



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

Sermon for Pentecost 21

October 17, 2021

Contentment

Ecclesiastes 5:10–20

¹⁰ He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. ¹¹ When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? ¹² 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. ¹³ There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, ¹⁴ and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. ¹⁵ 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. 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? ¹⁷ Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger. ¹⁸ Behold, what I have seen 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. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

Toward the end of today's Old Testament, God says that it would be a good thing for you to "accept [your] lot and rejoice in [your] toil." In other words, He wants you to be glad about your labor "under the sun" because this is a gift that He gives you.

Of course, He's speaking to *everyone* here, not just to employers and employees. Many Christians go off to work every day and work hard — toiling "under the sun" — to support their families. If that describes you, God is certainly speaking to you when He says, "rejoice in your toil."

But, employed people are not the only ones He's speaking to here. Those who bring home a paycheck every week aren't the only ones who work hard, are they.

Stay-at-home moms, for instance, often cringe when someone asks them, "Do you work or do you stay at home?" Seriously? Spend a day with a stay-at-home mom. Stick around all week, if you have the strength. Some stay-at-home moms would love to work outside the home just for the rest! So, God says to stay-at-home moms too in today's text, "Rejoice in your toil."

Many Christians can't enter the work force because of their health. But it would be foolish for us to think that people with disabilities don't work hard. Often they work harder



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than a lot of people just to get through the day. Certainly, God says to them, as well: “Rejoice in your toil.”

And what about children? Some struggle with school; others struggle with a bad home life; most of them struggle to figure out who they are and where they belong. All of childhood — especially the teenage years — could be thought of as the hard work and long toil of learning to be an adult. God says to children too, “Rejoice in your toil.”

Retired Christians also feel the weight of “toil under the sun.” They may have retired from wage-earning, but now they have more responsibilities in their family, their church, or in their community. Many retirees I know work harder now than when they held a job.

No matter who you are or where you are in life, God is speaking to you in today’s Old Testament. Some people might take offense at God saying to them, “Accept [your] lot and rejoice in [your] toil,” especially if they’re not happy about their lot in life, or if they don’t enjoy the toil of their daily labors.

And when God says that you should “accept [your] lot and rejoice in [your] toil,” He’s *not* being a demanding ogre who wants you to suffer in silence. He says this because He wants you to think of your situation in life as a gift from Him. What He really wants is for you to be content (Job 36:11, 1 Tim. 6:6).

Now, He’s fully aware of how hard you work to put food on your table. But He also knows that more money in your wallet isn’t the solution. Why? As He says in our text, “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money . . . When goods increase, they increase who eat them.” In other words, God knows that, if you double your income Monday, on Tuesday you’ll have every penny of it spoken for, and by Wednesday you’re still going to feel like you don’t have enough. The real solution is to rely on the promises of God, who “opens His hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing” (Ps. 145:16). Jesus assures you that you are worth far more than the birds of the air or the lilies of the field” (Matt. 6). He provides for them without their even asking. And, if He feeds and cares for them, do you really think He won’t take care of you, “O you of little faith?” My friends, let us “accept [our] lot and rejoice in [our] toil.”

Did you know that God is not the least surprised that some of you struggle with afflictions of body or mind? His entire creation is so thoroughly drenched with sin that it only makes sense that we would feel the effects of sin physically and mentally. He’s the One who created your body and mind; He knows every ache and every shadow; and He has lovingly and graciously allowed your crosses to come upon you, so that you would follow Jesus. Remember what Jesus said: “Take up your cross and follow Me” (Mark 8:34). Which is another way of saying, “Accept [your] lot and rejoice in [your] toil — [for] this is the gift of God.”

Of course, we shouldn’t pretend to be what we’re not. Teenagers shouldn’t pretend they’re thirty years old. Retirees shouldn’t pretend they’re thirty years old. Sixty-one-year-old pastors shouldn’t pretend they’re thirty years old. If God wanted to fill the world with



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thirty-somethings, He would speak it and it would be so. But He hasn't done that, has He. No, He's given each of us a particular lot and place in life.

For example: He wants some Christians to be old women, so that they may teach younger women what it means to be a good Christian woman (Titus 2:3-5). The same can be said of older Christian men.

God wants some Christians to have more money so that they'll show love to their neighbor, and He wants other Christians to have less money so that they'll *be* loved by their neighbor (Luke 3:11).

God wants adults to take care of children, intervening for them and "bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4); He wants young men to respect the old, honoring them in their old age (1 Pet. 5:5); He wants employees to work hard for their employers (Eph. 6:5-8), and pastors to lay down their lives for the sake of the sheep committed to their care (1 Pet. 5:1-4; John 10:11).

And beyond all that, God wants Christians to feel various limitations of body and mind. Why? So that we'll have no choice but to abandon the sin of sufficiency in ourselves and to trust in Him alone for all good things (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

Beloved, God calls all of us to be content with what we have and who we are. After all, He lovingly created each one of us to *be* who we are and has given us everything we have (Eph. 2:10). So, "accept [your] lot and rejoice in [your] toil," says the Lord, "this is the gift of God."

There's a word for this; it's called "contentment." Contentment is possible *only* by the gift and miracle of Jesus, "who is God over all, forever praised!" (Rom. 9:5). The Lord Jesus Christ purchased and won not only forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation for you through His death and resurrection, but contentment as well. Here's what I mean:

Some people feel discontented because of their sins, their injuries, or regrets of the past. Jesus shed His blood to wash away all those sins, injuries, and regrets. This is what He promises when says to you: "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us (Ps. 1-3:11-12).

Other people feel discontented because of their worries and fears about the future. But remember: Jesus rose from the dead! And in so rising, He has secured for you an *eternal* future that can never be taken away from you. This He promises you when He says: "According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

He also promises to take care of you here and now in your day-to-day challenges, saying that "All things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).



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Boil all these divine words down and do you know what you have? Simply this, spoken lovingly to you by your God; spoken to you in mercy and peace: “Accept [your] lot and rejoice in [your] toil — this is the gift of God.” In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen