

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCT 12TH-13TH, 2019 // BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

BETTER OFF DEAD (ECCLESIASTES 4:1-3)

NOT "ALL THE ACTS DONE UNDER THE SUN"

It is impossible for anyone except God to truly witness every oppressive act on earth, so Solomon is using hyperbole for effect.

- Though we can't see it all, it is easy to see that this life is full of evil and oppression. It is also easy to fall into despair over this injustice.

NEITHER FIND COMFORT WITHOUT GOD

Solomon says there is no hope for the oppressed or for people who are being oppressive if God isn't in their lives.

- **We learn that God wants salvation for all people, even people that do evil things.** Later we will learn how our looking to earthly leadership leads to oppressive people.

INJUSTICE REALLY BOTHERED SOLOMON

The evil in the world bothered Solomon so much that he envied the dead because they have escaped the dark things of this life. He even goes so far as to say those who have "not yet existed" are better off.

- We must remember the context: **without God in our lives, darkness is overwhelming.**

COMPETITION (ECCLESIASTES 4:4-8)

ALL OF MY WORK IS ROOTED IN JEALOUSY?

Solomon is not saying that all work and accomplishment is because we want to excel more than others. He is pointing out that when one doesn't honor God with their work, success can be selfish and competitive.

- **Competition is not evil, but we must ask ourselves what drives us and why do we want to succeed?**

HOW DO WE FEEL WHEN OTHERS SUCCEED?

The majority of us wouldn't admit to being jealous, envious, or competitive people, but we must be honest and ask ourselves how do we react and feel when others get attention and accolades.

- **To truly love others is to long for their well-being and to want the best for them. Do we love properly?**

GIVING UP ISN'T THE PROPER CHOICE

V5 is a graphic depiction of self-cannibalism due to just "folding [our] arms" and not engaging in work or relationships. This analogy shows that the loner will eventually consume themselves in their fear and jealousy.

- V6 shows the joy in balance. **Yes, we're to work hard to be our best, but we also find rest and prioritize.**

IT GOES BACK TO THE "WHY" WE DO THINGS

When it comes to work and success, we must ask ourselves what is our motivation? If it is money and external affirmation, those things will never satisfy. But, **if our work is viewed as a form of worship of God and service to others, we can find true joy in our efforts. This requires a mind and heart change.**

"WHO AM I STRUGGLING FOR...?"

If we are struggling for success and notoriety just for ourselves it will ultimately lead to isolation and heartache.

- **Selfish desire has an insatiable appetite.** We've been fed a lie that just one more step of personal success will give us the joy that has been so elusive.

MOST OLDER PEOPLE GET THIS

As we age, thinking about what is truly important becomes unavoidable. The unfortunate thing is that many of us have burned so many bridges that it's difficult to reconstruct them all before time runs out.

- **We must drop the illusion that we can "have it all" and focus on the things we need to have true joy in this life.**

STRENGTH (ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12)

GOOD FRIENDS ARE VITALLY IMPORTANT

In contrast to being super competitive and always working for personal gain, Solomon tells us that relationships are important to having a content and stable life.

- God's intent is for people to have deep relationships with others. **Yes, we need God above all things, but we're also designed by Him to need friends.**

THIS IS WHY THE CHURCH IS A BIG DEAL!

The church was designed by God to bring people of all kinds together under one goal: to live for Jesus. This commonality **unifies drastically different people into a family.**

- When we're struggling, we have **help**. When we're wandering off, we have **accountability**. When we are down, we have **encouragement**.

THE BIBLE TEACHES THIS PRINCIPLE

In Lk. 10 Jesus sent His disciples out in 2s. Paul needed encouragement and support as he ministered. It is important to note that the relationships were very **intentional**.

- The old aphorism applies: **"I went to look for a friend and found none. I went out to be a friend and they were everywhere."**

NOW ADD GOD IN THE MIX (V12)

Synergy is a popular word that suggests that combined effort does exponentially greater than individual effort. This is true with friends, but when the "third strand," God, is added to a relationship the efforts have an eternal impact.

- This is true for marriages, friendships, and family. **We need God in all human interactions.**

SOME PEOPLE HAVE NO DESIRE TO GO DEEP

Many people don't want true community when it comes to church. What many want are **lifestyle enclaves**, artificial communities with people that look, think, act, and desire the same things as them.

- **Many want grace without accountability, love without boundaries, and encouragement without correction.**

TEACHABLE (ECCLESIASTES 4:13-16)

"...WHO NO LONGER PAYS ATTENTION TO WARNINGS"

There seems to be an advantage in having a young fresh leader over one that is older and is not **teachable** anymore.

- **The issue isn't as much age as it is the willingness to learn and grow.** The imagery of coming from "prison to be king" shows that we often like young revolutionary type leaders.

THE NEWNESS EVENTUALLY WEARS OFF

Initially we are excited about young fresh leaders and ideas, but overtime those leaders get older and they become set in their ways. **So, we find ourselves in a constant cycle of anticipation then disappointment as we continually look for new blood.**

- Satan will use this weakness to lure people into following the **two "beasts."**

HONORING AUTHORITY IS BIBLICAL

Though we're to honor earthly authority, **we must remember that our hope is only found in Christ and His Kingdom!**

- We must also **stay true to biblical teaching** above all else by **discerning right from wrong by the power of God's Spirit**. Daniel was a perfect example of this (Dan. 6).

THIS WORLD IS BROKEN

- There will always be oppression in the world. How do we handle this? **What are we doing about it?** Do we even care that others are oppressed? How do we react when it happens to us? Are we sometimes oppressive?

DO WE JUST WANT TO WIN?

- What drives us to succeed at the things we do? Is it jealousy or insecurity? Do we think achievement will satisfy our need to be known and appreciated? Are we believing the lie that we can "have it all?" **What does our selfish ambition really cost us?**

A CORD OF 3 STRANDS

- Do we surround ourselves with good friends? Do we have iron to **sharpen** ourselves on? Do we even want to be held **accountable**? Do we want true community that runs to the mess and believes in **vulnerability** and **honesty**?
- **Is God in our relationships?**

WHERE DO WE FIND HOPE?

- Do we compromise our faith and beliefs because deep down we believe that something here on earth will save us?
- **Where do we run for hope?** Is it in new leaders and fresh ideas, or is it to the everlasting arms of the eternal God?