

**Summary of the Preacher's Main Points So Far:**

1. **The Whole of Life is *vanity* – a mere breath in which none of our personal accomplishments or legacies will survive or be remembered** (Ecclesiastes 1).
2. **Even those specific things that are precious to us, that we hold onto so tightly and invest so much in, also have little or no lasting satisfaction** (Ecclesiastes 2).
3. **Life is not about struggling to gain; but rather letting go, and learning to simply receive and enjoy life as a gift -- accepting this is the beginning of true Joy, Hope, and Freedom** (Ecclesiastes 3).
4. **A) Making life about “ME” is the source of most pain.**  
  
**B) Making life about others -- you will find true joy and contentment that cannot be matched elsewhere under the sun** (Ecclesiastes 4).

**Religion is Just Another Form of Vanity****Ecclesiastes 5:1-3**

**Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil. <sup>2</sup>Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few. <sup>3</sup>For the dream comes through much effort and the voice of a fool through many words.**

- **“Guard Your Steps as you go to the House of God...”**
  - **What is the danger the Preacher is warning of?**
  - **The Preacher's knife cuts very deeply here...**
    - Chapter 5 does not introduce a new topic, but simply continues in the same vein:
      - Pursuing “Religion” for personal gain is no different than pursuing any other vanity; wealth, pleasure, accomplishment, etc...
- **“For the dream comes through much effort and the voice of a fool through many words...”**
  - **Religion can easily be just as empty of a pursuit as every other useless pursuit “under the sun.”**
    - Man Talks; Man Dreams; Man Does
    - Religion is about ME, not GOD
      - It is false, a chasing after the wind, with no real or lasting value

# Matthew 23: The 7 Things Jesus Hates About Religion

(One of my old sermon series)

Religion: The Flesh's Version of Holiness (23:1-12)

#1: Religious People Misrepresent God (23:13-14)

#2: Religious People Care More About Appearance Than Sanctification (23:27-28)

#3: Religious People Convert Others to Their Dogma, Not to Jesus (23:15)

#4: Religious People Reduce Spiritual Life to Loopholes and Technicalities (23:16-22)

#5: Religious People Often Miss the Heart of the God (23:23-24)

#6: Religious People Believe in Fixing the Old Man, Not Crucifying Him (23:25-26)

#7: Religious People Rarely, If Ever Deeply Examine Themselves (23:29-33)

Reaping Religion's Reward (23:34-39)

- "Religion" is perhaps the most dangerous place to fall into "vanity" and "chasing after the wind."
  - **Why is this true?**
    - Proverbs 16:18
    - 1 Cor. 10:12
    - Matthew 7:21-23

## • "Draw near to listen..."

- Deuteronomy 6:4-8 "Hear oh Israel..."
- John 10:1-18 "I am the Good Shepherd...the sheep hear my voice..."
- Habakkuk 2:20  
"But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him."

## • Talking Not Walking

(5:4-7)

<sup>4</sup>When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for *He takes* no delight in fools. **Pay what you vow!** <sup>5</sup>It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. <sup>6</sup>**Do not let your speech cause you to sin and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God that it was a mistake.** Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands? <sup>7</sup>**For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness. Rather, fear God.**

## Reminder of the Vanity of Riches

(5:10-17)

<sup>10</sup>He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance *with its* income. This too is vanity. <sup>11</sup>When good things increase, those who consume them increase. So what is the advantage to their owners except to look on? <sup>12</sup>The sleep of the working man is pleasant, whether he eats little or much; but the full stomach of the rich man does not allow him to sleep.

<sup>13</sup>There is a grievous evil *which* I have seen under the sun: riches being hoarded by their owner to his hurt. <sup>14</sup>When those riches were lost through a bad investment and he had fathered a son, then there was nothing to support him. <sup>15</sup>As he had come naked from his mother's womb, so will he return as he came. He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand. <sup>16</sup>This also is a grievous evil—exactly as a man is born, thus will he die. So what is the advantage to him who toils for the wind? <sup>17</sup>Throughout his life *he* also eats in darkness with great vexation, sickness and anger.

## The Gift of God: How to Live

- **A Repeating Simple Theme** (2:24-25; 3:12-13, 3:22; 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7;)

(5:18-20)

<sup>18</sup>Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun *during* the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward. <sup>19</sup>Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God. <sup>20</sup>For he will not often consider the years of his life, because God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart.