

Lessons in Ecclesiastes
May 29, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Introduction...

1. How would you describe the state of hope and happiness among people in the world today? **Happiness is a state of mind that is elusive...perhaps more is written and discussed about this topic than any other since we are constantly seeking happiness. Augustine said as much 1700 years ago. Since the Fall man-kind has been unable to seek and find true happiness unless and until God steps in to make a change in his heart so that man can once again appreciate what true happiness is.**
2. In what do people place their hope so that they might be happy?
 - a. **Their careers,**
 - b. **Their recreational activities...**
 - c. **Their families, though that is becoming less and less of a priority...**
 - d. **Relationships as they hop from one to another always seeking that one "true love"...**
 - e. **Power and position...celebrity and financial security...**
 - f. **As well as cultural security...**
 - g. **Racial equality**
3. Historians of philosophy tell us that the modern age, and with it, the age of secularism, began somewhere around the middle of the 18th century in France. Atheistic intellectuals called *philosophes*, fed up with the hypocrisy of the age, resolved to establish a new paradigm for thought and life. Rousseau, Diderot, d'Alembert, and Voltaire, among others, pooled their considerable intellectual powers to the task of rethinking the world without God, without angels and demons, and even without the Church, and considered that they were quite original and doing a very good thing. (The *philosophes*...French for "philosophers"...but few were primarily philosophers; rather, *philosophes* were public intellectuals who applied reason to the study of many areas of learning, including philosophy, history, science, politics, economics, and social issues. Sort of like the think tanks that were popular in Athens and Corinth...that we see especially highlighted in the book of Acts when Paul goes to speak to them about the resurrection.) Also, In the nineteenth century, a philosophy grew up which originally came from those who were being oppressed in absolutist courts of Czarist Russia. These revolutionaries rejected the authority of the state, church, and family. By the end of the nineteenth century, a German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, had formalized this philosophy of nothingness called nihilism.
 - a. Nihilism comes from the Latin root, nihil, for the word nothing. It says that there is no meaning in this life. Nihilism is the belief that all values are baseless. There is no objective basis for values. You create your own values. There is nothing that can be absolutely known or communicated. Every belief, every considering something-true, is necessarily false because there is simply no true world.

- b. Nihilism is often associated with extreme pessimism and a radical skepticism that condemns existence. So, a true nihilist believes in nothing, has no loyalties and no purpose other than the impulse to destroy. But what they somehow managed to overlook was that there is nothing new under the sun
 - c. But long before the French philosophes and Nietzsche, a philosopher far wiser than the German thinker, had looked this issue square in the face. He called himself the Preacher, and in the second verse of this book he says, "Everything is meaningless."
 - d. From what you may know about philosophy and secular intellectuals how would you assess their achievement? In other words, how have what they done affected us even in the 21st Century?
 - e. Is there any sense in which we in the Christian community are in the same place the philosophes were in 250 years ago? Explain.
4. Ecclesiastes, a book that at first reading is filled with despair, frank hopelessness, stiff philosophy, is in fact full of gospel truth. Ecclesiastes means in the Greek equals Preacher/ Convener= assembler of the covenant community...which was used in the Septuagint and the Vulgate.
 5. There has been much speculation about the author of this book...for me and much of the church prior to Martin Luther and after the author seems to identify himself in the first line... *"The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem."* Since the writer only uses the term Qoheleth...Preacher in the Greek...convener of the truths...convener of the peoples...one who gathers the assembly together...that has led to much speculation. I am not moved by arguments of language difficulties or structural concerns for as with all books that name themselves we usually give them the benefit of the doubt. Also given Solomon's wildly attested to life...in biblical and extra-biblical sources it is not a jump at all to believe that he in fact is the author...but one who seeks to be humble at this point by using a simple title rather than the title of King.
 6. In his day King Solomon learned the hard way about trying to make sense of life without God. The first years of Solomon's reign in Israel were a model of God's divine economy functioning through the means of the human institutions of culture and society. Having gained the wisdom of God to rule his people well, Solomon governed the nation with one eye at all times fixed on the will of God knowing that this was the way to wisdom and success in the early years. But somewhere towards the middle of his reign, Solomon strayed from the path into an experiment of living "under the sun...under heaven...on earth" all apparently synonymous in meaning (an experiment with all that life has to offer...which is always vanity) that ended up in disastrous results.

7. The Book of Ecclesiastes is Solomon's account of his own sortie into secularism, crafted as a plea to his son and to God's people not to repeat his terrible mistake that seems to have had 3 parts: (1) living as though God didn't exist, (2) or God doesn't matter, (3) or, to play with the world you will get bitten by the allure of the world and all its vanity. Solomon ultimately recovered from his errant ways; his son, Rehoboam, would not. The Book of Ecclesiastes outlines the folly of thinking that we can make our way in this world without reference to God – "*under the sun*", as Solomon says.
 - a. Read 1 Kings 3:3-14 and James 3:17. What is wisdom? Where does it come from, and how may we attain it?
 - b. What is the relationship between wisdom, prayer, obedience to God's Law, and a desire to serve God's people? What can get in the way of gaining the wisdom of God?
8. What would you say are the distinguishing marks of our current age? In other words, how will this age be defined for posterity in the ages to come? What does it look like, and what are its effects?
9. One of the main reasons that this book is so unsettling for many people is Solomon's frankness in how he describes life and death honestly...something that most people do not wish to do. He is shocking in his assessment as one who has been burnt by his own stupidity and a desire to make sure others do not follow in his footsteps. He sees clearly as His days are coming to an end that he has wasted so much time and energy...Wasted it on things that are worthless for eternity. The author begins in verse 1, by attesting to his competence. He's basically saying, "Look, I have had a range of experience which uniquely enables me to explore the question of the meaning of life with you." The author is speaking from a position of knowledge and experience that qualifies him to ask and answer hard questions. He bought that T-shirt many times so he is an expert in playing with vanity, worthlessness, and futile behavior.
10. Another contrast that we will see in this book is the contrast between the vain and the honorable. Now there is a lot more that deals with vanity...but an underlying theme deals with knowing what is honorable... those things which God approves.
11. One last contrast we will consider as we go through this book together is the contrast between meaninglessness...vanity... and meaning! For on a very basic level nothing is totally meaningless since we know that God ordains whatsoever comes to pass. Solomon knew this as well... so this contrast is at the very heart of our understanding as we read through this short book.

12. Having discussed the 1st verse in some detail...let's look for a few minutes this morning at verse 2. It is his thematic statement for the whole book. What does it mean for them and what does it mean for us today?
- a. ***"Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."* This is the author's assertion of the human situation without God. He's saying that if you view life without reference to God, the world in which we find ourselves is a chaos without meaning or progress. He is laying down the foundation, the groundwork, for commending to you a God-centered life by saying, "You go ahead and try to live a non-God-centered life and I'll tell you what your life is going to be. Your life is going to be empty." He's saying that this is a result that flows from any and every approach to life that leaves God out of the center—emptiness and pessimism. Emptiness and pessimism are the only alternatives to Bible faith.**
 - b. **When he says all, he really means all, everything. He doesn't mean that most things are empty in this life; he means all things apart from God are empty in this life in the sense that they cannot supply ultimate meaning. There's nothing under the sun, apart from God, that can supply ultimate meaning. And he calls them vanity; he calls them emptiness.**
 - c. **So his message then is basically that all man's efforts to find happiness apart from God are useless. Simple enough. This life, apart from God, is meaningless, it is hopeless, and it is only filled with despair.**
 - d. **This is important because; from the very beginning chapters of the book of Genesis, the Old Testament asserts this fundamental truth: that there is a Creator, He is distinct from His creation, we are His creatures, and we are not Him; and the essence of life consists in glorifying and enjoying that Creator and honoring Him as the One who is the Lord and Sovereign.**
 - e. **And so it is perfectly appropriate that there would be a book in the Old Testament that sets forth what happens when you attempt to live life against that truth or without that truth. If you attempt to live life under the sun, if you attempt to live life apart from the reality of a Creator that has brought all things into being and made us for Himself, then this will happen. That's basically the story of the book of Ecclesiastes.**
 - f. **It is an exploration of the different ways that people try to find meaning in this life apart from God, and it is an explanation of how futile that is. It is a big argument to argue you into a corner in the denial of the Creator. So, when the author says, *"All is vanity,"* he really means it. Everything under the sun is vanity apart from God. Everything in this world, everything in this earthly sphere is incapable of satisfying the deepest part of our soul apart from God.**

Lessons in Ecclesiastes
June 5, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Solomon's words are unsettling for a number of reasons:
 - a. **Solomon's frankness in how he describes life and death honestly...something that most people do not wish to do.**
 - b. **A contrast between the vain and the honorable. Now there is a lot more that deals with vanity...but an underlying theme deals with knowing what is honorable... those things which God approves.**
 - c. **A contrast between meaninglessness...vanity... and meaning! For on a very basic level nothing is totally meaningless since we know that God ordains whatsoever comes to pass. Solomon knew this as well... so this contrast is at the very heart of our understanding as we read through this short book.**

2. What would you say are the distinguishing marks of our current age and think about it...what were the distinguishing marks of Solomon's age as well? 4 old lies:
 - a. **Laugh and the world laughs with you, cry and you cry alone.**
 - b. **Every day in every way our world is getting better and better.**
 - c. **There's a light at the end of every tunnel.**
 - d. **Things are never as bad as they seem, so dream, dream, dream.**
 - e. **These are the myths that my generation were raised on...also, they are the myths that influenced your way of thinking as well. We would rather stand up for axioms rather than God's truth...which clearly exposes the myth concerning the hope of each one.**

C. Ecclesiastes 1:1-11- we need to look at each verse early on so that we don't miss the meaning for the rest of the book. Think of the first 11 verses as the preface of this book.

1. Verse 1 set up the writers credentials. Solomon begins in verse 1, by attesting to his competence. He's basically saying, *"Look, I have had a range of experience which uniquely enables me to explore the question of the meaning of life with you."* The author is speaking from a position of knowledge and experience that qualifies him to ask and answer hard questions. Solomon was a -PROFESSIONAL HEDONIST!...and he was a Christian at the same time.

2. What did we say last week that Solomon meant by the next 2 phrases found in verse 2? Why is it so important to Solomon that it is placed here as the theme verse for this whole book?
 - a. **His message is basically that all man's efforts to find happiness apart from God are useless. This life, apart from God, is meaningless, it is hopeless, and it is only filled with despair. Life appears to have substance and the ability for us to find contentment but that is the lie of this world...just like the lies that influenced my generation.**
 - b. **When the author says, "All is vanity," he really means it. Everything under the sun is vanity apart from God. Everything in this world, everything in this earthly sphere is incapable of satisfying the deepest part of our soul apart from God.**

- c. **He says, if you're looking for meaning in this life apart from God, here's what you'll end up with—a handful of wind. He saying, the search for significance apart from God is utterly fruitless and empty. He's saying, if you sit down and think hard about life, if you try to live life apart from God, it is utterly meaningless.**
 - d. **Now, this is fundamentally an important message, because from the very beginning chapters of the book of Genesis, the Old Testament asserts this fundamental truth: that there is a Creator, He is distinct from His creation, we are His creatures, and we are not Him; and the essence of life consists in glorifying and enjoying that Creator and honoring Him as the One who is the Lord and Sovereign.**
 - e. ***Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.* This is the author's assertion of the human situation without God. He's saying that if you view life without reference to God, the world in which we find ourselves is a chaos without meaning or progress. He's saying that this is a result that flows from any and every approach to life that leaves God out of the center—emptiness and pessimism. Emptiness and pessimism are the only alternatives to Bible faith.**
3. How is he describing human work and what it yields in verse 3?
- a. **He's telling you that significance, meaning, purpose cannot come from any earthly endeavor.**
 - b. **This could be translated, *"What does or can a man get by all his toil at which he toils under the sun."* For all that he puts into life, what's his yield? And what is the Preacher's answer? The answer is: this life doesn't pay dividends. You won't find a yield of meaning and significance under the sun. There's nothing in this life that can provide that for you, if you want this life to do it.**
 - c. **Combined with verse 2 we hear him saying, *"Under the sun, everything that we do, everything has an undertone of misery and futility."***
 - d. **Life under the sun is the preacher's way of talking about a life that is lived only along the horizons of this world.**
 - e. **If you want to live life under the sun, if you want to live life apart from God, if you want to search for meaning in this life anywhere and everywhere but in saving relationship with God, the answer is: this life is empty.**
 - f. **There's nothing under the sun, apart from God, that can supply ultimate meaning. And he calls them vanity; he calls them emptiness.**
 - g. **If we are still uncertain about the reality that Solomon talks about think about this: We are perhaps the most bored society of all time. We have more things to occupy our time but we are still easily bored...we have access to more information,...more entertainment ...more pleasures of all kinds...and we are still bored. You know the drill..300 channels and nothing to watch. We are always looking for more...the next best thing...the way to get our attention. We are not satisfied so we search and go on searching...one drug leads to another more powerful...simply because we want more excitement or more deadening. And this goes for so many other things in life.**

4. Thinking about this concept of work.
 - a. Where do we see this concept first discussed? **Gen. 2:15- "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it."**
 - b. This was prior to the Fall so what is the purpose of work here in this 2nd chapter of Genesis? **To glorify God and enjoy Him forever as we did what He called upon us to do. He commanded and as we do what He commands we are walking in His ways...**
 - c. Then what happened after the Fall? **"And to Adam He said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.'"**
 - d. So did the command change concerning man and work? **No!** If not, then what changed? **The reward was taken from us...we no longer want to work...we no longer want to work for God's glory...and when we do work we find little to no satisfaction in our work if it is to fulfill anything lacking within us...and a lot is lacking without God.**

5. How does he confirm for us in verses 4-7 that we won't find the solution to the problems of this life?
 - a. **The problem of meaninglessness under the sun doesn't go away. A new generation comes along and doesn't come up with a secret formula and then they die. The problem doesn't go away; it doesn't get better over time. When the next generation comes along, and starts thinking about things and they find the same old situation that past generations have found and then they die and the search for significance starts all over again for the men of the earth. This problem, Solomon is saying, will outlast every generation of men. People are born and then they die...so the cycle goes. It is the curse manifested!**
 - a. **Man seeks for answers everywhere...but even the creation has been affected by the Fall...See Rom 8:18-25.**
 - b. **When a believer looks at the world and sees the regularity of the sunrise and of the seasons and of the ebb and flow of the tide, he rejoices. But when an unbeliever looks at this world and he considers the cycles of nature, the sun, the seasons, the rivers, it feels monotonous and hopeless to him.**
 - c. **The flow of the rivers in nature, for the one who looks simply at this life under the sun, doesn't bring hope, but despair. And even when we consider the seasons of life, there's something plaintive, something pensive about it. "They" are often heard saying in frustration, "There seems to be a plan and a flow for everything in this life but for me."**

