

INTRODUCION

- “It wasn’t meant to be.” Has anyone said that? Heard that?
Lottery story – Which might actually be funnier as this lesson continues.
 - What are we saying there? – That it is fate, destiny or predestine.
 - Just out of curiosity how many here believe there is a predestine path (ea. life & history)?
- It is a difficult and controversial subject.
 - It would take some time to walk through the details of it.
 - The paradoxical relationship between pre-destiny and freedom or will.
 - ❖ Or better known in theology as Gods Sovereignty and our freedom of will.
- These seemingly mutually exclusive ideas are in-fact allies, they are not contradictory.
 - Think of it in that you have the freedom to make your own decisions, but these decisions are made in a linear time frame. *Now I will... Now I am going to...*
 - God is outside of time. He is above the timeline. He has foreseen all the decisions you will ever make, before you have made them.
 - ❖ Of course it can be immensely more complex than that. For God saw everything before its creation. So it isn’t like He is adjusting His plan based on your decisions. But how can you be free in your decision if it has already been made? Etc... etc... etc...
- So for right now accept that God is sovereign if you like it or not.
 - That is what Solomon is in the scripture that we are going to look at today.
 - Eccl 6:10 - 7:14 as we continue our summer study on the book of Ecclesiastes.
 - We are at part 8 today.

PRAY – with me asking the Lord to bless our time.

- Solomon opens and closes today’s reading with the subject of Gods sovereignty.
 - He brackets it around four pieces of advice how to protect yourself from vanity (or emptiness)
 - ❖ Virtue is better than a false covering. [Slide]
 - ❖ Better is contemplation than ignorance.
 - ❖ Be patient don’t let yourself be corrupted.
 - ❖ Value of wisdom.
 - Write these down. I did not have enough time to get an outline to print. But if there were one, there would be a fill in the blank around here. :o)
- So Solomon begins with this statement about God’s foreknowledge:

Eccl 6:10 Whatever has come to be has already been named, **AND** it is known what man is, **AND** that he is not able to dispute with **one** stronger than he.

11 The more words, the more vanity, and what is the advantage to man?

12 For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his *vain* life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?

- **6:10a** Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is...
 - God has named everything before it was made. He foresaw all that happens.

- ❖ Solomon, all his achievements – buildings, wealth, short comings etc.
- ❖ He foresaw the building of the nation of The United States.
- ❖ He foresaw the political conundrum we are in.
- ❖ He foresaw you and all of your achievements and shortcomings.
- ❖ He foresaw the fabrication of your cell phone. He foresaw Pokémon
- God Knows humanity and there is no point in trying to argue against the creator.
- Remember the previous section he has presented how the worldly pleasures don't satisfy.
 - ❖ (money, sex, food, power, worldly accomplishments, etc...)
 - ❖ Even putting our hope on future generations isn't a solution.
 - Look at King David setting up Solomon and were that resulted. Corruption.
- Solomon sets the next scene with ...
 - Look God knows all. He knows humanity better than we know ourselves.
 - How can one argue with “**one** stronger than he”
 - In other words, how can one argue with our creator
 - ❖ Paul says (**Rom 9:20**) “Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?”
- You can talk about it till you're blue in the face, write a mountain of books about the subject, you can philosophize until the cows come home, you won't fully understand it.
- It won't change a thing. **6:12** For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his *vain* life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?
 - It just reminds us that our life is a shadow that quickly moves across the landscape of human history and is gone.
- **6:11** And the more words the more vanity.
- Now the irony here is that Solomon then takes the next 14 verses to do just that.
 - He reproduces some of his Proverbs (and the four pieces of advice we mentioned).
 - In a sense I think what he is doing is showing us that it doesn't really help.
 - ❖ All the words (even true) don't really satisfy.
 - ❖ Here are some truths, some virtues to live by. But see you don't feel any better.

