look with me at verse 5:13-14 which says, *“<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.”*

**The Preacher is saying that when people keep all their riches to themselves it's a grievous evil.** The Preacher calls this “a grievous ill,” literally “a sickening evil because they hoarded their riches and did not enjoy them.

In verse 14, Solomon says he has seen people who have lost it all in a bad venture, and they have nothing in their hands to pass on to their kids. This is a grievous evil as they didn't even enjoy it. **A lifetime of toil, a lifetime of storing—and it's all gone—down the drain.** This is a reminder that **we can't predict the future and may**

experience an earthquake, an illness, the corona virus (just look at what happened to the stock market this week, or a recession, a bad investment, — there are many ways to lose one’s wealth. Overnight you can lose it all. We too easily become the hoarding squirrel who toils for nothing. It’s a sobering moment when you catch up to the mirage and realize it is not there.

**QUESTION: Does the Bible not tell us to be good stewards of our money?** What about Luke 16:10 *“One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much,”* Or Proverbs 21:10, which says, *“Precious treasure and oil are in a wise man’s dwelling, but a foolish man devours it.”* Yes. The bigger question is: at what cost are you attempting good stewardship? The preacher is saying that it’s wrong or foolish if you and your family can’t enjoy life! **It’s prioritizing the “stewardship of money” over the “stewardship of enjoying God given gifts!”** Enjoying those God-given relationships. The problem is **that we can be so concerned about tomorrow that we can’t enjoy the good things that we have been given today.**

As we keep reading, the Preacher gives us some sobering reminders of why we need to enjoy life now.

Look with me at verse 5:15 which says, *“15 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.”* You come into this world naked and you leave this world naked. All that you have stored up for yourself isn’t going with you. He is reminding us that we can’t take the trust fund, the car collection, or the jewelry with us. Nothing is gained! Think of Job. Job was extremely wealthy, but he lost it all in one day.

**DISCLAIMER:** The next illustration will be very difficult for some families, and I am sorry that this may stir up some pain. Part of me just wanted to avoid it. However, I need to be faithful to teaching the text.

**The preacher reflects on someone who does not enjoy life (6:1–6)**

Look with me at chapter 6 starting at verse 3 we read things like *“<sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered.”*

A stillborn child is better off than that rich person! This is a difficult comparison. In verses 4 and 5 the Preacher explains why the stillborn child is better off than the rich man who “does not enjoy life’s good things. **A stillborn child comes and goes before it experiences the harsh realities of life. It does not see the light of day or know anything about the pain of life in this world. A long life without enjoyment ... is far worse than no life at all.** The rich man has no proper burial and therefore cannot find rest. But the stillborn child “finds rest.”

### **STORY: Taking our kids to Disney World.**

The kids have been asking to go to Disney for years. The request came from the chief executive officer AKA wife and mother of the children who batted her eye lashes and said, “can we take the kids to Disney World?” I respond by saying, “How are we going to pay for it?” She says, “we need to go before they are too old, so we don’t miss the magical experience of when they are young!” So, we figure it out. We enjoy the experience of our kids meeting Mickey Mouse, riding the roller coasters, and seeing the parades. **(SLIDE 10)**

### **APPLICATION:**

I recognize that it may not be Disney for many. But can you enjoy what you have been given? We can easily be so busy toiling for more that we can’t even enjoy the present. The Preacher is calling out all the workaholics and driven personalities who take it too far. Don’t mistake it for good stewardship as you can’t even enjoy what God has given you now. He calls it sinful. This too, is a mirage that doesn’t satisfy.

As you can see, we need to guard against the hoarding squirrel mentality as it will not satisfy. Lastly, we need to guard the good gifts of God as they will bring some satisfaction.

### **3. MIRAGE #3 – ENJOY ALL THE THINGS **(SLIDE 10)****

#### **a) Enjoy God’s gifts - as they will give you temporary satisfaction **(SLIDE 11)****

Look with me at verse 5:18 – 19 which says, *“<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.*

*19 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.”*

The word good here means “beautiful” and filling. In other words, God has made everything “beautiful” or “fitting” for its time so that we can find enjoyment in life **within boundaries**. God boundaries are there because it is what he deemed best for us. In verse 19 it says that we need to accept our lot (which means whatever God has given us) and enjoy it. **We must also realize that not everyone has been given the same things to enjoy in life.** The point is that we have all been given something to enjoy. **Notice how the Preacher stresses that it is “the gift of God”: “God gives wealth and possessions” followed by, literally, “God gives the ability to eat from them,” and he sums up with, “this is the gift of God.”** When we realize these are good gifts from God, we can find joy in them! It’s like taking a bite of the donut and finally reaching the jelly! This is the gift of God.

God created “all things” in this world for us “richly...to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17). **The Preacher is saying savor a wonderful meal, sip your favorite drink, desire your spouse, play with the kids, prize a piece of art, listen to music that moves you, read your favorite novel, watch the game, and laugh with a friend. This is Biblical. Don’t feel guilty about it. Enjoy all the things within the boundaries that God has given you.**

**This does not mean watch or listen to whatever you want. This does not mean go sleep with whoever you want. Or go on a drunken binge. Sin will always leave you more broken and unsatisfied. God said, enjoy his good gifts!**

God loves giving gifts as an expression of His love for us. It’s just like receiving a Valentine’s card from our spouse draws us closer to him or her, God’s gifts are designed to draw our affections to Him.

