

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPT 28TH-29TH, 2019 // BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

PLEASURE (ECCLESIASTES 2:1-3)

WITHOUT GOD, PLEASURE IS EMPTY

The beginning of Ecclesiastes is an experiment that Solomon conducted in order to find the meaning of life. In chap. 2, his first experiment was the pursuit of pleasure.

- In a world that “works for the weekend,” it is easy to think the point of life is simply having a good time. But, **pleasure alone has no lasting value.**

SOLOMON WOULD SAY THIS PURSUIT IS INSANE

The idea that life is all good times and laughter is not only “futile,” but “it is madness” that doesn’t “accomplish” anything. The pursuit of pleasure alone disappoints and gives us a “what’s next?” syndrome.

- Look at culture: **the façade of joy and the appearance of accomplishment with no real contribution to mankind.**

A CALCULATIVE APPROACH TO HEDONISM

Solomon, in his right mind, tried cheering himself up with drunkenness. He was not seeking pleasure for no reason, but to find the true source of fulfillment.

- Solomon was testing the philosophy of carpe diem, to live today to the fullest with little or no thought of the future.

IT SOUNDS AWESOME, UNTIL TOMORROW COMES

Though we’re to live each day intentionally and to the fullest, we must do this within the perimeters of God’s desires for our lives. And whether there is a tomorrow or not, wise people prepare for whatever may come.

- **There is always a cost of “folly” and undisciplined pleasure. It all sounds good until we have to pay the price.**

POSSESSIONS (ECCLESIASTES 2:4-11)

SOLOMON HAD A LOT OF THINGS

Over 40 years of being king of Israel, he amassed homes, vineyards, gardens, fruit orchards, man-made lakes, slaves, herds and flocks, silver and gold, and concubines.

- This list isn’t a boast, but a confession that **materialism ultimately doesn’t satisfy. Gaining possessions without knowing God is futile!**

WAIT, ARE YOU SAYING IT DOES SATISFY?

If we were to stop at v10 without knowing the context, we would be led to believe that having money does produce happiness.

- It’s true, money can make us happy, but only as long as the money lasts. **We seem to only be happy if we have some kind of diversion that keeps us from dealing with the bigger issues.**

WEALTH CAN BE A LETHAL TRAP

There is nothing wrong with success and wealth. **The danger of wealth is that it makes us more of what we truly are by giving us the means to act on our desires.**

- If we’ve accomplished much but don’t live dependent on God, we will fall into pride and not think about the truly important things in life.
- **Jesus, Matthew 19:24 (CSB)**

“WHEN I CONSIDERED ALL THAT I HAD ACCOMPLISHED...I FOUND EVERYTHING TO BE FUTILE AND A PURSUIT OF THE WIND.”

Most of us don’t have a need for more, but a want for more. The Bible tells us that **we can use the temporal things, but we must desire the eternal things because we’re not designed to find fulfillment without the eternal God.**

KNOWING MORE ABOUT LESS AND LESS

Arnold Toynbee said that of 21 great civilizations that have existed since mankind began, the modern West is the first that doesn’t have to teach its citizens any answer to the question of why they exist.

- What comes from this is **pluralism**, the freedom to choose one’s ultimate value system **and it is not working.**

WISDOM (ECCLESIASTES 2:12-17)

EARTHLY WISDOM HAS LIMITATIONS

Solomon acknowledges that being wise in how the world works is more advantageous than poor choices (folly) and pitting yourself against God (madness).

- Even being ethical, intelligent, and wise in how things work will not shield us from the inevitable: death.

IF WE ALL DIE, WHAT’S THE POINT?

Solomon brings up a good point. If we all die, why not just party and live it up? Why be wise and follow the rules when we could die at any time? Even if we are great in this life, over time we will be forgotten.

- These questions beg the greater one, **what happens after we die? The answer to that steers our lives now.**

“THEREFORE, I HATED LIFE...”

If everything “under the sun” is futile and the foolish/selfish person gets the same fate as the wise/selfless person, one can see why life would be pointless and how Solomon could grow into hating life.

- The bleakness so far is setting up the answer to the question of why are we here and what is our purpose?

WHAT’S MISSING (ECCLESIASTES 2:18-26)

WHAT IF THE NEXT PERSON BLOWS IT?

The prospect of leaving his fortune to an heir or someone else did little to comfort Solomon because the heir to his empire might be a fool.

- Haven’t we seen this a lot in our society? Many successful people have left money and property to others that squander it away.

SOLOMON’S DEPRESSION HAD GOTTEN DEEP

He says that he “began to give [himself] over to despair concerning all [his] work that [he] had labored at under the sun.”

- V20-23 show us that **mankind can produce nothing everlasting. Even the best things we produce eventually fade away and are like a “pursuit of the wind.”**

HERE COMES THE GAME CHANGER!

The script begins to flip in v24-25. Solomon acknowledges that anything good and of substance comes from “God’s hand.”

- God doesn’t delight in us going through hard times. He delights in offering us life, but **sometimes God has to allow and even use afflictions to get us to see where true life comes from.**

WE MUST PREPARE OURSELVES

Prosperity tends to draw us from God and afflictions tend to push us towards other means of help and perspectives. **If we are to find contentment in this life, we must connect with God before the good and bad of this life take place.**

- **We cannot let the changing tides of life dictate our beliefs and purpose.**

IT REALLY BOILS DOWN TO KNOWING GOD (V26)

Solomon says, “wisdom, knowledge, and joy” are given to the person that has a relationship with God, but “the task of gathering and accumulating” are for the “sinner,” someone that doesn’t have a relationship with God.

- Solomon insinuates that all the stuff “sinners” try to gather will be a reward for believers in the afterlife.

EVERY QUESTION HASN’T BEEN ANSWERED...YET

Saying that “God is good” or “Jesus loves us” doesn’t answer every question that we may have about suffering, purpose, the problem of sin, and why we struggle.

- **We must go beyond the clichés and really learn to trust God in all seasons of our lives! This only comes through relationship.**

THE DEPTH OF THE ROOT

- It is not a matter of if life will become turbulent, but when it will.
- Without God, prosperity makes us selfish/prideful and afflictions push us to ungodly means of “help.” Before either of these happen, we must build a relationship with God in order to weather this life.
- **If it all hinges on a relationship with God, we must ask, do we have one?**
- A healthy relationship with God will have **communication** (prayer), **commitment** (Bible and church), **compromise** (humility and submission on our part), **respect/honor, and complete trust.**
- If we don’t extend our root deep in our relationship with God now, when the storms come, we will not stand.
- **We need God.** We need Him everyday because life is hard and it will get harder.
- **We need salvation that comes from a relationship with God because there is a life after this one.**