VIRTUE

- The first part of these proverbs opens with a pretty tough concept. **Death**.
- He really lays the foundation in reality.
 - And I want to spend a little time on this because all the other points need to be reflected off of the idea that Solomon is setting.
 - It is the foundation to understanding the other three pieced of advice.
 - ❖ And it is in line with our previous lessons of the worldly.
 - ❖ Virtue is better than the temporal. ****

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Eccl 7:1 A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of **death** than the day of birth.

2 It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of *feasting*, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart.
[Death is the destiny of every person] NET

- A good name (having a virtuous name or being a person of virtue) is better than the finest ointment (sometimes translated a perfume)(costly ointment)
 - Interesting duality set up between the better non temporal (immaterial) and the temporal
 - Virtue (morality)(truth) is better the a thin covering of perfume
 - Death is better than life.
- One could read this in a depressing nihilistic existential tone.
 - Like Job crying out to be done with his suffering.
 - But that isn't what Solomon is doing here. Because of how he couples the statement with [better is virtue than perfume.]
- By using that parallel he is giving us a paradigm shift on death.
 - Death is not to be feared but is a friend not an enemy.
 - At this time in Jewish history the concept of afterlife was believed but not very well developed.
 - David (Solomon's father) constantly referenced Sheol (the place where the dead go)
 - ❖ But there wasn't much of an understanding if heaven or hell.
 - ❖ Life was precious because Sheol was unknown.
- By Jesus time there was quite the controversy going on between the Sadducees and the Pharisees – the two leading political and religious leaders of the time.
 - Pharisees believed that there was evidence in the scripture that suggested a resurrection after life; beyond Sheol.
 - Sadducees did not. The end was the end.

- Then imagine Solomon reading this psalms.

Ps 49:7-15 Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, **8** for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice, **9** that he should live on forever and never see the pit.

10 For he sees that even the wise die; the fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others. **11** Their graves are their homes forever, their dwelling places to all generations, though they called lands by their own names.

12 Man in his pomp will not remain; he is like the beasts that perish. **13** This is the path of those who have foolish confidence; yet after them people approve of their boasts. — Selah

14 Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; death shall be their shepherd, and the upright shall rule over them in the morning. Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell. **15** But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, **for he will receive me.** — Selah

- Very prophetic. What would Solomon be thinking?
- A call for ransom that one may live forever?
 - ❖ How could that be done? The author of the psalm couldn't even imagined it.
 - And though all will be consumed by Sheol, God will receive him?
 - ❖ There is this faint idea of a better end and not void.
 - The Holy Spirit had put it on to the hearts of those who hear Him.
 - And Solomon was touched by the Holy Spirit and blessed with wisdom (1 Kings 3, 2 Chron 1)
- Similarly today, death still looms over the heads of all mankind.

- And it is philosophized to the ends of the earth.
- German philosopher Heidegger recognizes an anxiety that he calls a “subtle mood” that hangs in the background generated by the unknown of death.
 - ❖ He said, “death defines life”
 - ❖ Our anxiety about death drives our life.

It makes me think about Grimm's fairy tales

Old man and Angel of death

- When faced with the unknown of death. What do we make of our lives?
 - ❖ How valuable our lives become.
- God made an impenetrable finality to this life for many reasons.
 - First, it is brought on by sin. The original sin of Adam and Eve.
 - There was perfect unity with our creator and yet, they wanted to be God.
 - ❖ **Gen 3:4** But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. **5** For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”
 - And the curtain fell. An absolute limitation to our human pride.
- No matter how knowledgeable, controlling and pompous we may get there is one element of humanity that cannot be breached. We are finite ... here.
 - A radical conclusion to our existence.
 - It is a wall to the unbeliever. A doorway to the believer.
- But listen to this beautiful scripture Paul writes to Corinth.

1Cor 25:54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” **55** “**O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?**” **56** The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. **57** But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- And John writes

1Jn 5:5 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

- So back to Solomon putting together this realization of something beyond death.
- Remember, this genre of literature is *ancient apologetic*. Meaning it is an argument defending the existence of God.
 - Under the sun (meaning in the world) all this is futile, meaningless ... vain.
 - But under heaven, it makes sense.
 - His is drawing connections between these dots.

