

# The Empty Promise of Pleasure



**Eccl. 1:12–14; 2:1–11**

**Bro. Kory Cunningham**

Imagine if you walked out of the foyer today and the greeter waves at you and handed you an envelope. You walk out and open it and in the envelope is one million dollars. How would that change today? I don't know what plans you have this afternoon, but how many of you would have different plans if we gave you a million dollars? What about next week? I mean, you have a job — you are probably quitting that, you have a million dollars! How many of you would immediately drive to a car lot, trade in your car, and buy a new one? I mean, you have been dreaming about your buddy's truck for a while, or your girlfriend's car; it's way better than yours. I got a million bucks so I am going to go buy that. Actually, give me two in different colors! This wardrobe? Nope, you just drive to Nashville and go to every mall, just buy whatever you want, eat whatever you want. And then Monday, I go to the bank and I want to pay off everything. Actually, there is a house for sale now and I want to buy a bigger one.

What would you do with a million dollars? But wait — I know there's inflation and a million is not that much. Let's say it was a billion dollars. How many of you could say that would probably change your life? Alright, let's ask this question. How many think you would be just a little more

happy if we gave you a billion dollars? Just be honest. How many of you? Just imagine if that really happened. A lot of you would probably travel, buy whatever you want, do whatever you want, have no obligations, and just do whatever desires you had with a billion dollars. In other words, it is this idea of what if in a sense you gained the whole world. What if you had everything you could ever want? Jesus asked a similar question in the gospels. Think about Mark 8 when He said, "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world [there is a little caveat] and forfeit his soul." Would it really profit you if you gained the whole world, but at the end of that, you lost your soul? In other words, you disconnected everything from the creator God.

In Ecclesiastes chapter 2, we are going to see a man who got the whole world, and we are going to see, really, the empty promise of pleasure. We think if we just have enough pleasure, we will be happy but it's actually emptiness. We are going to see that Solomon, he actually gains the whole world, and at the same time, he gains nothing. The question we have to deal with this morning is when the whole world doesn't satisfy, what are we left with? If there's nothing on this planet that will actually satisfy us forever, what are we left with? And here is the answer...we have to look beyond this world. We can't pursue everything under the sun, disconnected from God, we have to actually get our pleasure and joy and happiness first and foremost in King Jesus. And then, once we look above the sun, through Him we can actually enjoy those good gifts that He's given us. But if you connect those two, you can have all the world but it won't lead you to happiness, it will lead you to emptiness. You say I don't know if that's true. Well, let's just listen to Solomon, because he got the whole world, and at the same time got nothing.

## **Scripture**

***"I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind."***

This opening statement is a little bit of what we heard last week where everything is meaningless apart from Christ. Solomon is kind of reintroducing that idea. He says I explored through wisdom, I am searching, I am seeking with all my heart, with devotion, I am really trying to find if there anything in this life that's worth it on its own self — I am really trying to explore if I can find meaning of life disconnected from the Lord. Now, we see those phrases, under heaven, and under earth. Both those are repeated, under the sun, under heaven, and what we have tried to explain is that Solomon saying if we take God out of the picture and we just look at the world for the world's sake, is there pleasure, meaning, joy? Can we be happy apart from God, if we just look at the world and take God out of the equation? His conclusion is it's an unhappy business, it's vanity. Everything in a sense is worthless. That word, vanity, it's emptiness, it's futile, it's there is no problem, there is nothing left over. He's exploring all these things and realizing at the end of it you are hoping in something that is hopeless. He actually says it is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man. It's an unhappy life. It's an unhappy thing that we are here on earth to do, and again he's using that phrase under heaven, under the sun, which means a perspective apart from God.