He shows us how to turn the heavy reality into enjoyment. The emphasis here falls on “enjoyment.” *Find enjoyment in the common things of life.*

**Just take a moment to reflect on all the good things that God has given you over the years in the midst of all the difficulty.** As we adjust ourselves to the reality of the universe and to the reality of God who made it, it is possible to find peace of mind and joy in the midst of our lives.



This is why we need to learn to enjoy God, as He will give you complete satisfaction.

**b) Enjoy God – as He will give you complete satisfaction (SLIDE 12)**

Look with me at verse 20, which says, *“<sup>20</sup> For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.”*

This is talking about someone who has found joy is not so preoccupied with the problems, cares, and frustrations of life. Wealthy or not, we need to be oriented toward God by remembering that our days are few. The person described here found joy in their numbered days as God keeps them occupied with joy in their heart.

**ILLUSTRATION:**

In Canada, the average life expectancy was 80 years for males and 84 years for females in 2019. That means the average person has 80 years to enjoy God’s good gifts. What if you took a jar and put coins in it to represent the number of years or months that you have left. Every time you pull out a coin, ask yourself how you are going to enjoy God’s good gifts? Are you occupied with joy in your heart?

One family used this illustration by filling a jar with pennies that represented the number of weeks from birth until their kids left home. **A mason jar heavy with the weight of exactly 936 shiny copper pennies.** My arms dropped a bit as I took the full weight of the jar between my hands. “In these jars is a penny for every week you will raise this child.” Every week when they got home from church, they removed one penny from the jar that had left until their kids left home. **And it will be a reminder of the time you have left to raise your child before they go out on their own.** Are you occupied with joy in your heart?

This is a good reminder that all our days are numbered. Whether you are married, divorced, a parent, a grandparent, single, or a student, our days are numbered, and our jar emptying.

For some, the reality is that we are struggling to find enjoyment and satisfaction in life. Indeed, the Preacher says that this situation is *frequent and* more common than having the ability to enjoy whatever “good gifts” God has given you. As broken people, we want more. We think we deserve more. The person who fears God realizes that he or she does not deserve more; they deserve less. So, whatever he does have, he takes

delight in it as a gift from God. May we all respond to the simple gifts that God gives to us! Notice at the end of verse 20, it's "*God who keeps him occupied with joy in his heart!*"

**(SLIDE 13)** As Christian Ginsburg says, "**Not only is there nothing left for man but present enjoyment, but even for this he is dependent upon God.**"

**We won't find lasting satisfaction in God's gifts without finding satisfaction in God Himself.** The truth is, we are all looking for something. Though we may not know exactly what it is, we continue to search for it. No matter how hard we try, we cannot stop our pursuit of it. As if we are looking for our lost car keys, turning over the couch cushions, searching pockets, and seeking in every corner until they are found. The search can consume us. We are restless! **We were made by God to pursue something and pursue it we will. What is it, you may be wondering? It's knowing God! It's knowing His Glory! It's finding satisfaction in Him?"**

This is why God gifted us Jesus so we could experience satisfaction in Him. When we seek, find, and know Him we start to experience His joy that is available for us. God gives us the best gift of himself when we come to him in our unsatisfied state. We do this by confessing we can't be satisfied without Him and He turns our hearts from away from our sin to Him. It's through a changed heart that you love Him back as he has always loved you. God that gives you deep satisfying fulfilling joy when you continue to look to Him.

Okay pastor, why is it that one day I find satisfaction in Christ, and the next day I am right back to struggling? **We live in this tension of being dependant on ourselves and being dependant on God. We flip flop.** Rather than getting lost in the past, the gift of God can enable us to keep looking to the future.

**So, what if our bucket list changed to include daily acts of dependence and enjoyment of Jesus himself? To create space for us to abide in Christ. To swim in the living waters that bring us life and satisfaction. We need a bucket list that cares for our soul.** When Jesus is saying He is the bread of life, He is saying that He can bring us daily spiritual deep nourishment. When He returns, He will satisfy your deepest longings forever. The answer to our satisfaction problem is deeply and intimately knowing God.

The preacher is telling us to stop chasing the mirage. **“Money talks but doesn’t deliver!” Don’t be a hoarding squirrel who doesn’t enjoy life. Enjoy all the good things God has given you.** Especially God Himself and He will give you satisfaction. **Do you know God? What is on your bucket list?**

**PRAYER:**

Let us drink from the fountain of His grace that wells up in us to eternal life. Let us enjoy God’s gifts. More importantly, let us enjoy God himself. Let us daily remember where to look for our satisfaction. As Psalm 90:14 says, “Dear Father, 'Satisfy us each morning with your unfailing love, so we may sing for joy to the end of our lives.

**Pause & Reflect:**

- Where have you tried to find satisfaction?
- Have you ever thought a possession or a person would bring satisfaction?
- Pray and reflect on the benefits of God and how they bring more satisfaction than all that the world has to offer.