

The Treasure that Makes You Poor

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, Watermark Church. So this morning, we will look at Ecclesiastes chapters 5 and 6. So it's going to talk about possession and also contentment. Starting in chapter 5, verse 8, we read, The oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness.

Do not be amazed at the matter, for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them. But this is gain for a land in every way, a king committed to cultivated fields.

He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income. This also is vanity. When goods increase, they increase who eat them.

And what advantage has their owner but to see them with your eyes? Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich would not let him sleep.

There is a grievous evil that I have sinned under the sun. Riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, and those riches were lost in a bad venture.

[1 : 1 6] And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. And 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.

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 win? Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness, in much vexation and sickness and anger.

Behold, what I have sinned to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil, with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him.

For this is his lot. Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil.

This is the gift of God. For he will not much remember the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

[2 : 2 6] There is an evil that I have sinned under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind. A man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them.

This is vanity. It is a grievous evil if a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with life's good things, and he also has no burial.

I say that a stillborn child is better off than he, for it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered. Moreover, it has not seen the sun or known anything, yet it finds rest rather than he, even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no good.

Do not all go to the one place? All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied. For what advantage has the wise man over the fool?

And what does the poor man have who knows how to conduct himself before the living? Better is the sight of the eyes than the wondering of the appetite. This also is vanity and the striving after wind.

[3 : 55] This is the word of God. Thank you, Iris. Let's pray together as we come to this passage.

Heavenly Father, a sovereign Lord of all creation, as we sang earlier, all glory to you, God. May you be glorified, God, with the words of our mouths, the attitude of our hearts, the work of our hands.

God, we long to see you glorified. And I pray, God, even in the next 30 minutes, as we look at your word, may you be honored and glorified. May we see you, Jesus.

God, as we pray, we just consider some of the things in our world, and as we consider our new chief executive coming in to office this week, we pray for John Lee. Pray for your favor on him.

We pray that you give him both wisdom and a heart of justice, that he will serve the great people of this city. God, we pray for a fear of God in him, that he will make decisions that are honest and just and for the good of the people.

[5 : 06] We really bring him before you. We bring the ceremony on Friday before you. And we ask for your blessing on his life, God. Won't you protect him and protect him from wickedness?

God, we pray, Lord, also for Amelia, who's with us today, but soon going back to Taiwan and just her work with the Hakka people there. God, we're so thankful for her life and her faithfulness to you and the way she serves you and serves your people.

God, we pray today for your blessing to rest upon her. Strengthen her, God, when it's tough. God, encourage her with, may she see some of the fruits of her labors.

God, we pray for your blessing to rest on Amelia and her work in Taiwan. God, we pray for those in our own community, those that maybe are sick. We know many of us have had COVID or are currently struggling with it.

God, we pray just for your grace and those that are at home and sick, those that are distant from family and are unable to see them soon. Lord, we pray for those that are traveling in the coming weeks and months.

[6 : 08] Won't you be with our community and keep us safe? Lord, we bring all these things before you in your great and your precious name. Amen. Well, I should have introduced myself earlier.

If you're new to Watermark, my name's Kevin and it's great to have you with us. Welcome if you're new for the first time. We are working through the book of Ecclesiastes and today we come to chapter five and chapter six.

Now, Boris Becker was a star tennis player at the very top of the tennis world. He, in his lifetime, won around 50 million US dollars of earnings.

He had houses all over the world and was the star of the tennis world. He, and yet he was on the brink of suicide. He writes, he says, I had won Wimbledon twice over, once as the youngest player ever to do so.

I had all the material possessions I needed, yet it's the old song of movie stars and pop stars. They had everything and yet they are so unhappy. I had no inner peace.

[7 : 14] I was a puppet on a string. Well, as we, the Bible has lots to say about wealth and money. Jesus talks about it in almost a third of his parables, reference money, and over 2,000 verses in the scripture talk about the concept of wealth.

