

## CONTAGIOUS JOY – CHAPTER FOUR DIGGING DEEPER

### Looking into the “before & verses”

#### in our bible study

#### Psalms 5:1-12 - For the director of music. For pipes. A psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup>Listen to my words, LORD, consider my lament.<sup>2</sup>Hear my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray.<sup>3</sup>In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly.<sup>4</sup>For you are not a God who is pleased with wickedness; with you, evil people are not welcome.<sup>5</sup>The arrogant cannot stand in your presence. You hate all who do wrong;<sup>6</sup> you destroy those who tell lies. The bloodthirsty and deceitful you, LORD, detest.<sup>7</sup>But I, by your great love, can come into your house; in reverence I bow down toward your holy temple.<sup>8</sup>Lead me, LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies— make your way straight before me.<sup>9</sup>Not a word from their mouth can be trusted; their heart is filled with malice. Their throat is an open grave; with their tongues they tell lies.<sup>10</sup>Declare them guilty, O God! Let their intrigues be their downfall. Banish them for their many sins, for they have rebelled against you.<sup>11</sup>But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you.<sup>12</sup>Surely, LORD, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield.

#### Jeremiah 31:1-13-

**31** “At that time,” declares the LORD, “I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they will be my people.”<sup>2</sup>This is what the LORD says: “The people who survive the sword will find favor in the wilderness;

I will come to give rest to Israel.”<sup>3</sup>The LORD appeared to us in the past,<sup>[a]</sup> saying: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.<sup>4</sup>I will build you up again, and you, Virgin Israel, will be rebuilt. Again you will take up your timbrels and go out to dance with the joyful

<sup>5</sup>Again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria; the farmers will plant them and enjoy their fruit.

<sup>6</sup>There will be a day when watchmen cry out on the hills of Ephraim, 'Come, let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God.'"<sup>7</sup>This is what the LORD says: "Sing with joy for Jacob; shout for the foremost of the nations. Make your praises heard, and say, 'LORD, save your people, the remnant of Israel.'<sup>8</sup>See, I will bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the earth. Among them will be the blind and the lame, expectant mothers and women in labor; a great throng will return.<sup>9</sup>They will come with weeping; they will pray as I bring them back. I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble, because I am Israel's father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son.<sup>10</sup>"Hear the word of the LORD, you nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: 'He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.'<sup>11</sup>For the LORD will deliver Jacob and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they.<sup>12</sup>They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will rejoice in the bounty of the LORD—the grain, the new wine and the olive oil, the young of the flocks and hardstep will be like a well-watered garden, and they will sorrow no more.<sup>13</sup>Then young women will dance and be glad, young men and old as well. I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow.

### [Ecclesiastes 2:1-27](#)

## Pleasures Are Meaningless

**2** I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless. <sup>2</sup>"Laughter," I said, "is madness. And what does pleasure accomplish?" <sup>3</sup>I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was good for people to do under the heavens during the few days of their lives.

<sup>4</sup>I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. <sup>5</sup>I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. <sup>6</sup>I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. <sup>7</sup>I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. <sup>8</sup>I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and a harem<sup>[a]</sup> as well—the delights of a man’s heart. <sup>9</sup>I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me.

<sup>10</sup>I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil.<sup>11</sup>Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

## Wisdom and Folly Are Meaningless

<sup>12</sup>Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom, and also madness and folly. What more can the king’s successor do than what has already been done?<sup>13</sup>I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness.<sup>14</sup>The wise have eyes in their heads, while the fool walks in the darkness; but I came to realize that the same fate overtakes them both.

<sup>15</sup>Then I said to myself, “The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise?” I said to myself, “This too is meaningless.”<sup>16</sup>For the wise, like the fool, will not be long remembered; the days have already come when both have been forgotten. Like the fool, the wise too must die!

## Toil Is Meaningless

<sup>17</sup>So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. <sup>18</sup>I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. <sup>19</sup>And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. <sup>20</sup>So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. <sup>21</sup>For a person may labor with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then they must leave all they own to another who has not toiled for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune.

<sup>22</sup>What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun? <sup>23</sup>All their days their work is grief and pain; even at night their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless.

<sup>24</sup>A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, <sup>25</sup>for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? <sup>26</sup>To the person who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

-

## Ecclesiastes 5:1-21 - Fulfill Your Vow to God

**5** <sup>[a]</sup>Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. <sup>2</sup>Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. <sup>3</sup>A dream comes when there are many cares, and many words mark the speech of a fool.

<sup>4</sup>When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. <sup>5</sup>It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it. <sup>6</sup>Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the temple messenger, "My vow was a mistake." Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands? <sup>7</sup>Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore fear God.

## Riches Are Meaningless

<sup>8</sup>If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. <sup>9</sup>The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields. <sup>10</sup>Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income.