6. What is he saying generally about the things that we want most in life in verse 8?
 - a. **The things we want most in this life, apart from God, will eventually weary us upon reflection.**

- b. **What we desire can't fulfill us. What we get delights us less and less. We're impacted by two universal laws: the law of unfulfilled expectations (When you finally get what you've always wanted, you find out what? It didn't give you what you thought it was going to give you.) and the law of diminishing returns.- (We may enjoy something and delight in something, but over time the return lessens and sometimes we even get sick of that which we once delighted in. It bores us. It exhausts us. It drains us. It wears on us. It saps us. It cannot satisfy us. Everything in life becomes a weariness apart from God. "I can't get no satisfaction," said the Rolling Stones.)**
 - c. **Augustine reminded us of it years ago why this is true: *"You have made us for Yourself, and therefore our hearts are restless until we find our rest in Thee."* When we look for rest anywhere else, we won't find it. When we look for satisfaction anywhere else, we won't find it.**
7. What is he saying about how much meaning we will find in progress, invention, or new accomplishments in verses 9-10?
- a. **Meaning is not found in the next thing because the next thing never turns out to be so new after all. He's not railing against progress or technology, but he wants to warn us against our trying to find ultimate meaning in change and progress and technology. You know, near eastern kings were always trying to seek to accomplish something new so that they could leave a legacy, build a new building, bridge a new river, or capture a new territory. They wanted to leave a legacy. They wanted something new, something special, something unique, something extraordinary about their reign which would establish their reputation and imbue their reign with significance. Sound familiar with modern day rulers...our Presidents are always seeking to secure their legacy...in things. Not is seeking to be known as one who followed the Lord God...**
 - b. **Ecclesiastes is saying here that that won't work. Ultimate meaning is not found in something new. "New and improved"--the ultimate hope of the modern consumer will not realize your fondest dreams.**
 - c. **We forget that gravity feed toilets have been around since the Babylonians...we forget and think it was a new thing when it was re0invented.**
8. So with all this in mind, what is he telling us in verse 11?
- a. **Those who don't know history are bound to repeat it...not the good stuff but the bad stuff!**
 - b. ***"Look, face the emptiness of life squarely."* Meaning and significance cannot be found here under the sun. It can't even be found in being remembered. There's no remembrance of earlier things. And also of the later things that will occur, there will be for them no remembrance among those who will come later still.**
 - c. **He's saying, *"Are you living to leave a legacy here? Well, I've got some news for you. They'll forget you. They'll forget it; they won't remember you no matter how important you are."* Apart from God, the preacher says, our approach to life will either be bitter and cynical and pessimistic, or it will be trite, unrealistic, naïve, and impractical.**

- d. In the end, after all his contemplations and studies...purposefully leaving God out of the equation...he was led to the conclusion by God's wisdom, given to him by God, that one cannot make sense of life without submitting to God and His Law. In his quest, Solomon ended up disappointed, disillusioned and despairing...much the way our secular generation has come up short with its own worldview.**
- e. But by way of contrast, the Christian view of life is realistic and hopeful and practical and durable all at the same time. You see, the preacher is saying, if you really consider this life apart from God, you'll see there's no hope. But that very hopelessness, the futility of any other approach to life, should lead us to the only hope--God our Savior.**
- f. The author of Ecclesiastes doesn't sell out that hope for us here in chapter 1, verses 1-11. However He is not ready to give us quick and easy answers, but he will give us an answer that runs throughout the book...the saving knowledge of the one and true living God brings the satisfaction that was promised in the garden.**

Lessons in Ecclesiastes
June 12, 2016

A. Prayer
B. Review

1. Remembering what we have talked about in the “preface” (vss. 1-11), what would you say this book is going to be about?
 - a. **All of life without God is meaningless...every pursuit, every pleasure, every feeling, every desire...all meaningless- useless without God..**
 - b. **Without God everyone is lost!...Either eternally or temporarily separated from God...feeling like all is lost.**
 - c. **The one who speaks knows these trues first hand.**
2. Is there any “good news” in these first 11 verses? What?
 - a. **By contrast, if all life lived under the sun...under heaven...is vanity, then life with God is fulfilling...a normal way to argue a point in logic and debate.**
 - b. **There is a set pattern in place...one that God has shared with us from the beginning...someone set this pattern in place...One more intelligent than man...the Creator, God, Our Father.**
 - c. **Rather than looking everywhere for satisfaction...there is one place...
(1)By referencing Genesis and the Proverbs as he does he has the whole of Scripture in mind...that point s to this truth.
(2)With the references to Scripture...automatically the covenant comes into play...the covenant of grace...so for those who are His , who have been granted salvation just like Solomon we need to know that what the world offers is useless.**

C. Ecclesiastes 1:12-18- See also I Kings 4:29-34

1. What are the primary ways that secular people today seek to gain knowledge and understanding?
 - a. **They start with there is no God...or if there is a God He is of little significance. He may have begun all of this but he has left it for us to take it from there. Carl Sagan was known to say, “The cosmos is all there is or was or ever will be.” Interesting twist on biblical words about God.**
 - b. **People are on a perpetual quest to discover meaning...it is part of their DNA...but because of the Fall they reject the simple truth before them in the Bible.**
2. He began this chapter with general observations which he will expound upon throughout the book to some specific conclusions about his own pursuits. What does he tells us here?
 - a. **That he *applied his heart to seek*= to theoretically investigate all matters as a scientific experiment... coming up with the theories... “largeness of the heart” = “applied his heart” is a Hebrew expression with these meanings:
(1) Intellectual prowess- he had a vast comprehension of knowledge...a great strategist and planner...he could see the whole picture at once.
(2) It speaks to his boldness, courage and assurance of all his decrees.**

(3) A disposition to do good with his knowledge. It was said that Solomon freely gave of his wisdom just the way he gave of his food. All of our gifts are for the good of others to enhance them and strengthen them and encourage them. Solomon seems to have gotten that understanding when he received his wisdom from God.

- b. Applied *His heart to search out*— or explore which conveys the idea of experiencing everything first hand that he theorized about. He was his own Guinea pig in his experiments.**
- c. *By wisdom all that is done under heaven*- he set out in his mind to seek and explore, with wisdom as his tool and guide, everything under heaven. He sought to supply meaning to this world under heaven, considered apart from God, through the vehicle of wisdom. He concentrated all the capacities of his inner thought life to search out deeply and wisely the whole of life, and it led him to a definite opinion regarding whether wisdom, studying all things under heaven, could supply the meaning of life.**
- d. His conclusion:**
- (1) *It is an unhappy or grievous task... that God(Elohim=Majestic, great, and all powerful One) has given to the children of man to be busy with.* In other words, he's saying that human beings can't help but seek out questions to the answers about ultimate meaning in life. Human beings can't live without believing that there is a meaning to this existence. An atheist may claim, "*Look, there's no ultimate meaning to life, and the sooner that we get rid of that, the sooner we can get on with living.*" But no matter how hard they try they just can't live by their own creed...he must seek for answers...it is part of the curse and part of the blessing of this life. In the end it's frustrating, because when they try to get those answers apart from God, they can't come up with them....hence a "grievous task".**
- (2)All work done under the sun is vanity. Man looks at the world, he looks at history, he looks at the struggle, the search for meaning, for gain, for satisfaction in the lives of individuals, and what does he see? He sees people frustrated by problems that can't be solved, and he looks at people seeking to attain things that they can't attain, and that failure frustrates them. And the more they know, the more frustrated they are.**
- (3)The increase of worldly wisdom increases grief and sorrow. There are twists and gaps in all our thinking, and there are problems that we can't sort out, we can't figure out in this life. If meaning is supplied to life by us being able to figure it all out, then meaning will never be supplied to this life, because we'll never figure it all out. For if that is all you search for your search is in vain. For worldly wisdom is as empty as the wind.**

3. What does this section tell us about what he thinks about human wisdom?
 - a. **Ecclesiastes has an incredibly careful assessment of human wisdom. You might have expected him to criticize all human wisdom as worthless. He doesn't. In fact, explicitly in this passage he acknowledges that there is a tremendous advantage to be found in human wisdom. It's very valuable, it's worth having, but it's not the ultimate answer. So he doesn't just write off all human wisdom as valueless; on the other hand, he is acutely aware of the limitations of human wisdom.**
 - b. **In this passage, he says to the person who says, "Look, I can go out and by the process of reflection, and putting into place practical steps in my life, I can supply meaning to this life through human wisdom without recourse to the living God in relationship with Him," the author says, "Oh, you can? Let me show you why you can't, because I've tried that, I've thought about that, I've explored every possible way in which human wisdom might supply the meaning of life, the answers to the fundamental questions of life, and through the course of my study I've found out, it can't." And so, in this passage, Ecclesiastes shows us that the wisdom we may have as humans is indeed one of life's blessings, but it is incapable apart from God, of solving the problem of life and it is incapable, apart from God, of supplying the meaning of life.**
 - c. **If you're looking for ultimate hope in what human wisdom can supply apart from God, you're not going to find it. Human wisdom is simply LIMITED...say it with me now...Human wisdom is simply LIMITED! We can't know it all...we won't know it all ever. One generation makes progress the next slides back only to have the next generation "re-discover" old truths...Theology 101- he is God and we are not!...We were created to worship and glorify God not know everything.**

D. Ecclesiastes 2:1-26

1. Over 55 times in the ESV he uses a personal pronoun- "I, me, or my". Why, what is he communicating to his audience and to us almost 3000 years later?
 - a. **He did these things...he knows what he is talking about. First hand witness of all that he talks about.**
 - b. **He did the research and he experimented on himself...he was his own guinea pig...not willing for anyone else to try this "at home" if you will...he was the professional.**
 - c. **Maybe a bit of pride in here as well...but I think at this point in his life he was not trying to influence others towards this lifestyle...he "alone" took all this on.**
2. Look at verse 1-11. This makes up the next section of his argument.
 - a. What is he communicating here and how what we see here apply to our modern life?

(1)How often do we find people building their own empires and sacrificing everything for it?

- (2) There is momentary “joy” in the things of the world. He admits that openly. It is the reason we keep doing the things under the sun. there is “just enough” joy/ pleasure/delight, to get us hooked, addicted/ convinced that satisfaction is just around the next corner, so we keep striving after the wind.**
- (3) We smell what we think is the right smell, but we can’t find where it is coming from.**
- (4) He had achieved the “good life”...but all he truly gained was momentary “good feelings” which are always fleeting...always wanting more of a “good thing.”**
- (5) We are like the rats following the Pied Piper...or the frog in the kettle being drawn to our death or to severe consequences.**

- b. The 18th Century philosophers were persuaded that reason and observation were sufficient vehicles for arriving at truth and understanding. How has this thinking influenced our modern day? Where do we see this thinking?
- c. Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not?
- d. How does faith factor into leading us to the truth and what is its place with the other 2 disciplines mentioned?
- e. What are some reasons people might set aside their faith and turn to observation and reason to try to understand themselves and the world? What responsibility does the Church have for the world’s slide into secularism?

- (1) We wish to do away with THE standard that holds us accountable.**
- (2) We wish to break everything down to the lowest common denominator... “What feels good to us at the time.”**
- (3) We have gotten away from the word so it is easier to set aside our faith as a hindrance to this “particular” event or thing.**

3. Re-read 1:12-18 and 2:12-17

- a. What do we have here? What more is said here than in chapter 1?
 - (1) This in many ways is just a recounting of all of chapter 1.**
 - (2) Repetition aids learning.**
 - (3) He wants us to know these differences...like we know our own face. The pursuit of knowledge even the use of wisdom is vanity without God.**
 - (4) Wisdom compared to folly/foolishness produces more, but without God, it too is fleeting. He is willing to admit things that most are not willing to admit about the worldly/conventional wisdom.**
- b. What is the answer to his dilemma posited in vs. 18-21?
 - (1) One could just give up and do nothing... since you work all your life to get what you want, only to die!**
 - (2) One could work hard to find someone worthy of leaving all that one has accomplished to...but in the end what would that guarantee?**

(3) One could lean into God with all our might and not worry about who come along afterwards because our worth is found in Him not in what we build.

(4) There is no value in our labor from a purely human perspective...for it is here today and gone tomorrow.

(5) He also may have been thinking of the foolishness of his son Rehoboam when he penned this.

4. Read vs. 24-26

a. All this bleakness...where is the hope...like where's the beef...the "good news"?

(1) Vs. 24 in the Hebrew could read... *"There is nothing in a man to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good."* In other words, people do not have the natural capacity to draw genuine "joy" from their endeavors...they do not have the natural ability to be unbiased about what they do. It is not part of our fallen DNA...it isn't within us to be able to choose any good. You may ask, "How is this good news?" Answer: It is always better to know the truth about a situation rather than not. God tells us this so we will know...if we have ears to hear and eyes to see.

(2) Now the ability to discern...the ability to use true truth...god's wisdom...comes from God/Elohim as a gift to those who are His ...those who have been granted salvation for they alone can seek God out and ask Him for wisdom as Solomon had. This enables us to discover satisfaction in this life (vs. 24-25). If the Lord is not the center of your life, contentment is only momentary and fleeting...even for the Christian...but with Him joys come in mourning.

(3) Vs. 26 says what?

- **Those who do not order their lives according to God's standard will never truly enjoy the benefits of their toil.**
- **Yet, those who are in Christ Jesus will ultimately profit from the work of others...by persevering through tough times and affliction we will reap the benefits of knowing we are not alone, that the God of all the universe is with US and that this same God has prepared a place for us when this is over. Think of the spoils of Egypt given to the people at their deliverance...think of the promise of God from Isaiah 43... *"I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, people in exchange for your life."* All throughout the OT and into the NT this promise has been reiterated as a reward of God's people.**

b. In there is time, Look at Genesis 1:26-28, 2:15; Ps. 90:16-17, I Cor. 10:31. Taking all of these together, briefly explain how a Christian should look at his or her work?

c. What seems to be the driving force behind why most people work? Should Christians have a different motivation than this? What should it be again?

