

## INTRODUCTION

- Don't you wish life was just a bit more simple?
- Paul Simon, - you can call me Al.
  - Man walks down the street.
  - He says, *why am I soft in the middle now? Why am I soft in the middle?*
  - The rest of my life is so hard?*
- Gosh do I feel like that lately.
- I so wish it were a simple equation. Hey I go to 1 and then 2 then 3 follows.
  - Every time. But the equation is quite a bit more complex than that.
  - There are A's and B's, Alpha and Gamma. Pi and Avogadro's constant and Plank
  - Free agents that choose differently than I think right
  - Republicans and Democrats, Cats and Dogs living together .... The problem with pain...
    - ❖ If God is good and all powerful then why is there evil?
    - ❖ It would seem He should eradicate it.
- **Mat 5:45b** God makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.
- This tone echoed in the book of Ecclesiastes well.
  - That is our summer study, we have been taking a deep dive into the book of Ecclesiastes.
  - This morning we are looking at chapter 9.
  - There are three ideas expressed in today's reading.
    1. Gods work is incomprehensible, and Solomon gives us some examples of how confusing life is.
      - ❖ He is getting across the concept of Hevel. Remember the video clip...
      - ❖ Hevel, Hevel: Life is a vapor – a paradoxical enigma.
        - Meaning; vapor, a smoke. Can't grasp it, little substance.
        - Paradox: opposite of what is seems. Enigma: Something that can't quite comprehended.
    2. Solution for us "under the sun", though it is kind of tongue in cheek
      - ❖ Remember that the author references two perspectives.
      - ❖ Under the sun - and - under heaven.
    3. An example
      - ❖ That we will expand on greatly.

## PRAY

### Gods Work and Our Perspective

- Let's start at the end of chapter 8.
  - Remember a few weeks ago (ch. 6-7)? Solomon bracketed some proverbs with the idea of Gods sovereignty.
  - He is bringing us back to this idea. He seems to present some wisdom about living and then remind us how little control we really have.

**Eccl 8:16** When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep, **17** then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.

- Solomon was really dedicated in understanding wisdom. “He committed his heart to it.”
  - He stayed up night and day pondering it.
  - To find out true wisdom is unattainable through human effort.
  - Though the wise man claims he knows – he is mistaken.
  
- The gad fly of Athens (Socrates) spent his life seeking a true wise man.
  - Every time he interviewed someone that was known for a specific virtue he would reveal that the person didn't have a clue how to even define that virtue or where it came from.
  - Ultimately he would show that the wise weren't so actually so wise and the just weren't actually so just.
  - Suggesting that those who were humble and honest about their ignorance were actually the most wise.
  
- This seems to ring true in my own life.
  - I reflect on many conversations where I knew I was right but came at it with a pompous attitude and the results were damaging.
  - Whereas when I come at something humbly searching for the truth and I am able to put my pride aside, my preconceived notions and challenge my assumptions.
    - ❖ Then I realize how little I actually know
  - That is actually part of my testimony in accepting Christ.
  - *I have a tattoo : Jury* (Humbly gather the evidence and try to discern the truth)
  
- In a similar way, that is what Solomon is saying there.
  - Take a serious honest search for truth and you will see how big God really is.
  - Our knowledge is limited, remember Donnie's drawing?
  
- But to make his point Solomon then goes on to list these ‘couplets of opposites’ to get across to the reader the great injustice in the world and how it is an enigma (Hevel).
  - Again remember this is all from the perspective of being “under the sun” not “under heaven”

**Eccl 9:1** 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. Whether it is *love* or *hate*, man does not know; both are before him. **2** It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the *righteous* and the *wicked*, to the *good* and the *evil*, to the *clean* and the *unclean*, to him who *sacrifices* and him who does *not sacrifice*. As the *good* one is, so is the *sinner*, and he who *swears* is as he who *shuns* an oath. **3 This is an evil** in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

- Solomon tells us he has thought this through. This has been a burden on his heart. He sees that the righteous and the wise put themselves in the hands of God.
  - Regardless of how fickle our emotions may be. ‘Whether it is *love* or *hate*’
  - Regardless of the seeming injustice of the world. ‘the same event happens to all’ (namely death)