I want to give you an illustration that I think captures what Solomon is doing throughout the whole book. I want you to imagine that you are a little boy or a little girl and it's Christmas morning. You are in your living room, your dad comes in and gives you a gift, and he says, "Merry Christmas, I love you." You open the gift, but you are unsure what it is because you have never seen this before. Everybody watching knows it's a baseball glove, you just don't know what a baseball glove is. You thank your dad, you look at it, you smell it, you put it on, and immediately you decide to go play with your glove. You run out of the living room, through the snow, and go into the woods. You start picking up stuff with it, beating your fist in it, smelling it; you are looking at it trying to figure it out. After a few minutes, minutes, you think this is not that cool... *why did my dad give me this gift? This isn't a good gift.* So you conclude your dad gave you an unhappy gift. This is not something good. He gave you something bad. It didn't bring joy, happiness, and pleasure. You aren't even sure what it does. Here's the problem — The gift is not bad, but the gift is meant for

something else. See, when you ran out the living room, you didn't know that your dad also had a glove and he also had a ball in that glove, and the reason he gave you a glove is so that *both* of you could go outside, take this ball, and you could pass it back and forth. You could play catch with your dad and he would teach you how to throw the ball and how to catch it. You would have an experience together and there would be this relationship, this thing that you guys would do over and over. You would go out and play catch, and talk and laugh, and take breaks together. It was meant for relationship. That's what the glove is for. Not only a relationship with your dad to play catch, but your other friends also have these gloves and these things called bats, and we are going to go on the weekends and all get together and play this game called baseball. You get to use your glove for a bigger purpose and a bigger game where there's actually joy and happiness in that glove. But what you did, you just ran out of the house and you ran to the woods and just decided I'm going to take this for myself and I'm going to squeeze all the joy I can get out of it, disconnected from God and community. I'm just going to love it for the sake of itself. What you found is it brought no joy, and so in your heart you cursed your dad. You said, "Dad, this thing is worthless."

I think that's what Solomon is trying to paint when he says under the sun, under heaven. We are going to look at all the things of life — wisdom, work, pleasure, and all these different things, but we are going to be like little kids who run out in the woods with a glove to say let's seek pleasure for its own sake. What we are going to find is in the woods chasing pleasure by itself, disconnected from our creator, God, it will be empty and lacking because we are not using it how it's meant to be used. We were supposed to find pleasure in God and then everything else would give us little bits of joy, coming from the source of joy. I think that's that imagery that he wants to paint for us, so as we look at pleasure, remember we are the little kids in the woods trying to seek it apart from our father, and it was never meant to be sought outside of God. So, let's just get into what Solomon does in his experiment.

We will get to wisdom next week, but this week we are going to chase down pleasure and think about that metaphor of the little kid in the woods

with a glove, disconnected from catch with his dad. Let's look at chapter 2 verse 1. We are going to see Solomon's pursuit of pleasure. Here's what he says. "I said in my heart, 'Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.'" What a statement. He's the king of Jerusalem, he's got unlimited resources, unlimited money, very wise guy, and he says...*test number one: to see if this world has something to offer, I am going to pursue pleasure for the sake of pleasure — and here are the rules — enjoy yourself, just chase down pleasure.* In other words, whatever you think will make you happy, go and do that thing.

I would say that this is the cultural motto we have. This is what we are trying in our experiment right now, just whatever makes you happy, go enjoy to the fullest in that thing that makes you happy, that gives you desire. Just chase that down because life is about happiness. I mean, we are people that like in our independence, we say that we are the people who have an inalienable rights. We believe in life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Well, Solomon is going to try that out. He is exhibit A of can you be happy by pursuing happiness? I mean, it sounds like it would make sense. I have to be happy, pursue happiness. Well, Solomon is going to try the pursuit of happiness and it's the opposite of what his dad would say. For instance, in Psalms 37 David says delight yourself in the Lord. That's a big difference. Solomon says enjoy yourself, and David says delight yourself in the Lord. We are going to see Solomon trying to delight himself in enjoying himself, not in the Lord, but in all the stuff the Lord has made, disconnected from the Lord. But Solomon gives it away what he finds out right off the bat at the beginning. This is exhibit A, chapter 2, verse 1, "But behold, this also was vanity." So, what he sees is the top is actually the bottom. The very pinnacle of all of life, when he got all of life, the very top was actually the bottom. He says when I got everything I had nothing. So what do you do when you gain the whole world but it doesn't make you happy? You have to look to something beyond the world, which ultimately is our King, Jesus. Some of us don't believe it. You think if I got everything I ever wanted, I would be happy. I mean, that's what every ad is telling you, right? If you buy this, you will be happy. If you get this razor and shave this way, you

will be happy, right? That's every commercial. If you just get more, you will be happy. Solomon is going to scream to us...I got more and the more I got, it was just emptiness.