Lessons in Ecclesiastes
June 19, 2016

- A. Prayer
- B. Review- Look at Eccl. 2:1-11. This makes up the next section of his argument.
1. What is he communicating here and how does what we see here apply to our modern life?
 - a. **How often do we find people building their own empires and sacrificing everything for it?**
 - b. **There is momentary “joy” in the things of the world. He admits that openly. It is the reason we keep doing the things under the sun. there is “just enough” joy/ pleasure/delight, to get us hooked, addicted/ convinced that satisfaction is just around the next corner, so we keep striving after the wind.**
 - c. **We are like the rats following the Pied Piper...or the frog in the kettle being drawn to our death or to severe consequences.**
 2. What are some reasons people might set aside their faith and turn to observation and reason to try to understand themselves and the world? What responsibility does the Church have for the world’s slide into secularism?
 - a. **We wish to do away with THE standard that holds us accountable.**
 - b. **We wish to break everything down to the lowest common denominator... “What feels good to us at the time.”**
 - c. **We have gotten away from the word so it is easier to set aside our faith as a hindrance to this “particular” event or thing.**
- C. Chapter 2 continued-
5. Re-read 1:12-18 and 2:12-17
 - c. What do we have here? What more is said here than in chapter 1?
 - (5)**This in many ways is just a recounting of all of chapter 1.**
 - (6)**Repetition aids learning.**
 - (7)**He wants us to know these differences...like we know our own face. The pursuit of knowledge even the use of wisdom is vanity without God.**
 - (8)**Wisdom compared to folly/foolishness produces more, but without God, it too is fleeting. He is willing to admit things that most are not willing to admit about the worldly/conventional wisdom.**
 - d. What is the answer to his dilemma posited in vs. 18-21?
 - (6)**One could just give up and do nothing... since you work all your life to get what you want, only to die!**
 - (7)**One could work hard to find someone worthy of leaving all that one has accomplished to...but in the end what would that guarantee?**
 - (8)**One could lean into God with all our might and not worry about who come along afterwards because our worth is found in Him not in what we build.**
 - (9)**There is no value in our labor from a purely human perspective...for it is here today and gone tomorrow.**
 - (10) **He also may have been thinking of the foolishness of his son Rehoboam when he penned this.**

Lessons in Ecclesiastes
June 26, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What is the answer to his dilemma posited in vs. 18-21?
 - a. **One could just give up and do nothing... since you work all your life to get what you want, only to die!**
 - b. **One could work hard to find someone worthy of leaving all that one has accomplished to...but in the end what would that guarantee?**
 - c. **One could lean into God with all our might and not worry about who come along afterwards because our worth is found in Him not in what we build.**
 - d. **There is no value in our labor from a purely human perspective...for it is here today and gone tomorrow.**
 - e. **He also may have been thinking of the foolishness of his son Rehoboam when he penned this.**

2. Read vs. 24-26

- d. All this bleakness...where is the hope...like “where’s the beef”...the “good news”?

(4)Vs. 24 in the Hebrew could read... “There is nothing in a man to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good.” In other words, people do not have the natural capacity to draw genuine “joy” from their endeavors...they do not have the natural ability to be unbiased about what they do. It is not part of our fallen DNA...it isn’t within us to be able to choose any good. You may ask, “How is this good news?” Answer: It is always better to know the truth about a situation rather than not. God tells us this so we will know...if we have ears to hear and eyes to see.

(5)Now the ability to discern...the ability to use true truth...God’s wisdom...comes from God/Elohim as a gift to those who are His ...those who have been granted salvation for they alone can seek God out and ask Him for wisdom as Solomon had. This enables us to discover satisfaction in this life (vs. 24-25). If the Lord is not the center of your life, contentment is only momentary and fleeting...even for the Christian...but with Him joys come in mourning.

(6)Vs. 26 says what?

- **Those who do not order their lives according to God’s standard will never truly enjoy the benefits of their toil.**
- **Yet, those who are in Christ Jesus will ultimately profit from the work of others...by persevering through tough times and affliction we will reap the benefits of knowing we are not alone, that the God of all the universe is with US and that this same God has prepared a place for us when this is over. Think of the spoils of Egypt given to the people at their deliverance...think of the promise of God from Isaiah 43... “I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, people in exchange for your**

life.” All throughout the OT and into the NT this promise has been reiterated as a reward of God’s people.

- e. If there is time, Look at Genesis 1:26-28, 2:15; Ps. 90:16-17, I Cor. 10:31. Taking all of these together, briefly explain how a Christian should look at his or her work? **Man’s praise, Money, position, keeping up with Jones...**
- f. What seems to be the driving force behind why most people work? Should Christians have a different motivation than this? What should it be again?

C. Chapter 3

- 1. Eccl. 3:1-8- One of the most familiar sections in the Old Testament
 - a. What would you say this statement means?
 - b. These back and forth statements communicate much to us.
 - (1) We live in a world of changes...that the vents of human life are vastly different from one another...every event is unalterably fixed and determined by God.**
 - (2) Every purpose has its time.**
 - (3) Everything done under the sun is subject to change...but done in heaven by God cannot and will not change.**
 - c. Just to be clear about the depth of what Solomon is saying...
 - (1) The love of verse 8 is so great and marvelous that even our love for one another pales in comparison. There is a time to love the LORD our God with all our heart, soul, and strength...this love excludes all other distractions.**
 - (2) The hate spoken of here is God’s hate...passing over and judging that that is completely opposite of anything of God.**

Lessons in Ecclesiastes
July 3, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What seems to be the driving force behind why most people work? Should Christians have a different motivation than this? What should it be again?
2. Eccl. 3:1-8- One of the most familiar sections in the Old Testament
 - d. What would you say this statement means?
 - e. These back and forth statements communicate much to us.
 - (4)**We live in a world of changes...that the vents of human life are vastly different from one another...every event is unalterably fixed and determined by God.**
 - (5)**Every purpose has its time.**
 - (6)**Everything done under the sun is subject to change...but done in heaven by God cannot and will not change.**
 - f. Just to be clear about the depth of what Solomon is saying...
 - (3)**The love of verse 8 is so great and marvelous that even our love for one another pales in comparison. There is a time to love the LORD our God with all our heart, soul, and strength...this love excludes all other distractions.**
 - (4)**The hate spoken of here is God's hate...passing over and judging that that is completely opposite of anything of God.**

C. Ecclesiastes 3 continued:

2. Eccl. 3:9-15

- a. How has Solomon described life WITHOUT God up to this point?
 - (1)**All is vanity/meaningless/useless...**
 - (2)**There is nothing new under the sun...**
 - (3)**Everything done under the sun is a striving after the wind...**
 - (4)**Wisdom for its own sake brings sorrow and grief...**
 - (5)**Pleasure seeking is futile...**
 - (6)**And God has designed it to be this way...**
- b. So now, looking at these few verses, what does he have to say about life WITH God?
 - (1)**God makes everything beautiful= "appropriate" in its time. (Think Rom. 8:28.) Neither of these sets of words imply that everything is beautiful or appropriate. But they do affirm that God will make the wicked deeds of humans work out for good for those He loves in His eternal plan. God uses Solomon's sin as described here in Eccl. To keep us...His children...grounded. (think also of Luke 13:1-7)**
 - (2)**God has placed eternity/forever in the hearts of man...this is another way of saying that all men know there is a God and that this God has a plan that has a future...and this fact makes everyone curious about the future...hence, seeking, seeking and more seeking...Just like in Rom. 1 man is without excuse that God exists and that He has a plan and that plan is going somewhere....but as**

the rest of the text says, “...yet so that men cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.” Without God it is a futile search. He made us to know and to search...to thirst for meaning and purpose... but He also made us, since the Fall, to not be able to find it until He changes our heart. How does that make you feel?

(3) God gives us 4 gifts:

- **The ability to rejoice and enjoy life- vs. 12a...but the word “them” here designates believers only...this thinking follows who will be able to understand the eternity in the heart...God’s elect only.**
- **The ability to do good in our lifetime- 12b-to do good for others...real good...sharing and proclaiming the good news of the hope that is within us.**
- **God gives us an appropriate appetite to eat and drink- 13a- most everyone has the ability to eat, but fewer have the ability to fully appreciate the food given by God and to really enjoy His gifts.**
- **The ability to see good in our toil- 13b- God has granted us all that we have...including our work and when it is done in service to God and to bring Him glory then we can take true pleasure in this work. (See 2:24- Vs. 24 in the Hebrew this could read... *“There is nothing in a man to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good.”* In other words, people do not have the natural capacity to draw genuine “joy” from their endeavors...they do not have the natural ability to be unbiased about what they do. It is not part of our fallen DNA...it isn’t within us to be able to choose any good. You may ask, “How is this good news?” Answer: It is always better to know the truth about a situation rather than not. God tells us this so we will know...if we have ears to hear and eyes to see.**

(4) 4 truths about God’s actions in verses 14-15:

- **God’s works are permanent- 14a**
- **God’s deeds are thorough and complete-14b**
- **God does things that cultivate our awe of Him-14c**
- **God patiently repeats that until they are learned- 15**

3. Eccl. 3:16-22

a. What makes what Solomon is saying so contemporary, as if he was talking today?

(1)The world seems to be out of control.

(2)Justice seems to be broken. Evil judges abound.

(3)Calling right -wrong and wrong right!

(4)Evil seems to triumph ...death, corruption, oppression, sinful behaviors seem to abound while the truth seems to be fading into the background.

(5)There are corrupt and unbelieving church leaders.

(6)No matter when it is it is where men go to by default since the Fall.

(7) But all works will be judged by God...this concept isn't old it is also found in the NT.

b. What is the solution that Solomon gives to all this corruption in verses 17-21?

(1) Injustice will only be temporary-17

(2) Injustice reveals men's beast like behavior- vs. 18. Being made in the image of God we should be in fellowship one with another...but since the fall we are more like beast when it comes to protecting our territory and seeking our own way. Sin eats away at our humanity so that the more we yield to it the more subhuman we become...Ps. 73:21-22

(3) Injustice reveals man's beastlike destiny- vs. 19-21...also see Ps. 49:12-20. There is a difference between man and the beast...but since the Fall and without God we are more and more de-evolving into beast. From purely empirical observation, death places man and beast on an equal footing. As far as one can observe there seems to be no advantage over beast to be a man...death comes equally to both. Yet, we know instinctively that men and beast are not the same...though we fight that knowledge in our unredeemed state.

c. With all of this background what is Solomon communicating in verse 22?
We can't alter our "lot" in life but we can change our responses to it.

Lessons in Ecclesiastes
July 10, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. How has Solomon described life WITHOUT God up to this point?
 - a. **All is vanity/meaningless/useless...**
 - b. **There is nothing new under the sun...**
 - c. **Everything done under the sun is a striving after the wind...**
 - d. **Wisdom for its own sake brings sorrow and grief...**
 - e. **Pleasure seeking is futile...**
 - f. **And God has designed it to be this way...**

2. What is the solution that Solomon gives to all this corruption in verses 17-21?

Injustice will only be temporary-17:

 - a. **Injustice reveals men's beast like behavior- vs. 18. Being made in the image of God we should be in fellowship one with another...but since the fall we are more like beast when it comes to protecting our territory and seeking our own way. Sin eats away at our humanity so that the more we yield to it the more subhuman we become...Ps. 73:21-22**
 - b. **Injustice reveals man's beastlike destiny- vs. 19-21...also see Ps. 49:12-20. There is a difference between man and the beast...but since the Fall and without God we are more and more de-evolving into beast. From purely empirical observation, death places man and beast on an equal footing. As far as one can observe there seems to be no advantage over beast to be a man...death comes equally to both. Yet, we know instinctively that men and beast are not the same...though we fight that knowledge in our unredeemed state.**

3. In the midst of Solomon doing all this...this...searching out all that the "world" has to offer...seeking all his pleasure...he is at the same time building the Lord's Temple, building His own palace and one for his Egyptian wife along with the wall around Jerusalem and earthworks to protect the city from invasion. He is also building and rebuilding strategic cities along with offering to the Lord 3 times a year specific burnt offerings and peace offerings. He was a major influence in the world as we look at how his faith and wisdom...both of which came from God... affected the Queen of Sheba and Hiram of Tyre. In other words, while he is doing the Lord's word he is also indulging his own pleasures which will soon catch up to him and have devastating effect on the nation. But before that happens he is doing what he wants and at the same time worshiping as God wills...How do we make sense of this type of behavior? **He is a Christian....none of us are perfect and all of us come with our fallen nature... he is God's child...chosen and elected as his own...his behavior was wrong and sinful and he would pay for his transgressions though he like his father , David, would not lose his salvation. Sin may lead any of us at one time or another down the wrong path...while not losing our salvation we still will reap the consequences of our behavior and as the King...in this case so too the people. (I Kings 11)**

C. Chapter 4:1-16

1. Remember Solomon is writing from extravagant luxury but he is speaking from personal experience as well. Look at verses 1-3.

a. What is he saying to all the regular people in his world?

- (1) **He is sad for them...there is no one to hear them. Those with might are prevailing against the righteous ones, i.e. slaves, laborers, workmen...there must have been a promise of a better life...being lifted out of endured status, investment property that never is profitable because of fraudulent claims by those above them, unjust judges where justice is able to be had for the right amounts of money.**
- (2) **They were lied too...what ought to be is not what is. "None of their ought to be's" are reality...and when we do not tell people this we lie to them.**
- (3) **The American Dream is a nightmare for most people...always just out of reach.**
 - **People in power oppress those below them...why do you think there is so much written in the scriptures about the employer/employee relationship...there has always been an inequity and God seeks to remind the elect that they are to be different.**

2. Look at verses 4-6. What does he have to say here to those who have made it to the top of their profession and find the top lonely and unfulfilling?

a. **Vs 4, can be taken 2 ways:**

- (1) **He wants to make is clear that all those who work hard to get ahead will be hated by those who don't! This sounds so contemporary.**
 - **People look at the wealthy with distain, even if they started from nothing.**
 - **People want a re-distribution of wealth so they do not have to work so hard.**
 - **People want grades modified so no one fails.**
 - **And everyone deserves a participation trophy because all of us are winners.**
- (2) **That the fact that people do work hard and are successful cause others to try and do the same whether or not they have the same gift mix which causes them to fail and/or be discontent with their lives.**

(3) **Or, maybe it is both...**

b. **Solomon is NOT talking about healthy and ethical competition... what he is talking about is the one on one rivalry that destroys friendships and fellowship...**

- (1) **"The fool folds his hands"...is set in his ways, not to be changed from being against everyone else...**
- (2) **"and eats his own flesh." This drive will lead to consuming his own family and his own physical health. He will sacrifice everything for his own way...the word here can also be describing one who is eat up with ulcers. This speaks to the 2nd meaning of vs. 4.**

- c. People seeking after what they cannot obtain leads them to take the bull by the horns and seek to wrestle him down... *“better is a handful of quietness than 2 hands full of toil and a striving after the wind.”* This is the person who is content to being idle and work little and living on little as not to be:**
- (1) on the grid,**
 - (2) Not to be beholden to anyone,**
 - (3) Thinking it cool to be carefree...**
 - (4) A contemporary example might be someone on government assistance and not wanting to get off...they are “content”, if you will with a little so they don’t have to do any more work than they have to...**
 - (5) But in the end someone has to pay for their laziness...and what they do is a striving after the wind.**

3. Look at verses 7-8.

a. What group of people is he talking about here?