- I say fickle emotions because, he says, we struggle to even determine the difference between love and hate, we are told there.
  - ❖ We think what indicates love is actually the opposite (ie: lust) – it is damaging.
  - ❖ Our emotions can drift from love to hate, with sometimes no rhyme or reason.
- And then Solomon gets hung up on the injustice of the world again.
  - ❖ The one who swears an oath (on my word) is too often in no better position than the one who breaks it. The righteous and the unrighteous sometimes have the same outcomes “under the sun”.
- He is recognizing the same thing that Jesus said in Mat 5:

**Mat 5:45b** God makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

- Then Solomon says this really divisive statement:
- **This is an evil** ...that the same event happens to all (death)
  - This word here (H7451: ra'a) has a heavy moral component to it. But it can be translated some 10 different ways. The most simple as just “bad” or “unfortunate”
  - It is hard to determine the exact connotation here.
- Solomon could be just saying: “this is unfortunate” what a bummer - The righteous and the wicked suffer the same fate, this is not how it should be
  - Or he could be saying there is a moral evil here.
  - He is **not** saying that God is doing this moral evil in allowing, “the same event to happens to all” That is not consistent with the rest of Solomon’s writings.
- In that same breath there Solomon could also be saying this is part of the curse. This is evil, there is a moral deficit in this system. Not only in us, but in the world.
  - The first time we see this word ra'a is in **Gen 2:9** when we are introduced to the tree of the knowledge of (*towb - ra'a*) good and **evil**.
  - It is because Adam and Eve took upon themselves the right to define good and evil so they may be “like God” we find ourselves in this predicament.
  - I say this because Solomon follows the statement with an accusation on mankind.
 

**Eccl 9:3b** Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead
  - The hearts of humanity are morally corrupt
 

**Jer 17:9-10** The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? **10** “I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.”
- So Solomon had a burden on his heart and he investigated these things. The righteous lay their deeds in the hands of the Lord, while all this injustice still ravages the world and they suffer the same fate that the unrighteous does. Death.
- This is unjust and is evil. Seems hopeless, but...
- **But** there is hope. We get to turn the corner here, some good news (kinda ...)

**Ecc1 9:4** **But** he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living **dog** is better than a dead **lion**. **5** For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. **6** Their *love* and their *hate* and their *envy* have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun. **7** Go, **eat** your bread with joy, and **drink** your wine with a **merry** heart, for God has already approved what you do.

- There is hope - even though there is a thick curtain of death which we can't see past.
- From this view point, with this limited perspective.
  - Solomon makes this comparison between the despised and the most noble.
    - ❖ Dogs in this culture are not cherished little pets, but dirty despicable scavengers.
  - Whereas the lion is the nobility of the wild.
  - But they are the same at death. Rotting flesh.
  - So from the perspective of “under the sun” it is better to be alive and despised than noble and dead.
  - Because there are things to take pleasure in on this earth.
- Just like he said last week **Ecc1 8:15** “I commend joy”
- Also in looking forward to death Solomon recognizes it is relief from our fickle emotions. “Their *love* and their *hate* and their *envy* have already perished, and forever”

### Enjoy What God has Given

- Yes this has a limited perspective. It is “under the sun!”
- But it is a valid message. Just like Solomon’s call for wisdom. He also directs us to enjoy the simple gifts that God has given us.

**Ecc1 9:7** Go, **eat** your bread with joy, and **drink** your wine with a **merry** heart, for God has already approved what you do. **8** Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head. **9** Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that He has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil *under the sun*. **10** Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going. **11** Again I saw that *under the sun* the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. **12** For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.

- It starts out there almost like hedonism or ignorance is bliss.
  - Well it isn't go and party cuz life is short. We have talked about that already. Solomon says “Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head”
  - Meaning be clean and pure in front of the Lord. He has approved you enjoying the life He has blessed you with.
    - ❖ Enjoy your spouse – they are a gift from the Lord
    - ❖ Work hard seek wisdom and knowledge they are blessings on this earth.
- This isn't a call to ignorance either.
  - To bury your head in the sand. The root word of ignorance is “ignore”
  - It is pretty obvious the author is a big advocate for wisdom not ignorance.
  - Remember a couple weeks ago ... **Ecc1 7:5** It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools.

- This is more a recognition of simplicity. Peace with it. (Shalom) Joy in it.
  - Our schemes don't always pan out. The race isn't always to the swift and the bread for the wise. The intelligent aren't always the wealthy.
  - Scheming for these things will get you caught up in life and you just might miss it.
 