CONTEMPLATION

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- With the backdrop of death setting the tone. Solomon tells us...
- Contemplation is better than ignorance. ****

Eccl 7:2 It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of *feasting*, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart.

3 Sorrow is better than *laughter*, for by **sadness of face the heart is made glad**.

4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the *heart of fools* is in the house of mirth.

5 It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the *song of fools*.

6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the *laughter of the fools*; this also is vanity.

- See this image of voices in a party popping and snapping like fire of lies.
- At first glance that sounds off. Very sucky.
 - Better to be sad than feast? Sadness makes me glad?
 - ❖ First take this in light of previous sections. There is a time for everything.
 - ❖ There is an appropriate time for joy and gladness.
 - ❖ There is an appropriate time for mourning and sadness.
- Second, the language there “feasting”, “mirth” is pretty much strait up partying. With a very high connotation to drinking.
 - One becomes contemplative in times of sorrow and mourning.
 - ❖ Why did this have to happen? Why must it be this way? Is there any meaning to this?
 - But often to avoid this people will distract themselves from these questions.
 - ❖ And no easier way than with a vice. Temporary relief.
 - ❖ A lot of the times this is the root the addictions. Run to an idol to distract us from looking into the face of difficult questions.
- Basically Solomon here is saying – “The unexamined life is not worth living”
 - Anyone ever heard that quote before? Plato c.400 BC.
 - Plato or Socrates gets a lot of credit for this quote, however they weren’t the first.
 - Solomon here is presenting this c. 900 BC (500 years earlier)
 - ❖ -- Hu, nothing new under the sun ... (**Eccl 1:9**)
 - **Matt 5:4** Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. (Jesus c. 0)
- Paul has some helpful insight.
- **2 Cor 7:10** For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.
 - What I like about how Paul parses “grief” is that he differentiates an honest contemplation seeking truth and a worldly seeking self.
 - ❖ I can get into a pity party and stand behind my preconceived bias without honest search.
 - ❖ Or my contemplations can be constrained to not allow any information in that may challenge my belief.
 - ❖ Honestly, this is where most of humanity is.
 - We need to set aside our assumptions and bias baggage.
 - We need to stop running to our distractions and seek His truth.

- But, honest contemplation doesn't come easy and it is often not the natural reaction.
- Contemplation take patience. And that is where Solomon takes us next.

BE PATIENT – DON'T BE CORRUPTED

Eccl 7:7 Surely oppression drives the wise into madness, and a bribe corrupts the heart.

8 Better is the end of a thing than its beginning, and the **patient in spirit** is better than the proud in spirit.

9 Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools.

10 Say not, "Why were the former days better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.

- Being patient is the key to keep from corruption **AND** Pride is the poison. **** [Slide]
 - Don't allow what wisdom you have been gifted to be corrupted.
- Two words to look at "oppression" and "madness"
 - When Solomon uses the work "oppression" here he is trying to capture the idea injustice, injury, fraud. Oppressing truth.
 - "madness" (*abad*) can mean to wander away, destroy or to perish.
 - ❖ Oppressing the truth can push wisdom to destruction.
- Keep the end in mind. Keep it in perspective. A holy perspective, a humble perspective.
- The second half of that sentence emphasizes a patient spirit over a prideful spirit.
- Anger being a stake of pride that is one of the strongest catalysts for oppression of truth and corruption of motives.
- Solomon gives an interest example
 - "The good ol' days" -- You hear this all the time.
 - But that is a flawed view. The days of past were just as corrupt as today were just as depraved as today. Remember there is nothing new under the sun.
 - Very similar to the Israelites coming out of Egypt.
 - ❖ They were slaves, praying for God to rescue them. And when He does in a fairly short time they complain about the cuisine. Manna, manna, manna ... how droll.