(1) This is that self-made prideful man...

- **the one who believes he owes no one anything...**
- **that person who doesn’t believe he should ask forgiveness from anyone...**
- **the person who looks down on others...**
- **he has done it his way, and his way is the only way...**

It is also a perfect picture of someone who has become a slave to the pursuit of success, whether needing to make their “million” before they can settle down...or to prove themselves to someone else...or just to amass wealth for unknown reasons...this person has not stopped long enough to ask himself the question, Why I am knocking myself out? So he drives on until he is totally bitter because he has no answer to this simple question.

Lesson's in Ecclesiastes
July 17, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review- Let's look again at 4:7-8.

1. What group of people is he talking about here?
 - a. **This is that self-made prideful man...**
 - (1) **the one who believes he owes no one anything...**
 - (2) **that person who doesn't believe he should ask forgiveness from anyone...**
 - (3) **the person who looks down on others...**
 - (4) **he has done it his way, and his way is the only way...**
 - b. **It is also a perfect picture of someone who has become a slave to the pursuit of success, whether needing to make their "million" before they can settle down...or to prove themselves to someone else...or just to amass wealth for unknown reasons...this person has not stopped long enough to ask himself the question, Why I am knocking myself out? So he drives on until he is totally bitter because he has no answer to this simple question.**
2. Considering all that we have looked at so far, how do Jesus' remarks in Luke 12:13-21 answer this same issue that Solomon is dealing with?

C. Eccl. 4 continued:

4. Look at verses 9-12. Our culture and the culture of all men since the Fall have sought to cultivate being alone...making it on our own so we don't have to share the glory. Independence is a source of pride for individuals, churches and even whole countries.
 - a. Why are relationships so important? **We need one another...we were created that way. And even since the Fall we know something is missing without others so we seek to suppress that feeling.**
 - b. Why are relationships so hard to sustain over time? **Because men are fallen...sinners and fools**
 - c. What reasons does he give as to why it is better not to be alone? In other words; Two are better than one because:
 - (1) **Good results in cooperative labor...**
 - (2) **When one falls there is another to pick them back up...team work keeps everyone from getting in over their head.**
 - (3) **We can warm the other in cold... A fire only keeps burning with other logs...the lone log will eventually go out and turn cold. The church comes together to create a bonfire of fellowship as we set each other ablaze in the service of the Lord.**
 - (4) **When life gets hard we can uphold one another if we are together. Especially if there are 3 of us...connected with God as the third One spoken of here. (Matt. 18:20)**
 - (5) **When seeking to be alone one becomes isolated and unattached from reality.**
5. Look at verses 13-16. What are some of the lessons that he is teaching us here?
 - a. **Wisdom is very important for the leader.**

- b. **Everyone admires a self-made man...no one admires the fellow who had it handed to him. Though I suspect that Solomon is telling us something else as well, here, he realizes that really he had nothing of his own when he was born and growing up. The riches he was surrounded by were David's riches...not his...his father was rich but he was poor...and then God gave him the riches that he has amassed around him...he did nothing for his wealth.**
 - c. **Don't seek to please people...be humble!**
 - d. **Never too old to take advice.**
 - e. **You don't have to look too closely to see this as a Messianic statement...all the images are there.**
 - f. **All popularity is fleeting.**
6. Where is the "good news" in these verses? **All is vanity without God which is our hope! Truth no matter how hard it is to swallow is always hopeful.**

D. Eccl. 5

1. Let's look at verses 1-7. Solomon turns from talking about a more general cultural/secular conversation to the religious...from the sphere of work to the sphere of worship.
 - a. What would you say is the overarching point (s) of these verses?
 - (1) **Worship...public and private takes preparation.**
 - (2) **We need to be very aware of what we do in the presence of God...we are always in the presence of God...so we must always be aware.**
 - (3) **We must be quick to listen and slow to speak...**
 - (4) **These are prescription against all the folly that he has been talking about...worship that is.**
 - (5) **Worship should not be a passive experience.**
 - (6) **In being prepared we can fear God...if not we will not.**
 - b. In what ways should we prepare ourselves that will better enable us to worship and to better side-step folly?
 - (1) **Be on guard...watchful...aware...alert...when we drop our guard we drop our resolve. Being prepared enables us to be alert. (vs. 1a)**
 - (2) **Draw near the Word of God. Vs. 1b**
 - (3) **It was said during discussion that this section let's us know that we need to know our place. (vs. 2)**
 - (4) **Listen well to what God says there....so our offering won't be in vain. (vs. 1b-3) Close our mouths and open our ears...the old "one mouth- 2 ears principle". God will speak to us through the prayers, the songs, the sermon and the sacraments...Prov. 10:19**
 - (5) **Keeping our commitments...our vows...(vs. 4-5). Think membership vows...covenant family vows, Martin Lloyd-Jones once said of church membership, "...is the biggest honor which can come a man's way in this world." It has also been said, "Membership is soul business, but its effect, if people fulfill their vows, will transform communities." Membership is a pledge to show up in each other's lives. And as such it means we NEED each other and should not be taken lightly. What is true for the church is also true for our marriages...when did we get the right to divorce? As Christians we do not have this right! There may be a case that can be made because of sinful covenant breaking behavior**

but it is not a right granted by God out of His favor for His church...only because of sin, Jesus said.

(6) Keep your word...(Vs. 6 no matter what the cost). Do not decide now and deny later, because God doesn't ignore our words. (Deut. 23:21)

(7) "For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity..." (Vs. 7a)- Most OT Hebrew scholars are convinced that these dreams are "daydreams". Because we are not prepared our mind will wander and when that occurs we dishonor God in our worship.

(8) We are to take God seriously (vs. 7b). Always keep God and His word close.

2. Now let's look at Chapter 5:8-20.

a. What is he telling us in verse 8-9?

(1) Once again do not be amazed by injustice and oppression. God has told us and does tell us many times that in this there will be much injustice, oppression and persecution.

(2) This isn't a call to do nothing it is just pointing out the fact at this point.

b. Re-read verses 10-17 again. Now turn to I Tim. 6:9-10.

(1) What is communicated to us today with these passages?

- **Our material possessions will not be ours forever...they will either end up on the junk pile or as someone else's possessions. *He who dies with all the toys...still dies!***
- **Money cannot buy happiness, contentment or peace or security.**
- **Dissatisfaction leads to discontentment.**

(2) Why does he keep bringing up this paradigm? Because he had fallen into this trap...others have fallen into this trap...this is a generational sin...so it needs to be discussed over and over again.

(3) Where do we see this dissatisfaction with life coming from? The curse of God upon fallen men and women...Gen. 3:16-19.

(4) How would you try to explain to a secular person that the pursuit of wealth is similar to a religious quest?

(5) How might you try to turn someone whose heart is set on acquiring wealth to consider the things of God?

Lesson's in Ecclesiastes
July 24, 2016

A. Prayer
B. Review

1. Re-read verses 5:10-17 again. Now turn to I Tim. 6:9-10.
 - a. What is communicated to us today with these passages?
 - (1) **Our material possessions will not be ours forever...they will either end up on the junk pile or as someone else's possessions. *He who dies with the most toys...still dies!***
 - (2) **Money cannot buy happiness, contentment or peace or security.**
 - (3) **Dissatisfaction leads to discontentment.**
 - b. Why does he keep bringing up this paradigm? **Because he had fallen into this trap...others have fallen into this trap...this is a generational sin...so it needs to be discussed over and over again.**
2. Where do we see this dissatisfaction with life coming from? **The curse of God upon fallen men and women...Gen. 3:16-19.**

C. Chapter 5 continued

1. Now vs. 18-20.
 - a. How is it that Solomon can speak to such issues? **See I Kings 10:14-29**
 - b. What 3 God-given gifts does he say we need to claim here in this text? Why?
 - (1) **Claim the gift of enjoyment in your life, vs. 18...(See Eccl. 2:24-25; 3:12-13, 22)..but this can only happen if we refuse to commit ourselves to a pursuit of possessions for the sake of possessions.**
 - (2) **Claim the gift of fulfillment in your work, vs. 19... Fulfillment can be found in our present work if we are not focused on the job next door...if we focus on doing the job in front of us without envy will can experience some sense of contentment and peace in our work in this life. Instead of hoping for something better that may never materialize we need to claim the fulfillment of the job God has given us now...for it is in that we will glorify God and enjoy Him.**
 - (3) **Claim the gift of contentment in your heart, vs. 20...By focusing on what God has given to us and seeking to do it to God's glory we can and will experience the inner peace that God promises.**
2. So, just so we are clear, is this the Bible against money and us making it? If not, what is it against and what is it that Solomon highlights in these verses to prove that?
 - a. **Solomon has contrasted in this chapter the bad use or the seeking after wealth to achieve some desired satisfaction with the "good" use of wealth vs. 18-20.**
 - b. **The good use is to bring God glory not to use it as he had used the wealth that God had given him.**

D. Chapter 6 is a continuation of thought from chapter 5.

1. How do these verses add to the conversation of chapter 5?
 - a. **He goes even further to show the vanity in the pursuit of wealth.**

- b. In Solomon's day gold was in abundance...and silver was so plentiful that it was like dust in the streets the Scriptures say. So this was a time of prosperity.**
 - c. Not just vanity but an evil that plagues man.**
2. Why should we call the pursuit of material wealth "evil"? As a matter of principle most people/ Christians even wouldn't consider the pursuit of the American Dream or getting ahead evil...so what is his point?
- a. He is talking about himself as well as the people...who he is leading into this evil. (vs. 2= I Chr. 1:12)...And the fruit of his laborers are being enjoyed by his 1000 foreigners...i.e. - his wives and concubine.**
 - b. As I said this was a particularly affluent time under Solomon no one really had anything to complain about...they were overall comfortable...thus deluding them into a false sense of security, self-assurance, and pride.**
 - c. They pursued wealth because that was the national pastime, if you will...not seeking after God...so it becomes evil to be an idolater..**
 - d. Idolatry???**
 - (1)Well, Solomon ended up making a temple or a place of worship for all the gods of his foreign wives and offering sacrifices to them...he was so wealthy that it didn't bother him to make this compromise...so comfortable that he gave in...like Adam ...to the sins of his wives making them his and even leading the nation in them be his example.**
 - (2)The people also, participated in the idolatry...of placing their pursuit of wealth before God. They may or may not have sacrificed to foreign gods...but by virtue of their being "comfortable" and prosperous they placed their wealth before God. Idolatry at its worse...and idolatry is always evil...And anything that stands in God's place is an idol...anything!**
3. How does he seek to alleviate his dissatisfaction in these passages? How does this work for him?
- a. Trying to take pleasure in his wealth...God took that ability to take pleasure in the wealth away from him...probably talking about the mid-point of his reign where he began to walk in the ways of idols.**
 - b. Even parenthood cannot take God's place....all of his children did not bring his pleasure...so much displeasure in fact that he uses a rather harsh example concerning the pain of his children. (vs. 4-5)**
 - c. Even more years wouldn't help because eventually all people die anyway. (vs.6)**
 - d. Hard work can not relieve dissatisfaction...part of God's curse, by the way... (7)**
 - e. A Good education...without godly wisdom cannot relieve the struggles of life...both the wise of the foolish have no advantage. (vs. 8)**
 - f. We need to stop dreaming about what we don't have and find contentment in what God has given us. (vs. 9)**

4. What is Solomon seeking to tell us in verses 10-11 that is somewhat a contrast to the rest of this chapter and much of chapter 5?
- a. **That God is sovereign. (vs. 10a) The act of naming things is seen in the Scripture as a sign of sovereignty over the thing named. Ex. When Adam gave names to the animals he was exercising the God given command and blessing to rule over God's creation....But the reality is that Adam gave them the names that he was given by God to give...because God is the One who actually names His creation... See these texts:**
 - (1) Gen. 45:4-8
 - (2) Gen. 50:19-20
 - (3) Ps. 147:4
 - (4) Dan. 2:20-22
 - b. **That man is not sovereign. (vs. 10b) *"It is known what man is..."*...in most cases used it is used in a "less than flattering way!"**
 - c. **Man cannot dispute with God. (vs. 10c-11) No advantage to try. God is always right and His word is always true. (See Is. 45:9-12)**

Lessons in Ecclesiastes
July 31, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

5. How would you answer the questions posed in verse 12 for yourself?
6. How would you answer the questions posed in verse 12 to others with these questions?
 - a. **Life seems futile from time to time. We become frustrated by our own sins and the sins of others. We become discontent very easy because things aren't happening fast enough or they are not happening as we see them in our own minds. Thankfully, God has adopted us and He never stops lovingly telling us that we are loved and have great benefit in Him through Christ as we follow Him so that we can actually trust Him.**
 - b. **We are often fearful about the future...if we aren't most of those around us are...whether they would admit it or not. The fear of the unknown drives us to do some amazingly "good" things but also some amazingly horrific things.**
 - c. **Only God can give us the answers that we seek...and only if we are His will we care to seek. If we are not His we will bumble through this life in fear and frustration ...oh many try to cover it...but in most cases...most people you meet are fearful, hurting and sick and tired of the status quo...**
 - (1)**Just look at this election cycle (2016 election).**
 - (2)**Look at the racial unrest...there is no justice and so the people are going all Old West on their own.**
 - (3)**The people have realized that they have been being lied to for many years and yet they stay with what and who they know...rather than the Lord...for God has hardened hearts in these last days so that men cannot enjoy the fruit of their labor...**
 - (4)**But for His we are destined to be oppressed, persecuted, may be even martyred for Christ, but in this life and the next we will see, sense and know God's love and satisfaction in His when we trust and obey the one who has given us all that we have.**

C. Chapter 7- In the first 6 chapters of Ecclesiastes, Solomon describes human existence without God, while at the same time throwing in just enough contrast of what life with God is like. However, from chapter 7 on, his focus becomes less man-centered and more God-focused. We see now the transition from a walk of self-centeredness to a walk back home with the Lord as his days on this earth begin to wane. We know this because the terms "wise" and "wisdom" begin to show up with a greater frequency...almost 35 times in this latter half of this book. Furthermore, the first 10 verses of chapter 7 especially we see Solomon waxing eloquently in proverbial form on how to deal with life from a godly perspective. Proverbs are often seen paradoxical to the unbelieving world.