And so it's not surprising when our teacher in the book of Ecclesiastes, Kohelet, the one who, his words encompass most of the book of Ecclesiastes, he's considering the world around him.

He's trying to make sense of life around him. And he considers toil, and he considers pleasure, and he considers wisdom and education. And so it's not surprising that as he looks at the world around him, he considers the role of wealth and money in the pursuit of meaningfulness and happiness.

And he considers the subject of wealth. And many of us in this room are very financially savvy. Some of us have made a career out of wealth, whether wealth creation or wealth preservation.

And the Bible says that, never says that money or wealth or being wealthy is a bad thing, or a wrong thing, or a morally wrong thing, or an unspiritual thing.

[8 : 29] The Bible never says that wealth is a bad thing, but what it does say is that it's a treacherous thing. It's a dangerous thing in some ways. And that's what our passage today is going to look at.

The teacher, Kohelet, he's reflecting and grappling on the subject of wealth and money. And as he does so, he's grappling with the paradox of wealth. And he comes to the conclusion, he says, wealth or money can be a great blessing in your life.

And you can thank God for it. But it can also be a great curse in your life, depending on how you relate to it. The author says that wealth has the ability to control you or to serve you.

And so look to wealth to give you meaning or purpose, sign over the power of attorney to wealth, to the treasures of your heart. And oh, it can be so disappointing.

It can embitter you. It can rob you of joy. Because wealth is the one treasure that has the power to make you poor.

[9 : 40] But, he says, on the other hand, if you will master the love of money, if you will regain over it so that it doesn't control your emotions and your affections, your love and your joys, your anxieties and your fears, money can actually be a great blessing, a great sense of joy.

Wealth, says the teacher, is a terrible master, but a great servant. That's what we're going to look at today.

And so let's see how the teacher arrives at this point. Firstly, consider, he says, those who look to money or financial success for meaning and purpose in life, he says, consider how wealth has the ability to be a source of pain.

Look at how he says this in verse 13. If you've got your bulletin, you'll need to look at it. He says, chapter 5, verse 13, there is a grievous evil that I've seen.

Another translation says, a sickening tragedy. There's a tragedy that I've seen under the sun. Riches were kept by their owner to his own hurt.

[10 : 45] He says, the gaining of wealth, the increases of riches, the growing portfolio, rather than being a blessing, in some instances, has actually been a curse. It's actually caused disappointment and pain.

Rather than enriching its owner, it's ended up impoverishing them. Well, how so? Well, he gives us three examples of what he means. Look at verse 13 and 14.

He says, a man comes into some wealth. Maybe he inherits something from his parents. Maybe he pulls off a great deal at work and gets paid a massive bonus. However it is, he comes into some great wealth.

And he's thinking what to do with this wealth. And he's thinking, if I invest this well, this can work out for me. He's got a son. Recent, he and his wife have just had a son.

And he hears about this thing called, let's just say, cryptocurrency, right? And he hears it's on this massive rise. And he thinks, I've got to get in there quickly. You know, everyone, I'm getting left behind. All my friends are making tons of money.

[11 : 45] And so he dives in and he lies awake at night and he's thinking, if I played this thing right, my son can go to the best school. In fact, he can go to the best Ivy League university.

And no one else in my family has gone there. My son will be the first one in my family to study abroad and go to this Ivy League university. I will be the envy of my family. And as he lies awake at night, he starts to think, if this really works out, actually maybe we can buy a holiday home in the Maldives as well.

And he's thinking and speculating and so he dives in. And every day he's watching the price and he's going up and he's getting excited until one day, what happens? The market crashes.

The Fed pulls some levers. The shipment sinks off the Pacific. His Arabian camels get hijacked in the Arabian desert. Something happens and he loses it all.

And now not only is the son not going to go to Ivy League university, he's not going to go anywhere. All is lost. Look at verse 13 and 14. There is a great evil I've seen under the sun.

