

ECCLESIASTES SERIES

Chap 2 The King's Speech or East of Eden or Going 1st Class on the Titanic

We're in a series in Ecclesiastes, and we'll be here for a number of weeks.

A book that focuses on our shared human experience. It is not "preachy" with lots of biblical words or language.

Ecclesiastes is a book for those whose life has been off script, and for the rest of you as well.

It is a book of Wisdom literature that may not always feel like it, but if we're open, it will take us behind the facades we like to create and speak to real life issues.

The Bible raises a question in Ecclesiastes 2 that every human being asks, **"Is there a thing in the world that can truly satisfy the heart of a human being?"** Eswine

Ex: George Bailey – Bedford Falls is too small and insignificant to fulfill his dreams for doing great things. He wants to gain more for his life. "I couldn't face being cooped up for the rest of my life in a shabby little office," he declares to his pop. "I want to do something big, something important."

TWO ASSUMPTIONS that he shares with us and with the audience of Ecclesiastes:

1. If importance is to be found, he must travel to a faraway place to find it. – GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER
2. Two, he believes that once he finds it, he will become a satisfied and happy man, content, experienced, honored, and fulfilled; no longer restless within himself or the world. (Eswine)

Ecclesiastes is bringing us face to face with the issue of meaning in life. An underlying idea is that to have real meaning in life, we must have something that hold up in the face of death. If our meaning can't survive death, then how meaningful is it, really?

If it can't survive death, then it's only make believe; it's a child's pretend game that will come to a sudden end. We talked about how "the drill drills on" when it comes to the routine things of life – and that can be depressing at times. **But Ecclesiastes also shows that God is the one who puts that factor of consistency in the world. While there is "hebel" and confusion, we can take comfort in knowing that there is also stability.**

"Tomorrow is another day"

"The sun will come out tomorrow"

In a world of "hebel" it is good to know that

God is the FIXED POINT that gives meaning to everything else – Tozer

EX: marker outside Notre Dame

Kilometre Zero of French [national highways](#), located in [Paris](#) on the square facing the main entrance of [Notre Dame cathedral](#), and considered the official centre of the city of Paris. 48.8534° N 2.3488° E



If there is no fixed point of truth, then we are all "lost in space". We are like the astronaut doing a spacewalk who gets untethered from the spacecraft. Sadly, we see how untethered we have become in our culture when we look at the "moral revolution."

This past week I heard two stories that show how far we've drifted:

<https://albertmohler.com/2018/02/12/briefing-02-12-18/>

There was a 1-2 punch on the issue of pornography in Sunday's 2/11/18 edition of the *New York Times*, most importantly the cover story in the *New York Times Magazine*. The cover story's main point has to do

with the fact that it has argued in the article that pornography has become the main vehicle for sex education amongst American teenagers.

In one amazing paragraph in the article, it actually suggests that the moral issue is not whether or not teenagers are looking at pornography but what kind of pornography they are viewing and whether or not it brings out a certain form of sexism in them. One source cited in the article said and I quote, "I think porn can be a good thing to have as an outlet. I'm not scared by explicit sex per se. I'm afraid of the bad values."

Now just consider the moral universe in which those sentences can be put together in which it's an affirmation of pornography at the same time arguing that the concern would be bad values in pornography. The assumption here and we should note is the argument that parents should direct their teenagers toward pornography with better values rather than worse. The article basically champions an approach that is known in some places as porn literacy in which teenagers are taught how to view pornography in a more discriminating fashion.

Next is the article about a ELCA female pastor who "transitioned" into a man and they had a "renaming service", as Rev Rose, was renamed Rev Peter. There were prayers and a blessing with "holy water". http://www.nj.com/hudson/index.ssf/2018/02/transgender_pastor_celebrated_at_renaming_service.html

In a world untethered from God, anything is embraced.
Ecclesiastes reminds us that there is a Fixed center in the universe, and that there is actually some comfort in the mundane routine of life.

REVIEW OF Intro and overall perspective of Ecclesiastes:

Jeff Meyers - What the author intends to teach us is that real biblical wisdom is founded on the honest acknowledgment that this world's course is enigmatic, that most, if not all, of what happens is quite inexplicable, incomprehensible to us, and quite out of our control. The wise woman or man learns to walk by faith and not by sight.

