

Popeye's Treasure

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1 Kings 7:1-12

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In 1980 Hollywood produced a live action version of the famous cartoon Popeye. The story line surrounded Popeye's quest to find "Me Pappy". His journey takes him to the town of Sweethaven (anyone remember the song?). "Sweet, Sweethaven. God must love us. Sweet, Sweethaven. God will bless us." Eventually we find out that Popeye's father is being held captive by Bluto because rumor has it that Popeye's father has a treasure buried nearby, and Bluto wanted it for himself. The story ends with Popeye defeating Bluto after he eats some spinach (as usual). But we are also given a glimpse into that sacred treasure chest. What was the treasure Popeye's father kept hidden there? Memories of his son.

Enchanting story, except even Popeye's father had missed the mark. There should have been something else that his heart treasured above all else. I know, I know, we want to say that at least it wasn't diamonds and rubies. At least it was his "Infink". But according to the Bible, we must be on our guard, lest the things of this world become our treasure and interfere with our relationship with God.

As we look closely at King Solomon's life, so many of us are tempted to jump to the end. We look at how his life finished rather than how it started. And by doing this, we miss the height from which he fell. Listen to what God says about this man. *I will give you what you asked for! I will give you a wise and understanding heart such as no one else has had or ever will have!*¹³ *And I will also give you what you did not ask for—riches and fame! No other king in all the world will be compared to you for the rest of your life!*¹ (1 Kings 3:12-13). We already saw the spender of the Temple. Wait till you hear about his Palace and the rest of his life! (*Read 1 Kings 7:1-12, 10:14-29, 11:1-3*).

It is said that Solomon had an annual income of between 60 and 75 million dollars. Solomon had all that money could buy. He had the praise on men. Check out what the Queen of Sheba has to say about this man. (*Read 1 Kings 10:1-13*). So not only did this man have the Blessing of God upon him, he also was well

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

respected by his peers, and was wealthy enough to do whatever his heart desired. Think about it; the queen of Sheba just drops 9,000 pounds of Gold right in his lap! WOW! Gold is priced at over \$1,000 an ounce these days. What would you have done if someone had just given you \$144,000,000.00? Boggles the mind, doesn't it? This had to be one happy guy. And yet, if you read Solomon's diary, his heart was empty. It longed for something more.

I want you to turn ahead to Ecclesiastes chapter two and see just how Solomon's heart ached for something more. There was some elusive treasure out there, some experience, something that had lasting value and purpose. Solomon had built himself a paradise of pleasure. Yet so empty, so vain was his life. Why, you ask? Because Solomon had lost what was once central to his life.

Several Old Testament Scholars believe that Nathan the Prophet had been Solomon's tutor for many years. He would have instructed the young man on the things of heaven. And when we read about his conduct in his younger days, he leaves us with the impression that God was the foundation of his life. The Lord was what he treasured the most. But after 20 years of building and other labors, Solomon seems to have lost this. And his heart longed for what he once had (*Read Ecclesiastes 2*).

There are three lies about happiness I see Solomon mentioning here. And I believe he passes them along to us so that we don't end up wasting our life trying to find happiness in all the wrong places.

1. Happiness can be found in money and possessions. Solomon says that his reward for all that he had gained was meaningless (verse 11). It still left him feeling empty. Nothing satisfied him anymore. Nothing stimulated him anymore. Can you imagine someone looking you square in the eye and saying "I wish I'd never won the lottery"? This is exactly what Solomon is saying. "I took that \$144,000,000.00 dollars that the Queen of Sheba gave me, splurged on all these extravagances, and I still feel empty inside. Sometime I wish she would have given it to someone else." Solomon says that a person will never find happiness in the size of their bank account (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

2. Happiness can be found in what you do. Solomon says that his hard work gave him no lasting pleasure. For whom was he working? Was he really making a difference in this world by spending all those hours out at the building site? Solomon realized that all the pools and vineyards and palaces might last, but the legacy he was leaving would soon be forgotten. Solomon had given so much of his time to the Kingdom, that he neglected time spent with his family (can you imagine the children he must have had?), and with the Lord.

Now I know these first two are quite elementary to the Christian Faith. These are some of the first teachings we receive when we become a Christian. It's the whole Sermon on the Mount lesson. We're told to Lay up Treasures in Heaven (Matthew 6:19-21). But it's the third lie about happiness that I find to be the most challenging.

3. I can find happiness within myself. Solomon points out that both the wise and the foolish share the same fate; they both die. And what I believe Solomon is referring to here is that he had build the foundation of his life upon his smarts; his wisdom. And in the end, even being smarter and wiser than everyone else left him feeling empty. Today, there still exists the claim that says happiness is something I can muster from within myself; that if I just keep reminding myself that I'm good. I'm great, and I'm wonderful, I will finally find happiness. I will finally be at peace. But according to Solomon, the deeper we look into ourselves, the uglier we become. So to be happy (or find fulfillment) I must ignore all the weakness I see within me. I would have to chant the modern day mantra "God doesn't make mistakes", and ignore the problem of my sin. This is Solomon's point. If you trust in your goodness or wisdom or knowledge, you will find that at the end of the day, as your head hits the pillow, it has still gained you nothing.

These are the things Jesus warns us about in Matthew seven. As you look at your life, where are you going? And when you get there, what will satisfy? And the end of your day, where are your values? Where is your Lord? Solomon at one time must have built his life upon God. God was the firm foundation. God was his rock, his

sword, his shield. But somehow, in his pursuit of happiness, Solomon forgot this. And he spent the rest of his life looking to fill the empty hole in his heart where God used to be; where God needed to be.

Out of curiosity, have you been pursuing a treasure? Have you been searching for that once certain something that will make you happy and content? Well, money's not going to buy it, your work will not supply it, and your heart can't manufacture it. It can only be found in Christ alone. That's why, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus concludes, ²⁴ *"Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. ²⁵ Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. ²⁶ But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. ²⁷ When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash."*² (Mathew 7:24-27)

Jesus is the only One who does not fail. He is the foundation upon which our life must be built. And anyone who tells you otherwise is feeding you a bunch of lies.

²Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.