[12 : 52] Riches kept by the owner, two is hurt. And those riches were lost in a bad venture. Though he is the father of a son, he has nothing in his hand. The love of money, he says, has a way of getting into our hearts and actually rather than enriching us, impoverishing us.

But look at also, he says, the love of money can destroy relationships. Look at verse 11. It says, when goods increase, they increase also who eat them. And what advantage has the owner but to see them with his eyes?

The teacher here is commenting on the fact that those who get rich quickly suddenly find themselves with a whole lot of friends that they didn't know that they had. I'm sure you've read the stories online.

Somebody wins the lottery, \$50 million, the Mark VI, or somebody inherits a whole pile of money from some long lost relative they didn't know about.

And suddenly they are the talk of the town. Right? And they've got all these friends that they didn't know that they had before. All these estranged family members suddenly contact them and want to get in touch and rebuild the relationship.

[14 : 00] Right? You know that feeling? You know what I'm talking about? Or maybe their colleagues and their neighbors suddenly now recognize how wealthy they are and want to get in. And they talk to them and say, oh, you know, I've got some debt and I wonder if you can help me.

And so they run into all these friends and family members. But what happens? Invariably a year or two later, the friends are gone. The money's gone. The relationships are broken down.

The family's a mess and they're in more debt than they ever had before. I remember talking to a friend of mine who pastored a church in upstate New York many years ago.

And the place where he pastored was extremely, extremely wealthy people. And he said to me, he said, one of the things with extremely wealthy people is they never know who their real friends are. Because they're always wondering, the people in my life, are you just here because you want to be friends with me because I've got money?

Or maybe because we move in the same social circles. But if I lost everything, would you still be my friend? And the problem that the teacher notices there, that thing, he says, when goods increase, so do those who eat them.

[15 : 10] Suddenly you've got all these people around, these hangers-on that want to be friends with you and get in your life because of your wealth. But the other problem that the teacher notices, he says that when people's wealth increases, so do their lifestyles.

He says, when wealth increases, so do the bills who eat them up. You're generally very content with what you have. You get a nice bonus and suddenly you drive past the showroom of the car that you drive and you start recognizing all the little things in your car that previously you're very content with.

But now suddenly an upgrade seems appropriate. Or maybe you're very happy with your laptop and you get a bonus at work and you walk past the iStore and suddenly there's a special.

And you realize, oh yeah, I think it would be a good investment to my career for me to upgrade my laptop, right? When goods increase, he says, so do those bills that eat them up.

Suddenly when wealth masters you, it has a life of its own. You get a big check, you make a big deal, you get paid handsomely and suddenly a few weeks or months later it's all gone.

[16 : 16] Because either you find you have new friends that you didn't know that you had before or you find you have new bills and things in your house that you find new things that you need that you didn't know that you needed beforehand.

But here's another way he says that the money can hurt us. He says it steals your peace. Look at verse 12. It says, The sweet is the sleep of the laborer, whether he eats much or little, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.

The teacher's commenting on what we all know so well, right? He says, financial wealth promises freedom, but it so easily ends up enslaving you. It actually, it's a peace thief.

It steals your rest. He's saying, who sleeps better at night? The laborer that's worked hard, had a good day's work, and crashes on his bed, or the person that checks the opening of the New York Stock Exchange just before going to bed and seeing that investment crash, right?

Who's going to sleep better? We all know. Now, some people say, okay, I know that money doesn't buy you wealth, but I'd rather be unhappy in a Lamborghini than unhappy on the streets, right?

[17 : 30] You ever heard somebody say that? If you're a high schooler here, a youth, maybe you've thought about that. Look, I know it doesn't buy me happiness, but rather let me be unhappy with money than unhappy without it.

But, but look at what the writer's saying. He's saying, it's true that money and wealth is not a bad thing. It's not wrong or immoral. If God has blessed you with wealth, that's not a bad thing.

