

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

July 10, 2022

Ecclesiastes Revisited

Wine and Folly

Prayer: *Father, we just thank you and praise you for the fact that we can still gather freely, we can still lead, lift up our voices in song and prayer and praise to you and we're grateful for that. We're grateful for the gift that you've given us of the wisdom of your word. We pray this morning as we open up your book we would have the presence of your Holy Spirit guiding us, Lord, bring us into truth, make it of everlasting value we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, as you know we're studying God's wisdom, it's God's wisdom through the eyes of Solomon. And more specifically we're looking at the book of Ecclesiastes, a book that Solomon wrote about God's wisdom applied to life under the sun. That's the term that Solomon uses and it means basically life as we experience it with our senses without God. Solomon was God's perfect choice. Solomon had wealth, he had fame, he had power, he had the greatest wisdom any man had ever been given and with that wisdom he took a wide-eyed approach to every aspect of living under the sun. And last time we

looked at laughter and pleasure and here's how Solomon put it in *Ecclesiastes 2:1-2*, he said: *I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"* In verse 10 he said: *And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure.*

Last time we saw that the laughter that he was referring to, it was not the healthy laughter of a good joke or a funny story, it was instead it was the laughter of derision, of sport, of mockery, it was the laughter of cynicism. And Solomon explored that laughter with wisdom and he decided that it was foolishness. We also looked at pleasure itself. Pleasure is kind of the general heading and Solomon broke pleasure down into five areas, each of which he approached as he puts it -- quote -- *"With my mind still guiding me with wisdom."* And those areas of pleasure were laughter, wine, folly, amusement and sex.

So today we're going to look back at the next pleasure that Solomon embraces and it's a pleasure that's still embraced today. Actually we're going to be looking at two different pleasures because they often go together and that is wine and folly. So first let's look at wine. Understand, Solomon, Solomon here, he's not talking about the fine points of wine tasting here. And you know, most of you

know there's been a long running debate among evangelicals about the use of alcohol and scripture has two different ways that you can look at it. On the one hand we have *Proverbs 20* which says: *Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise;* or *Ephesians 5:18* which says: *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.* That's one side. Then on the other side we have Jesus' first miracle which he did at Cana. You're all familiar with that fact that there's this wedding and there Jesus changes water into wine. And even the text itself indicates that the wine that is drunk at that party was such that the more you drank it, the less you cared how good it was. *John 2:10* says: *"Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now."* Well, folks, that doesn't happen with grape juice. I mean Jesus created that wine and he would hardly create something that wasn't good. I mean in *Luke 7:33* Jesus compares himself to John the Baptist. This is what Jesus himself says. He says: *For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.'* *The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'* *Yet wisdom is justified by all her children."*

So Jesus is clearly contrasting himself with John the Baptist who

never tasted wine. Well John didn't but Jesus did. I mean think it's safe to say that Jesus drank wine. I know it's safe to say that Jesus was never drunk. And if there's questions in scripture about drinking in general, there's certainly questions concerning stumbling others. There's virtually no questions at all concerning intoxication. *1 Corinthians 6* says: *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. Galatians 5:19* says: *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Well the wine and folly that Solomon is studying in Ecclesiastes is that kind of drunkenness. I mean the Hebrew word for wine is "yayin" which means to effervesce, it means to ferment and it means by implication, intoxication, drunkenness. And as we've seen drunkenness is clearly listed among some very bad company. But you know someone might ask why is drunkenness so bad if this world is cursed, if it's fallen, if it's in bondage to decay, why not escape

it? Well Solomon has much to say about why not. I mean, you have to understand the whole point of Solomon's quest is to examine the pointlessness of life itself. We were looking at pleasure but that's just one category of escape from the world and wine is just a subcategory of pleasure. And whether it's pleasure or work or wealth or wisdom itself, Solomon says everything is just a distraction from the meaninglessness of life.

So what's so terrible about using wine? Well, he's talking about using wine as an intoxicant, and the reason why intoxication is so bad is that it's an appetite whose abuse shuts out the only satisfaction that really matters, the only satisfaction that lasts, and that's God and his kingdom. You can give yourself over to the spirit of intoxicants, literally they will take control of you or you can give yourself over to the Spirit of Christ inviting him to control your every thought, word and deed. It can be one or the other but it can never be both. Again *Ephesians 5:18*: *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.* Few of us realize where the Spirit of Christ can take us but an awful lot of us know where the spirit of alcohol can take us. Solomon's whole quest in Ecclesiastes is to embrace these alternative appetites wide-eyed with wisdom to see if any of them deliver what they promise.

