meaning(less)-life lessons from the book of ecclesiastes

part 6

I. The Empty Life (vv. 1-6)

A. Our accomplishments

1. without the blessing of God, they are not only pointless, but \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

a. wealth, possessions, honor

b. intellectual pursuits

2. even in we attain all our heart desires, without the God-given capacity to enjoy them, they

are inadequate

B. The nature of earthly gain

1. the lie that we are told is that the things in themselves are the source of contentment a. the Teacher reminds us that they have no inherent ability to bring gratification

i. they are only things and temporary positions

ii. satisfaction, contentment, happiness and gratitude are blessings

2. God often blesses us with earthly things, along with the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that accompanies them

a. we can confuse the joy that accompanies, with the thing that we are given

i. and we begin to seek not the One who blesses, but the thing

ii. even in Solomon’s time there was an awareness that the two are not always linked

b. we confuse “cause and effect” – that the blessing is the producer of joy, rather than the

One giving the blessing

3. “blessings”, apart from the One who blesses, are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

a. in some cases they bring very short experiences of delight

b. in some cases they bring none at all

C. The nature of achievement

1. having a large family

2. living a long lifespan

a. again, if there is no corresponding ability to enjoy these blessings, then life itself

becomes even more bleak

II. The Bottomlessness of Desire (vv. 7-12)

A. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ appetites

1. the cravings we have point us to an ultimate fulfillment

a. *“Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby*

*feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is*

*such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in*

*myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable*

*explanation is that I was made for another world… earthly pleasures were never meant*

*to satisfy (that desire), but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must*

*take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or to be unthankful for, these earthly blessings,*

*and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a*

*kind of copy, or echo, or mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country,*

*which I shall not find till after death” – C.S. Lewis*

2. no matter how much food, or how many delicacies we enjoy, we know that we will reach a

point of dissatisfaction in a short period of time

a. no one, during a time of hunger, is able to look back at a previous feast and find relief in

it

i. in fact, doing so only increases the feeling of want

b. fleshly cravings do not satisfy eternal longings

B. The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ appetite

1. no matter how much one practices wisdom, or learning, or decorum, he or she will be

judged by their station in life

a. the Teacher is lamenting the limitations of learning and wisdom – that which has been so

valuable to him – by noting that they too, do not gratify the craving that he has for ultimate meaning and purpose

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ tell us two things:

a. there is a unique reaction in the human brain to religion which doesn’t relate to the

other known neurological reactions

i. critics of Christianity interpret this to mean that God is “all in your mind” because

we’re pre-programmed for religion

b. people in affluent societies tend to be less religious

i. critics of Christianity interpret this to mean that God is, in fact, ***not*** all in your mind,

and that we’re not pre-programmed for religion; instead, religion is but a delusion

clung to by the ignorant and suffering

3. there is a unique response in the human brain that occurs during \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

because God is a unique desire not satisfied through the gratification of other desires (sex,

money, fame, food, drink, comfort)

a. only through connection with God, do we observe people getting this unique spiritual

hunger fed

4. people who routinely indulge in things like sex outside of marriage, the pursuit of money,

fame, overeating, drinking, etc., often have misidentified their spiritual hunger as

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ hunger

a. we often mask one hunger through the gratification of another – it’s the reason that

people rebounding from a breakup often turn to drugs, alcohol, and casual sex, or throw

themselves into another relationship

i. in indulging generally, we can mask the specific hunger we’re trying to ignore

5. God implanted a spiritual hunger that was not able to be gratified through any earthly

pursuit or accomplishment, and gave the fulfillment in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

a. this is why Jesus spoke of Himself as “The Way”; that He said that His followers would

know fulfilling joy, and that they would overflow with streams of living water