

Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



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The Empty Life

A life spent working and accumulating for ourselves will leave us feeling empty, as though something is missing. In fact, something IS missing.

“All things are full of labor; man cannot express it. The eye *is not satisfied* with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing” (Eccl. 1:8).

“There is one alone, without companion: He has neither son nor brother. Yet there is no end to all his labors, *nor is his eye satisfied* with riches. . . .” (Eccl. 4:8).

“He who loves silver *will not be satisfied* with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity” (Eccl. 5:10).

“All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet *the soul is not satisfied*” (Eccl. 6:7).

The book of Ecclesiastes paints a rather dismal portrait of human existence. Life under the sun is not only not fair, it is often pointless. Despite all our hard work, we remain disillusioned with what we have accomplished, so we push ourselves to work more, accumulate more, experience more. But it’s never enough. A perpetual emptiness hangs over our days like a crotchety old school teacher, constantly reminding us of the incompleteness of our efforts. It’s not

that we make mistakes—at least we can grow through those—but that even our accomplishments do not provide a lasting sense of purpose in our lives.

This dissatisfaction poisons every aspect of our lives, including how we relate to others. As social critic Eric Hoffer observed, “Our greatest pretenses are built up not to hide the evil and the ugly in us, but our emptiness. The hardest thing to hide is something that is not there.” We want desperately for others to see us as valuable, while deep inside we ache for the smallest scrap of self-worth. So we posture and strut to convince others—and ourselves—that we really are important. Only it never works, and we come off looking foolish.

It is this “nothing there” feeling that Solomon is addressing in Ecclesiastes. We cram our lives with so much activity that we can’t find time for it all, yet struggle with a gnawing sense that what we’re doing is not not all that important. There is something still missing from our lives. What is it?

Solomon gives us a clue in these verses. Notice that the dissatisfaction he

describes is tied directly to *work* and *money*. If our lives feel empty, it’s because *we’re trying to fill them with the wrong treasure*. Work and money have a legitimate place in our lives, but it’s a mistake to expect them to define our self-worth. They can’t.

Jesus picked up where Solomon left off, and went straight to the core of the matter: “One’s life does not consist in the abundance of things he possesses” (Lk. 12:15). Contrary to the popular maxim, clothes do not make the man—and neither do houses, cars, careers, investments, and so on. If we’re going to find fulfillment, we’ll have to look elsewhere. Jesus explains, “Seek the kingdom of God . . . sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail” (v. 31, 33). Our souls will find satisfaction, in other words, when we put God first, and use our lives to serve others.

The empty life is not a problem of busy-ness; it’s a problem of priorities. Get our priorities straight, and our lives will be rich with meaning.

– David King