And like I said, last time we looked at laughter and cynicism. We saw how the cynic develops this appetite for what is both bitter and funny. And we'll see in future messages how Solomon reacts to all the other distractions, but this morning we're going to examine how wine steals our appetite for God, and it does it on three different levels. There's three different layers or levels that wine or intoxication operates from, three ways that it steals our appetite from God. For some alcohol flat out destroys; for others alcohol simply degrades; and for still others it distracts.

And now if you think this is merely a screed against alcohol, consider that you can take almost any appetite that we have and treat it this way. I mean most of the sins of the flesh involve taking good things and pushing them to bad levels. I mean food can destroy, degrade and distract, so can sex or any other gift that God gives us as an appetite. A significant source of sin in our lives is simply good things pushed to bad limits. And for some the appetite for wine is that bad limit. And for some it just leads directly to destruction.

According to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, in 2020 one person died in an alcohol-related death every 45 minutes. Almost a thousand a month. Previous statistics showed of all fatal car crashes, 30 percent during the week were

related is to alcohol, 51 percent of weekend fatalities related to alcohol, 77 percent of fatalities occurring from 12:00 midnight to 3:00 a.m. related to alcohol, 69 percent of New Year's Days fatalities, alcohol related, 64 percent of Super Bowl Sunday fatalities, alcohol related. 3 in 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some point in their lives. A Federally funded task force on college drinking claims that alcohol-related accidents will kill 1400 students a year. It estimates that alcohol contributes to 500,000 total injuries and 70,000 cases of sexual assault and date rape each year. I mean it really is no argument that alcohol destroys thousands of lives each year. And add to the physical destruction the regret, the remorse, the bitterness that alcohol produces, simple wisdom alone would say don't go anywhere near that. But Solomon with all of his wisdom decided to embrace it. He said -- quote -- *"I tried cheering myself with wine and embracing folly my mind still guiding me with wisdom."*

But you see, Solomon had a luxury that very few of us can afford, I mean, he was a king with servants and maids and attendants. So there was always somebody to clear a path ahead and clean up the mess behind. So the outright destruction that we often see would not really be a factor in Solomon's life. The degradation and distraction, however, he did experience, and he spoke about it in

Proverbs 23. This is what the wisest man who has ever lived, this is what he had to say about intoxication. He said: Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine. Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things. You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. "They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink."

Well God through Solomon, he's literally taking us into the mind of a drunk. And I know what's that like, I've been there myself. I mean it's been five decades since I was in college when I used to drink like a fish. I still can remember the strange -- quote -- "sights and confusing things" in my own drunkenness. One time when I was intoxicated I put my hand through a window. I cut my hand very badly and I bled like a stuck pig but I didn't know it until the next morning. Quote -- "it hurt me, but I didn't feel it." It "hit me, but I thought I'm not hurt!" I was like one "asleep on the high seas lying on top of the rigging." I mean that captures how incredibly degrading drunkenness is.

And Solomon not only cheered himself with wine but he says in verse 3 that he also embraced this thing called folly. Well what is folly? You know what folly is? Folly is what drunk people do. The Hebrew word we translate as "folly" means silliness, foolishness. Folly is alcohol's constant companion. Things that are obnoxious and stupid to a sober mind become hilarious and clever to a mind given over to folly. *Proverbs 15* says: *The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly.* See, the problem is in our culture folly has become big business.

I mean how many of you here have heard of *Jackass*? The movie, not the animal? I haven't seen it but I read a bunch about it. It used to be an *MTV* show before it got kicked off that channel because it couldn't meet their standards. I mean the premise of the movie is very simple: Get a film crew, get some folks to make some extremely stupid and dangerous stunts, make a jackass of yourself or unsuspecting victim and take it to the bank. I mean the initial film *Jackass* cost \$5 million to make and it made 60 million at the box office. I mean at one point it was the number one movie in the country. I mean it did so well that they made two sequels creatively entitled "*Jackass 2*" and "*Jackass 3.*" They made great money selling folly as a product. They did great until one of their stars was killed in an incident surrounding it. It was a

news article that said: "In a tragic example of life imitating art, 'Jackass' star Ryan Dunn was killed yesterday in a blazing Pennsylvania car wreck that cops believe was the result of 'excessive speed.' Critics routinely slam 'Jackass' stars for being irresponsible both on and off camera, and Dunn's death has proven to be no exception: Hours before the crash, he posted photos of himself online drinking with pals." A later article said: "'Jackass' star Ryan Dunn's blood alcohol level was twice the legal limit at the time of his fatal car crash, police said Wednesday." You see, thousands of years after Solomon observed we see the same tragic combination today of wine and folly. Solomon said: *Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a stench; so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.* And all it takes is a little bit of folly and it can change lives forever. That's the scripture where we get the phrase "the fly in the ointment." And folly is the fly in the ointment of human dignity, because we were never designed to be jackasses.