Ecclesiastes is the book about faith in the Old Testament. It tells how the person of faith looks at the world. We are told that a wise and faithful person will come to embrace the perspective of Solomon that all of life is "vapor"! The life of faith is not grounded in our ability to discern the meaning of everything in our world. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction concerning things not yet seen (Heb. 11). God doesn't give out a key to the "city of Wisdom" or a code breaking chart. If you are a believer, you are going to have to actually trust God to keep the key to life.

EX: woman married 40 years and suddenly it all ends, yet she is trusting God in the midst of it.

As we grow in wisdom we learn that our part as Christians is to fear God and keep his commandments, to receive and use the gifts of God with joy and gratitude, that is, to eat, drink, work, love our husbands and wives, rejoicing in all of these things, all the while knowing that we cannot understand his ways and must not attempt to play god in his world. We must not try to gain leverage to manipulate the world to our petty purposes. That is the wisdom of Solomon.

Last week I quoted Nicholas von Zinzendorf - "Preach the gospel. Die. Be forgotten", and some of you thought, "No way".

Remember how little we remember former things - Exodus- "there arose a Pharaoh, who knew not Joseph." Even worse- in Judges "There arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel" (Judg. 2:10).

If the people of Israel can forget God, then the world around you can forget you.

READ PORTIONS AS WE GO THROUGH THE TEXT 1:12- 2:26

In This section the King / preacher begins a long speech on his reflections about his search for wisdom. The word "I" is used a lot, and you could summarize his speech like this...

THE FAILURE OF HAVING IT ALL TO GIVE MEANING TO LIFE

1:12 – THE KING SPEAKS (to himself and others)

A serious search – 1:13 – applied self to it, full time search for meaning in the world. Based on experience but limited by horizons of this world.

v. 13, 14, 2:10, 11 – “all, everything” a comprehensive search. No stone left unturned

He is in a position to try it all. As King, nothing is outside his ability to obtain. Everything is available to him. He has wisdom, v 16 and all resources were at his disposal. Most of us don't have resources, yet we look anyway.

THE KING'S SEARCH – several components

1:17 – sought wisdom – a different definition of wisdom as he goes forward.

Wisdom in Proverbs is ability to understand life, obstacles and handle them – in fear of the Lord.

He raises question “does wisdom help gain goals in life”

v. 17 sought wisdom and madness and folly . folly = delusion and he pursues that – what is it like to live life based on a false premise? Folly is rejecting God and he says he wants to know what it is like to live that life. It is part of his search.

He rejects the way of folly up front in Proverbs, but here he wants to see where it ends.

Many of us have already tried this and know the consequences of it.

Where will his search lead him?

Nine components: old as Ecclesiastes and new as today. You can fit most things into one of these categories.

- ❖ Joy or mirth 1-3 not necessarily “pleasure” in a hedonistic way, but even a “joy which comes from the Lord Himself;...even that joy is tempered with weeping (Rom 12:15) - Kaiser
- ❖ Wine (any mind or mood altering substance)
- ❖ Creative expression – art-bigger house 4-6
- ❖ Nature v 5-6 better yard-garden – horticulture and landscaping- the original cultural mandate from Eden
- ❖ Money and possessions (people, animals) Solomon was RICH – 1 Kings 10:27 – “silver and gold were soon to be regard as useful for paving the roads.”
- ❖ v.8 Entertainment (music)
- ❖ Sex v.8
- ❖ v.9 Acclaim
- ❖ v.11 Work – success in labor

Those have been around for a long time and not much has changed – Gen 3:6 “the fruit looked good to the eye and for giving wisdom”

In each case, then as today, something is missing in those 9 paths to fulfillment. None could bring satisfaction and joy. I could do a whole sermon on these Nine things, but I'll move on.

2:11 THE KING'S FRUSTRATION v.11-16

v.13-16 There is an advantage of wisdom over Folly, but in the end, both die.

“I've done it all, and all is futile. Nothing to be gained, no profit under the sun.

Enjoy the benefits of labor, but nothing under the sun that give real meaning to life.

Even what we can enjoy has problems”

Because to “enjoy oneself” is to drink in what only the self can provide. Created beings and things only have so much that they can offer us. A video game may offer thirty-six unbelievable levels and absorb a young man's whole attention. But once the levels are overcome the man will pine for a new game, bored with

what once thrilled him. Left to ourselves, our entertainment abilities are substantial but limited. Eswine, Zack W..

