

# Ecclesiastes 5:8-12

## Bosses and Bills or Broken Systems, Broken Desires

### Introduction:

We looked last week at how even though we are made for worship we can get caught up in practice and miss the point of who it's all about.

It's easy to get caught up in the rat race of being successful or wealthy.

To jump in with the most current cause or issue. To look at the world and see all the problems brought on by what some have and others do not.

Social media has only aided in the exaggeration of this problem. Someone's income or dream job, or dream hobby, or dream vacation can become to you a nightmare because it always feels just out of reach.

The Preacher will continue with his view of "under the sun" as he observes two things: broken systems and broken desires.

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### Read the text:

Ecclesiastes 5:8-12

If you see in a province 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

#### **1. Our lives are lived in a broken system (v8-9)**

##### **a. Life under the sun works against: (v8)**

- i. the poor**
- ii. justice**
- iii. Righteousness**

Back in view of "under the sun".

- We may be shocked to hear of things that happen
  - An accident
  - A health complication that leads to hospitalization or death
  - When we hear of shootings, bombings, or someone who has committed some violent or gross act.
- We also hear about injustices in court.
  - Criminals that don't get what they deserve.
  - Light sentences and early releases
  - Judges and officials taking bribes to benefit the wealthy and creating more disadvantages for poor and impoverished people.

b. **Expect brokenness “under the sun”(v8)**

And yet...

- Why should we be surprised at any of it?
  - Why is it a shock to see such things?
  - Why do broken people doing broken things amaze us?
    - The late, great Vivian Smith responded this way during small group many years ago.
    - Teachers were complaining about teacher things, as we often do, when seemingly out of nowhere (but really out of the wisdom of time and the Spirit) she said: “why are you expecting people who are lost to act like people who are saved?”
- i. **Why do you expect people who are lost to act like people who are saved?”- Vivian Smith**
1. **It’s what the Preacher is communicating** here: that we live in a broken world under the sun.
  2. **If this is all there is, it is hevel**, sad and unfortunate.

c. **A broken system is better than no system at all (v9)**

- But The Preacher gives somewhat of a silver lining, more of a grey lining, to the cloud
  - “The meaning of the hebrew verse is uncertain” great.
  - **There are two ways to interpret:**
    - **1) a corrupt leader in a system is better than no system at all**
      - a king, a government, a leader, is better than anarchy and chaos because they will at least till the land and produce food, and will also likely take and profit for himself
    - **2) even the king is dependent on the land for food.**
  - When there are questions of interpretation, as in the words are obscure or have multiple meanings, we must look in context for a greater understanding.
    - It seems to be that when we take the surrounding issues of officials, and leaders, and the rich in connection with the mistreatment of the poor and the lack of justice and righteousness, it’s my take, and one I’ve come across in my reading, that even a corrupt government is better than none at all.
    - Despite how we feel about government and administrations, it would be pure chaos if it all went away today.
- Before we move on, I want to take us above the clouds for a moment, above the earth at how God wants us to view the poor, justice and righteousness, and those in higher places than we. The believer may live in this broken world, but he does not have to be of it.

- First, how God would have us treat the poor and relate to justice and righteousness.
  - Deut 15:7-8- "If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, 8 but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.
  - Proverbs 14:31- Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.
  - Psalm 82:3-4- Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."
- Second, how God would have us relate to those in higher positions of authority than us.
  - Romans 13:1-4 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.
  - We may go to the highest rung of the ladder and find corrupt leaders and leadership, but they will all one day bow the knee before the King of kings and Lord of lords.
- There is hope in the hevel.

He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with this income; this also is vanity. When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep. (v10-12)

## **2. Our lives are lived with broken desires, or Mo' Money, Mo' Problems (v10-12)**

### **a. The hunger for more never ends (v10)**

- i. Whatever amount we think will solve our problems, it's never enough
- ii. The love of money brings all sorts of evil.

1. 1 Timothy 6:9-11

### **b. Mo' money, mo' problems (v11)**

- i. The more money we have, the more problems seem to arise, the more expenses show up.
- ii. *I don't know what, they want from me*
- iii. *It's like the more money we come across*
- iv. *The more problems we see*

### **c. True rest escapes those with broken desires (v12)**

- i. The laborer is not a better man than the rich man, but his worries are not over money.
- ii. The laborer's life is simple, for the most part. He wakes up, goes to work, comes home, goes to sleep.
- iii. His concern is not over the running of the business, the stacking of riches, or the building of an empire.
- iv. But the rich man lays down with his stomach full but his mind on the money he has made, is making, or will make. He cannot rest because he is caught in the trap of never having enough.

## 2 Gospel Thoughts

### 1) On the day that Christ returns, all oppression shall cease;

- a) Of the poor, of the defenseless, of those who lack justice and where righteousness was violated.
- b) There will be no need for us to seek justice and righteousness or mourn to see the lack of it. The wicked and rebellious will receive their due, as will the faithful and obedient.

### 2) Christ calls each and every believer to follow after Him and only Him.

- a) There can be only one master. There cannot be two. You cannot serve God and money. Or God and master
- b) Matthew 6:24

Will you serve him?

- The king of kings who is always just and right
- The only one who can satisfy the longing of your heart?

# Small Group Discussion Guide

**Sermon Title:** *Bosses and Bills* (or *Broken Systems, Broken Desires*)

**Text:** *Ecclesiastes 5:8–12*

**Theme:** Living faithfully in a broken world without letting broken desires rule our hearts

## Icebreaker

*When was the first time you realized the world wasn't "fair"?*

(It could be something lighthearted or serious — anything that showed you how uneven life can feel.)

## Discussion Questions

### 1. Life in a Broken System (vv. 8–9)

The Preacher says not to be “amazed” when we see oppression or injustice.

- Why do you think injustice still shocks or frustrates us, even though we know the world is broken?
- How does remembering that God is still in charge help us keep perspective when we see corruption or chaos?

### 2. A Better System or a Better Hope

Even a flawed leader, Solomon says, is better than no leader at all.

- What are some ways Christians can honor authority without placing ultimate trust in it?
- How does Romans 13:1–4 help us think biblically about government and leadership today?

### 3. Broken Desires (vv. 10–12)

“He who loves money will not be satisfied with money.”

- Why is it so easy to believe that *more* — money, comfort, freedom — will finally make life feel full?
- What helps you stay content and grounded when you start to feel like you're missing out?

### 4. Gospel Hope Above the Sun

One day, Christ will set all things right, and only He can satisfy the heart.

- How does that future promise give meaning to how we live and work now?
- In practical terms, what might it look like to “serve God, not money” this week?

## Optional Reflection

*Where do you see “hevel” (futility or vapor) most clearly in today's world, and how does the gospel reframe your response to it?*