But it's also not a neutral thing. It has an ability to get into your heart and to change you. Wealth has an ability to take on a life of its own and to enslave you.

He says, it's not bad, but oh, you need to be careful. It has a unique power to it. It's not just that it can make you happy. It has a way of owning you.

Unless you master it, it will master you. He says, the apostle Paul in the New Testament writes this. He says, those who desire to be rich fall into a temptation, into a snare, a trap, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

[18 : 38] The teacher looks at those around him and he says, here is a grievous evil, a sickening tragedy. I have seen under the sun riches kept by the owner to their own hurt, to their own demise.

Look what else he says here. He says, the desire to get rich has the ability to perpetuate injustice. Look at verse 8 and 9. It says, if you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness, don't be amazed, don't be surprised, for the high official is watched by a higher one and there are yet higher ones over them.

So what's he saying? He's saying somebody in the land, they want to try and get some money quickly and so they cut some corners, but there's someone watching them so they need to pay them off. But that person is being watched by someone else so maybe they need to pay off the person above them.

And that person needs to cover their tracks so the person above them doesn't get in trouble. And the whole system of oppression and injustice continues. He's warning us here saying, it's very easy for us to say, it's just a little shortcut.

Nobody will notice. It won't make any difference. They're saying, oh, you get into a system and the system gets hold of you. You think you've got a control of it, but actually, it can soon control you.

[20 : 01] I don't know if this is inappropriate to say this, but coming from South Africa, I could tell you lots of stories of bribery and corruption and how it gets hold of the system.

One quick story, a few years ago, the deputy finance minister got called into the private house of a private citizen. And this private citizen says, I happen to know that the finance minister is going to get fired from his job in a few weeks' time and we have selected you to take his place.

Here is a briefcase with 50 million Hong Kong dollars. It's the first of five installments as an introductory gift just to help you on your way. The gift wasn't an act of generosity.

It was the first installment of bribery and corruption. And thankfully, that man turned around and said, no thank you, I don't do business with private citizens like that.

And he lost his job very soon after that. The point is that, maybe you say this, one of the things as a pastor that I've been very interested in by in recent years is the multiple falls that pastors and people in ministry have.

[21 : 12] You have these pastors that have affairs or steal money or are controlling and manipulative or abusive and pretty soon they lose their job. And one of the things that's interesting is almost no pastor goes into ministry with that goal in mind.

They always start off with the best of intentions. Everyone goes into ministry saying, I want to serve people and love and serve God. Right? But somewhere along the line, the power and the authority gets to the head and changes you.

And the author is saying the same thing with money here. The love of money has a power, it has an ability to change you. Nobody starts off in their 20 and says, I want to be corrupt and steal and I want to, you know, be a corrupt person.

But when you get to 60 and you find yourself like there, how did you get there? It started with small decisions. Okay, look at, look at another thing he says here. Ultimately, he says, wealth gives no guarantee of the satisfied soul.

It doesn't satisfy. Now, last week I mentioned the song by the birds, Turn, Turn, Turn. And I asked if anyone knew it and much to my disappointment, very few of you knew it.

[22 : 22] Henry knew it and Ayush knew it. There we go. Ayush, thank you. And Oscar nodded his head. Well, let's see if anyone's heard of the Rolling Stones. Anyone heard of them? Okay, still nobody.

Ed? Okay, thank you. Florence? Great. Well, they came up with a song. I think we should come up with a song each week, right, in Ecclesiastes. Last week was the birds. This week the Rolling Stones. You know this song?

You can't get no satisfaction. I can't get no satisfaction. Well, that's what he's saying here. Look at verse 10. He says, He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income.

This also is a vanity, a tragedy, he says. Someone makes all sorts of sacrifices. They sacrifice relationships. They sacrifice community.

They sacrifice their spiritual disciplines, their Bible reading and their prayer. They pass by on some of the most powerful moments in their children's lives. Maybe they miss their children's birth.

