

(10) He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. (16) This also is a grievous evil: just as he came, so shall he go, and what gain is there to him who toils for the wind?

Excellent question. What point is there to toiling, working, slaving for something you will never get your arms around? Solomon suggests this is a waste of time. You can't collect it. You can use the wind, but not gather it up, and you sure can't store it.

Solomon is being poetic, of course, and he's not really talking about wind. He's making a comparison. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon equates the wind with money. “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income.” King Solomon had experimented with everything this life has to offer. In the end, he found himself to be the richest empty-hearted man in the world. His wisdom was hard-earned.

Material goods are ‘goods’ for a reason. It's good to have them. But it's a very short step from goods to gods. What Solomon learned the hard way is that when you make ‘goods’ into gods, you set yourself up for a life of ‘worry, sickness, and anger.’ You know why, don't you? More money and better goods never satisfy. That doesn't stop human beings from trying to put them on the throne. But you see, the problem is not with inanimate objects like money; the problem is in us. We're always trying to measure our own worth. And much of the time we use measurements that have little to do with what God has said about us.

For example, if pay becomes the measure of your worth, it creates an open-ended situation where enough is never enough. You're always checking to see how you compare to others who do similar work, right? Why? You're measuring your own worth. An obvious example would be the world of professional sports, where players leave millions of dollars on the table and risk not getting paid at all in hopes of signing a bigger contract that reflects their perceived value, relative to other athletes. You and I don't have that particular problem—I don't think—but we do the same thing, just on our own scale. We may not be holding out for another million dollars, but we are holding out for more affection, more respect, more recognition from someone, somewhere. We're always measuring our worth, and if we are not using God's standard of measurement, we will use other methods, and those methods take us to dark and lonely places.

To emphasize this, Solomon says, “There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt... As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand.” Solomon's point is easy to understand. We come into this life with nothing and we leave the same way. Both the rich and poor break even.

In today's Gospel Lesson, Jesus comes, echoing Solomon's message. "Jesus looked around & said to His disciples, 'How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!'" Why would Jesus say something like that? It's because He knows the main temptation of wealth is making it your functional trust. Do you know what that means? Your functional trust is whatever you really look to when you need to know that you matter and that everything is going to be okay. It is very easy to do that with wealth. But it can be anything; a romantic relationship, or a great reputation, a lot of people admiring you. Your functional trust is whatever your heart turns to when you need to feel secure. The wisdom of Solomon and Jesus says that nothing can handle the weight of our need but God.

"And [the disciples] were exceedingly astonished, and said to Him, 'Then who can be saved?' Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.'"

What human nature finds so hard to believe is that God has already measured your worth. He has already measured your value and has declared you a treasure. You are covered in the perfection of His Son Jesus, so the Father sees you as perfect, and loves you with a perfect love. Jesus gave up everything and even went to the cross in order to gain you. You were worth it to Him. Do you understand how monumental this is? It means the end of self-measuring, the end of constant comparing, the end of toiling for the wind. When the functional trust of your heart runs to Jesus and rests in what He has done for you; when you delight in the fact that God delights in you, first of all, that gives you everything you need for a victorious life. Secondly, it makes everything else snap into place. Wealth, success, reputation, friendship, family life—these can all be enjoyed for what they are, because you're not making them more than they are. They're all gifts that come from the same source—a compassionate and generous Father God. And it doesn't take long for it to hit home that these gifts were meant to be shared.

And here's the thing that throws people off about this sharing: there are no rules. What to give, how much to give, who to give to; you are *free* to decide all that yourself, because you are *free* from toiling for the wind. You are *free* to give and share in a way that reflects the enormous gift that has come to you in Jesus. He demonstrated love for you in willing sacrifice. The Bible says it was for the joy set before him that he endured the cross. There was a joy set before Jesus that made him able to persevere through horrible pain. It was the joy of gaining you; of bringing you in; of knowing you forever.

You are the joy of Jesus. Make that the functional trust of your heart. And you may be surprised by what happens next.