HOW MUCH MONEY IS ENOUGH?
Ecclesiastes 5.11

We are continuing a series on the Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Scriptures (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and parts of the Psalms). Contrary to modern understandings, wisdom has a divine origin, not a human one. As we read wisdom literature, we can easily get the mistaken impression that wisdom involves the memorization and application of certain texts. The fact is, wisdom is not just common sense based upon experience, it is a result of a relationship with God.

Now all has been heard;
here is the conclusion of the matter:
Fear God and keep his commandments,
for this is the whole duty of man.
For God will bring every deed into judgment,
including every hidden thing,
whether it is good or evil. Ecclesiastes 12.13-14

In our study of Ecclesiastes, it is helpful to see the word translated "meaningless" (NIV) in a possible different light.

"Meaningless! Meaningless!"
Says the Teacher.
"Utterly meaningless!
Everything is meaningless." Ecclesiastes 1.2

"The merest of breaths;"
Says the Teacher.
"The merest of breaths!
Everything is a breath." Job 7.7; Psalm 39.4-6, 11

The writer of Ecclesiastes believed that his book was an argument that came to a close in 12.13-14. Therefore, we are able to fairly conclude, that each of the four sections, (1.2-2.26; 3.1-5.20; 6.1-8.15; 8.16-12.14), added something to the progress of that argument. The best way to then understand where the author is headed is to look at the conclusion of each section. If we can understand the conclusion, we might then be able to follow with greater certainty the steps leading up to it.

God has commended enjoyment as one of his most excellent gifts to the men and women who choose to fear him. God really intends that men and women come into a proper enjoyment of the good material gifts placed in the world by him, and that the gifts should be a source of constant satisfaction when the things and the users are properly related to the Giver himself, (Ecclesiastes 8.12, 15).

But what about wealth? How do you measure the meaning of wealth? How much money is enough? This is not a new question, Solomon asked it some 3,000 years ago.

As goods [wealth] increase,
so do those who consume them.
And what benefit are they [wealth] to the owners
except to feast their eyes on them? Ecclesiastes 5.11

There are many topics that can be considered about wealth, but here are just a few:

What Is It That We Think Wealth Will Bring?

- We tend to think that more wealth will bring greater satisfaction.
Whoever loves money never has enough;
whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income.
This too is meaningless [short-lived]. Ecclesiastes 5.10

- We tend to think that more wealth will bring greater significance.
Then he [Jesus] said to them [us], “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” Luke 12.15

- We tend to think that more wealth will bring greater security.
Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone,
for they will surely sprout wings
and fly off to the sky like an eagle. Proverbs 23.5
However, What Is It That Wealth Often Brings?

- It will surely bring more expenses.

  As goods [wealth] increase, so do those who consume them.  
  Ecclesiastes 5.11a

- Invariably increased wealth brings more worries.

  The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep.  
  Ecclesiastes 5.12

- There will likely be more pain if it is lost.

  13 I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners,  
  14 or wealth lost through some misfortune…  
  15 All their days they eat in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger.  
  Ecclesiastes 5.13-14a, 17

- More wealth certainly brings a greater responsibility to use it wisely.

  So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?  
  Luke 16.11

What Does God Want Me To Do With My Wealth?

- First and foremost, we need to be grateful.

  Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil – this is a gift of God.  
  Ecclesiastes 5.19

  10 When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.  
  11 Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God…  
  12 Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied…  
  13 …then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God…  
  14 …You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.”  
  15 But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth…  
  Deuteronomy 8.10-18

- Next, we need to realize that there is more to wealth than money.

  Then he [Jesus] said to them [us], “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”  
  Luke 12.15

- God has placed us where we are, therefore, enjoy what you have while you have it.

  When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider this:  
  God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, no one can discover anything about their future.  
  Ecclesiastes 7.14; Job 1:21; Ecclesiastes 2:24

- We need to be willing to give generously.

  17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.  
  18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.  
  19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.  
  1 Timothy 6.17-19

- Finally, we must put God first in our life.

  “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”  

  19 Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.  
  20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.  
  21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.  
  Matthew 6.19-21