This too is meaningless. <sup>11</sup>As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owners except to feast their eyes on them?

<sup>12</sup>The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep. <sup>13</sup>I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners, <sup>14</sup> or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when they have children there is nothing left for them to inherit. <sup>15</sup>Everyone comes naked from their mother's womb, and as everyone comes, so they depart. They take nothing from their toil that they can carry in their hands. <sup>16</sup>This too is a grievous evil:

As everyone comes, so they depart, and what do they gain, since they toil for the wind?<sup>17</sup> All their days they eat in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger.

<sup>18</sup>This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them—for this is their lot. <sup>19</sup>Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God. <sup>20</sup>They seldom reflect on the days of their life, because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart.

## Deuteronomy 26:1-12- Firstfruits and Tithes

**26** When you have entered the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, <sup>2</sup>take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the LORD your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name <sup>3</sup>and say to the priest in office at the time, “I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come to the land the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us.” <sup>4</sup>The priest shall take the basket from your hands and set it down in front of the altar of the LORD your God. <sup>5</sup>Then you shall declare before the LORD your God: “My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. <sup>6</sup>But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, subjecting us to harsh labor. <sup>7</sup>Then we cried out to the LORD, the God of our ancestors, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression.

<sup>8</sup>So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. <sup>9</sup>He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; <sup>10</sup>and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, LORD, have given me." Place the basket before the LORD your God and bow down before him. <sup>11</sup>Then you and the Levites and the foreigners residing among you shall rejoice in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household.

<sup>12</sup>When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied.

## 1 Samuel 2:1-4-Hannah's Prayer

**2** Then Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my horn<sup>[a]</sup> is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance."<sup>2</sup>"There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God."<sup>3</sup>"Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, or the LORD is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed."<sup>4</sup>"The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength.

Jeremiah 15:1-17- **15** Then the LORD said to me: "Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Send them away from my presence! Let them go! <sup>2</sup>And if they ask you, 'Where shall we go?' tell them, 'This is what the LORD says: "'Those destined for death, to death; those for the sword, to the sword; those for starvation, to starvation; those for captivity, to captivity.'

<sup>3</sup>"I will send four kinds of destroyers against them," declares the LORD, "the sword to kill and the dogs to drag away and the birds and the wild animals to devour and destroy. <sup>4</sup>I will make them abhorrent to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what Manasseh son of Hezekiah king of Judah did in Jerusalem.

<sup>5</sup>“Who will have pity on you, Jerusalem? Who will mourn for you? Who will stop to ask how you are?”<sup>6</sup>You have rejected me,” declares the LORD. “You keep on backsliding. So I will reach out and destroy you; I am tired of holding back.<sup>7</sup>I will winnow them with a winnowing fork at the city gates of the land. I will bring bereavement and destruction on my people, for they have not changed their ways.<sup>8</sup>I will make their widows more numerous than the sand of the sea. At midday I will bring a destroyer against the mothers of their young men; suddenly I will bring down on them anguish and terror.<sup>9</sup>The mother of seven will grow faint and breathe her last. Her sun will set while it is still day; she will be disgraced and humiliated. I will put the survivors to the sword before their enemies,” declares the LORD.<sup>10</sup>Alas, my mother, that you gave me birth, a man with whom the whole land strives and contends! I have neither lent nor borrowed, yet everyone curses me.<sup>11</sup>The LORD said, “Surely I will deliver you for a good purpose; surely I will make your enemies plead with you in times of disaster and times of distress.

<sup>12</sup>“Can a man break iron— iron from the north—or bronze?

<sup>13</sup>“Your wealth and your treasures I will give as plunder, without charge, because of all your sins throughout your country.<sup>14</sup>I will enslave you to your enemies in<sup>[a]</sup> a land you do not know, or my anger will kindle a fire that will burn against you.”<sup>15</sup>LORD, you understand; remember me and care for me. Avenge me on my persecutors. You are long-suffering—do not take me away; think of how I suffer reproach for your sake.<sup>16</sup>When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight, or I bear your name, LORD God Almighty.<sup>17</sup>I never sat in the company of revelers, never made merry with them; I sat alone because your hand was on me and you had filled me with indignation.

**Nehemiah 8:1-13-** <sup>1</sup>all the people came together as one in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel.

<sup>2</sup>So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. <sup>3</sup>He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

<sup>4</sup>Ezra the teacher of the Law stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiyah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam.

<sup>5</sup>Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. <sup>6</sup>Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

<sup>7</sup>The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah—instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. <sup>8</sup>They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear<sup>[a]</sup> and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read.

<sup>9</sup>Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.

<sup>10</sup>Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

<sup>11</sup>The Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve."

<sup>12</sup>Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

<sup>13</sup>On the second day of the month, the heads of all the families, along with the priests and the Levites, gathered around Ezra the teacher to give attention to the words of the Law.