So let's just see how pursuing pleasure played out in Solomon's life. He is seeking after pleasure and the first place he seeks is in comedy. Verse 2 says, "I said of laughter, 'It is mad,' and of pleasure, 'What use is it?'" *I want to be happy, I want to pursue pleasure...surely those people who laugh a lot are happy so I am going to try to just laugh a lot.* Maybe he got jesters to come in and perform comedy bits and he's just trying to fill his days with laughter, not thinking serious things but lighthearted entertainment. If he were here today, he would go to Netflix and watch every season of The Office. At the end of it, it's that was funny but life still has some hard things, so what do I do? So he goes to YouTube and watches cat videos. Ok, that was funny, but there are still serious things I have to deal with. So, this idea of pursuing comedy for the sake of comedy, it did not make him ultimately happy.

Next, Solomon is going to try wine. If comedy doesn't do it, maybe a good buzz will do it. Verse 3 says, "I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life." *Surely, if I cheer my body with wine...I mean, it seems like the people that drink wine are happy. They look happy, they are smiling, they are laughing, so maybe if I do this I will be happy.* In the original language, it's kind of hard to know exactly what he's saying. In other words, there are two opinions. The first is he's a connoisseur and he has these nice bottles of wine. He's taste testing fine wine, having some with dinner, and he just gets a buzz, just a little bit of dulled sensitivity. Just kind of having a buzz and trying to keep that all the way through life. Maybe that will make life more happy. Or, the second opinion is he's going into a drunken stupor. We aren't sure which one he's doing, but I think if you just read the text, it seems like he's doing both. I think at first he's a connoisseur, tasting all of the fine wine and he's keeping his wisdom, his heart is still guiding him. He's not in a drunken stupor, but at some point, he sees the long buzz doesn't lead to happiness.

Because every morning you wake up and it has worn off, so you have to start again. This kind of slow medicated life, it doesn't fix all of his problems. And then, it's like...*well, let's just go to a drunken stupor, I'm going to try to lay hold of folly. Just give me the bottle, no more tasting. Let's just turn it up and see what that does.* In both of these scenarios, he is trying to find ultimate satisfaction in wine, in numbing the pain, getting a buzz, getting drunk, and at the end of it, he says it's vanity and it doesn't bring me ultimate joy. But there's always a coming off. There's always having to get back up and it still doesn't numb all of the real situations in life.

And notice what Solomon says, "...till I might see what was good for the children of man." That "children of man," Solomon uses that a lot all throughout Ecclesiastes. That Hebrew word, "man," can translate as Adam. I think what he's trying to get at is the children of Adam. In other words, this is east of the garden, outside of God's presence. For the children of Adam, we have a few days on this earth so what are we going to do to be happy? Well, let's try comedy. Let's try wine. Let's try these different things because there has to be something. We only got a few days so let's just try to get through them as happy as we can. But at the end of the day, it doesn't lead him to ultimate satisfaction; it leads him to more and more emptiness. You always have to go back to whatever the substance is. It doesn't fix anything; it just causes the problems to linger more and more.

Next, Solomon is going to try works. What if I just accomplish everything, what if I accomplish all of my goals? What if I check it off my life plan and I get everything I could ever want. This is his next experiment. Notice what he says in verse 4, "I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself." Now, I just want you to notice as we read this, the "myself" language. He's not just building houses; he's building houses for himself. He's doing all these things for himself. This is self-indulgence. He's not doing it for the good of neighbor, he's not doing it for the glory of God, he's doing it for himself. He is the one who is making all these things for himself. Notice verses 5-7, "I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. I bought male and female slaves, and had

slaves who were born in my house.” He is accomplishing great things. He is building great things.

Notice at the very beginning he says I built houses and I planted vineyards. I remember when I was in middle school, the show MTV Cribs came out. You could watch a celebrity go into their house and they would show you all of their stuff. It was the coolest. Some rap star, some athlete who makes way more money than we will ever make, would bring you into their house and show you their cars. There would be bowling alleys, pools on the roof, and helicopter landing pads, giant TVs, plush sofas, huge beds. They were just immaculate. I remember as a kid thinking if I had that I would be so happy. If I had a pool on top of my house, life would be good! Everything would be great if I just had enough money to build the biggest house. Well, Solomon did it. MTV Cribs would have to spend several seasons just on Solomon’s stuff. He didn’t have just houses; he had houses upon houses. If you read in 1 Kings, he built God a temple, and then he built his personal house, which was almost twice as big. It’s kind of funny, right, here’s God’s house — I’m building my house a little bit bigger than God’s house. And then he plants all of these vineyards, and notice all of it is for himself.