A few weeks back I mentioned a very disturbing video that I saw, it was of a Chinese circus. And one of the featured acts in that circus was a bear dressed in a tutu holding a parasol while riding a bicycle. And it was grotesque to see an apex predator like a brown bear reduced to a carnival sideshow, absolutely degrading to the animal as well as degrading to people who were there. And this

is why folly is so disturbing. See, we are not just an apex predator like a brown bear, we humans, we are the apex of creation. We are the crown jewel of the same God who made eagles and lions and great white sharks and blue whales. But in all of creation there's only one creature to whom God said: *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."* We seldom take the time to even contemplate the enormity of the privilege that we have. We are bearers of the image of God. We humans alone bear God's image. In all the created universe there's no other creature that can make that claim. Well none of us deserve it. You and I are future emperors and empresses of the universe, and because of that we find ourselves play center stage in this grand spiritual battle that's ongoing between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. Because we're such unique creatures we have a history that mirrors that warfare.

It's been observed by many that we human beings are capable of producing astounding contrasts. For every children's hospital we build there's a torture chamber discovered somewhere. For every new drug we discovered, there's organized drug runners willing to kill and torture. For every liberation of oppressed peoples like World War II, there's a genocide like Rwanda, Darfur or now Ukraine. We're creatures capable of bearing the very image of God our creator or carrying out the very will of the demonic hosts who

hate him. We're capable of the highest heights and the lowest lows because we're the highest order of creature ever created.

C. S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*, there's a scene where Aslan is questioning Prince Caspian. He's complaining about his humble origins as a human being. Aslan says to him -- quote -- "You come from the Lord Adam and the Lady Eve," said Aslan. "And that is both honour enough to erect the head of the poorest beggar, and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor on earth; be content." (Prince Caspian, 185) I love that. I mean we are sons and daughters of Lord Adam and Lady Eve. What an unspeakable privilege. But we live in a culture that is desperate to minimize that privilege because the enemy of our souls detests that we've been given that. He not only hates it, he fears it because he knows at one point we will sit in judgment on his minions. This is what Paul said in *1 Corinthians 6*. He said: *Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!*

That's incredible. What he's saying there, you know, there's two ways that God uses to express the enormity of this privilege that we've been given, one is what God says about it and the other is

what God does about it. This is what God says in *1 John 3:1-3*. He says: *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. And what God is saying there is stunning but what God does though is truly beyond comprehension. Romans 5:8: But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

I go back again and again to *Hebrews 12:2*. It says: *Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.* What that's telling us is that Jesus Christ allowed himself to be arrested and unfairly tried and convicted and slapped and beaten and flogged and stripped and crucified for this joy that was set before him. And I said it many, many times and it bears repeating, it bears rejoicing and it bears stunned wondrous meditation because we were the source of that joy.

I mean John Stott once said this, he said: "For God came after us

in Jesus Christ, and pursued us even to the desolate agony of the cross, where he took our place, bore our sin and died our death, in order that we might be forgiven. Then he rose, ascended and sent the Holy Spirit, who is able to enter our personality and change us from within. If there is any better news for the human race than this, I, for one, have never heard it." And we're living temples in whom the God of the universe now chooses to live. And it's not for children of the king to choose the way of the jackass. Our folly is the fly in the ointment that takes it all away.

I mentioned last week or the last time about Discovery's *Planet Earth* and how I love to watch these magnificent creatures who are glorifying their very existence because to me this glory points to God as their creator. We go to great lengths just enjoying the privilege of observing them. We love to watch these creatures in their glory, but I think that we are greatly unaware that there are millions, billions, maybe trillions of other creatures who are doing the very same thing to us. We're being watched and we're blissfully ignorant of that fact. *Hebrews 12* says: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*

Imagine that, Paul, Paul's writing about the grace that he's

received in ministry. This is what he says, he says: *To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things.* Okay. God's got this mystery that is being revealed. He says: *So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.* Did you hear what God is saying in that? What he's saying is that God's wisdom, his multifaceted wisdom is being displayed to the rulers and the authorities throughout all of the heavens and it's being displayed by us, he says through the church. God uses you and me to demonstrate his transforming power along with his ability to shape and mold us into the image of his Son.