[23 : 19] They miss birthday parties. They miss their children's plays at school in the pursuit of that goal to get that career advancement, to gain a treasure.

And when they get there, what do they find? It doesn't satisfy. Two weeks ago, Neils gave you that quote by Jim Carrey. He says, I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever wanted just to see that that is not the answer.

There are many stories like this. Jack Higgins, one of the most successful authors of all time, 1970s, he wrote that book, *The Eagle Has Landed*, sold 50 million copies alone.

All his books have sold a quarter of a billion copies. That's a lot of books to sell. One of the wealthiest, richest men, authors of all time. He lived in Jersey, tax haven, so even his wealth wasn't taxed.

He died earlier this year. In the interview, someone asked him, what do you wish that you had known as a boy? And without skipping a beat, he straight away answered, I wish somebody had told me that when you get to the top, there's nothing there.

[24 : 30] There's nothing there. And this is what the teacher, Kohelet, is trying to tell us. That when we think that wealth and money and possessions are the key to our happiness, the key to meaning, the key to satisfaction in life, when you hand over the keys of your life, when you sign over the power of attorney, to possessions to give you meaning and satisfaction, you allow that thing to master you, to own you, to control you.

But the problem is that when you master it, you become its slave. And ultimately, it does not satisfy. And so look at chapter 6, verse 2 with me.

This is, he summarizes his point here. He says, there is an evil that I've seen under the sun. It's like a burden that's heavy on mankind's hearts. A man to whom God gives great wealth and possessions and honor so that he lacks nothing of all he desires.

He sees that Lamborghini and he says, I'll take one. Sees that house in the Maldives, I'll have one of those. He lacks nothing of all he desires. Yet God does not give him the ability to enjoy it.

Man has everything he could possibly want, but he is not happy. He is not content. This is futile, a sickening tragedy, says the teacher.

[25 : 58] Money is a terrible master. But did you notice when Iris read to us this morning, there is one place in this passage where he talks about what is positive.

He says, behold, I've seen what is good and fitting. Four times he says to us, there is a grievous evil, a sickening tragedy. But one time he says, behold, there's something good and fitting in this world.

He says, behold, verse 18, I have seen, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink to find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun these few days of his life that God has given him.

For this is his lot. But there's something else going on here because compare chapter 5, verse 19 with chapter 6, verse 2.

These two sentences are almost identical, almost word for word the same, except one is positive, one is negative. Look at chapter 5, verse 19. He says, everyone to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them and to accept his lot and to rejoice in his toil, this is the gift of God.

[27 : 12] But then in 6, verse 2, he says almost the same thing. A man to whom God gives wealth and possessions and honor so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, but God does not give him the power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them.

So here are two sentences, almost identical, one positive, one negative. So what's going on here? If you, by the way, if you're new to church and new to the Bible, the biblical authors want us to take note of things like this.

This is no coincidence. It's the way the Bible writers want us to sit up and to ask questions. And their point in doing this is to ask, what's going on here? So what is going on here?

What does the author want to tell us? Well, there's two things. The first thing is he's telling us that our lives are under the hands of the sovereign God. We tend to think that we are the captains of our faith, the masters of our own happiness, right?

But he says, don't you believe it? One person builds their dream house and fills it with children and grandchildren. Another couple builds their dream house and dies in a car accident before they get to possess it.

[28 : 20] One person has everything, they get to enjoy it. One person has everything, they don't enjoy it. And notice, he doesn't attribute this to fate or to chance or to karma.

Who does he attribute it to? The hand of the sovereign God. God. The author here says, God gives and God takes away. Now the point of Ecclesiastes is not to make us pessimistic cynics, right?

The point is to lift your eyes off of what you can see. See God, consider God, consider the sovereign God. Your life is in his hands. You are not the captain of your faith, the master of your destiny, the sovereign God is.