I mean, that’s kind of one of the promises we have — if we would just have the right house in the right place, we would be happy. But we kind of get to experiment with the Solomon lifestyle because we have things like VRBO, right? With VRBO, we get to go and act like we have a bunch of vacation homes. For just a little bit of money, we can rent somebody’s really plush house in an exotic location. We can walk in and act like we own the place. This is great! I can be like a celebrity movie star...but then we have to leave after a week and the cleaners come in. We don’t really get to own it; we just get to play the part for a moment. We think if we could just have that, if we could really have enough houses and enough places, then we would be happy. Solomon says I had it, and I had it more than you ever will, and at the end of it, it was vanity.

See, what happens when the world doesn’t satisfy is you have to look at something outside the world. He had houses. He planted vineyards for himself. Notice, he made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit



trees. He had these pools that would water them. You can go on Google and look up Solomon's Pools and you can still see these giant pools that he made. He had pools to water his trees! That's a pretty good lifestyle, right? He has it all. He has this place that almost looks perfect, but the problem is when you build a lot of stuff and have a lot of stuff, it causes a lot of work. The more stuff you have, the more you have to work. Most of us spend our Saturdays cleaning out all the stuff we have, right? Solomon, he alleviated that problem. He had a bunch of stuff and he doesn't want to do the work, so he buys people...he buys slaves to do all of his work. He can walk from house to house and somebody else is mowing the yard, somebody else is cleaning out the pool, and he's just chilling. He's got it made!

When Solomon talks about making himself a garden and planting these trees, these fruit trees, it almost calls us back to another place that has planted fruit trees. It almost calls us back to this garden moment where God creates a place for us to dwell with Him, a place filled with trees planted by God that would have rivers that are going to water them, that we would find satisfaction in this place and our work would not be by the sweat of our brow, it would be joy. It's almost like Solomon is getting back that garden scene — and what is wrong with Eden now, what's wrong with all of our work now? It's hard and it has toil. So he almost recreates the garden minus the fall. There's no work in this garden, because he just gets to look out at it and see everyone else doing what he should be doing. It's a garden minus the fall. He's trying to recreate this perfect place. The only one missing is God. And if you have a perfect Eden, devoid of the fall, you are still missing the main thing, which is God. That is why he's saying even this, at the end of the day it is vanity. I had all that I wanted but it didn't last.

Not only did Solomon have wine and works, but also he has wealth. Notice the end of verse 7 through the beginning of verse 8, "I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces." Solomon says...*and by the way, I have a lot of possessions. Uh, I'm kind of a big deal because I have a whole lot of money.* Now, when we read that, we think Solomon had some money, but

just to put it in perspective, if you Google 'richest man in the world,' Solomon's name will pop up. Like, undisputed. He's the richest man that's ever lived on the planet. If you think about the top five richest people today and you put all of their fortunes together, it's not even close to the wealth Solomon had, according to the Scriptures and according to history. It's not even close. He ruled over all these kingdoms and they all had to give him something like forty billion dollars in gold every single year, so when you calculate what that adds up to, his net worth today would be two point two trillion dollars! He wasn't a millionaire, he wasn't a billionaire, he was a trillionaire!

Now, just to kind of fix that in your mind, our preaching guys on Thursday did some math and calculated — Solomon would be able to spend one billion dollars every day for six years before his money ran out! You were happy about a billion dollars for the rest of your life walking out of here, right? Solomon could spend that every single day, one billion dollars for six years to spend two point two trillion dollars! He had more money than you have. He had more money than any of us ever will have. Solomon is trying to say I had great possessions, so if you think the more you buy the happier you will be, just look at me...I had it all, and when I look at all of it, it's vanity. I gained the whole world but the whole world didn't satisfy.