And these many faceted expressions of God's wisdom are being displayed to creatures we've never seen, creatures we know very little about. God is telling us we're being observed by these creatures with the same intense interest that we have for our own creatures. I just wonder what do they think of *Jackass* the movie? I mean I wonder what they think when the apex of all creation degrades himself with alcohol and folly so we become the bear in the tutu riding a bicycle? Solomon puts it: *"They hit me but I'm not hurt. They beat me, but I didn't feel it. When will I wake up*

so I can find another drink?" That's not what God intends for the creature that bears his image. Solomon embraced both intoxication and folly with characteristic analytical wisdom. I mean I doubt if anyone's approached those venues of pleasure like he did and he found out they were meaningless. No doubt there was laughter of some sort but as he said in *Proverbs 14: Even in laughter the heart may ache, and the end of joy may be grief.*

Well now at this point you might be thinking, well, wine and folly are not really my problem, I mean, I don't drink and drive, I never get sloppy drunk, so distraction and degradation are not an issue -- I'm sorry, destruction and degradation are not an issue, well what about distraction? Remember what Solomon is setting out to do and remember what he concludes. He sets out to find the meaning of life and he concludes there's only one way to find it. He says, *"Fear God and obey his commandments."* All of the wine and all of the folly are just meaningless distractions from that which matters most. I call it aiming my life at God and his kingdom. And Jesus says it's really a matter of what matters to us. In *Matthew 6:31*, he says: *"Where your treasure is there will your heart be also."*

And again the biggest problem with wine and folly is that it's an appetite that competes with the appetite for God and his kingdom.

It's an appetite that we get pitched to and about over and over again as well. I mean wine and folly in our culture is sold as much of a lifestyle as it is a product. You just take a casual look at the commercials for these products and they suggest that their target audience is a 21-year-old male with the brain of a 10-year-old. I mean, the folly comes prepackaged in the sale of beer and wine and if the commercials are not selling young men as buffoons, they're also selling their product as a combination of pleasure and good time and good fellowship.

A few years back there was an ad for a brand of beer -- Miller, I think it was. There was a bunch of guys standing around a lake and it's the end of a clearly good day of fishing and one of the guys looks at the other guys and he says, "Guys, it doesn't get any better than this." Well, can Solomon and I correct that? It does get much better than that. In fact it has to. See, deep down we all know that it has to get better than that. I mean it has to because anything less than the God whom we were designed for is going to become ultimately and permanently meaningless regardless the pleasure we think that it will give us.

Steve Weingartner, now I've been picking on Steve a lot lately, he loves to fish. He once caught a five-and-a-half-pound bass. It's on his office wall. He caught it up at Northern Frontier. It was

a great thrill, just ask him, he'll tell you. But he'll also be the first one to tell you that it's not thrill enough. Jesus in *Mark 1:17* told Peter and Andrew where the real thrill was. There he said: *"Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men."* You see, church is the place where we meet once a week not just for corporate worship but it's also a place where we meet to swap fishing stories. It's where we go to tell others how God has worked in our pond this week. If you go to church and you only hear some songs and talks about other people's fishing stories you're going to be missing a large piece of what God intends for your life as well. I mean Solomon tried every single thrill this world could afford him. He found first that the laughter of cynicism was simply insane and then he tried cheering himself with wine while embracing folly, his mind still guiding him with wisdom, but that wisdom exposed wine and folly as meaningless.

I think we all know that the wisdom that Solomon had escapes most of us today. For some wine and folly bring destruction and we see that almost every night on the news. For others it brings degradation. I mean the crown of creation, the bearer of the *imago dei* reduced to an image of a brown bear in a tutu holding a parasol riding a bicycle. For many others and particularly for God's chosen ones, wine and folly seems to be a distraction, a low pleasure that crowds out a higher one.

Jesus once described a man -- and this is rare, but Jesus described the man as a fool. According to Jesus the man said to himself this: *"Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."* But God said to him, *"Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be? So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."* Here's a man who had become distracted by the lure of materialism. This also is a low pleasure that crowds out higher ones. Now, this guy who's telling us to eat, drink and be merry, he's all about wine and folly. He's just looking out for himself. He doesn't appear to be bothering anyone, he's simply putting up bigger barns and thinking that his life is all about eating and drinking and being merry. God says to that man, you're a fool. Why? Well, God calls the man a fool because worldly success had so restructured the man's appetite that all of his treasures centered around this world. His good things could only be found in barns. God says that's the mark of a fool. Jesus is simply stating the obvious from a spiritual perspective. Remember, scripture defines what a fool is. It says: *The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."* Understand that's not a statement, it's an attitude. The fool says in his heart there's no God.

