

Ecclesiastes 5:10-20, Mark 10:23-31

How hard is it for a rich man to get into heaven?

King Solomon who wrote Ecclesiastes and the words we heard from the fifth chapter this morning was rich. Perhaps the richest man during his time. And maybe the wealthiest man of all time! One scholar estimated that between levied taxes, and gifts given from the nations around him brought in what could amount to one billion dollars per year in income. Not too shabby!

For all that wealth he acquired, he was not happy. The more he accumulated the more unhappy he grew. He became less and less content. All this wealth caused a lot of sleepless nights. He saw people eating up his wealth, taking advantage of him. Then he realized as he was writing this book of Ecclesiastes that all this wealth and the things of this world are temporary. It is vanity, or like the breath, here today and gone tomorrow. As old sayings go, "You cannot take with you" and "Money cannot buy happiness."

That is what Solomon learned. That is what many learned through out the ages and in this day and time it is a lesson we are still learning. Money and riches can become an obsession. If only I had a little more money life would get better and have fewer problems. Money and economics is a giant factor in our elections. It causes marriages to break-up. And then we have these arguments over minimum wage and taxes. Pay-day loan Companies litter our cities. Credit cards maxed out.

Solomon is correct money is a consumer. It demands our attention and time. And the same is true for those who strive to obtain it. So, do not be jealous of those who do.

Here is the thing. Not is this true about money, it is true about any false god. Money can be a big one among many. False gods consume time and attention. They break-up marriages, cause much unhappiness, they pit one person against another, especially when wills are contested. False gods take, pure and simple. Gods never give. So, if any of this describes you, then you are being consumed, eaten up.

Jesus tells His disciples that just how impossible it is for rich man to get into the kingdom. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. Amazing. So, amazing the even the disciples are exceedingly amazed. If this the case, then who can be saved? And Jesus' response is, "with humans it is impossible! But with God it is not, for all things are possible with God!"

The One True God of heaven and earth doesn't consume, demand, or take life. He gives life, He peace, and He give faith. He gives work to enjoy, He gives people to love, and He gives contentment. He gives patience in times of stress and turmoil, and he gives the forgiveness of sins and the sure and certain hope to eternal life. And God accomplishes this by giving His most precious gift: His Son who came and gave. He gave health to the sick. He gave hope to the hopeless. He Gave kindness to the outcast. He gave good news to the poor. And He gave life to the dead. He came too, to give His own life on the altar of the cross, dying for our sins and

raising us up from the death that sin causes. He gives the new life of faith and the hope that we too will be raised up on the last day. And even now He gives that life that takes us from the old sinful life to the new life in Him.

This is what Solomon came to realize. To turn and to trust in the One true God who gives and receive the blessings He gives and to enjoy them. If find yourself being consumed, it is time to repent and turn the loving and gracious and forgiving God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He us His forgiveness, He gives us this community of faith, to help and encourage us on our faith journey. The more of the old life that is given up, the more God pours His gifts into our lives.

And the gifts of God never run out. Here in Church, we receive offerings of money that come from the blessings that God has showered upon us. Here in Church, we have many that serve, teaching, keeping the property in good repair, welcoming others, preparing meals for grieving families, and praying for others that our Lord would give them the things that we cannot give on our own, like healing, reconciliation, restoration of marriages. We give back to God in many and various ways. And here is the thing, as much as we might give, we will never out give God. He just keeps on giving.

We heard in our gospel again from Jesus responding to Peter when he said, "See, we have left everything to follow you." And Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age – houses.....with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life."

With persecutions. Even in this life of faith Satan will not leave us alone. If Satan cannot consume you with false gods, he will try to get at us with ridicule, and persecution. Satan is ruthless.

Our Heavenly Father is even more ruthless. He is ruthless for you. And Jesus is too. And the Holy Spirit is too. God gives the Kingdom for you. It is the same Kingdom that Solomon finally realized that is far richer than the one God gave him here on earth in his day and time. The one that God gives will give joy beyond compare. That is the way it is with your giving God. He cares for the widows and the orphans, He welcomes the unloved, He raises up the lowly, and He fills the hungry...and this too, in His Kingdom He makes the last first.