But there's something else he wants us to see here. He's wanting to contrast wealth and possessions with contentment. He's comparing and contrasting possessions with contentment.

Look at what he says here. He says in effect, have much money doesn't mean anything. Be very wealthy doesn't mean you're going to be satisfied. Wealth and contentment says the author are not synonymous nor are they causally linked.

[29 : 31] having one doesn't mean you have the other. Wealth is not the determinant of a contented life. One person gets rich and enjoys wealth.

Another person gets rich and loses the ability to enjoy it. And the lesson for both is this. Don't set your heart on riches. Don't set your heart on wealth.

It is a fragile and an unstable base for your contentment, your joy or your satisfaction in life. That's his point in verse 6-3.

He says, okay, let's consider something else. Let's park money for a while. Let's consider the blessed life. In the ancient world, how was somebody considered blessed? Well, what is the signs of a blessed life?

You lived a long life. You had many children. You had a good and decent burial. Right? Three signs of a prosperous life. Well, look at what he says. He says, you can have all three of those things.

[30 : 29] You can live a thousand years. You can live twice a thousand years. You can have a hundred children. Doesn't mean anything. If you don't find contentment and satisfaction in all those things, what's the point?

Meaningless, meaningless. A vanity, a grasping after the wind. Look at verse 9. He says, better is the sight of the eyes than the wondering of the appetite.

What does he mean? He says, better to be content with what you have in your hands than always lying awake in bed thinking about the next thing to buy and consume. If only I can get that upgraded laptop.

If only I can get the new iPhone. If only I can get a new house. If only this. Better to be content with what you have than always longing and lusting for the next greatest thing.

This too is a vanity, a striving after the wind. And this is the point that the teacher wants to come to. He's got this long passage and in the middle of his passage he says, vanity, vanity, vanity, vanity, vanity.

[31 : 32] But in the middle he says this, here is something good. Here is something worthwhile. The climax of his passage is this, seek contentment, not possessions.

If your goal is possessions, your possessions will possess you. They will own you. Wealth is a terrible master but a decent servant.

Look at how the Apostle Paul writes it in the New Testament. He says, those who desire to be rich easily fall into a temptation, a snare, a trap into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil and it is through this craving that some have even shipwrecked their faith, wandered from their faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

This is what the teacher sees and observes, a futility and meaninglessness, wealth and possessions and honor, so that he has it all that but he lacks contentment, a vanity, a chasing after the wind.

[32 : 39] Now, the message of Ecclesiastes is pretty clear and straightforward. You don't need to be a rocket scientist or a nuclear physicist to work it out, right? He says, make sure that money is your servant, not your master.

But the challenge is, how do we do that? The challenge is not understanding the message, it's actually applying it or obeying it. Ask any addict, it is one thing to know that something is dangerous, it's another thing to walk away from it.

And so the question is, how do you keep yourself from being mastered by the love of money? And that could look like either being incessant spending or incessant saving, right?

How do we keep ourselves from being mastered by the love of money? That's a great question. 200 years ago, there was a Scottish pastor by the name of Thomas Chalmers, and he preached an amazing sermon called, The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.

Listen to what he says. He says, A man's desire is not to be gotten rid of simply by destroying it. It must be gotten rid of by substituting it with another desire in its place.

[33 : 58] The most effective way of withdrawing the heart from one object of desire is not by turning it to nothingness, but by presenting to it another object which is more alluring.

The heart is so constituted, so built, that the only way to dispossess it of an old affection is by the expulsive power of a new one. You see what Chalmers is saying?

He's saying, if you want to be free from being mastered by the love of something, you can't just tell yourself, don't love it, don't love it, don't love it. Your heart has to form more in love with something else.

You can't just turn away from what you love to nothingness, you've got to fall more in love with something else. And so the question is, something else has to become more precious, more beautiful, more reassuring, more delightful to you, otherwise you'll always be enslaved by the thing that you love the most.