1. *"A good name is better than precious ointment (perfume)..."*(vs. 1a) Jus from a mere practical explanation, how would you restate this in 21st Century language?
 - a. **A good name is better than wealth.**

- b. An excellent reputation is more important than a pleasant and expensive fragrance.**
 - c. See I Peter 3:3-5**
 - d. Beauty is not unimportant, but not as important as one's character and integrity.**
 - e. A good name will be chosen by all who are wise...over material things. Prov. 22:1**
2. "...and the day of death (is better) than the day of birth." (vs. 1b)
- a. Why is Solomon so preoccupied with this reality of death?
 - (1) Because most people aren't.**
 - (2)**
 - (3) Death is not meaningless...it is part of the fabric of life. We do our best to cheat death...to deny that it will happen...it will happen to someone else.**
 - (4) We were all born to uncertainty, but a "good man" ...a godly person...does not die with uncertainty.**
 - b. This proverb sounds so pessimistic, but it doesn't have to. How is it really a positive statement?
 - (1) Death for the believer is a victory.**
 - (2) Phil. 1:21-24**
 - (3) The joy in eternity with God will be better than the limited experiences we have had in this life.**
3. Vs. 2-7 gives us a slew of proverbs which for the most part speak to the same thing. *"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting... Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad...the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth...For as the crackling of thorns (burning) under a pot, so is the laughter of fools; this also is vanity."*
- a. What is Solomon telling us in these verses?
 - (1) He is still talking to us about death as a part of life that we can't run away from.**
 - (2) Mourning is often a more honest emotion...laughter can be brought on by fakeness...by external stimulants...by seeking to mask your true feelings...but true mourning will not be masked.**
 - (3) Pain has a way of shifting us toward the Creator.**
 - (4) We are to reflect on the brevity of life...and the direction of our lives.**
 - (5) Those who refuse to deal with death wisely are fools (4b).**
 - (6) A fool sounds like a crackling of thorns burning under a pot...Fool can be fun to be with but their life is ultimately empty. Heeding the rebuke of the wise will get us farther than listening to the jokes of a fool.**
 - (7) We need to be careful concerning the counsel we follow we can be led astray and tempted by those we wish to look up to. We need to discern everything through the lenses of Scripture not how we feel about someone. (vs. 7)**
 - b. How would you sum up these verses in 21st Century vernacular?

Lessons in Ecclesiastes
August 7, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

4. Chapter 7:1-7 gives us a slew of proverbs which for the most part speak to the same thing. *"...the day of death is better than the day of birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting... Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad...the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth...For as the crackling of thorns (burning) under a pot, so is the laughter of fools; this also is vanity."*

- c. What is Solomon telling us in these verses?

(8) He is still talking to us about death as a part of life that we can't run away from.

(9) The life of the Christian is not an easy path to be sure.

(10) Mourning is often a more honest emotion...laughter can be brought on by fakeness...by external stimulants...by seeking to mask your true feelings...but true mourning will not be masked.

(11) Those who are mourning will look to God sooner than those who are not.

(12) Pain has a way of shifting us toward the Creator. Sanctification.

(13) We are to reflect on the brevity of life...and the direction of our lives. We need to be more focused on eternity.

(14) Those who refuse to deal with death wisely are fools (4b).

(15) A fool sounds like a crackling of thorns burning under a pot...Fool can be fun to be with but their life is ultimately empty. Heeding the rebuke of the wise will get us farther than listening to the jokes of a fool.

(16) We need to be careful concerning the counsel we follow we can be led astray and tempted by those we wish to look up to. We need to discern everything through the lenses of Scripture not how we feel about someone. (vs. 7)

5. How would you sum up these verses in 21st Century vernacular?

C. Chapter 7 continued:

1. Vs. 8-14 presents us with some more proverbs.

- a. *"Better is the end of a thing than its beginning..."* What does this mean?

(1) When the end is reached the whole picture comes into view.

(2) Dreams may abound at the beginning but reality is what is left at the end. And that is all that matters in the end...what we did, not what we dreamed about doing.

- b. *"...and the patient in spirit is better than the proud (haughtiness) in spirit."* What is he telling us here?

(1) God seeks to develop our character as we traverse this life from birth to death...He seeks to make us into the image of His Son.

(2) To do this He must replace our pride with ...patience/ humility/ submission so that He can give us wisdom...pride pushes aside wisdom.

- c. Vs. 9-10... How does he further define the fool in these verses?
(1) Angry
(2) One who always looks to the past for their best days.
(3) No wisdom in them.
- d. *“Wisdom is good with an inheritance, an advantage to those who see the sun. For the protection of wisdom is like protection of money, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it.”*
 (1) How does this statement contrast with verses 9 and 10?
 - **Wisdom learns from the past, lives in the present and looks forward to a certain future in God. As a result the wise can still flourish even in this sin filled world.**
 - **Wisdom preserves our lives from the sins of the heart like pride, impatience, and resentment...**
 (2) Why the comparison with material things...inheritance and money?
- e. Vs. 13-14. Besides protection what other advantage does he talk about here that wisdom has over the fool?
(1) Wisdom exhorts us to consider God...the fool does not or at the very least seeks to deny God. (Ps. 19: 7-11)
(2) Also it encourages us to realize His absolute control... “...who can make straight what He has made crooked?” An interesting question to ask.
(3) To consider the prosperity and the adversity that all comes from God.
(4) Those who are wise have a “fuller” lifespan.
(5) So wisdom provides our lives with the divine perspective in the bright days and in the dark.
(6) So...
 - **We should not make any decisions in life without seeking God’s counsel first...His wisdom.**
 - **We must understand that we CANNOT see the whole picture without God’s wisdom to guide us through.**
6. In vs. 15-29 we have Solomon showing us how to put this wisdom to work in our everyday life.
- a. Let’s stop a moment and define our terms. How would you define wisdom?
(1) We shouldn’t need to place a qualifier in front of this word, like, “godly” wisdom...since there is only one true wisdom and that is what comes from God.
(2) Discernment
(3) Fear of God
(4) Holy Spirit at work in us
(5) Knowing and practicing God’s Word.
(6) I have come across many definitions for wisdom through the years but I count this one from Chuck Swindoll among the best: “Wisdom is the God-given ability to see life with rare objectivity and to handle life with rare stability.” Look at I Cor. 2 and see if this meshes with the definition just given.

- b. How does this wisdom work itself out in our lives? That is what vs. 15-29 speaks about.
- (1) Solomon has seen it all...the righteous persecuted and killed and the fool who lives a long life and prospers beyond all others. He talks about this in the proverbs as well and we often see David talking about it in the Psalms...a topic that obviously bothered both father and son...a topic that bothers all believers.**
 - (2) We are to live our lives in light of God's attributes.**
 - (3) The Lord does not approve of superficial faith nor will he sanction lukewarm attitudes toward sin. A common statement among people of faith today is this... "We are looking for a church with acceptable doctrinal teaching." Acceptable to who...based on what?**
 - (4) Wisdom gives the wise...those who fear the Lord... balance.**
 - (5) "Wisdom gives strength to the wise man more than 10 rulers who are in the city." What does this mean?**
 - **God's wisdom enables us to overcome... the tensions of this life that he places in our path. We all stumble and we all fall and we always will until Christ returns.**
 - **This is not said so that we will just give up and give in...but so we won't think too highly of ourselves placing expectation upon ourselves that our unbiblical. He expects perfection of us...but that perfection can only be achieved through Christ's righteousness since we have no righteousness on our own. (19-20)**
 - (6) (21-22)- Wisdom enables us not to fall for fake accolades and criticism. It helps us to sort through the lies to find the truth if there is any. Wisdom holds us responsible for our own irresponsibility...reminding us of our weaknesses so that we might repent of them.**
 - (7) We cannot discover wisdom for ourselves...it comes from God. Vs. 23-24**
 - (8) Intimate relationships can be compelling but more often than not if that is all you are looking for the relationship will be completely unsatisfying. Vs. 25-26**
 - (9) (vs. 27-28)-In his search, he found 1 in 1000 men who were wise...and none of his wives....if you will. His preoccupation with pleasure, his position, his power, his prominence...left few who would speak up to him...a man like Hiram, king of Tyre, perhaps.**
 - **This tells us that we will have few truly wise friends/mentors.**
 - **Also, we need to be really discerning of who these people are.**
 - (10) Wisdom provides us with the ability to see, "...that God made men upright, but they have sought out many (other) schemes/devises." Man determined...after the Fall... that we would survive by our own devises...or try to anyway. Instead of staying in God's hands we decided to fend for ourselves.**
- c. How would you wrap up the teaching in this chapter?
- (1) The Lord gives us wisdom so that we can view life with objectivity and handle it with stability...since so many around us have neither of these.**
 - (2) All and only those who claim the name of Christ can seek God for His wisdom.**

Lessons in Ecclesiastes
August 14, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Chapter 7 is full of contrasting phrases known as proverbs. What was the overriding purpose and/or theme of this chapter for us today?
2. Why is seeking and using wisdom so important going forward in this life?

C. Ecclesiastes 8

1. Verse 1 asks 2 questions, "Who is like the wise man? And who knows the interpretation of a thing?" What is meant by the answer given?
 - a. **The wise man is the good men that God has chosen...he knows God and seeks to glorify God and...he knows himself and does well for all around him.**
 - b. **This wisdom advances him above his neighbors... *"for he can interpret the things of God."* The word "interpretation" here comes from the Aramaic word for "solution." It is often used to refer to someone who sees through a mystery and is able to explain it(See Dan. 5:12). In this context it seems to mean that this individual is one who knows why a thing is the way it is. Only God reveals His wisdom to whom He chooses...and with that gives them the ability to interpret. it...something not given to everyone only those who are His children.**
 - c. **This wisdom is a great happiness to him.... *"his face shines/illuminates..."* = he is gladdened by the wisdom of God. And this joy is experienced by those he comes in contact with. Fewer things are more contagious than cheerfulness. It has been said by many theologians down through the centuries that, *"A wise person...especially discerning leaders...has a pleasurable temperament. If faces are tight and stern, and are words are coarse and disconcerting to those we are leading we are probably not acting with wisdom."***
 - d. **This wisdom emboldens him before others... "his face shines" =the word here for shine speaks of joy as well as confidence and a sense of contentment...that others will be able to read. It requires us to take God seriously but...not to take ourselves too seriously...laughing at ourselves is helpful for others. Philo of Alexandria once said, *"Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle."***
 - e. **He is an incomparable man...He is known by the wisdom and grace... *"the hardness of his face is changed."***
2. Verses 2-9 speak to us today.
 - a. Can you give one or 2 examples of how politicians in our day have made laws that are clearly contrary to God's law? And what has been and is some consequences in our society concerning these laws?
 - b. Now, what benefit would it be to keep the king's commands according to Solomon?

(1)If they do not oppose God's law...we would be honoring and obeying God by keeping the laws of the king. The text says, *"because of God's oath to him."* Remember Jesus said... *"Render*

unto Caesar what is Caesar's...” and, of course, Paul speaks to this in Rom. 13 as well.

(2) If they do not oppose God's law...we would be supporting unity and promoting peace within the society.

(3) “Keep” is an interesting choice of word here; it means:

- **Obeying the law**
- **But also supporting the law and educating others about the law... “keeping” is found in Genesis 2, where man is told to work and keep the garden...so this word is more than pure obedience.**
- **Keeping it with our words and our actions.**

c. How does he further define the character of the wise man and woman in these verses?

(1) A wise man...especially a leader...must have a discreet mouth...and are to exercise their authority with tact, sensitivity and compassion.

(2) A wise man's heart discerns time and judgment.

(3) But even it is not perfect...for we can still be surprised by the events that God has not revealed to us...but we may be able to interpret them better than someone with a worldly world view.

(4) A wise man is a humble man...we know our limitations and accept them and live with them not complaining about them.

d. According to this text, who controls time and judgment? **God does!!! To every purpose its time has already been ordered and it is unchangeable. Man cannot stop death...and cannot stop the war against it. Even the most subtle wickedness cannot stop death.**

e. Regardless of what some people say about their abilities, why does God not want us to know the future...even the future concerning evil events?

(1) Maybe so we are always ready for change. Anything that we ourselves have not foreseen is change to us...so God wants to prepare us for “change”...His change, that is.

(2) We would worship these people who we determine can do this...rather than Him.

(3) We would stop searching His word.

(4) We would use it against each other.

f. One more thing in verses 8-9. What 2 warnings does Solomon give to the one in charge?

(1) We are not given the privilege of choosing our circumstances...but we are given the privilege of how we will obey God sometimes.

(2) It is inexcusable for leaders to take unfair advantage of those under their charge.

(3) Leaders who take unfair advantage of their people hurt themselves more than they hurt their followers. See Eccl. 12:14; Amos 5:10-15, 18-20, 8:4-14; Matthew 12:36-37; I Cor. 5:10

Lessons in Ecclesiastes
August 21, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Chapter 8, Verse 1 asks 2 questions, “Who is like the wise man? And who knows the interpretation of a thing?” What is meant by the answer given?
 - a. **The wise man is the good men that God has chosen...he knows God and seeks to glorify God and...he knows himself and does well for all around him.**
 - b. **This wisdom advances him above his neighbors... *“for he can interpret the things of God.”***
 - c. **This wisdom is a great happiness to him.... *“his face shines/illuminates...”* = he is gladdened by the wisdom of God. And this joy is experienced by those he comes in contact with.**
 - d. **This wisdom emboldens him before others... *“his face shines”* =the word here for shine speaks of joy as well as confidence and a sense of contentment...that others will be able to read.**
 - e. **He is an incomparable man...He is known by the wisdom and grace... *“the hardness of his face is changed.”***

2. Verses 2-9 speak to us today.
 - g. How does he further define the character of the wise man and woman in these verses?
 - (5) **A wise man...especially a leader...must have a discreet mouth...and are to exercise their authority with tact, sensitivity and compassion.**
 - (6) **A wise man’s heart discerns time and judgment.**
 - (7) **But even it is not perfect...for we can still be surprised by the events that God has not revealed to us...but we may be able to interpret them better than someone with a worldly world view.**
 - (8) **A wise man is a humble man...we know our limitations and accept them and live with them not complaining about them.**
 - h. Regardless of what some people say about their abilities, why does God not want us to know the future...even the future concerning evil events?
 - (5) **Maybe so we are always ready for change. Anything that we ourselves have not foreseen is change to us...so God wants to prepare us for “change”...His change, that is.**
 - (6) **We would worship these people who we determine can do this...rather than Him.**
 - (7) **We would stop searching His word.**
 - (8) **We would use it against each other.**

3. Now let’s look at verses 10-17.
 - a. There are many things that we cannot get our heads around in this life. Things that don’t always make sense to our sensibilities. The, “Why would God allow such things”... kind of struggle. These are things we cannot fully resolve to our own satisfaction and they cause us to wonder...often to the point of sinning.

