

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 17TH, 2019 // BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

Ecclesiastes 9 reminds us that life is short and the world's value systems are broken. Therefore we're to make the most out of the life we've been given and practice gratitude for the simple gifts God has given us.

INEVITABLE (ECCLESIASTES 9:1-6)

Life and death are "in the hand of God" (vs. 1) and only He knows our future, whether it will bring blessing ("love") or sorrow ("hate").

- Solomon isn't saying that we're passive actors following a script given to us that is our lives- he's already emphasized the freedom we have for discernment and decision.
- We're simply reminded that God knows our future and what decisions we'll make throughout our lives.

The end of our all of lives is "the same for all...righteous & wicked, good & evil, clean & unclean, him who sacrifices & him who does not sacrifice" (vs. 2).

- We're all going to die, most of us don't know how or when we will die, and we can't outrun death no matter what we do.
- We all share a common destiny on earth-death and the grave- but not so with eternity.

So how do we live in light of the fact that we're all someday going to die?

- For those without faith in God & life "beyond the sun", this life is all that there is and therefore hedonism makes the most sense (vs. 3).
- Some people respond to the reality of death by doing anything except for repenting in order to escape or distract themselves from death.
- But it doesn't work- they still "go to the dead".

A different response to death is simple acceptance of death and attempting to discover some way to make sense of this life and find some satisfaction in earthly existence.

- While we're alive, we have hope, and "a living dog is better than a dead lion" (vs. 4).
- What's he's saying is that being alive is a better option than being dead- even a disgusting scoundrel ("a dog") that's alive is better off than a nobleman ("a lion") that's dead.

The living have an advantage over the dead (vs. 5-6) because the dead don't know what's happening on the earth, but the living know and can respond to it.

- The dead can't add anything to their reward or reputation nor can they relate to people on earth by loving, hating, or envying- but the living can.
- It's seems obvious that it's better to be alive than dead, so what is Solomon saying exactly?

Solomon is emphasizing the importance of seizing each opportunity we've been given in this life while our hearts are still beating because life is short and death is coming for all of us.

- As believers we have hope of life after death, but how we respond to God's love and truth in this life shapes & determines our eternal destiny.
- We only have one life to give in service to God- we're to make it count with every breath!

RECIPE FOR JOY (ECCLESIASTES 9:7-10)

Everyone on earth is pursuing a certain version of happiness, and some of us very different ideas on what it takes to be happy.

- For some it's money, social capital, success, experiences, or relationships.
- But Solomon has made it clear that **the reality of joy (which is far better than happiness) can only occur when God has invaded our lives.**
- When God is at the center of our lives, we can find joy in the simple pleasures of life.

In verses 7-10 Solomon lists some of the common experiences of home life- family meals (vs. 7), celebrations/holidays (vs. 8), a faithful, loving marriage (vs. 9), and hard work (vs. 10).

- This stands in stark contrast to modern society's recipe for happiness: fast food & a full schedule, the addictive pursuit of everything new, live-in relationships, and shortcuts to help you get rich quick without working too hard.

"ENJOY YOUR MEALS!"

(vs. 7)-To the average Jewish family, meals were modest but still very sacred because eating as a family was a communal act of friendship and commitment.

- The enjoyment of food, wine, & family was intended to be an act of worship that celebrated the giver of these gifts.
- God takes pleasure in the pleasure you experience as you enjoy His gifts! (vs. 7b)

"ENJOY SPECIAL OCCASIONS!"

(vs. 8) -In Jewish culture white garments (a symbol of joy) and expensive perfumes were only worn on special occasions such as weddings or holidays.

- Solomon tells his readers to wear these things always! He's not speaking literally.

- What he's saying is make every occasion a special occasion, and don't just express your joy and thanksgiving when you're celebrating a holiday.

"ENJOY YOUR MARRIAGE!"

(vs. 9) -If you know anything about Solomon's life, it seems bizarre to hear him instructing us about enjoying the "wife whom you love" (and not "wives").

- This is probably written near the end of his life, and as he reflects on what truly brings joy he concludes that romance, sexuality, and companionship are best enjoyed within marriage between **one man** and **one woman**.

He uses the word "enjoy" on how we're to relate to our spouse- **not tolerate or endure**.

- We're to enjoy our spouse's **friendship**.
- We're to enjoy our spouse's **help & companionship**.
- We're to enjoy our spouse's **support & encouragement**.
- We're to enjoy our spouse **sexually** (1 Cor. 7:5).
- The best way to enjoy your spouse is to **ask the question, "do I bring joy to my spouse?"**

"ENJOY YOUR WORK!"

(vs. 10)- Work is a gift from God. The phrase "do it with all your might" suggests two things-

1. **"Do you very best at all times, no exceptions."** It is quite possible to do your work with half of your might without anyone else knowing.
2. **"Do your work while you still have the strength."** There will come a day when you can't physically do your job- so make the most of this season now

UNPREDICTABLE (ECCLESIASTES 9:11-18)

Our abilities are no guarantee of success.

- It's generally true that faster runners win races or stronger soldiers win battles or smart & skillful workers make the most money, in life there are factors completely out of our control.
- Who knows when trouble will arrive and wreck all of our plans like a fish caught in a net or a bird in a snare (vs. 12)?

"Time and chance" in vs. 11 does not mean "luck"- it simply means occurrences or events outside of our control- but not God's.

- So often we make plans that in our pride we think are fool-proof only to have something happen completely beyond our control that changes everything.
- If it's only "life under the sun", this is the greatest vanity and atrocity of life!

Great achievements don't always guarantee honor or appreciation.

- Most likely Solomon witnessed an actual incident that stirred his reflections on life, and this particular incident was of a poor, wise man that used wisdom to help deliver his city from an invading king (vs. 14-15).
- His wisdom was "better than might" and it helped deliver and save an entire city (vs. 16).

And yet, no-one remembered this poor, wise man (vs. 15) and his wisdom was despised and the rest of his words weren't heeded (vs. 16).

- The world's value system is cruel, and often the people that deserve credit, honor, and appreciation don't receive it.
- It's the fools who talk the loudest that get all the attention, and the wise who speak quietly that often get completely ignored (vs. 17).

Wisdom is better than "weapons of war" (vs. 18a)- might does not make right and being forceful and aggressive isn't the best course of action.

- Being wise leads to greater victories in our lives than simply being strong or having power.
- "One sinner destroys much good" (vs. 18b)- don't ever underestimate the power of one person's sin to destroy an entire family, ministry, business, or even an entire nation.

What Solomon is reminding us of is this, "just because you're talented, strong, smart, savvy or wise- that doesn't mean you'll be successful, honored, or even remembered in this life".

- The world is broken and people are cruel, so life "under the sun" is uncertain, unpredictable, and unfair- and so is death.
- If you're living for the world's value systems to satisfy you and love you back, you'll always be disappointed!

"WHAT DO YOU NEED TO BE HAPPY?" (1 TIM. 6:6-8)

We often don't know what we need to be happy, content, and satisfied. Our Father knows that what we truly need is not more of what we already possess- it's contentment and it's rest in His provision.

- Are you **grateful for and are you enjoying your "bread & wine" and your family?**
- Are you **expressing your thanksgiving and joy** every day and not just on holidays?
- Are you **grateful for your spouse** and **are you bringing joy to your spouse?**
- Are you **grateful for your work** and are you **working each day "with all your might"?**