And so the question is this, where do you find something to master you without destroying you? Where do you find a master that you can hand over the controls of your life to, and yet that master won't enslave you, won't oppress you, won't commit injustice against you, but will actually set you free?

[35 : 18] Where are we going to find a master, a Lord, that will own us and control us, but also love us? Where will we find a master who will capture our hearts attention, that we can so love, that we can be free from false masters in love?

Friends, where will we find a master whose promises are not illusionary, but will keep his promises even at the cost of his own life? Where will we find a master who will set us free from the mastery of wealth so that we can enjoy it and be content with it without being controlled by it?

On one Thursday night, 2,000 years ago, it was Passover weekend, and Jesus Christ is celebrating Passover with his disciples, and that night he's going to be betrayed, he's going to go to the cross and die on the cross, but while he's celebrating Passover, at the end of the Passover meal, he gets up and he takes off his cloak and he puts on the attire of a servant, and he gets a bowl of water and he puts a towel around his hand, and he does the one thing that no respectable rabbi, no respectable human being would do in the ancient world.

He does the one thing that even servants in the ancient world were not required to do. He washes the feet of his disciples, and Peter, the one disciple, says, no, no, no, Lord, you can't do this, this is inappropriate, and Jesus says, if I don't wash you, you'll never be clean.

Jesus is talking about the fact that the next day he's going to go to the cross and shed his blood, and then at the end of washing his disciples feet, he says, you call me Lord and Master, and you write, for that is what I am.

[37 : 09] See what Jesus is saying? Jesus is saying, I am the Lord and the Master of the universe. I am the King of all creation. I am the sovereign God.

I am Lord and Master. But what kind of Master is he? He's not the kind of Master that's going to control you and oppress you and commit injustice against you. He's not the kind of Master that's going to impoverish you.

He's the one Master who will get on his knees and serve you and set you free. Jesus Christ says, you call me Lord and Master and you're right, for that is what I am.

But look at what kind of Master I am. I'm the Master that will set you free. Later on, Jesus says, if you want true rest, if you want true grace, if you want to experience my rest, you've got to come to me as Master.

You've got to let me control. You've got to hand over the controls of your life to me. But if you come to me, I won't oppress you. I'll truly set you free. Do you remember Jesus' famous words in Matthew 11?

[38 : 10] Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon me. Do you know what that means? In the first century, to take someone's yoke upon you means to come under the authority, to submit your life to them, to surrender to them.

Jesus says, take my authority upon you. Take my lordship, come under me. Take my yoke upon me. Learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Come to me, you who are frantic and anxious, worried and frustrated about life. Those of you who are frigidly and heavily burdened, come to me and submit to me, and I will give you rest.

Jesus Christ says he's the one lord and master. He says he's the sovereign God. Remember how Colossians says he is the one by whom and through whom and for whom all things are made. Jesus Christ is the one who sits on the thrones of the heaven.

He's the one before whom angels will bow down and cry, worthy, worthy are you, our lord and king, to receive glory and honor and praise. Jesus Christ is the one person before whom every knee is going to bow down and every tongue is one day going to confess, it is true, you are God.

[39 : 26] He's lord and master. master, but he's the lord and master who did not come to be served, but to serve and to lay down his life as a ransom to save us from our sins.

Do you remember how the apostle Paul writes it? He's writing in prison. Paul is in Rome, he's got a collar around his neck, he's got chains on his hands, he's suffering in a Roman prison, and he writes a letter to some Christians in the city of Philippi and this is what he says, I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

I have learned to be content whether I have little or content whether I have much. In all and any circumstances I have learned the secret of contentment, whether I'm well fed or whether I'm hungry, whether I'm in abundance or whether I am in need.

Well what is the secret? How did Paul learn that? Do you remember what he writes earlier in Philippians? For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

What did he write in chapter 3? He says, All my life I've pursued these certain things, credentials. Now I consider them rubbish, I consider them loss compared to the all surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

[40 : 43] Friend, do you want to know the secret to contentment? It's knowing Christ Jesus is Lord. To live is Christ and to die is gain because you get to be with him.

