

Jesu Juva

“The True God Gives”

Text: Ecclesiastes 5:10-20; Mark 10:23-31

Solomon, the man who wrote Ecclesiastes, knew something about wealth. He was one of the wealthiest people who ever lived. One writer I looked at estimated that between the taxes he levied on his own people, the tribute that was paid by the nations around him, and the gifts he received, that Solomon probably had an annual income that in today's dollars would be over a billion dollars a year. Not too shabby.

But with all that wealth, Solomon was not happy. In fact, as we heard tonight, the longer he was king and the wealthier he got, the more unhappy he grew. The more money he had, the less content he grew. The more money he had, the less sleep he got worrying about it. The more money he had, the more he saw people eating up his wealth, taking advantage of him. And then he realized this, too: it was all only temporary. You can't take it with you.

We should learn something from Solomon's words here. Yet in the thousands of years that have gone by since the time Solomon lived, it seems we haven't. Money remains one of the chief focuses and problems of people today.

Jesus, too, talked a lot about wealth and money. We heard it in the Gospel tonight. And in fact, if you add up all the times Jesus talked about various topics which we have recorded in the Gospels, money is at - or very near - the top of the list.

And today as well money continues to be an obsession. People continue to think if they just had a little more money, they'd be happier. If they just had a little more money they'd have fewer problems. And as a result, the economy is usually one of the most influential factors in our elections. Yet is it so? Money continues to be among the most-cited causes of divorce. And then there are arguments over taxes, the minimum wage, and income equality, car title loan places have popped up seemingly everywhere, many have maxed-out their credit cards, and some now face bankruptcy.

Solomon was right: **money is a consumer**. It consumes the attention and the life of those who have it and worry about it, as well as those who don't but continue to strive after it and be jealous of those who do.

But here's the thing: that's not just true about money - that's true of *every* false god. Money is a big one, but it's not the only one. False gods **consume**. They consume time, they consume happiness, they consume marriages. False gods **take**. They take people away from each other and pit them against one another. False gods **demand**. They demand more and more. They are not content with part of you, they want all of you. And

they will hound you to the grave. So if you are worried, if you are unhappy, if you are afraid, if you are jealous, if you are angry, if you are anxious, or if you are anything like that, here's why: *you're being consumed . . . by a false god.*

Because the true God, the one true God, doesn't consume, take, or demand - **He gives.** He gives life, He gives peace, He gives faith. He gives work to enjoy, people to love, and contentment in doing so. He gives patience in the midst of trouble, forgiveness for our sin, and the promise of a life after this one has ended. A life free from sin and trouble and which will last forever. And to provide that, He gave the greatest gift of all: His Son. His Son who came and gave. Who gave health to the sick, hope to the hopeless, kindness to the outcast, good news to the poor, and life to the dead. And then He gave His own life too, on the altar of the cross. That dying for our sins and then rising from the dead, we might rise too - from sin to a new life *now*, and to a life that is eternal.

And that's what Solomon grew to realize: *what is good and fitting is to enjoy what God gives.* When you are being consumed - by whatever it is - it's time to repent, time to turn away from that false god, and receive again from our giving God. For He wants only to give. To give us His forgiveness and love, and these through the people He has given to us. They're not the enemy. They're not against us. They're the ones God has given us to bless us. At home, at work, at school, at church. When we are divided, satan is using false gods to rob us of these gifts, to deprive us, to consume us, to cause all kinds pain and lack in us, to make us concerned about only one thing: *me and mine.* Repentance is giving up me and mine, and receiving His. His forgiveness and life and love.

And you won't run out. The more you give up the more you will receive. You cannot out give God! We heard that tonight, too, from Jesus, in response to Peter who said: ***See, we have left everything and followed you.*** And Jesus replied: ***Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.***

*With persecutions,* for satan isn't going to leave you alone. If he can't consume you from within, with false gods, he will try to consume you from without, with persecutions. And usually he gives you both barrels at the same time. He is ruthless.

But your heavenly Father is ruthless, too. But *for* you. And Jesus, too. And His Spirit. The God who gives has a kingdom for you. The same one that Solomon *finally* realized was better and richer than the one God had given him here. The one that will give joy beyond compare. For that's the way of it with your giving God. He cares for widows and orphans, He welcomes the unloved. He raises the low, He fills the hungry . . . and this too: in His kingdom, He makes the last first.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.