*The best laid schemes of mice and men, go often askew.  
And leave us nothing but grief and pain for promised joy.*
- Work hard do well and enjoy the rewards gifted to you.
- Be at peace (shalom). Another installment of my testimony.
  - **Jn 14:27** Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.
  - Peace: Shalom (tranquility. Peace in all aspects of life. Peace with self, peace with God)
  - *If I were to get another tattoo it would be 'Shalom'. I need to be reminded that Jesus offers me peace and joy. It is mine for the taking. I just need to surrender my schemes to Him.*
- Have peace. Enjoy the simple pleasures and beauty the God has blessed you with.

## The Allegory

- Then Solomon gives the example of how wisdom is valuable, but don't expect rewards beyond peace and joy.

**Eccl 9:13** I have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me. **14** There was a little city with few men in it, and a great king came against it and besieged it, building great siege works against it. **15** But there was found in it a poor, wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man. **16** But I say that wisdom is better than might, though the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard.

- The lesson is straight forward. Wisdom saved the city, but was soon forgotten.
- Commentaries suggest that perhaps Solomon is writing about a historical event. It sounds like it because he says "I have seen this example".
  - But we can't pin point the event.
  - Perhaps 2 Sam 20:15. Where Joab (one of David's generals) besieged a small city to capture Sheba (rebelled against King David).
    - ❖ A wise woman came up on the wall and called for the battering ram to be halted and negotiated to bring Sheba's head if they were to leave the city unharmed.
    - ❖ Her patience, confidence in the Lord and wisdom saved the whole city.
- But this is a woman, not a man as the story presents itself.
- The other option is that it is a fabled story (called a Targum) to teach the value of wisdom
- Or even a Jewish allegory (presented in the Midrash [Jewish commentary] – 500 ad)
  - Small town = the few that are righteous
  - Great king of destruction = Satan
  - Man of wisdom = personified Spirit of God (ie: woman in proverbs)
- This allegory intrigues me.
- One could take some license and extend this allegory to see a need for a savior.

- This is not a messianic prophecy in the middle of Ecclesiastes.
  - But there is a deeper lesson that we can extend into our lives.
- There is a narrow gate that few walk through.
- That gate is under siege. Satan wishes to have it destroyed.
- There is a man of wisdom that protects the gate and advocates for us who are safe inside.
- That man is despised, not respected, often forgotten.
  - [Eccl 9:16b](#) the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard.

[Isa 53:3-5](#) He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. **4** Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. **5** But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.

- He was despised and rejected, but He brought us peace.

## The Conclusion

- That brings us to the conclusion of chapter 9 in Ecclesiastes, Solomon wraps up the example with a staunch warning that should really sting.

[Eccl 9:17](#) The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools. **18** Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.

[Eccl 10:1](#) Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a stench; so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

- It should be obvious to us that the whispers of wisdom are better than boisterous fools.
  - But we get tricked by it all too often.
- Why do we ignore the “Wise man of the city”?
  - Why do we not give Him the recognition He is due?
- For the same reason (9:2-3)
  - We want to be our own gods.
  - And we do not calculated damage of sin.
- It is kind of like the relationship ratio, it takes 7 compliments to counter 1 cutting remark.
  - The weight of folly is so much more impacting than wisdom.
  - And we so often fail to see that. The entire batch of ointment is stench because of one fly.
  -
- What is sin? We want to be our own gods.
- Aldous Huxley – British philosopher from the 50’s  
 “I had a reason to not believe in God, because to disbelieve was the basis for sexual and political freedom.”
- [Jn 8:34](#) Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.
- Anselm (1100); Cur Deus Home (Why God Became Man)  
 You have not yet considered the greatness and the might of sin.

- Yes, life is confusing, a great enigma. There is injustice and pain.
  - But God offers us peace. He offers us Joy. Amidst all this Hevel.
  
  - Even greater than that.
    - ❖ Christ came and tore down the curtain of death and offers us hope eternal.
    - ❖ Why don't we take it up? Because we want to be gods.
  
- There is THE wise man offering His wisdom, salvation to the city.
  - The world is bashing against the walls.
  - Satan is pounding at the gate.
  - And Jesus whispers wisdom to us.
  - Have peace in me.
  
  - You don't have to reject Him.
  - Give Him the honor He is due.
  - Surrender our schemes and find joy in His gifts, find peace in Him.

## **PRAY**