- b. Solomon mentions 3 here in these last verses of Chapter 8, what are they...and why these?

(1) The triumphing of the unjust. (vs. 10) We see this dilemma all through Scripture so it must be one that truly plagues the sensibilities of the righteous.

- **He highlights those in the church...those who attend to cover up their wickedness and bring a degree or two of respectability to their lives. Even honor at their funerals...when many around them know differently.**
- **They are in the world...the wicked who prosper while others..."good people" suffer for doing good. They often live long and prosperous lives and escape any punishment for their wrong doing in this life that is... (vs.11,12)**
- **They often even lead others to do sin of equal or greater sinfulness (11)**
- **Often when we see how much God hates sin and His continual promise to deal with the evil doer it causes us to wonder just like it has caused the saints to wonder for centuries.**

(2) A second thing follows up on the last...What seems like unfair consequences (vs. 14). Why are the godly killed for their faith while the murders seem to go unharmed for their deeds? Why is it that an irresponsible drunk driver walks away from an accident that has taken the lives of others who were unaware of the danger? Why do honest people have to barely scrape by while thugs and others live in luxury from money gained by drugs and other vices? Where is a "good" God in all of this?

(3) An interesting one to be sure...Untimely pleasures (vs. 15)... that God gives to His people.

- **Solomon- Commends joy...God's joy in the face of the things we have just talked about. As James tells us... *"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness."***
- **God would have us not be overwhelmed or worried or fearful by such things like we have been talking about, but to cheerfully enjoy what He has provided and what He provides when we least expect it.**
- **Once again by looking to the "next" life as our destination we can receive the joys from God that come into this messy world often when we least expect it if we would only be focused on God rather than the messy, ugly world...knowing that God has even these things under control even if we do not know what he is doing.**

- c. What is his answer to why we should follow God's counsel in verses 16-17?

(1) If we don't... all of life simply revolves around vanity and we become pessimistic and resentful of God and His teachings.

- (2) He and others have searched long and heard into these paradoxes spoken of above to no avail...even with all the wisdom God had given him...God is still God and Solomon is simple a man with great wisdom...but not greater than God Himself who knows all and knows why he does what He does...and why He doesn't always reveal to us His reasoning.**
- (3) Even using logic and studying all the methods that God uses to do what He does we cannot tie God down to one method over another for Him to carry out His will except those that He reveals to us...but there are many things hidden from us that we must just except...he is God and we are not!**
- (4) God's ways are above our ways! His judgments are meant for us to be in awe of Him so we will glorify Him forever. If we could figure Him and His ways out He would no longer be God ...we would.**

C. Chapter 9

1. Note to make sure we understand what is going on here: So often in our text we see Solomon say things like: *"I applied my heart to seek and search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven..."*; or *"...I said in my heart, I have acquired great wisdom...my heart has had great wisdom of knowledge. And I have applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly..."*; or *"In this vain life I have seen..."*; or *"When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth..."*; or as in our text this morning, verse 1a says *"But all this I laid to heart examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God."*
 - a. What exactly is his point...what is he seeking to communicate to His readers?
 - (1) Each time he says something like this he is highlighting a new point or he is coming back to a well-established point made by him or elsewhere in Scripture...usually both.**
 - (2) A wise man judges himself...**
 - (3) Don't try this at home...it is dangerous...I know... I have walked the dark side...but thankfully by God's grace and His wisdom in me I was able to discern and move out...even though there would be grave consequences for my indiscretions.**
 - (4) God gave me the ability above all men to do just what I have done...but that ability also came with the ability to not go down the roads I chose to go down...but all of this is for you so you don't make the same mistakes...even though we do...since we choose not to listen to his words ...rather to choose his lifestyle like his sons.**
 - (5) God is sovereign over all things.**
 - (6) In this case, in particular he is now beginning to share with us all the positive things he has learned in specifically searching out the things of God rather than the things of men which are folly.**
 - b. I love this quote by Matthew Henry concerning this first verse, *"Solomon considers all this in his heart, and weighed it deliberately, that he might declare it for the good of others. Note, What we are to declare we should first consider (think through); think twice before we speak once; and what we consider we should then declare. I believed, therefore have I spoken."*

c. What does Solomon communicate to us about what God thinks of His own people in this first verse?

(1) God is particularly focused on His own...His people and their deeds are in His hands...

(2) We are all guilty of thinking too highly of ourselves.

(3) It doesn't say that all people everywhere are in His hands...only the righteous and wise and their deeds. By making this statement we also know the inverse- That God does not have in His hand unbelievers and their deeds.

(4) Nothing comes to be by chance for the righteous or the unrighteous...but God shows particular care for His own...all of us are in His hands! John 10:29.

(5) The love or hatred (passing over by God) are never to be measured by how we define these terms. Only we ...His children...can know the love of God...others never know.

Lessons in Ecclesiastes
August 28, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. If you were to sum up the teaching of chapter 8 what would you say that Solomon is communicating to God's people?

C. Read chapter 9

1. In verses 1, what does Solomon communicate to us about what God thinks of His own people in this first verse?
 - a. **God is particularly focused on His own...His people and their deeds are in His hands...**
 - b. **We are all guilty of thinking too highly of ourselves.**
 - c. **It doesn't say that all people everywhere are in His hands...only the righteous and wise and their deeds. By making this statement we also know the inverse- That God does not have in His hand unbelievers and their deeds.**
 - d. **Nothing comes to be by chance for the righteous or the unrighteous...but God shows particular care for His own...all of us are in His hands! John 10:29.**
 - e. **The love or hatred (passing over by God) are never to be measured by how we define these terms. Only we ...His children...can know the love of God...others never know.**
2. How do verses 2-6 support what we have been saying about verse 1?
 - a. **Death is an inescapable fact...it comes to all men equally. Coming to grip with this fact can help us straighten out our priorities and recognize the blessing of God's sovereignty.**
 - b. **The human heart is only evil all the time...without the sanctifying work of the Spirit...Total Depravity 101!**
 - c. **Genuine hope for the living...those who have been called according to His name. Dogs were considered dishonorable diseased mongrels and lions were regarded as animals of royalty deserving respect. So he is saying here that it is better to be alive and dishonored than honored and dead....because the living have hope of a better tomorrow.**
3. How does he say in verses 7-10 that this knowledge should affect the way we live?
 - a. **Live happy and content where you are because God has approved it by having put us where we are and given us the ability to enjoy His blessing. (See 2:24-25; 3:12-13; 5:18-19) great advise that won't hear from many pulpits in today's conservative churches to be sure!!!**
 - b. **We are to walk in purity and in the power of the Spirit...white clothes symbolize a pure heart and pure living and oil usually symbolizes the work of the Spirit. While we are "free" to do what he has said to do in verse 7, we are to remain pure in our activities.**
 - c. **Enjoy your spouse... Marriage is a gift from God and we are never to take that gift for granted...the sanctity of marriage is "good" for the sanctity of the believer...marriage defined by God has been ordained by God and is to be cherished by men as God defines it.**

- d. **Throw yourself fully into the life God has given you... That is, whatever God has placed in front of you today to do...do it! Do it without delay. Not like Saul in I Samuel 10:7...he did what he liked and did not do what he didn't like. He liked to be seen with the prophets prophesying but he didn't want to go to war with the garrison of Philistines which was what was placed before him to do...Don't wait for retirement to try to enjoy life...understand that each day is a gift from God and is to be enjoyed in the measure that that is possible. See also John 9:24, 12:35**
 - e. **Couple of word notes: a few words worth considering for our study:**
 - (1) "Already" seems to be speaking of, as "long ago"—perhaps a reference to creation and God's blessing upon man and the gifts of wife, food, and clothing.**
 - (2) The thought that God has "approved" mankind's labors. "Approved" translates a Hebrew term that refers to divine acceptance, will, or favor. Enjoyment of the divine gifts in life "under the sun" belongs preeminently to those who do the divine will, who please God, who are recipients of His gracious favor. "God approves only that which is in conformity to his will and character."**
 - (3) The imperative "Enjoy life" (v. 9; literally, "See life"), means "experience life."**
4. Think about this a minute: Why would he throw enjoying your spouse into such a mix as the above list?
- a. **Once again how we interact with our spouses will show the world and our spouses what our relationship is with God.**
 - b. **Marriage is about oneness...our oneness enables us to worship God and enjoy Him the way we were created to glorify Him.**
 - c. **Marriage is a symbol of the oneness we are to have with His Church as together we glorify Him as He has prescribed.**
 - d. **Without his wife, a man cannot experience the fullness of the God-designed life.**

Lesson's in Ecclesiastes
September 4, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. How does talking about death and human depravity really produce hope in God's people?
2. How does he say in verses 7-10 that this knowledge should affect the way we live?
 - f. **Live happy and content where you are because God has approved it by having put us where we are and given us the ability to enjoy His blessing. (See 2:24-25; 3:12-13; 5:18-19)**
 - g. **We are to walk in purity and in the power of the Spirit...white clothes symbolize a pure heart and pure living and oil usually symbolizes the work of the Spirit.**
 - h. **Enjoy your spouse... Marriage is a gift from God and we are never to take that gift for granted...the sanctity of marriage is "good" for the sanctity of the believer...marriage defined by God has been ordained by God and is to be cherished by all men as God defines it.**
 - i. **Throw yourself fully into the life God has given you... That is, whatever God has placed in front of you today to do...do it! Do it without delay. Not like Saul in I Samuel 10:7...he did what he liked and did not do what he didn't like. He liked to be seen with the prophets prophesying but he didn't want to go to war with the garrison of Philistines which was what was placed before him to do... See also John 9:24, 12:35**
3. Think about this a minute: Why would he throw enjoying your spouse into such a mix as the above list?
 - e. **Once again how we interact with our spouses will show the world and our spouses what our relationship is with God.**
 - f. **Marriage is about oneness...our oneness enables us to worship God and enjoy Him the way we were created to glorify Him.**
 - g. **Marriage is a symbol of the oneness we are to have with His Church as together we glorify Him as He has prescribed.**
 - h. **Without his wife, a man cannot experience the fullness of the God-designed life.**

C. Chapter 9 continued:

1. In verse 11, he gives us 5 ironies of life that he has witnessed in his search:
 - a. **the swift might not win the race**
 - b. **the warriors might not win the battle**
 - c. **the wise might not obtain food (or, earn a living)**
 - d. **the discerning might not gain wealth**
 - e. **The skilled might not find favor...**
 - f. **Human ability alone cannot guarantee success.**
 - g. **Word notes:**
 - (1) **"Time and chance" (v. 11) might express the idea of "timely events."**

(2) “Chance” refers to “a happening,” not to anything like luck or fortune. This word occurs only here and in 1 Kings 5:4 (Hebrew, v. 18, “misfortune” is literally “evil occurrence”). In both contexts the term “chance” takes on the negative connotation of something like the English word “accident.” “Time and chance” is dictated by God...this is not something controlled by man in anyway...though man seeks to control it...God’s providence always wins out.

2. How does he answer these ironies in verse 12?
 - a. **His point is that life is unpredictable to us ...but that God knows exactly how all things will unfold and He is the one who provides for us...**
 - b. **Solomon makes the point that no one can know the timing for life’s ironic moments... there is no way for us to know “our time”.**
 - c. **See James 4:13-15**
3. Why are we so hung up on knowing the future?
 - a. **Lack of contentment with the present...always hoping for a better tomorrow.**
 - b. **Want to be in control.**
 - c. **DNA has us searching for knowledge...something we were created to do....since the fall that search has been twisted and one of the ways it manifests itself negatively is wanting to know the future as we search for “other” things to satisfy ourselves with.**
4. What are the lessons to be learned from verses 13-18?
 - a. **Wisdom forms the theme of the final section of this chapter.**
 - b. **Wisdom proves superior to might (v. 16a), strength may be more impressive but usually not as effective as wisdom...even when strength must be used.**
 - c. **Wise counsel is not always popular... People do not always respect or honor wisdom (v. 16b).**
 - d. **Powerful people can make it difficult to listen to the voice of wisdom (v. 17)**
 - e. **Constructive words of wisdom are no match for the destructive weapons of war. (v. 18) A persons foolish, reckless lifestyle can ruin other lives characterized by wisdom. No matter how superior wisdom might be, one foolish act by a sinner can destroy the good results of wisdom.**

D. Chapter 10

1. What wise advice does he give in verses 1-4?
 - a. **To preserve our reputation....a little folly casts a dark shadow that can ruin an otherwise wise life. A lapse...just one can ruin the character of a wise man.**
 - b. **We pay more attention to folly than to wisdom. Folly is more “fun.”**
 - c. **The right hand is typically a symbol of protection, power, and the presence of God...the wise person goes God’s way and receives the benefits of a God-centered life. This was Don Nelson’s favorite verse...The humor in the Bible is dry to say the least but it is there none the less. Manage your affairs well, stay away from the fool...**

- d. The “left” speaks of the path of error—a road to disfavor and rejection (v. 2; cp. Gen 48:13–14; Matt 25:32–34). Literally, the verse reads, “A wise man’s heart is at his right hand and a fool’s heart is at his left hand.”
 - e. People can discern what sort of person someone is just by watching him walk along a road (v. 3). “*His sense is lacking*”—in other words, a fool exhibits an inner deficiency through his or her behavior (cp. Prov. 12:23; 13:16). The fool speaks loudly, behaves arrogantly, ignores the rights and needs of others, and rebels against spiritual things.
 - f. Be submissive to those in power over us that we have ticked off....for it will net blessing in the end. Take our medicine...without complaint...especially when we are at fault. Another way to say this would be: “*If your superior becomes angry at you, don’t get hasty and turn in your resignation, because your calm temperament may quiet his hot temper.*”
2. What is he telling us in verses 5-7? **He is talking about the reality of the unqualified to lead...leading those who should be leading them.**
 3. What is he saying in verses 8-11?
 - a. **Haste makes problems for the one in too much of a hurry...especially the fool.**
 - b. **Calamity may await anyone even in common actions in everyday living.**
 - c. **At the end of this string of common proverbs Solomon finishes with his main point: “Wisdom has the advantage of giving success” (v. 10b). It is as though Solomon said, “Use your head. Think about what you are doing. Proceed with proper caution and attention to potentially harmful consequences.”**
 - d. **Concerning verse 11, some have noted that this proverb seems to mean, “*Slackness may nullify inherent skill.*” In other words, a wise person plans ahead of an issue, considers potential dangers or impediments so as to make the correct choice more often than now.**
 4. Once again, how do we gain this wisdom that Solomon declares we are to have?
 - a. **Proverbs 2:1-9-**
 - (1) **We are to meditate on the Word that we have memorized.**
 - (2) **We need to listen to other wise people...past and present.**
 - (3) **Strive to know and understand God’s Word.**
 - (4) **Prayer**
 - (5) **Vs. 4-Silver was as abundant as the sand at this time...so other than its intrinsic value as treasure which we should always consider God’s wisdom to be...there is also the whole...it is everywhere ... God’s wisdom is everywhere for His people to see and utilize...we are never truly poor any longer.**
 - (6) **Consider it to be the most precious thing you can possess. Don’t take it for granted.**
 - (7) **Then we will discern the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.**
 - b. **James 1:5—asking God in prayer.**

