

Ecclesiastes 5:18-20
Contentment Is Our Lot
WRCoB 11.19.23

Someone once said

Life is a nightmare between two nothings!

Another, Matthew Prior, said

*Who breathes must suffer, and who thinks must mourn; And
he alone is bless'd who ne'er was born*

And one more for good measure, from Cicero

*To what end then has this world been formed?—to plague
us to death?*

Wait! Here's one from the Book of Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes 1:2 NIV
“Meaningless! Meaningless!”
says the Teacher.
“Utterly meaningless!
Everything is meaningless.”

He calls himself

Qoheleth—meaning Preacher or Teacher.

Many consider him to be King Solomon
Based on the very first verse.

**Ecclesiastes 1:1 NLT These are the words of the
Teacher, King David's son, who ruled in Jerusalem.**

It's a great read.

Particularly if your feeling hopeless and full of despair!

Some early church leaders objected to the fact
That Ecclesiastes was included in the canon.

They felt it too pessimistic.

And it is, for the most part.

But in all seriousness
The writings address much of what people feel.

That life is a rat race
An endless, self-defeating, pointless pursuit.

~~

It is considered Solomon's final testimony
Written some 3000 years ago
But still packing a punch for today.

He reflects over his life.

He had everything a person could ever want and more.

Power, prestige, phenomenal wealth
All the worldly desires a person could ever hope for.

But looking back over his life
Everything he tried, tested, and tasted
He ends up saying

Meaningless! Utterly meaningless!

The question Solomon reflects on is in verse 3.

Ecclesiastes 1:3 CEV What is there to show for all of our hard work here on this earth?

The life of the rich and famous.

Is it really all that?

Solomon in all his wisdom
Looking back over his own life
Thinks otherwise.

Ecclesiastes 1:13 NLT I devoted myself to search for understanding and to explore by wisdom everything being done under heaven. I soon discovered that God has dealt a tragic existence to the human race.

Wow!

Has God indeed dealt a disservice to humanity?

Or have we done it to ourselves?

Ecclesiastes is raw.
It is very human
It is very real

Life is hard. And then you die!

But hold on! There's more.

Solomon catches a glimpse of something more.

Maybe something he missed
When chasing after women and wealth.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 NLT Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time.

He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.

Solomon senses something more.

There's more to life than what meets the eye.

Something beyond our understanding.

Beyond our imagination

Something that smacks of incredible joy

Something holy.

God has planted eternity in the human heart.

It's this little tiny hint

That sparks belief in a greater purpose.

It's this little whisper that declares

There's more to life than endless drudgery.

God has planted a sacred seed within each of us.

It's that, that give us this intuitive feeling

That there is a higher power.

St Augustine and John Wesley call it prevenient grace.

Prevenient grace prepares our hearts and minds

To hear and receive the gospel of Jesus Christ

And then respond in faith.

It'll be another 1000 years before the Messiah arrives.

But the seed has been planted
And will keep us searching and restless
Until we find our rest in Christ Jesus.

~~

The question to life
Solomon sought to answer, is answered here.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 CEV Everything you were taught can be put into a few words: Respect and obey God! This is what life is all about.

~~

There's discontent in this life. A lot of it! Look around you!

Disappointment
Distress
Depression
Despair

There's loneliness and heartbreak

Hey, we've all been there.

Life, at times, can feel pointless.

However, God's original intent was not this.

It is through God's redemption in Christ Jesus
We can find purpose and meaning
And enjoy the good things life has to offer.

~~

Eat and drink and enjoy the work given you
For this is our lot.

We don't use this phrase much anymore.

Solomon uses it here.

When we use the term, we usually mean
Putting up with something less than desirable
Kind of a fatalistic view of life

In truth, it is to suggest exactly the opposite.

Yes, without God, our toil seems pointless and futile.

*There is no joy in my toil until I begin to accept "my lot in life"
as something that's divinely orchestrated not only for my
good, but for my enjoyment (Heather Davis Nelsom).*

Ecclesiastes 5:19 NLT

**19 And it is a good thing to receive wealth from God and
the good health to enjoy it. To enjoy your work and
accept your lot in life—this is indeed a gift from God.**

It's not to say that we shouldn't try to improve our lot in life
Or to help others improve theirs

It simply means that wherever we find ourselves
Our lot in life
God gives us the grace to be content.

~~

My Grandfather Whitten was a godly man.

A hard-working, highly ethical
Extremely honest and strict to the point of being harsh

I never felt he really enjoyed life.

He was a farmer and a minister
In the Church of the Brethren

He worked hard from sunup to sundown.

And then by lantern light
He read his Bible and prepared his sermons.

He took his Christian faith as he took his work
Very seriously.

But I don't think it brought him much joy in this life.

Yes, he was a godly man
But was he a contented man?

I know my grandpa received the gift of eternal life

But he didn't allow himself the grace
To enjoy God's gift of contentment.

He was a godly man but not a contented man.

But Paul says to Timothy.

1 Timothy 6:6 NIV But godliness with contentment is great gain.

As Christians, we must not be daunted
By the enormity of the discontent in our world today

Nor be overwhelmed by the evil we face.

We must not let trying to be a good Christian
Get in the way of the contentment available in Christ.

We are not responsible for building the kingdom of God.

God is!

We are responsible to do our part.

But not at the expense of our own contentment.

The Apostle Paul says it well.

Philippians 4:11-13 NIV

¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Solomon discovered, probably too late in life

That contentment is not HAVING the most in life
But MAKING the most out of your life.

Contentment is our lot in life.

Food and drink and work are gifts from God.

God wants us to enjoy them.

And when we live in Christ

And all of what that means

Our lives will be such that

Ecclesiastes 5:20 NIV [We] seldom reflect on the days of [our] life, because God keeps [us] occupied with gladness of heart.

Contented days pass so quickly and without reflection
Because God has filled hearts full to overflowing.

~~

And so, is life a nightmare between two nothings?

Absolutely not, no way!

Our lot in life is meant to be enjoyed
With the good things God has blessed us with.

We are in the Season of Thanksgiving.

A time when most people make it an intention
To go home to family and loved ones
To enjoy a time around the table
With food, family, and fellowship.

Make it a point to reach out to those
Who have no place to go for Thanksgiving
And invite them to your place.

Enjoy the good things God has given you.

Proverbs 15:15 CEV The poor have a hard life, but being content is as good as an endless feast.

As Christians, our lot in life is to be content
For this is a gift from God.

Count your blessings, name them one by one
See what God has done.