

Eat, Drink, and Be Merry for Tomorrow We LIVE!

You know what I fell like doing? Playing a game of Monopoly. Monopoly has to be one of the most successful games ever produced. Over 250 million copies of the game have been sold and a half billion people have played it. Not bad for a game that got started over a 100 years ago.

Why not? It is a fun game. Which piece did you always want to be? The thimble? The race car? The cat? The top hat? Someone has to be the banker—my brother always volunteered for that. You get a fistful of play money, roll your dice and move around the board buying properties. You have to be a bit careful. You can't buy too much because if you land on someone else's property you have to pay them, and if you can't, you go to jail. You start to build houses, than hotels and it gets tense every time someone rolls the dice. Will they land on your property? After a couple hours of playing, someone is declared the winner. It's a game. That money is just play money. You really don't own Boardwalk with a hotel. You play it for fun and then put it away on the shelf.

We are going back to our Old Testament reading and as we do, we are reminded of something. All the things we have are temporary. Like Monopoly, we play a while and when we are done, it gets put away and we go home to heaven. So, let's practice a good Christian principle. Let's eat, drink and be merry with what we have because tomorrow or someday soon we will LIVE!.

I. Don't be burdened by wealth or things.

Monopoly is suppose to be fun whether you win or lose. I imagine people can get too serious about it. They land on Pennsylvania Avenue with a hotel and they get mad and throw their money on the floor. In our reading we are encouraged not to get too serious about the things of this world. ***"If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields. Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless. As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them?"***

Someone once asked John D. Rockefeller how much money does someone have to make before he is happy, and he said, "Just a little bit more." We don't have enough. Think about it. If you make \$1,500 a year, you make more than 75% than of the 6 plus billion people living in this world. And look at what you have: cable, TV, microwave, one car for each member of the family, air conditioning, cellphone. All of these things were outlandish luxuries two generations ago. We have these things and yet why is it we don't feel wealthy?

But what if someone gets a little bit more? What if they feel wealthy? Well, there is always someone out there asking for it. I joke that I don't play the lottery because I am afraid of winning. But that is true. If I won the lottery I can only imagine how many groups out there who want a piece of it; and I would get a headache trying to figure out who should get what. Even if we don't win the lottery, there is always someone there taking some of our work away from us. And what if a person makes more than they need? What good is it? All they can do is look at it.

This is why our text tells us that the poor often have it better than the rich. ***"The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats a little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep."*** The rich man may have the most expensive, comfortable bed in the world, but he doesn't sleep well because a couple ticks down on the stock market could cost him millions. He is constantly thinking of that stuff. Not the poor man.

So, if we take these things seriously, we will not have fun with them. It will cause us all sorts of grief. And what good is all that worry? In the end it all goes away. ***"I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner, or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him. Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand. This too is a grievous evil: As a man comes, so he departs, and what does he gain, since he toils for the wind? All his days he eats in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger."*** Remember Rockefeller? Well, after he died, someone asked, "And how much did Rockefeller leave behind? All of it."

So we work hard, very hard. And what happens? Something happens. Maybe we lose it fast. How many parents, maybe your own, saved up their whole life and it is all gone after only six months in the nursing home? There is nothing left for the kids. My mother retired while undergoing her second round of chemotherapy and she died months after. So much for retirement. So we work hard, we get frustrated and have to endure so much, we even get angry and what happens? Naked we came and naked we leave. All that work, all that worry amounts to nothing.

This is depressing, isn't it? But I hope you caught something in this reading. We are studying Ecclesiastes in Bible class and one of the first things we studied was this phrase: under the sun. It occurs 25 times in the book including out text. Under the sun is a world without God. Take God out of the picture and this is the depressing life we live. No wonder people in every generation adopt the philosophy, "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die." No wonder our society is so greedy, materialistic and cares only for itself. Tomorrow we may die and we can't enjoy it anymore.

That is life under the sun. What happens to life above the sun? What happens when we introduce God into the picture? The

frustration, anger and futility goes away. We can actually enjoy things as blessings from God.

II. Rather, enjoy things as gifts and blessings from God.

Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him—for this is his lot. Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work—this is a gift of God. He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.

What a completely different, happy difference God makes. Notice that this happy person still must work hard and toil. But instead of worry or frustration, he finds satisfaction in all of it. God enables him to enjoy work. He accepts his lot in life. Maybe he isn't living the dream, but he accepts it and is happy. His work is not a frenzied attempt to accumulate as much as he can. This doesn't mean he can't succeed and accumulate wealth. He just isn't consumed by it.

Finally, such a happy worker "***seldom reflects***" on the days of his life. He surely made mistakes in the past, but he doesn't let them haunt him. He doesn't worry about any lost opportunities. He doesn't worry about tomorrow and what it brings. There are no regrets, no unmet dreams, or frustration. He can do this because "***God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.***"

All of this sounds familiar, doesn't it. Jesus said the same thing with different words in Matthew 6: "***Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.***" Where can you find this magical gladness of heart? In God's kingdom and righteousness. We find it in God's Word. The Bible alone tells us about things above the sun—who God is, his name, how things came into being, why things are broken, and how much he loves us that he sent his own Son to save and redeem us all.

You see, when Jesus came, he came to establish a kingdom, but he wasn't driven by greed and a lust for power. He started this kingdom to save us. When Jesus obeyed the holy law perfectly for us, he didn't do it so he could brag. He did it to save us. When he died on the cross, he didn't do it for himself. He died for us. He doesn't demand we rise to his level. He comes down to ours and gives us his own righteousness. To have Christ means we possess the highest wisdom and a priceless treasure in heaven where moth and rust cannot destroy.

This is where the Christian and the heathen can agree. We both understand that our possessions will go away some day. We both know we will not get a second chance at it. So we both agree, "eat, drink and be merry." But this is where we differ. They eat and drink and are merry because tomorrow they will die. To them this is the best it will ever be, so they frantically chase after things and get worried when it is in jeopardy. Not us. We eat, drink and are merry because tomorrow we live. What we experience now is to be fun for now. Our true treasure is stored up on a perfect, sin free, death free heaven. Sure we continue to toil and labor, to manage things to the best of our ability. See if you can leave some for your children or charity. Be generous to the Lord and to one another. But don't worry or fret. Like Monopoly, we are just using play money and playing a game. Soon, very soon, Christ will come and we will put it away and really enjoy life in heaven. Amen.