

Buzzed

‘There was a guy who thought it was smart to get drunk every Saturday night. He would go out with other guys and drink and drink. But it would always make him sick. He would come home and throw up in the kitchen sink and go to bed feeling miserable. He kept on doing this week after week and his wife kept telling him how terrible that was and how hard on him. She said, “If you don’t quit doing that, one day you’re going to throw up all your insides”. But he kept on drinking. One Saturday after he left, his wife was cleaning a chicken for the next day and after taking out all the insides she started to gather them up and throw them away when she thought, “You know, if I left this here and [Bob] comes home and throws up, maybe he’ll think he threw up all his insides and that will make him quit drinking”. So she left all the mess in the sink. Later that night [Bob] came home and threw up as usual. The next morning when he came down to breakfast he said, “Honey I gotta tell you something”. “What is it?” she said sweetly with a twinkle in her eye. “Well”, he said. “I have decided to stop drinking. It turned out just like you said. I came home last night and threw up in the kitchen sink and then I saw that I had thrown up all my insides—but don’t worry, I got the long handled spoon from the drawer and got them all back down again”.’

A happy ending—he quit drinking! But if only it were that easy! I had a friend for a few months in the summer and fall of 1977. His name was Geoff Cummins, and we were friends solely by virtue of sharing the same last name, which meant that in all the lineups of us international college students on the Japan Study program, we were always put together. He spelled his first name, “G-e-o-f-f”, was from Chicago, which I tried not to hold against him, and was friendly enough, but possessed a notable quirk I’ve never had. He was perpetually “buzzed”. He tried his best to describe to me what a cool feeling it was to be buzzed, and whenever he felt it begin to subside, we always had to find a cafe, a convenience store, or a vending machine (which sell alcohol in Japan), to get him buzzing again. In retrospect, assuming he didn’t reform his ways, I wondered if he’s still alive, but after a brief search last week turned up over 70 Geoff Cumminses on LinkedIn alone, I quickly gave up trying to track him down.

While we can pity Geoff’s ways back in 1977, (I hope he’s had a good life since, for us he serves as a sermon illustration today. For as he insisted on living life buzzed all the time, so, too do the vast majority of people in the world today, many even in the church. For consciously or unconsciously, they’ve come to similar or the exact same conclusions as King Solomon did as he wrote Ecclesiastes. Now he had been given wisdom from God such as no one has known wisdom before or since. And God is no “Indian giver”. His gifts are freely given, and never withdrawn.

So despite all his faults, Solomon authored one entire book of the Bible, and some passages in a few others. And since nothing's in the Bible by accident, we're to take what's there seriously. Chapter three of Ecclesiastes is the famous passage describing the cyclical nature of life. And we can all see that and experience it. The older we get, the more we truly understand it. And while it's true, as Solomon noted, that God has made everything beautiful in its time, thus we should enjoy everything as it comes along, the limits of Solomon's wisdom become painfully obvious. For if that's all we're to do, then, as we read the last couple weeks his earlier chapters when he declares so definitively that everything is meaningless, everything is vanity, then he's absolutely right. Everything is ultimately meaningless, and truly, we'd be better off going through all of life "buzzed". At least that way, we'll all feel better going through the motions of living. And not just with beer and liquor, but with all sundry versions of drugs and mind-altering psychedelics. Don't these help us, by numbing the pain, disappointments and emptiness in all the tediousness of life?

As Christians, we should all of us, immediately answer why people should *not* live life in a perpetual buzz. Because, without God, without a personal knowing of Him, without a real, living relationship with Him, life truly is meaningless. Without purpose. Because God created us, each of us, and none of us are mistakes or accidents. And when we come to know Christ Jesus, suddenly everything, absolutely everything has meaning, beautiful

meaning and purpose. Though, as Solomon himself says, we each can sense eternity and the infiniteness of God, we, being finite, are incapable of understanding all that He is, but by knowing Lord Jesus, He so fills us with His very presence, which, by definition, is the very energy and truth and meaning of life itself, that we can look on what Solomon wrote, understand why he wrote it, and pity him for not knowing God, for not living his life with God, though God had blessed him with perhaps more of this world's best things than any other man who has ever lived.

But we do know God, hopefully. For the vast majority of the world's people, their understanding of life is no better if not identical to Solomon's. So they plug along, living because that is what people do, taking care of their families if they still have respect for other people's lives, and the minimum, natural love that mothers normally have for their babies, and fathers for their children. They work to make ends meet, to put food on tables, a roof over their heads, and clothes on their backs. And try to have some enjoyment, fun, even by criminal means, for much of their time on earth. Believing the "buzz" of evolution, they never know the real reasons of why they're here, or the bliss of the abundant life that we're all supposed to have when we live, abiding in Jesus Christ.

Basically, the whole world is buzzed, except for rare moments of clarity when people question their existence. But both they and the devils cohabitating the world would much rather that everyone stay buzzed, under the influence, never knowing reality,

never coming to know the Creator God Who made them, and why. Religious people, those who've spent a bit more time contemplating life, all too often try to define a so-called balance, or happy medium, in enjoying the pleasures of life, and in paying somewhat respectful acknowledgement of God or gods. So in ages past, they sacrificed bulls, goats and birds, thinking they've done their due diligence to appease deity, so they'll be blessed to live trouble-free, with little fuss or concern for others. But God tells us, even in Psalm 50:14-15, "Make thankfulness your sacrifice to God, and keep the vows you made to the Most High. Then call on Me when you are in trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give Me glory".

Or what was it like when Lord Jesus physically walked on earth? Luke 13 tells of another of His miraculous healings, here a woman who for 18 years had lived life bent over! Can you imagine? Despite her debility, she came faithfully to synagogue to worship God. Here she was, which just so happened to be the day the Lord Jesus came to the same synagogue. With a word of knowledge, His gaze found her sitting in the balcony. Calling her down, He touched her and instantly she stood straight up. Amazing! And how grateful she was to God and praised His name. The synagogue leader shared in her great joy, thanking God. Uh, no, he didn't. For Lord Jesus had broken protocol. Christ had committed a gross faux pas! In the leader's mind, the Lord had broken the third commandment! Flat out shattered it!! This all-

too-popular Man had to be confronted and ultimately stopped. He was making a complete shambles of the Jewish religion! So greatly “buzzed” was this synagogue leader, as well as nearly all the rest of the Jewish leadership, and many of their lackeys, too.

But it’s no different today. The key is to know Christ. Not just believing, but following. Not just giving, but sacrificing for Him. Not for selfish gain, but in giving oneself for the benefit of others, *at* His direction. Not to be thanked by others, but all for the audience of One, Father God. To some degree or other, we’re all buzzed, because we live in this world which is populated by creatures that will do anything and everything in their power to keep us away from knowing God, distracting us with everything and anything that can catch our eye, and confuse us, if even for a second. We simply can not afford to be under the world’s influence even for an instant. For such instants are often witnessed by other people, and in seeing our acquiescence to one or other “fake news” declaration of the world, they are confused and kept from God for just that much longer. And the door to the Kingdom will be locked to them. For our Lord taught us, in Luke 13:24: “Work hard to enter the narrow door to God’s Kingdom, for many will try to enter but will fail”. “We must struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, overcoming this triple threat to advance into the Kingdom” (Perry Stone). This is the “race” the great cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 12 is cheering us on. And, none of us are ever giving up or giving in! No more buzzing for us! Only truth!

