

Materialism: What Really Matters?

Thesis: (Avoiding materialism and living a meaningful life in today's society).

Text: (Ecclesiastes 2:10-11), "*Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun,*"

Introduction:

- 1- If I was to define materialism I would say that it is a malignancy gnawing at the very vitals of our beings.
 - a- I like this when it comes to defining materialism: Such is defined in pairs. Two Jobs, two wage earners, two cars plus a pick-up, one house and a weekend retreat, two plus bank accounts, phone lines, televisions in every room one being a 52 inch and on I could go.
 - b- We know how to make a living but not a meaningful life. (Winkler)
- 2- We live in a very materialistic society as evidenced in our popular culture, as expressed in our desire for an affluent lifestyle where consumerism is the name of the game, I WANT and I WILL HAVE IT.
- 3- **Materialism:** Is about constant concern over material possessions and wealth; a great or excessive regard for worldly concerns; There is a philosophical belief that nothing exists beyond what is physical (also called physicalism)en.wiktionary.org/wiki/materialism
- 4- **A materialist** - someone with great regard for material possessions, a desire for wealth and material possessions with little interest in ethical or spiritual matters. As (philosophy), the theory that matter is the only reality.
- 5- **Materialism is about being obsessive, pre occupation with worldly possessions- an attitude addressed by Jesus in (Luke 12:13ff).**

Transition

[In this lesson I want us to look at some passages with regard to materialism, then a case study, some things we can do to avoid it and how we can live meaningfully in today's society]

Discussion:

- I- **Passages on the subject of money and material goods.** [By the way: Wealth is not wrong in and of itself, it's what we do with what we are blessed with, (1 Timothy 6:17-19). Riches are here spoken of as being the gift of God. They are not to be looked upon as being evil if they come from God, but used in ways that would be helpful to others].
 - A- **The passages that bring awareness concerning wealth and money.**
 - 1- (Proverbs 15:16). "*Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith.*"
 - 2- (Proverbs 30:8-9). "*Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches...*"
 - 3- (Ecclesiastes 5:10-12). "*He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase... but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep, "...*"
 - 4- (Luke 12:15). "*...take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses,*"
 - 5- (1 Timothy 6:10). "*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith...*"
- II- **Case Study: Solomon.**

- A- Solomon was and still is a case study in the laboratory of human experience.
 - 1- The wealthiest man in the world was seeking answers to the question:
 - a- What is the sum total of life?
 - b- What is mans basic purpose for existing?
 - c- What will bring man true happiness?
 - 2- (Eccl 2:3), *"I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives."*
 - B- **Among other things, this great King and wealthiest man on earth appropriated a hedonistic, materialistic life style.**
 - 1- (I Kings 10:23-27). *"...So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom... the king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones..."*
 - 2- (Ecc 2: 4-11). Note the number of times Solomon used the word 'I.'
 - 3- Solomon's conclusion was, that after all is said and done, **"indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun."** In the final analysis Solomon came to the conclusion, **"Fear God and keep His commands, for this is the whole of man."**
- III- **Tragic consequences of materialism.**
- A- In this age of **consumerism** there are some very real consequences. In fact Jesus stated in (Luke 8:14) that the cares and riches of this world are the very things that choke out that which gives true life and brings no fruit to maturity.
 - B- **Materialism results in unethical conduct and life styles: (Jer 17:11).** Yes, get riches not by right. Dishonesty, greed, cheating dishonest dealings and on one could go with great list that are the products of materialism, (think of the recent problems with the banking corporate in USA and Europe). (I Tim 6:9-10).
 - 1- **It results** often in the disintegration of the family. Never have we had more gadgets and toys so much so that we seem to have an unending thirst for more and more THINGS, never happy or satisfied with what we have. The result is broken down families, unhappy and neglected marriages, out of control kids.
 - 2- **Results** ultimately in the soul being lost to the things of this world. Is not this what Paul affirmed in (I Tim 6:9), *"But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition."*
 - 3- **Did not the Lord state,** *"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matt 16:26). There are consequences and tragic ones.
- IV- **How then do we overcome materialism so that we can live a meaningful life?**
- A- Here are a few remedies that help in this area.
 - 1- **Priorities:** (Matt 6:33-Prov 16:16).
 - 2- **Covetousness** must be conquered. To covet is to have an inordinate desire for the illegitimate. In fact it is said to be idolatry. We worship our wealth, our health, our vocations, our things. *"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."* (Col 3:5). **Think about the case of a man called Gehazi in (II Kings 5:15ff; Achan in Joshua 7) examples of covetousness.**
 - 3- **A proper concept of stewardship** must be understood. There are four ideas inherent in stewardship:
 - a- **Divine ownership of all things, (Ps 24:1).**
 - b- **Human endowment, (Matt 25:14).**
 - c- **Faithful administration and accounting, (I Cor 4:2- Luke 16:2).**

- 4- The realisation that the things of this world; that life itself is transitory in nature. Life is like a vapour. (Matt 24: 35,1st John 2:17, John 6:26).
 - a- *Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."*
 - b- Illus: Alexander the Great, "So they can see that though I conquered the world, I left it empty handed," was the explanation as to why his hands were left outside his coffin.

Conclusion:

- 1- The rampant materialism in our society leaves that society in a state of spiritual malnutrition.
- 2- To avoid materialism and live a meaningful life, know that Jesus is the only offer that can be placed on the table.
- 3- What does Jesus offer...?
 - a- Rest for a weary soul – (**Mt 11:28-30**)
 - b- Rivers of living water for a thirsty soul – (**Jn 7:37-39**)...
 - c- ...Which He provides through His cleansing blood and life-quickenning spirit – (**Ac 2:38-39**, Acts 8, Acts 16,).
 - d- Matt Cook made this statement: "Our values are twisted it's time we transformed them into the values of Christ." So true Matt Cook.
- 4- Christ offers "treasures in heaven," (**Matthew 6:20**).
- 5- With such an invitation why would anyone trade their soul for all the material wealth of this world is beyond comprehension, is it not?

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ⁱ Spiritual Sword.Wendal Winkler, Materialism 1980.