Just think about, even Solomon's table. 1 Kings 4 says that Solomon's provisions for one day were thirty cors. A cor is a fifty-gallon container. There were thirty of those of flour, so fifty-gallon containers of flour. That's a lot of cake! That's a whole lot of food. Notice, he had ten fat oxen and twenty pasture-fed cattle. He was eating grass-fed beef before it was even cool! He can have whatever he wants, hundreds of sheep, deer, and gazelles, whatever he wants. He's got a table that's crazy with food. You wanted to hang out with Solomon. You wanted him to invite you to come over for dinner! Unlimited food, every single day is what he had.

Notice Solomon's horses. 1 Kings 4:26 tells us Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots and twelve thousand horsemen. Forty thousand, not horses, forty thousand stalls for his horses! Can you just picture that? Imagine how much wealth; two point trillion dollars! He had more money than we could ever fathom or imagine. He could buy anything

on the planet. He could *buy* the planet. He said I got the whole world but at the end of the day, when I looked at it, it was vanity. It was empty. It was like cotton candy. I ate it, but then at the end I was still empty. You are like...*there's no way! If I bought that truck...* See, the promise you have in your mind is just a little bit more will make you happy. Just a little bit more of what you have will make you happy...a little bit newer truck, a little bit better job, a little bit more money, and then you would be happy. Guess what? When you got that little bit more, do you know what you would want? Just a little bit more. John Rockefeller, one of the richest people that have ever lived, at one time owned one percent of the US economy, about ninety percent of all the oil and gas. He was once asked by a reporter, "How much money is enough?" He said, "Just a little bit more." He owned most everything, but he thought if he had just a little bit more, it would be enough. Solomon is saying hey, Jerusalem, what you think is if you have a little bit more, you will be happy. I have everything and I own you, and I am not happy...a little bit more won't do it. A little bit more and you will want a little bit more. His wealth could not satisfy his cravings.

Solomon goes from wine to works, to wealth, and then he goes to women. The end of verse 8 says, "I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man." He has concerts and concubines. He's got a good night life. Let's just take music, or entertainment, first. Music was a rare commodity. They didn't have iTunes. So to hear some you had to go to a concert. It's really expensive. You didn't just have people come play in your house. Solomon decides he wants entertainment all the time, so he just buys all the singers...*I'm going to buy Taylor Swift and just bring her to my house and just let her sing to me all day.* That's his lifestyle! Not only that, but it says he has many concubines. In 1 Kings, we see that he had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. We can say that this is a man walking *away* from the presence of the Lord at this moment in his life — you are not supposed to do this. He is looking to the world to define what happiness is and he's looking to other kings, and they have multiple wives and concubines and they just do whatever they want...*so what if I try that?* So he got many concubines, the delight of the sons of man. So he is enjoying his nights. I

mean, he's got wine, he's got works, he's got wealth, he's got night life, he's got concerts and concubines — he is taking hold of all he can get.

When we think about entertainment, we think about night life, we actually, in some ways, have more access than Solomon. We have Spotify. Just think about it. We have Apple Music. Do you know what we get to do? Every song that's ever existed (besides like Garth Brooks), you just click it and it plays. Think about how amazing it is — just anybody I want, I can have every singer sing at breakfast and lunch and dinner all the time. I can have earbuds in and listen to all the entertainment and all the singers I want. No civilization in the history of the world has had what we have as far as entertainment and music, not to even mention Netflix! We have so much more than even Solomon had. He had concubines; we have pornography at our fingertips, endless encounters, endless images, endless nights, endless pleasures.

So we have more music and more concubines than King Solomon, and I would just ask, are we happy? Are we filled with pleasure? Or does your playlist get boring? Isn't it weird when you have every song on the planet, but they all get kind of dull? It is an endless playlist, but something about a CD was almost better because he had limitations to it. Now we have unfettered, unlimited access to whatever we want, and somehow it's not making us happy. It's making us more empty.

In his commentary, Philip Ryken said, "Back in the 1960's when people were arguing for unrestrained sexual freedom, Time Magazine offered this rebuttal: 'When sex is pursued only for pleasure, or only for gain, or even only to fill a void in society or in the soul, it becomes elusive, impersonal, and ultimately disappointing.'" This was the 60's before the big revolution...*marriage, husband and wife, for life...that's really limiting, let's just throw off restraints, do whatever we want.* This is before that, and Time Magazine, which is not strictly a Christian publication, was saying we should hold off because it is probably not going to end well. Here we are sixty years later, way past the sexual revolution, and the question is are we more satisfied or are we more empty?

