

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 27TH, 2019 // BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

Ecclesiastes 6 explores the reality that when things don't make sense or when activities don't seem to have a purpose or a point, we get frustrated. Life "under the sun" doesn't make much sense and doesn't seem to have a purpose or a point.

RICHES WITHOUT ENJOYMENT (ECCLESIASTES 6:1-6)

Things that don't make sense make us frustrated, and there's one particular "evil" that Solomon has seen that creates frustration and "lies heavy on mankind". (vs. 1)

- It is that someone can have "wealth, possessions, and honor", and yet no power to enjoy these things as the gifts that they are. (vs. 2).
- The basic principle is that no one can truly enjoy the gifts of God apart from the God who gives gifts.

Enjoyment without God is simply hollow, cheap entertainment- which is fleeting.

- But enjoyment with God is enrichment- which brings true joy, satisfaction, and more worship of God.
- Vs. 3-6 is a hypothetical case that uses obvious hyperbole-no-one can live "a thousand years twice" (vs. 6) and father a hundred children (vs. 3).

In Jewish culture, a long life and many children showed true riches and God's blessing.

- What Solomon is saying is that, "no matter how many good things you possess, if you don't possess power to enjoy them, you might just as well never have been born!" (vs. 3-4)
- The comparison of this man's life to that of a miscarried child is a heartbreaking, tragic picture that no doubt causes us some pain.

To have a child and not be able to carry it to term is gut-wrenching and painful.

- But even more tragic, painful, and gut-wrenching is someone who is incredibly blessed and yet isn't able to enjoy or "be satisfied with life's good things" (vs. 3).
- In fact, what Solomon says is that the unborn child actually had it better because he didn't have to experience the pain of meaninglessness.

In the end, both the 2,000 year old man and the unborn baby ended up "unnamed" & with "no burial" (vs. 3, 4)

- The frustration that Solomon is reflecting on is this- why did God permit this man to have wealth and a big family if the man couldn't enjoy or appreciate it?
- Why would you even want to exist if that's all you're really doing? What's the point?
- What's the point of working to gain riches & wealth if they can't satisfy?

It's interesting to note that the text says that "God does not give him power to enjoy it" (vs. 2).

- Why in the world would God give someone something but withhold from them the ability to enjoy it?
- Because He loves us too much to allow us to believe empty idols are what we need.
- He gives some the inability to enjoy what they have in order to point them "beyond the sun" towards Himself. (Mark 10:25-27)

WORK WITHOUT SATISFACTION (ECCLESIASTES 6:7-9)

"All the work a man does is for his mouth..." (vs. 7).

- Life is more of a treadmill than any of us want to admit- we work so that we can eat so that we have the strength to work so that we can eat.
- The one thing that the wise and foolish, rich and poor have in common is that they all must labor to stay alive- "to eat".
- But even after all of this labor, the appetite of humanity is never fully satisfied (vs. 7).

Consider the animal kingdom- animals spend their days looking for food or escaping from enemies.

- Animals aren't really living, they're only existing.
- The frustrating thing about life is that we want to do more than just exist- we want to live!
- Yet, our lives by default become more about existing- working to eat and eating so that we have the strength to work.

Solomon then asks, "what advantage does the wise man over the fool?" or "the poor man who knows how to conduct himself before the living"?

- The answer is none- if all you do is live to "exist" (to satisfy your appetites), then it doesn't matter if you're wise, foolish, rich, or poor.
- Solomon isn't belittling self-improvement or education- he's simply saying that these things in themselves don't get you off the treadmill.

In vs. 9 Solomon shares a proverb about contentment and truly "living".

- He's saying, "It's better to have little and really enjoy it than to dream about having much and never attain it."

- We all daydream and fantasize about how our life could be better.
- But daydreams have a way of becoming nightmares if we don't come to grips with reality.

The way to satisfaction when you're on the treadmill of life under the sun, isn't to fill your life with fantasies about a life that isn't yours and won't ever be yours.

- Because if all we do is dream about the life we want and don't have, we won't be fully present to enjoy the life that we do have.
- It's a lot easier to dream than it is to do- but daydreaming doesn't get us anywhere.

But it's what is right in front of us ("the sight of the eyes") that matters- not the things that could be ours ("the wandering of the appetite").

- The journey to contentment begins when we accept reality for what it is and realize we need more than existence- life "on the treadmill".
- True satisfaction comes only when have someone from beyond the sun enter this space under the sun and catapult us to a new reality of life, meaning, and purpose.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANSWERS (ECCLESIASTES 6:10-12)

ALL OF HUMANITY IS TRYING TO ANSWER A FEW QUESTIONS:

How did I get here? (Origin) **Who am I?** (Identity) **Why am I here?** (Meaning)

Where am I going? (Destiny) **How am I supposed to live?** (Morality)

To "name" something is to study it, understand it, and appoint it an identity.

- "Whatever has come to be" (human history and the facts of life) & "man" (humanity) have both been given a place and an identity under the sun.
- We basically understand our place in the universe and history if we study long enough.
- But Solomon points out that humanity has significant limitations.

"...he is not able to dispute with One stronger than he" (vs. 10).

- Someone much more powerful than man- God- has known man and all of history from the beginning and is the only source of true wisdom.
- But humanity has tried to find meaning & purpose apart from God through "words" (vs. 11)- philosophy, enlightenment, and knowledge.
- But that's vanity and it doesn't change reality.

Humanity "under the sun" has attributed the gifts of God to our own doing.

- At the same time we've educated ourselves into imbecility, embracing a world of intellectual elitism where common sense and reason are sacrificed upon the altar of new enlightenment.
- We're so insistent that meaning can be found apart from God and that we have all the answers in ourselves without Him.

And yet...there are those pesky questions without answers that don't go away.

- In fact, there are times when it seems like the more we discuss a subject, the less we actually understand it- "more words, less meaning" (vs. 11).
- There is a limit to our understanding as finite humans- there are some things beyond us because there is "One stronger than us" (vs. 10).

SOLOMON ASKS TWO OF LIFE'S BIGGEST QUESTIONS

"Who knows what is good for us?" (vs. 12a)

- In other words, what path should we follow to find meaning and fulfillment?
- Who decides that path? What if my path to fulfillment causes pain & misery to someone else?
- God knows what's good for us- and the wise person is the one who takes time to listen to what God would have to say about it.

"Does anybody know what's coming next?" (vs. 12b)

- In spite of what astrologers, fortune-tellers and futurists say, no-one knows the future.
- It's futile to speculate. The only thing we're promised is death- and after that...who knows?
- We can't know the future, but we can know the One who holds the future.
- We can find peace in the mystery because we know that God is good.

Life can be exceptionally frustrating, discouraging, and dissatisfying, but it's not supposed to be this way!

HOW DO I GET OFF THE TREADMILL?

Turn & Believe. Recover & Pursue.