

Scottie Scheffler is the greatest professional golfer in the world. It isn't even close. He's approaching Tiger Woods stature. But a couple of weeks ago, in the days before The British Open, Scheffler gave an interview. Here's some of what Golf's Greatest said. "Why do I want to win the Open so badly?" he asked the assembled reporters. "I don't know, because, if I win it's going to be awesome for two minutes . . . This isn't a fulfilling life. It's fulfilling from the sense of accomplishment. But it not fulfilling from a sense of the deepest places in your heart." And then Scheffler went out and won the Major easily. He won, but what does that mean?

"Vanity of vanities, says Qoheleth, vanity of vanities! All things are vanity! . . . For what profit comes to a man from all the toil and anxiety of heart with which he labored under the sun?" Qoheleth (The Preacher) in our first reading from Ecclesiastes gives us a seemingly very depressing message. But it also rings true if we are

honest with ourselves and take the trouble to think it through. It's not just golf! It's all our goals and plans. So what?

At the center of that questioning heart is the biggest question of all: is there a God and an eternal life with Him to give eternal weight to our being -- or not. If not, then following the implications of the non-existence of God to their logical end leaves us . . . hopeless. Without God and eternal life, the universe and all our accomplishments and desires leave us without meaning.

For instance, I chose to preach on Scottie Scheffler because we almost worship sports in our culture. Stadiums are our new cathedrals. The Middle Ages spent their wealth on Notre Dame. We built Lumen Field. So, in Scheffler we have a modern prophet who has spoken the truth in that interview. Don't we tell ourselves, "If only I could be a winner – even a pro athlete! – or fill in the blank with your own dreams of success – then I will be fulfilled (for two minutes – maybe a little longer)? For us, it probably isn't athletic success, but

what have we each tried to substitute for God in our lives? Money, status, human respect, comfort? Chasing any of these as the goal in life isn't fulfilling. . . Jesus is simply underlining this truth in our Gospel today – “though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions.” You can't take it with you. Our profits from all our toil and anxieties in life will slip away.

So . . . where's the good news here? The Good News must always start with that Bad News – or we won't understand or value it. The bad news is that we are indeed born in time that is passing away – and we with it. We're hopeless and decaying . . . stuff, spiritually sick from sin, destined to die, pathetically trying to pretend we can create our own meaning. That's hard to admit. But if we won't recognize that such a life is vanity, we won't seek the true answer to our restless hearts.

Ecclesiastes can seem a depressing book because Qoheleth knows our human predicament, but not yet God's solution to it. At

this time in Old Testament history God's plan of salvation and the afterlife are only dimly suggested. This why Jesus our Messiah is so crucial for humanity. Without Divine revelation we're stuck in hopelessness. So, our religion is not about being comfortable or a self-help philosophy. It is about the true, dark, state we're in and our dependence on God for our rescue.

In the article in which I read about Scottie Scheffler's interview there was also a picture of Scheffler and his one-year-old son, Bennet. Scheffler is holding the trophy for winning the tournament but looking at his son with a bright smile. And after winning, he explained that the ordering of his life is his faith, his family – and then Golf. He doesn't disdain his profession. He says golf is one of the greatest joys of his life, "But does it fill the deepest wants and desires of my heart? Absolutely not."

Jesus' lesson from the rich man and his barns isn't a surprise. We all know it deep down. But it bears constant reminding because

the world can be just so absorbing. There is a right ordering in life that depends upon our faith in our eternal lives and Jesus, the great answer to our longing.

The Good News is that God has indeed offered us eternal happiness and hope through union with Himself! He offers us that in Jesus Christ. The world is just as meaningless on its own merits, full of vanities and injustice as it's always been, as it was three thousand years for Qoheleth. But now we have a way out. By dying for us, Jesus opened a way to the Kingdom where our loves and hopes are finally fulfilled forever. Committing ourselves to Him is the answer to Qoheleth's despair. And what our heart's desires were made for.