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Grace Notes

TITLE: How to enjoy life – part 2

SONGS: PRODIGAL SON

BORN TO SERVE

INTRO: Welcome to Grace Notes. This is your host, Barbara Sandbek. On our Last program we began a study on the subject ‘How to enjoy life’. We saw that God’s does wants us to prosper, and even have possessions, but He also wants us to see that life doesn’t exist in the abundance of material goods.

So, does this mean that we should strive to be poor? The wise teacher who wrote Proverbs 30:8b-9 had the answer. He prayed...

...give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread, otherwise, I may have too much and disown You and say, “Who is the Lord?” or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the Name of my God.

On our program today, we’ll take a look at some of the ills material prosperity can bring, if not handled correctly. But first, let’s hear a song about a parable we all know very well.

***** PRODIGAL SON *****

We’ve all either been a prodigal or have known one. Luke chapter 15 records this parable of the prodigal son. Here’s a case where a young man had been given everything he needed from his father, but he wasn’t content with that. The grass was surely greener on the other side. He felt he could enjoy life more if he had more money and could do with it what he wanted, so he asked his father for his inheritance, took the money and ran to a distant country to get as far away from his father, and his control, as possible.

Wealth without Godly wisdom to handle it is a dangerous combination.

1 Timothy 6:10 says that the love of money is the root of all evil. This young man wanted all that money could buy. He thought it would make him self-sufficient - free - but his wealth ruled him; it became his master. Jesus told it well in Matthew 6:24 when He said...

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

The young man served his money but his money didn’t serve him. It was like that verse in Proverbs 23:5 that says...

Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout

wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.

Sure enough, he squandered his wealth in riotous living and found himself broke, hungry and in dire need. This son of a wealthy man hired himself out to feed pigs.

Though his wealth ruled and ruined him, it taught him a valuable lesson. Money does not bring happiness. After unsuccessfully trying to steal a husk from the pigs to eat, he realized how good he'd had it under his father's care. He saw, too, how ungrateful he'd been. This penitent son got up and returned to his father's house, asking only to be a servant. His father, like our Heavenly Father, welcomed him with open arms, cleaned him up, reinstated him as his son, and celebrated his return.

This story had a happy ending, but that's not always the case.

Let's see what an abundance of possessions did to one of Israel's kings, King Solomon. He was a young child when he took the throne. What an awesome responsibility for anyone, much less a youngster. He needed help. God appeared to him in a dream and said...

"Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

Solomon's response, as recorded in 1 Kings 3:7-9, was...

"I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong."

I've always been impressed with his request, but the more I looked into it the more I realized that he didn't ask for God's help, he asked for God's wisdom. Solomon wanted wisdom so HE could rule, not so God could rule through him.

This may have been immaturity on Solomon's part, since he was so young. A better request would have been one like Moses' in Psalm 90:17...

May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us: Establish the work of our hands FOR US, yes, establish the work of our hands.

Nevertheless, God was pleased with his request and gave him the wisdom he asked for, along with wealth and honor, which he didn't ask for. God also gave him a conditional promise that if he obeyed his commands, he would live a long life.

Solomon had greater riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with him to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart.

I've always wondered why God gave Solomon riches, since this became his downfall. I initially saw it as a blessing, but after much thought, I believe it was more to test him to see if he would apply the wisdom to his own life, by handling his wealth correctly. Psalm 62:10b says...

Though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

God had given specific instructions to kings in Deuteronomy 17...

The king...must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself, or make the people return to Egypt to acquire more of them...He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.

It went on to say that the king was to write for himself a copy of this law and read it daily so that he would learn to revere the Lord and obey Him.

Solomon's riches made him forget his need for God. 1 Kings chapters 10 & 11 record that Solomon imported horses from Egypt, and accumulated chariots, horses, gold and silver. He married 700 wives and had 300 concubines. (I think that would quality as 'many wives'.) These wives were foreign women who brought their gods with them to the palace. 1 Kings 11:3-4 states that Solomon held fast to them in love and as he grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord, his God. His life was summed up in verse 6...

Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord: he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father, had done.

Solomon spent his life in pursuit of pleasure rather than God. He became selfish and overindulgent, denying himself nothing and dying at a very young age. Unlike the prodigal son he never returned to the Father God.

Solomon's prosperity blinded him to what life really consisted of.

Wealth, should be a used as a means to an end. I Timothy 6:17-19 says...

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the LIFE that is truly life.

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True living consists of seeking to know and serve the one true God –

- who made us in His image and likeness**
- who gave us life, breath and everything else**
- the One in whom we live, move and have our being!**

One of my favorite songs that my mom, sister and I sang years ago hits the nail on the head, & I'll close with it. We were born to serve the Lord.

***** Born to Serve *****

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Until our next program, let your grace notes be a song of praise!**