In fact, another article in 2022 by Christine Emba, who I don't think is a Christian, wrote an article for the Washington Post that said, "Consent is not enough. We need a new sexual ethic. In our post-sexual-revolution culture, there seems to be wide agreement among young adults that sex is good and the more of it we have, the better. That assumption includes the idea that we don't need to be tied to a relationship or marriage; that our proclivities are personal and that they are not to be judged by others — not even by participants. In this landscape, there is only one rule: Get consent from your partner beforehand. But the outcome is a world in which young people are both liberated and miserable." Liberated and miserable — that is our culture. See, Solomon is not looking back to Genesis to say...*God created male and female and created them for the purpose of marriage, one man, one woman for life. I don't like that. I like what my culture's doing. Concubines and all that I can get. That's what I'm going for.* And that is the culture we live in. It says that says what Jesus said in the gospel about God made male and female for marriage, one man, one woman for life — we don't like that. We want whatever we want. Many partners, however we want those partners to be. What we want is unfettered, unrestrained, just do whatever we want. And *secular* people are saying I think we have a problem — the only ethic we have is consent and everybody seems to be full but starving. It's not working! We are not happy. We are actually worse off and we are having to make weird rules about it that don't even make sense. We are groping at something we can't find the meaning of. We are like little kids running into the woods with a glove saying I don't get what this glove is for; it's meant to be enjoyed in a relationship with God under His provision.

So we see that even women could not satisfy Solomon. Not even all of the entertainment could satisfy him. Now, Solomon arrives, verse 9, "So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me." He became the greatest of all time. We argue about who it is; it was Solomon. He was the greatest. I remember when I was a kid the 'Be like Mike' commercials came out. I just wanted to drink Gatorade because somehow that was going to make me like Mike. When The Last Dance came out on Netflix and I saw Michael Jordan in his big house, his eyes sort of glazed over just talking about all that really

happened behind the scenes, do you know what I left thinking? I do not want to be like Mike. The greatest of all has everything, won everything, he's the best — and what I saw I pitied. He has it all, but he has nothing. That's what Solomon is trying to get to see. I had it all. I was at the top of the world and the world was actually empty. It didn't satisfy the longings of my heart.

So here's the dream, verse 10, "And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil." Solomon said whatever I wanted, I did. That's the dream. That's the American dream. Whatever you want, go get it and you will be full and satisfied. He said I got the dream; I arrived at the dream. I had the dream, and the dream is a nightmare. Notice what he says, verse 11, "Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun." The dream turned to a nightmare. He got the whole world and somehow the whole world wasn't enough. So what do you do when you gain the whole world and the whole world is not enough? You look past the world. You look to something else, something above the world, something beyond the world. Philip Ryken says the phrase, to consider, literally means to come face to face, to look at right in the eye. Solomon is looking at pleasure right in eye all of his life's work. He is the king on top of the mountain. He won Monopoly. He won the game. He passed go. He didn't go to jail. You notice that in Monopoly, after the game when somebody wins, you don't keep playing. It's not fun at that point, right? Solomon has everything. It's all vanity. Like when you win the game, you lose! He is standing at the top of the world saying the world is not enough. He's a little boy sitting in the woods with his mitt saying this glove doesn't work.

See, the pursuit of happiness for happiness sake leaves you unhappy. Solomon climbed the ladder and realized at the top of the ladder, the ladder was leaning on a wrong building. So, he got the top of the building. That's why so many of our celebrities fall. They have this dream that if they get to the top, then they are going to be happy. Most of them get to

the top and realize on top of this mountain there is actually nothing. That actually, in the valleys there is actually more of life to be had. They get to the top and it's often a quick trip to rehab because they realize it's an elusive dream. It's chasing wind. It's emptiness. The whole world, if you had it all, you are not going to gain.

So if all the world won't satisfy you, what hope do you have? We have to look at something beyond the world, and that something is the majesty of King Jesus. That's where you have to go to get your pleasure. I want to quote another person from the Bible who got pleasure right. His name is Moses, and we are going to hear his story in Hebrews chapter 11. It says this, "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward." Here is Moses, Pharaoh's adopted son, and he's got everything, all the money, all the privilege. He looks at it and he says if I compare the wealth of Egypt to the wealth of Christ, there is no comparison. If I put the whole world stacked up against Jesus, Jesus is better. There's more wealth. Yeah, there's pleasure in the world, there's pleasure in sin, but it's fleeting. It only last a moment and then it's gone. It doesn't work. It doesn't last forever. What you think is going to make you full actually leaves you empty. So, what did he do? He considered the reproach of Christ as greater wealth. Why? Because he's looking to the Lord. He saw the big picture, the whole picture — the fall, the redemption, the recreation. He knew the end of the story and Christ is better than all of the world.

So, what do you do when the world doesn't make you happy? What do you do when all that you pursue doesn't leave you full but leaves you empty? You look to something other than the world. You look to King Jesus. You believe what David said, "Delight yourself in the Lord." See, delighting yourself is not the problem. You are made to delight yourself. You have a longing to be happy and it was given to you from God. You just have to go to the right place. See, to be ultimately happy, it's not in self-indulgence; it's in self-sacrifice. Notice what Jesus would say in Mark 8, "If anyone

would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." Not indulge yourself, get all you want, but actually deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him. In other words, lose yourself and your pursuit of the world, and come and find Him, and then He goes to that question, what does it profit if you gain the whole world but lose your soul? Solomon answers the question. It gains you nothing. He got the whole world and at the end, he was empty. So what do you do? You pursue pleasure where it can be found — you pursue it in Christ.

See, when you pursue pleasure in the right place, when you come to Jesus to fulfill and satisfy your heart, then all of those things, most of the things that Solomon mentioned — not all of those things are bad things, many of those things are good things — you can actually have joy in those things when you connect them back to God. Not under the sun, but above the sun because when you get your joy in God, then you can properly enjoy his gifts. When you take the mitt and you run out of the woods back into the living room, and you say, "Dad, I'm not sure what this thing is." He says, "Hey, let me show you, let's go outside" now he's got a glove and a ball and you begin to play catch. All of a sudden, that glove that you thought was unhappy business, now it is a good gift that's connecting you to your father. It brings joy. See, things in this life under the sun can bring joy but you have to connect them to catch with your dad. You have to connect them back to God. You have to connect them above the sun so that under the sun you can have joy, pleasure, and happiness, not just now but forevermore. When we sever that relationship, we are doomed to emptiness. You can have the whole world but it's not enough. That's why you have to look past the world in order to enjoy the world. You have to go above the sun in order to enjoy what's below the sun. You have to come into that relationship with Christ, pursuing Him first, and then you can properly pursue the things around you.

I want to close with the words from a girl that I don't know. The reason I don't know her is because we don't know her name. The only thing we know is she's a poor woman in the 1800's. So we have Solomon, king, who had it all, and he says life is vanity; it's all empty. And here we have a poor woman, we don't even know her name, and this is what she says which



Kent Hughes quoted from her journals in his commentary, "I do not know when I have had happier times in my soul than when I have been sitting at work, with nothing before me but a candle and a white cloth, and hearing no sound but that of my own breath, with God in my soul and heaven in my eye. I rejoice in being exactly what I am—a creature capable of loving God, and who, as long as God lives, must be happy. I get up and look a while out the window. I gaze at the moon and stars, the work of an Almighty Hand. I think of the grandeur of the universe and then sit down and think myself one of the happiest beings in it." Solomon couldn't grab happiness. He grabbed it and it just popped like a soap bubble. It's all vanity. And here's a girl who has a candle and a cloth who says I am the happiest person on the planet. What's the difference? She's got God in her soul and heaven in her eye, and everything is happiness. Everything has pleasure. Everything has meaning. Why? Because she is seeing the world through the One above the world. See, you can gain the whole world and without Christ, it is meaningless. But in Christ, you can actually enjoy the things of this world in their proper place. You can take the glove, bring it back in to catch with your dad, bring it to the game of baseball, which it was meant for, and it will give you pleasure and happiness because you are not seeking it alone, you are seeking your father in it and through it and for it.

See, some of you are trying to gain the whole world and you are empty. So what do you do when you realize the world can't satisfy you? Solomon's pleading — look at something beyond the world. Go chase God. When you get Him, you will have pleasure forevermore. Some of you are still thinking about that million dollars and if you walked out of here with it, it would make you happy. Do you know what make you more happy? If you walk out these doors with King Jesus in your heart, in heaven, in your eye, because that lasts forever.