You see, there's no real difference between a practicing atheist

and a practical atheist. A practicing atheist is somebody like Richard Dawkins, that's somebody who states his hatred out loud, states his opposition to the kingdom of God outright. A practical atheist is somebody like the rich man. He doesn't say it out loud, he just lets his life say it for him. He's got no appetite at all for God, just eat and drink and be merry. Solomon describes wine as the off ramp that gets you there. In *Proverbs 31* he says: *It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to take strong drink, lest they drink and forget what has been decreed and pervert the rights of all the afflicted. Give strong drink to the one who is perishing, and wine to those in bitter distress; let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more.*

What Solomon is saying is that beer and wine are analgesics that God gives to those who are perishing. I mean, an analgesic can remove pain but it can't cure it. It cannot save those who are perishing. The gospel alone can do that. The idea that our God actually became a human being, that he came to this planet, lived a perfect life then he went to the cross to offer up that perfect life as a means of exchange for our lives of sin so that by faith we can claim his righteousness as our own and stand before God bathed in Christ's righteousness now worthy for heaven. You and I are the kings and rulers who have been given the privilege of

taking that gospel to all the nations. But that starts with my neighbors, my family, my friends, my co-workers, those who are locked into the meaninglessness of life without Christ. Now does that mean that God is calling us to be teetotalers? I don't think so. Wine is a gift. It's a gift that God himself created but if it distracts you from glorifying God, get rid of it. It's really that simple.

What about that other intoxicant that you don't drink but you smoke? Well, before it was a very simple thing because it was illegal. *Romans 13* says: *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. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.* Well that's kind of out the window now because it's legal. So what should our attitude be? Well, there are medicinal uses that are perfectly legitimate but if you're seeking the same escape that you would with alcohol, I think the same principles apply. *Hebrews 12* tells us: *Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.* Again, to paraphrase, aim your life at God and his kingdom and let nothing else, whether it's wine or folly or weed distract you.

Maybe a better question to ask ourselves this morning is how distracted am I in the first place? If you remember last time out I asked you John Piper's famous question about heaven. He said if heaven consisted of pure pleasure, nothing but great food and golf and fishing and sex, anything you want but Christ is not a part of it, would that satisfy you? And if so, how long would it satisfy you for? A thousand years? Ten thousand years? A million? How about a billion years of laughter and wine and folly, amusement and sex? I think we all know deep down that would never, never be enough. I mean just the thought of it is vaguely terrifying because we know that it's going to eventually run out of gas. Our problem is even as believers in our flesh, we are estranged enough from God to fear depending on him eternally for satisfaction even though we sense deep down that nothing else is going to satisfy us. So what do we do? We trust that the God who created us knows more about us to be able to meet the very desires he's created in us for all of eternity.

I mean, C.S. Lewis raised and addressed the very same issue in *Mere Christianity*. This is what he said. He said: "Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger; well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim; well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire; well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in

myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world." So we trust that God knows all about that other world. And we simply accept by faith that the God who made and designed us understands and knows us far better than we and understands what makes us tick, what makes us grow, what fills us with joy, what gives us not just deep but everlasting satisfaction. And God who expressly designed us this way says our deepest need, desire and satisfaction are to be found only in Him.

God says to his prophet Isaiah in *Isaiah 55*: "*Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?*" Well that's the question that earthly wine and folly can never answer. But you know God has another wine that awaits us. He says this in *Isaiah 55:1-3*, he says: "*Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*" He's talking about a wine that isn't just costly. He's talking about a wine that's priceless, and we will be drinking it in forever. If you've been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, if his substitutionary sacrifice on your behalf has become your righteousness by faith, then for the next million years you'll still be just scratching the surface of what eternal life really means, what it means to rule this universe with Christ with no need

for substitute amusements like wine and folly. And I can't begin to imagine what that day will be like one million years from today, but this much I know: *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. We shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. There's no more glorious future than that. So I refuse to let wine and folly destroy, degrade or distract me from it. That's our legacy, that is our destiny, that is our future. And folks, it truly doesn't get any better than that. Let's pray.*

Father, I thank you for what you have in store for us. I don't have a clue. I suspect that even the greatest of clues on this life don't even come close. And yet I have absolute and utter confidence that you will satisfy for all of eternity. You created us, you designed us, you put within us our own desires. And Lord, I confess how easy it is to become distracted, my lower pleasures than the greatest -- have the greatest pleasure just out there ignored so often because we are so caught up in the distractions of lower pleasures. So Lord, I thank you for the gift of wine, I thank you for the pleasure that it brings. I pray that we would have the wisdom to understand when it becomes a distraction, that it's got to go, at least for that point in time. And so I pray you

would give us insight and grace and wisdom as we address how we deal with these things that Solomon has dealt with for us. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.