Lessons in Ecclesiastes
September 11, 2016

- E. Prayer
- F. Review

1. How would you explain what Solomon wanted to teach us in Chapter 10:1-9?

- a. - **To preserve our reputation...a little folly casts a dark shadow that can ruin an otherwise wise life. A lapse...just one can ruin the character of a wise man.**
- b. - **We pay more attention to folly than to wisdom. Folly is more “fun.”**
- c. - **The right hand is typically a symbol of protection, power, and the presence of God...the wise person goes God’s way and receives the benefits of a God-centered life. This was Don Nelson’s favorite verse...The humor in the Bible is dry to say the least but it is there none the less. Manage your affairs well, stay away from the fool...**
- d. - **The “left” speaks of the path of error—a road to disfavor and rejection (v. 2; cp. Gen 48:13–14; Matt 25:32–34). Literally, the verse reads, “A wise man’s heart is at his right hand and a fool’s heart is at his left hand.”**
- e. - **People can discern what sort of person someone is just by watching**
- f. **him walk along a road (v. 3). “His sense is lacking” —in other words, a**
- g. **fool exhibits an inner deficiency through his or her behavior (cp. Prov. 12:23; 13:16). The fool speaks loudly, behaves arrogantly, ignores the rights and needs of others, and rebels against spiritual things.**
- h. - **Be submissive to those in power over us that we have ticked off...for it will net blessing in the end. Take our medicine...without complaint...especially when we are at fault. Another way to say this would be: “If your superior becomes angry at you, don’t get hasty and turn in your resignation, because your calm temperament may quiet his hot temper.”**

2. How is this wisdom gained, that Solomon declares we must have?

- a. **We are to meditate on the Word that we have memorized.**
- b. **We need to be obedient to the Word of God.**
- c. **We need to consistently a part of the people of God**
- d. **We need to listen to other wise people...past and present.**
- e. **Strive to know and understand God’s Word.**
- f. **Prayer**
- g. **God’s wisdom is everywhere for His people to see and utilize...we are never truly poor any longer.**
- h. **Consider it to be the most precious thing you can possess. Don’t take it for granted.**
- i. **Then we will discern the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.**
- j. **James 1:5—asking God in prayer.**

- G. Chapter 10 continued- The Bible spends a lot of time talking to us about discernment...discernment in doctrine and discernment in people. We often say that we do not know what the fool looks like. We are not sure what our friends ought to look like. Once again, that is because we haven't read the word. In this part of chapter 10 he begins by telling us about the tongue of the wise man. Literally, verse 12 begins, *"Words of a wise man's mouth are grace."* Gracious words accompany the wise (v. 12a; cp. 8:1; Prov. 22:11; Ps 45:2; Luke 4:22) and such grace wins favor with the people whom a wise person encounters.
1. What does Solomon tell us about the fool's character in verses 12b-20?
 - a. **(vs. 12b-14)-He uses unwise words...not just cuss words or other inappropriate words...but jokes racially charged...makes fun of others... like their spouses weaknesses...he just keeps talking "multiplying words" hoping that people will listen or maybe to wear them down so they can win their argument.**
 - b. **(v. 15)- Incompetence arises out of the failure to apply due diligence in the realm of labor and work. Some describe the circumstances as "a moral and intellectual laziness which leads to a stumbling, fumbling and crumbling in life." Derek Kidner (1913 – 2008, British OT Scholar) explains that, "The fool would get lost, even if you put him on an escalator to the place he is going." Or, "He does not know enough to come in out of the rain."**
 - c. **(vs. 16-17)- we see the contrast between a foolish king and a wise one clearly.**
 - d. **(vs. 18)- Solomon reveals that wise people truly care about how leaders govern their home country. It is the fool who does not care and who isolates himself or herself from how a government conducts its business and from those who lead it. "If attention is not paid to the everyday details of life, the results become a crippling liability." The proverb should be interpreted literally and applied liberally—it speaks in itself of a man's need to maintain his home, but within this context that same truth applies to the government of a nation just as accurately. (Indolence – avoidance of activity or exertion, laziness)**
 - e. **Vs. 19 seems to stay in the context of the whole; The lazy will suffer loss, but the diligent will enjoy the fruits of their labors. They enjoy food enough, drink enough, and money enough to take care of every need.**
 - f. **Vs. 20 gets back to speech and conduct: to warn against speaking unwisely about the king (v. 20; cp. 7:21–22). Cursing a ruler comprises a violation of the Mosaic Law (Ex. 22:28). Paul instructed Timothy to pray for "kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity" (1 Tim. 2:1–2). Within the royal household few words can be spoken without someone overhearing them (see 2 Kgs 6:12)—even the walls of one's bedroom have ears. Using a bird as illustration implies the speed with**

which idle words can make their way to the ears of the slandered person.

2. What do you suppose is the significance of the use of animals in this chapter?
The small size and seeming insignificance of flies, snakes, and birds conceal the great potential for harm that they possess.
 - a. **The flies, after all, were “flies of death” (or, “deadly flies”; v. 1). Coming from the maggots on dead animals and people.**
 - b. **The snake’s bite can also be deadly (vv. 8, 11).**
 - c. **the little bird carrying one’s words to the king or to one you don’t want to hear can bring dire consequences (v. 20).**
 - d. **If nothing else, this chapter teaches us to pay proper attention to the so-called “little things” in life both personally and nationally. Everything a person does matters. The character of a government leader matters. Even a little word can have far-reaching effects.**

3. What do all of these clarifying traits of a fool tell us as wise people?
 - a. **At the very least, we can know it will be difficult, if not impossible to share the truth with them. That is, apart from the Holy Spirit working in them. The Bible is clear about how the unregenerate man hates the things of God.**
 - b. **And yet, we are commanded to share the truth with those around us. It should be something that comes naturally since we have been changed by the Spirit of God.**
 - c. **We shouldn’t be surprised with unregenerate people act like they are unregenerate or foolish.**
 - d. **The Bible does instruct on how to speak to a fool: Proverbs 26:4-5.**
 - e. **The Bible also gives us instruction on the persistent fool: Proverbs 23:9 -Leave them alone...do not waste your breath. It is best to separate ourselves from those who choose to live foolishly at least for a time if they are family members.**
 - f. **Troy (Ruling Elder) says, in addition to everything discussed, include “diarrhea of the mouth” as a characteristic of the fool.**

H. Chapter 11

1. What are something that Solomon is saying to us in verse 1-6?
 - a. **Verse 1 could be read this way- *“Give of yourself generously, for eventually you will be repaid abundantly.”* It is not about doing this **SO** you will be repaid abundantly...but give of yourself without expectation of repayment...the LORD will take care of you and His reward will not be able to be measured.**
 - b. ***Don’t be dependent on money or on worldly things. Be dependent on God and what Christ has done, applied by the Spirit to our hearts.***
 - c. **To the wealthy...that is...anyone who does not live in poverty and are destitute. You see wealthy can be a relative term...if you are homeless even the person living in the projects living on government assistance could be considered wealthy to them. In many countries our**

government assistance is wealth compared to the little that they make...

- d. So he says we are to give willingly and liberally...the idea behind giving is not from your abundance but from your sustenance.... sacrifice is the idea. The wealthier you are the more you give to help the less fortunate than yourself.**
- e. We are to pursue what our hands find to do...what God places in front of us to do.**
- f. We personally get to be blessed in participating in blessing someone else.**

I like what Matthew Henry, in his "concise" commentary" notes: "Solomon presses the rich to do good to others. Give freely, though it may seem thrown away and lost. Give to many. Excuse not thyself with the good thou hast done, from the good thou hast further to do. It is not lost, but well laid out. We have reason to expect evil, for we are born to trouble; it is wisdom to do good in the day of prosperity. Riches cannot profit us, if we do not benefit others. Every man must labour to be a blessing to that place where the providence of God casts him."

- 2. Give till it hurts and the Lord will return that obedience. Look at these passages:
 - a. Duet. 15:9-10
 - b. Job 31:17
 - c. Matt. 10:42
 - d. Luke 14:14

Lessons in Ecclesiastes
September 18, 2016

A. Prayer
B. Review

1. How is this wisdom gained, that Solomon declares we must have?
2. Read Ch. 10:12-20
3. What do all of these clarifying traits of a fool tell us as wise people?
4. Read Ch 11:1-10
5. How does Solomon characterize giving in this passage?

C. Chapter 11 Continued

1. Vs. 2 defines our giving even more...
2. See Neh. 8:10 (context: the Worship service of Israel, the book of the Law read, and the people weeping because of their sin);
3. See Luke 6:38 (Troy can sing a song with this one!)
4. Do not hoard...give!
5. It is in giving that we will receive great rewards. Prov. 19:17..and by contrast Prov. 21:13
6. Verse 2 concludes with “for you do not know what disaster may happen on earth.” Two more times, Solomon highlights human ignorance (twice in v. 5 and once in v. 6). The statement serves as the key to the entire passage. Knowing our ignorance forms the basis for a realistic outlook that depends upon a sovereign, omniscient God.
7. Vs. 3 could easily be rendered: Don’t save up for that rainy day that may not ever come. Solomon is not against savings accounts or retirement accounts...it is resting in these things as your “savior” being unwilling to serve and to give to others along the way as it may take away from your nest egg.
8. Vs. 4. - Whenever an individual waits for perfect conditions before either sowing or reaping, failure and loss may very well follow. The paralysis of inaction results in lost opportunities and lost blessings.
9. Vs. 5-6- There are many things in life we do not fully understand...such as the nature of an infinite God...but there are those who won’t invest or won’t give until they are completely satisfied with the knowing hence they do not give for they are never convinced it is worth the risk to themselves...counting the cost the wrong way...and not counting the blessings that God promises ...the greedy never get it.
10. We are to do what our hands find to do even if we do not know the extent of return.
11. II Cor. 6:4-10 – What does this add to our discussion?
 - Paul is talking about the expectation of “your best life now” if the commands of God’s word are followed.

- Not all blessings are money. Not all gifts are money. Blessings and gifts can include skills, time, suffering, and money too... but anything God grants His people for their benefit (especially the benefit of the church as a whole) and His glory.

12. Back to Solomon in Ecclesiastes: Considering these passages, why do you suppose he waited until now to tell us these simple and profound truths? **He waited till after he taught us the difference between the wise and the foolish person.**

3. According to verses 7 and 8 what are we to rejoice in?

(1) Verse 7 says, Life presents wonderful opportunities that mankind must enjoy.

- **Being “under the sun” has its limitations, but existence in the light (being able to “see the sun”; cf. 6:5; 7:11) is far more pleasant than the alternative.**
- **In Scripture light and sunshine are frequently used to represent the wrath and security of love. Solomon uses this imagery to remind us to that it is good for us to rest in God’s loving protection.**

(2) 8a, reminds us, regardless of the number of years God might grant to any individual, “let him rejoice in them all”. God’s gift of life should be enjoyed, not just endured. We are to rejoice in all the years we have on this earth...laughter and joy is better for you than bitterness and complaining.

(3) At the same time as one must rejoice, one must also “remember the days of darkness” (v. 8b). Since these dark days occupy a large amount of time (“for they will be many”), death does not seem an adequate reference—suffering, old age, and dying do fit the description, however. These days consist of times of trouble in which a person finds no delight. The trials and travails of a lifetime just serve to make the joys all the more pleasant and sweeter.

(4) 8c, seems to be saying, disregard for rejoicing and remembering leads to great disappointment ...” vanity/futility”, because everything yet to come will pass very swiftly. If all we do is complain we miss out on the joys that God has put into our lives...we need to stop and smell the roses...literally sometimes and give thanks for pleasant things.

4. What is he saying to the young man in vs. 9...is he giving him license to do what comes natural?

(1) No...don’t forget the context of the book: Solomon has done all of that and he has been telling us, “Don’t do that! I did that and I am paying for it now!”

(2) So what is he saying here? Don’t waste the time of your youth...have fun...rejoice...cut loose...but do so within the standards of God’s joy. Youth passes quickly, so its opportunities for enjoying life will be few.

(3) The reader of Ecclesiastes should note that Solomon does not instruct young people to rejoice *that* they are young, but they are to rejoice *while* they are young. He tells the young to put in place the theological foundation for living as early as possible. When the youth becomes a man, he enters yet another brief season of life. During his manhood, he needs to allow his heart to enjoy life's pleasantness.

(4) But he says... "*walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes...*" Sounds like license to me...not really when we keep it in context...

- **Solomon does not leave this instruction without qualification. In a context where "you do not know" occurs 3 times (vv. 2, 5, 6), he now says in a positive way, "But know" ...He reminds the young man that he must keep in mind that God will judge him for all that does not meet divine approval (cp. 9:7).**
- **The Hebrew employs a definite article on both "God" and "judgment" ("the God will bring you into the judgment"). Such grammar seems indicate that Solomon has a single, specific judgment in mind. In other words, a reality exists beyond this life and that reality includes divine retribution.**
- **Hebrews 9:27 proclaims the same basic theological truth: "it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." Priority, therefore must be given to God and to His will as revealed in His Word. No one should ever make their own desires the priority. Solomon encourages innocent, God-approved enjoyment of life's gifts.**

- 5. How does God warn us here through Solomon, just in case we think about turning our "liberty" into license to sin?**
- After encouraging us we have seen that He tells Solomon to tell us to "*...remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many...*" Tough times will come and they will come by His ordination of them for our good and His glory.**
 - Also God has Solomon remind us that "*God will bring you into judgment*" holding us accountable for actions that do not rise to the level of His honor. Thus we should use our freedom...our liberty...for "good".**
- 6. With these verses in mind (vs. 7-9), how does vs. 10 wrap up what Solomon has been saying?**
- Therefore, people must "*remove grief and anger*" = "*vexation*" from their hearts and "*put away pain*" from their bodies, because the times of their lives "*are fleeting*". Mankind, but especially believers must never focus on the negatives to the extent that they miss the pleasant opportunities that God gives for their enjoyment. Enjoying the good things requires the proper perspective on the bad things in life.**
 - Vexation (in the ESV) is best represented in the Hebrew with these 2 words, "Grief and anger or anger and resentment...which when these**

coexist always nets rebellion in a person's heart.”. However, this single Hebrew word occurs 7 times in Ecclesiastes.