EX: FRANCE –la joie de vivre – joy of life- living for vacations, good wine, good food, good cheese, good lovin', good art, etc. Before getting there I was expecting deep conversations about the meaning of life, but what I found was a culture not deeper than what man can provide. Without God, that's not very deep, because it won't survive death. –see SOLOMON'S SONG at the end of the sermon notes

THE KING'S VERDICT v.17-26

The question of v 22 echoes 1:3

We mortals do not possess anything in ourselves to us in securing permanent happiness.

2:24 that's all there is, but this is from the hand of God.

- at least we have this limited pleasure v.18. our portion; accept our portion is gift of God.

What does he give these things v. 20 – even this portion is given so we won't reflect on this futile life. God keeps you occupied so you don't reflect on futility of everything else.

. Kaiser Jr., Walter

- There is nothing inherently good in a person per se.
- No one can really appreciate even such elementary things as eating and drinking apart from a personal relationship with the living God.
- God alone—not things or wisdom—is the giver of satisfaction and joy.
- God also gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please Him.
- In contrast to this, how far off the mark is every other pursuit. The question of 1:3, as to what does life in and of itself profit a person can now be answered. Kaiser Jr., Walter C. Coping with Change –

The conclusion to this first section is found in 2:24-26: the purpose of life cannot be found in and of itself for any one of the good things found in the world. **All the things that we call the “goods” of life—health, riches, possessions, position, sensual pleasures, honors, and prestige—slip through one's hands unless they are received as a gift from God.** Until God gives persons the ability to enjoy them and obtain satisfaction from them, they simply cannot in and of themselves compensate for the joy that comes from fearing God and knowing Him. God gives that ability to those who begin by “fearing,” that is, believing, Him. (See the later discussion of “fear” at 8:12-13.) There is where joy begins and continues—in God Himself.

The Preacher tells us that God has to give us enjoyment, or the thing itself (\$\$, sex, house, car) will leave us unsatisfied. **And the way God gives us enjoyment in his gifts is by giving us perspective on ourselves. When we know that the gift is not meant to be a stepping stone to greater things, when we realize we are not meant to rule the world, or master our destiny, or achieve ultimate gain through our careers, then we discover that enjoyment or joy is “itself the reward that we may expect from life and all our effort expended in living it. . . . There is no surplus to joy beyond joy itself. There is indeed no pathway to joy except by refusing to pursue it and to grasp at it.” 12**

David Gibson Gibson, David. Living Life Backward:

Real joy begins in “fearing” God Himself as we are in a right relationship to him. That means that we must see Him, not us, as the center of things.

God is the FIXED POINT that gives meaning to everything else – Tozer

When the drill drills on, so does the grace of God in Christ.

The Good News of Ecclesiastes gets even better in the NT because the “fixed point” became flesh.

It’s hard to love a “mile zero” marker in the cobblestone plaza, but it makes more sense to love the God-Man Jesus, who came and gave Himself for us.

Jesus is the “fixed point” with a Face. He is the exact representation of the Father, and through his life, death and resurrection, we see how much the Father loves us.

SOLOMON’S SONG- Katie May McKenna

Preacher man, tell us a story, you must have some wisdom to share
you walk every morning in a city of diamonds ,you sleep in a bed of despair

Teacher man, you own all the rivers; only fools leave their work undone
your wives lie and wait but you don't know their names ; no more mystery under the sun

"Raise your glasses," you say to the crowd
"and fill up this meaningless life"

(chorus):
when you die, someday soon they'll paint you up like a clown
no one will remember you sixty years from now , stuck in a box and put in the ground.

The Preacher, he wanted a mansion ; they built him a mountain instead
he drank til his mind found no more escape; fell asleep in the dirt like the dead

"Raise your glasses," he says to no one
"it's only a meaningless life"

Every stream runs to the ocean; the ocean will never be filled
the hammer and the hurt pound down like a plague; live like a king but you're dying still

When he sleeps he dreams of waking beyond the sun far above the sky
the Preacher's lament welcomes the sun every day; Teacher man is all sorrows and sighs

"Raise your glass," he says to himself
"fill up this meaningless life."

(chorus):
when you die, someday soon they'll paint you up like a clown
no one will remember you sixty years from now , stuck in a box and put in the ground.

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