That's the secret to contentment. Remember the words of that old hymn? Were the whole realm of nature mine that were an offering far too small.

Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all. Robert Murray McShane was a disciple of Thomas Chalmers.

I don't know why I love these old Scottish guys, but there's something nice about them. Robert Murray McShane was a disciple of Thomas Chalmers and he famously wrote this. For every one look at yourself, take ten looks at the person of Christ.

He is altogether lovely, such infinite majesty, and yet such meekness and grace, and all for sinners, even the chief of sinners like me.

[41 : 47] Friends, can I urge you for every one look at your bank account, for every one look at your stock portfolio, for every one look at your retirement fund, for every one look at that online shopping website, take ten looks at Christ.

He is altogether lovely, altogether precious, such meekness, such majesty, and such grace, and all for sinners like us.

Friends, Jesus Christ is the one Lord, who if you allow him to master you, if you hand over your life to completely, if you're willing to completely surrender to him, to have your way in my life, you'll find that he'll not only save you, he'll completely satisfy you.

Jesus will out-satisfy every other master in your life. Jesus will out-fulfill every other idol in your life. Jesus will out-satisfy every other idol that you tempted to serve.

Jesus Christ is the one Lord, the one master, the one king, who will both save you from your sin and your shame, but also satisfy your hearts. Let's come to him.

[42 : 50] Let's learn from the teacher of Ecclesiastes. Money is a great servant, but a terrible master. Let Jesus Christ be your master and your king, and be free from the lure of money.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus Christ, as we hear every week, you are the answer. You are the king. You are the one that we come to.

Father, it's so easy to know the words of the scriptures and to know the lesson, but it's so much more trickier to obey it and apply it. Christ, I pray for my friends.

I pray for myself. God, I pray for us as a church. Won't you, by your spirit, come and get hold of our hearts? Won't you open the eyes of our hearts that we may see you and be in awe of you, that we may be enamored by you?

Jesus, I pray, come and take your place. Christ, come and have your way in our lives. Christ, come and be our Lord and our king and our master.

[44 : 03] friends, we're going to go to communion in a few minutes time, but maybe just before that, I want to just give us an opportunity to respond. Friends, maybe you're here this morning and you are not a follower of Jesus.

You've been mastered by all sorts of other things. Why don't you come to Jesus this morning? Why don't you surrender to him? Why don't you hand over your life to him?

Why don't you hand over your life to him? Friends, why don't you come to Christ and ask him to be your king, your master, your Lord? The way to do that is just to pray a very simple prayer.

To admit that you're a sinner, that Jesus Christ died on the cross to save you of your sins, to take your unrighteousness and to give you his righteousness in your place, to credit your account, his goodness.

Why don't you come to him and say, Jesus, I need your grace. I can't do it on my own. I need you to forgive me. Why don't you come to him this morning and say, God, I want to live for you.

[45 : 18] I want you to be my master and my king. I want you to have your way. I will follow you. I will trust you. I will obey you.

I will love you supremely. Why don't you do that now?

Friends, maybe for some of us we are Christians already. Maybe we've been Christians for many years or maybe a few weeks. But if you're honest, something else has mastered you. It might not be wealth or money. It might be something else.

maybe what people think of you. Maybe some other desire. Maybe you mastered by porn or something else. Why don't you come and ask Christ to be your king and your master.

Ask him to come and be the most beautiful and attractive desire of your heart. To be the expulsive power that drives those other masters.

[46 : 24] God, come and do that for all of us, Lord. For all of us, come and be our king. Lord, I pray that this week as we go into the marketplace, as we go to work, as we go to school, as we go to university, as we travel and we see family and friends, God, won't you come and be our king and our master?

Won't you be first in our heart? We pray this in your wonderful and your gracious name. Amen. Amen.