(1) In 1:18 and 2:23 in the ESV it is translated “vexation” when speaking of the “pain” that his work under the sun brings to man...

(2) In 5:16 the ESV translates the word as “grievous evil.”

(3) In 5:17, in the description of eating in darkness “with great vexation and sickness and anger.”

(4) But, in 7:3 Solomon contrasts it with laughter and happiness, making it an equivalent of sadness.

(5) Occurring twice in 7:9, “angry and anger” seems most appropriate in that context.

(6) Here in 11:10 the ESV translates it as vexation as well.

(7) As Phillip Ryken points out, “This is not a call to deny the very real suffering that everyone experiences. Nor is it a call to escape pain by living for pleasure. Rather, it is a call to take care of our mental and physical health.”

7. How can you “remove ‘vexation’ from your heart and put away pain from your body? In other words, how do we rid ourselves of our rebellious side? **There are things such a drugs, too much alcohol, smoking or even pornography or other forms of sexual perversion that can cause physical pain...stop doing those that you know bring you pain...you can in Christ. It may take accountability to your brothers but you can do it...it is God's promise.**
8. What are the pleasant things you enjoy in life “under the sun”?
9. How can young and old alike enjoy life with a balanced perspective and a sense of accountability?

Lessons in Ecclesiastes
September 25, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Solomon ends chapter 11 talking about “vexations.” With this in mind: How can you “remove ‘vexation’ from your heart and put away pain from your body? **In other words, how do we rid ourselves of our rebellious side? There are things such a drugs, too much alcohol, smoking or even pornography or other forms of sexual perversion that can cause physical pain...stop doing those that you know bring you pain...you can in Christ. It may take accountability to your brothers but you can do it...it is God’s promise.**
2. What are the pleasant things you enjoy in life “under the sun”?
3. How can young and old alike enjoy life with a balanced perspective and a sense of accountability?

C. Chapter 12

1. After chapters filled with dissatisfaction and despair, Solomon tells us the necessary ingredient for experiencing true joy in our lives now...today! Not that he hasn’t said it before but now it will be abundantly clear for those who need to hear and see it more clearly. The first seven verses of this chapter comprise one long sentence. Thankfully we can place commas in the right places otherwise we might run out of breath before we finished. Breath is an interesting word because it can mean vanity as well. When we read something too fast we lose its meaning so we will break it down (as best we can, without having the writer here with us) to discover the full depth of what Solomon had in mind.
2. Do you see God’s grace in making sure that His people understand Him when He is making a point for our good? What is it about the word “remember” in this first verse that we need to remember?
 - a. **“Remember”- this is a decisive act on our part, we have to stop and consider and bring ourselves to remember...it is an act of the will.**
 - b. **It is very much like the word “behold”...which is placed in the Hebrew text to get our attention...to cause us to pause in wonder and awe concerning what is going on.**
 - c. **It also expects that we will have previous knowledge of what we are to “remember”.**
3. Along with this bit of information, how does he answer the question he asked before concerning how we will experience true joy today in verse 1?
 - a. **Then he says, Remember “your Creator...”**
 - (1) **An act of the will to remember the Creator and all that He has done for us His people...focusing on Him rather than ourselves will net the joy we seek.**
 - (2) **Being our Creator we need to know Him and honor Him according to His status and due the duty that our position warrants toward His.**

- (3) Interesting piece of information with the title Creator... just like the title Elohim... both are plural in the Hebrew...So we are to remember our Creators. Gen 1:26... *“Let us make man in our image...”***
- (4) Also, The Hebrew word for “Creator” involves a root that never takes a human being as the subject. Only God creates, as far as the Old Testament writers are concerned...everything else is at best a copy or a counterfeit.**
- d. Then the rest of the passage adds to these first 2, *“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them...”*”**
- (1) When we grow up knowing that our happiness and our satisfaction has been based on knowing God’s love we will be better equip for those dark days.**
- (2) I love this quote from Matthew Henry on this verse for the teen and young person: *“You that are young flatter yourselves with expectations of great things from the world, but believe those who have tried it; it yields no solid satisfaction to a soul; therefore, that you may not be deceived by this vanity, nor too much disturbed by it, remember your Creator, and so guard yourselves against the mischiefs that arise from the vanity of the creature.”***
- (3) Now this makes it incumbent upon parents to train our little children correctly in the Bible...**
- **To establish habits where the Bible is a priority in their home as early as possible.**
 - **To present God... the God of the Bible to our children...the God who sent His son to die and rise again for His own glory and the salvation of His elect children.**
 - **To encourage their “natural” curiosity and participate with them in it so that they know that it is a good thing to be in awe of the things of God’s creation. Begin early talking about the wonders of God...it feeds their senses that haven’t been corrupted yet.**
 - **To decide early the worship is a priority including Sunday School if the church offers it, so that the church is supporting and supplementing the teaching and instruction of the children by the parents.**
 - **To monitor and determine the faith of their children so that they can sooner rather than later participate in the Lord’s Supper as full-fledged members of the church.**
 - **To continually teach the importance of service to the Lord and His church.**
 - **To make sure that parents screen their children’s friends and outside influences to make sure that they grow up knowing God’s love.**
 - **To guard them from the natural temptations as they grow as much as possible...this will make them stronger rather than weaker...when we exposes our children to too many different things they are unable to differentiate between what is good and bad.**

- **Begin these things while they trust us and are willing to learn and take them in...before the dark days influence their thinking. Before they say about the days, *"I have no pleasure in them..."***

(4) It is in these things that the child will grow up from their youth remembering their Creator when the dark days come.

4. Now, let's stop a minute and ask a simple question? What hinders the pursuit of happiness in God's people? **Sad to say but it is the same things that hinder non-believers. Here are just a couple:**

a. Self-appointed excuses keep us from claiming God's joy for us daily.

(1) If I only had what they have, things would be different...

(2) If I only lived somewhere else

(3) If only they understood me better...

(4) If only I had more money...

(5) If only my children would obey me better...

(6) If only my spouse showed me more affection...

(7) If only... you fill in the blank, because you have said it...I have said it...we have all said it.

(8) Pursuit of the so called "American Dream".

b. Self-styled independence keeps us from remembering our Creator.

(1) I'll make it on my own...

(2) I don't need anyone...I don't need God.

(3) I know where I am going and how to get there.

(4) These keep us from actually relying on the only One who can give us lasting joy. Relying on self is vanity and in the end will NOT be enough.

Lessons in Ecclesiastes
October 2, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Verse 1 says again, "Remember also your Creator..." What is the "also" there for? **Everything else he says then...remember also...which is actually who we should first be remembering...**
2. How "BIG" is the command, "Remember your Creator"? What kind of things does this word communicate to us?
3. How does remembering our creator aid our ability to have joy in this life?

C. Chapter 12 continued:

1. Now let's look at verses 2-8.
 - a. The first thing to see as we come to verse 2 is that this is the 2nd use of the word "before". He will use it again in vs. 6 and he has already used it in verse 1. What point is he trying to make by using this word, a word we don't give much credence to?
 - (1)**First it keeps bringing us back to the command...Remember your Creator, before...**
 - **The evil days come and the years draw near to them saying 'I have no pleasure in them...**
 - **Before the end of time...before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened...this phrase deals with judgment and the coming restoration as well as the end of our existence on this earth. See Rev. 21:23**
 - **Before the silver cord is snapped...the frailty of age...bones breaking easily when we fall.**
 - (2)**2nd, it seems to be highlighting the difference between youth and old age.**
 - **Vs. 2 deals with possibly the dimming of the eyes of the old...where light is dimmed and the stars and the moon seem dark. The intellectual powers of youth are often dimmed in old age like a light going out...memory that once was strong in younger years begins to fail.**
 - **As I said about vs 6 above...when young you can take falls and recover with little problem when old you break like a lamp that has broken when the chain that holds it up breaks from age as well.**
 - (3)**Concerning the clouds that return after the rain...Clouds are little to no concern for the young...but for the old;**
 - **Clouds bring one more ailment or pain...one cloud hasn't left before another finds us.**
 - **We are not content with the loss of life...life seems to be one rainy day after the next.**

- b. And the problems for the old don't stop there...
- (1) **3a.** *"...in the day when the keepers of the house trembles..."* seems to be a clear reference in this context seems to be speaking of the actual "shakes" that older people get...the shaking of one's head, hands and voice that comes with age.
- (2) **3b.** *"...and the strong men are bent..."*- with age our legs become feeble, our backs droop
- (3) **3c.** *"...and the grinders cease because they are few..."*- fewer teeth makes it harder to eat our food well...thus taking to a place where eating isn't a joy.
- (4) **3d.** *"...those who look through the windows are dimmed..."* Mrs. Kravitz from Bewitched! Obviously saying it will become harder for us to see...building on what he said in vs 2.
- (5) **4a.** *"...and the doors on the street are shut when the sound of the grinding is low..."*
- Our hearing becomes impaired and it seems that people are avoiding us.
 - Also, as we get older our influence seems to wane as well. The word "door" actually means doors as in 2 doors...like the gates of the city where the elders would meet to judge for the town...after a while our judgment may wane or it may no longer be sought.
- (6) **4b.** *"...and one rises at the sound of a bird..."*- as we age we sleep less and we are awakened easier at times.
- (7) **4c.** *"...and all the daughters of song are brought low..."*- speaking of our hearing again and how we need to move closer to the front to be able to hear.
- (8) **5a.** *"...they are afraid also of what is high and terrors are in the way..."*- easier to scare, easier to worry with age...fear of crowds...fear of the unknown...fear of things that we hardly even thought about before.
- (9) **5b.** *"...the almond tree blossoms..."* was a phrase to describe the greying of the hair...
- (10) **5c.** *"...the grasshopper drags itself along..."* obviously the slower movements of the elderly.
- (11) **5d.** *"...and desire fails..."*- an obvious result of aging. However, every culture thought to ward off such problems...we have pills and things to put in our water they: The ancient peoples in the Near East prized the caperberry for stimulating appetite or sexual desire. In the advanced years, however, the caperberry no longer acts as an effective stimulant.
- (12) **Why does all this happen? - 5e.** *"...because man is going to his eternal home and the mourners go about the streets..."* It is all in making us want to leave this life behind for the better one in eternity.

- (13) Vs. 6-7- See Hebrews 9:27... What is the point of these 2 texts?**
- **#yolo- (you only live once) ...make it count for God!**
 - **If we respond to Christ before we are aged ...we will have a fuller life and even though all of these things may happen to us they will in the end cause us to look forward to eternity with great anticipation as God takes the time to separate our hearts from this world.**
- (14) Only by accepting the reality and naturalness of death, can a person face life with the kind of joy that Solomon encourages in the enjoyment passages (cp. 9:2–10 and 11:7–10). For the wise believer, contentment with the brevity of life produces a freedom for living the life God gives in His service and for His glory. Phillip Ryken reminds his readers that aging and death consist of “some of the hardest experiences in life. The Bible is honest about this, but not bitter.” GETTING OLD IS NOT FOR SISSIES!!! The psalmist speaks of the death of God’s saints as precious in His estimation (Ps 116:15).**
- (15) Vs. 8- THE GOOD NEWS IS THIS: God designed us to be empty without Him! THE BAD NEWS IS THIS: Life without God is only vanity!**

2. Now the end of the story- vs. 9-14...the climax and the key to the whole book.
- a. Phillip Ryken cites a set of syllogisms when speaking about the end of this book: *“If there is no God, then there is no Judge. If there is no Judge, then there will be no Final Judgment. If there is no Final Judgment, there is no ultimate meaning to life. Nothing matters.”* However- *“The final message of Ecclesiastes is not that nothing matters but that everything does.”*
- b. Solomon speaks specifically to me as a preacher here...but having said that what is he saying to each of us as believers called upon to proclaim the truth of the gospel in these 9-11?
- (1)The minister and we ought to be characterized by godly wisdom.**
- (2)The minister and the people are expected to speak the truth.**
- (3)We are to speak the truth with the right words and right method of delivery depending upon the circumstance with no thought of compromising the truth...expecting that it will make a difference in the life of the hearer since God’s word does not return to Him void.**
- (4)We are to hold the firm belief that these are in fact the words of the One Shepherd and as such are powerful to lead His elect to salvation...yet we are to proclaim to all for we do not know who the elect are.**
- (5)We should also be people who are seen to have been and are living out the word before men.**
- c. What is he saying to us in verse 12?
- (1)Remember this warning was given long before the printing press, or computers or even eBooks.**

(2) Each year thousands of books are written and published and countless terabytes of information is stored. No human being has the ability to read it all...we can't find the end of the internet. And it would be a vain task...Solomon sought to do just that and wound up with futility.

(3) Nothing wrong with reading other things than the Scriptures as long as it doesn't take away from your reading of the Bible. And His Word.. the Word of the One Shepherd ought to be our primary authoritative source for living a fruitful life.

d. What is Solomon's conclusion? (Vs. 13-14)

(1) "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." (vs 13). The word "duty" is not in the original Hebrew text...this verse simply ends with ... "for this this the whole of man." This does emphasize duty but so much more when read this way...it is an expression of our very essence...it is how we glorify God and enjoy Him forever. It is more than just obedience...it is our whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. Thus, it is mankind's very essence to fear God and obey Him.

(2) "For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing whether good or evil."(14) By fearing God and keeping His commandments...these becoming who we are... we are to prepare to stand before God in a future judgment where we will be held accountable for enjoying what He has given and for living in accord with His commands

e. So with all of this behind us...how does Solomon answer this simple question: How can we find purpose and joy under the sun? **By looking above the sun to our Creator and Redeemer...**

D. Overview of book.

1. How would you sum up this book in just a few words?
2. What would you say are the distinguishing marks of our current age and think about it...what were the distinguishing marks of Solomon's age as well?
3. Why are Solomon's words unsettling in this day and age?
4. What does Solomon have to say about work done under the sun throughout this book? Why is that helpful for believers?
5. Why should we call the pursuit of material wealth "evil"? As a matter of principle most people/ Christians even... wouldn't consider the pursuit of the American Dream or getting ahead evil...so what is Solomon's point throughout?
6. Why does Solomon seem to be so enthralled by death throughout this short book?
7. How is this a book of hope for the Christian?