Ex 16:3 and the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

 - Really now? Is that how it was?
 - Cognitive dissidence. We trick ourselves so we can justify our discontent.
- If we are looking back at days gone by and seeing them as better (or worse) than they really are – to bolster your position or argument.
 - Isn't this a corruption of wisdom?
 - You're not patiently contemplating what is true.
- Solomon tells us that it is worth it. Wisdom is good for a long and prosperous life.

VALUE OF WISDOM

Eccl 7:11 Wisdom is good with an inheritance, an advantage to those who see the sun.

12 For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it.

- Pass down Wisdom to your children as you would an inheritance. Protect it.
 - Wisdom is valuable.****
 - Protect it like you protect money. It will server you better.
 - It will prove a better life.
- Here on earth wisdom has value. But Solomon limits it to “under the sun”.
 - Hinting again to the limitations of our view.
 - As if to say, on earth wisdom has value, but who knows its value after death.

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CONCLUSION

- Well there is some good advice. Does that make the problem of humanity any easier?
 - Like he said in vs.11, “the more words, the more vanity (or the more vapor)”

Eccl 7:13 **Consider** the work of God: who can make straight what he has made crooked?

14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity **consider**: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.

- You cannot know which tomorrow will be, prosperity or adversity.
 - God has purpose for both.
 - In prosperity is peace
 - In adversity is growth.
- So he brings it back to Gods sovereignty. And our best option is to life a virtuous life.
 - Contemplate what God has prepared for you, in prosperity and in adversity
 - Be patient and keep from corruption.
- But Solomon’s solution still falls short. Doesn’t it?
 - Look wisdom, patience, introspect, all these virtues are good and do lead to a better life.
 - But we are still faced with that first issue that he presented us to set the mood.
 - We still stare into the curtain of death.
- Even the conclusion of the book falls a bit short.
 - **Eccl 12:13** “Fear God [Have a deep respect and reverence], this is the whole duty of humanity”
- Just as Psalms 49 asked.
 - Can a man ransom another man’s life? What is the value of life?
- Final story. **Gen 18** Abraham humbly asks God, “what would it take to spare Sodom from His wrath” – *remember this story?*
 - Abraham asks, “Would you destroy the righteous people in Sodom as well as the wicked?”
 - If there were 50 righteous people would you spare the whole city? If there were 40 ... etc.
 - He is testing the value of righteousness to God.
 - He gets down to 10. That is as many as he can fathom.

- ❖ “God would you let the wickedness of these tens of thousands continue to uphold the righteousness of only 10 souls?”
- Of course Gods answer is “yes”
- And of course God did not even find 10.
- But we are supposed to be asking – Abraham, why stop at 10?
 - ❖ Would you spare the wicked for the price of one?
 - ❖ And of course the answer is “yes”
 - ❖ But that one is not you nor me.
 - For we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
 - ❖ That one is Jesus.
- God Himself. Came down and let us put Him on trial.
 - Creator of the Universe. Outside of time and matter.
 - He is THE first cause, THE definition of being.
 - Let fall his cloak of glory to pay our ransom.
 - ❖ So yes psalmist there is a way our life can be ransomed
 - ❖ Yes Abraham, righteousness to God is so important that He will spare all who come to Him if there is but ONE who is righteous.
 - [Heb 2:9](#) ... Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.
- If you don’t have Jesus right – then really it is all moot.
- Live is the most virtuous way possible, but if you don’t have Jesus right....
 - [Jn 5:24](#) Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.
 - [Jn 11:25](#) Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, [26](#) and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

PRAY

OUTLINE

- 6:10** Predestiny / Sovereignty
- 6:11** Words are worthless, the future is unknown
- **6:12** True virtue is better than a false covering / death better than life
- **7:1-4** Better is contemplation than party (ignorance)/ contemplation is made glad
- **7:5-6** Corruption erodes wisdom, hindsight is 20/20, be patient
- **7:10-12** Value of wisdom: content, advantages, protection ... preserves life.

- 7:13** Only God can right things
- 7:14** So be joyful (in all) – God rains on the just and unjust alike
 - So that the future is hidden.