

Ecclesiastes 7:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity.

Analysis

For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool—the Hebrew creates wordplay: ke-qol ha-sirim tachat ha-sir (כְּקוֹל הַסִּירִים תַּחַת הַסִּיר), literally "like the sound of the thorns under the pot." Sirim (סִירִים) means thorns or briars, while sir (סִיר) means pot or cooking vessel. Thorns burn hot and fast with loud crackling but produce little lasting heat—all show, no substance. Similarly, sechoq ha-kesil (שְׂחוק הַכְּסִיל, the laughter of the fool) is loud, attention-getting, but empty and fleeting.

This also is vanity—gam-zeh havel (גַּם־זֶה הָבֵל, this also is vapor/breath). The fool's mirth, like burning thorns, makes much noise but accomplishes nothing lasting. It's all surface, no depth—momentary distraction from life's realities. The image warns against substituting entertainment for substance, noise for wisdom, distraction for depth. Proverbs similarly observes: "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness" (Proverbs 14:13).

Historical Context

Thorns were common fuel in ancient Palestine (Psalm 58:9; 118:12), burning quickly with dramatic crackling but little sustained heat. Travelers or poor people might use them for quick fires, but substantial cooking required better fuel (wood or charcoal). The metaphor would be immediately accessible: foolish laughter resembles thorn-fire—showy but useless. Ancient entertainment included jesters, musicians, and comedians at feasts (2 Samuel 19:35). Yet Scripture consistently

warns against empty pleasure. Jesus contrasted the rich man's feasting with Lazarus's suffering (Luke 16:19-25). Paul warned: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked" (Galatians 6:7)—pleasure-seeking has consequences. Augustine's Confessions recount his conversion from entertainment-obsessed life to Christ-centered purpose. Modern entertainment culture epitomizes thorn-crackling—vast noise and activity producing little lasting value.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How much of your time and attention is consumed by entertainment that crackles loudly but produces nothing of lasting value?
2. In what ways might you be using humor, distraction, or entertainment to avoid confronting deeper realities in your life?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	כֶּקֶק וּלְ	הַסִּיר	תַּחַת	הַסִּיר	כִּי	שִׁחִי קִ
H3588	For as the crackling	of thorns	H8478	of thorns	H3651	so is the laughter
	H6963	H5518		H5518		H7814
לְ	הַכֹּסֵי יֵל	וְגַם	זֶה	הַבָּל:		
	of the fool	H1571	H2088	this also is vanity		
	H3684			H1892		

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 58:9 (Parallel theme): Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath.

Psalms 118:12 (Parallel theme): They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.

Ecclesiastes 2:2 (Parallel theme): I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?

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