

Sunday Morning Message

July 30, 2023 (Adapted and edited from a message originally preached on 08/2018)

The Bottom Line of Life

Topic – Pursuing God and His Will

Text – Ecclesiastes 12:1 – 14 (Other Scriptures we will turn to besides these verses and others from Ecclesiastes are 2 Chronicles 9:13 – 28; 1 Kings 11:1 – 8)

Congregational Reading – Ecclesiastes 12:11 - 14

Background Information on Ecclesiastes

There is a Key Verse

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." - (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

There is a Key Phrase – “under the sun”

This phrase occurs 27 times in the Book of Ecclesiastes. It refers to the things of this earth. (See 1:3, 9, 14 for examples from chapter 1)

There is a Key Word – “vanity”

This word appears 33 times in the book. It means “empty”. The concordance defines it as *vapour* or *breath*.

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." - (James 4:14)

From the key verse, key phrase, and key word listed above, we can get a good idea of what Ecclesiastes will teach us. Most of the things that are “under the sun” are “vanity”. Thus, because the things of this world are empty things, the “conclusion of the matter” is to live for the things that are eternal.

This book will teach us that life can certainly be enjoyed and lived to the fullest; but much of what this life has to offer is vanity. And while we are certainly free to experience the temporal pleasures of this life, as long as they are not sinful, in order for us to get the most out of life and to fulfill an eternal purpose, we need to obey God and keep his commandments.

The title to the book comes from the Greek transliteration (explain) of the Hebrew title "*Qoheleth*" (kō·heh'·leth), which means a preacher, or one who speaks in an assembly. The Greek word *ecclesiastes* comes from the root word *ekklesia*, which is the word translated *church* in the New Testament.

You will see the title, in its English equivalent, *preacher*, used seven times throughout the book:

"The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem." - (Ecclesiastes 1:1)

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." - (Ecclesiastes 1:2)

"I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem." - (Ecclesiastes 1:12)

"Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account:" - (Ecclesiastes 7:27)

"Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity." - (Ecclesiastes 12:8)

"And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs." - (Ecclesiastes 12:9)

"The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth." - (Ecclesiastes 12:10)

The author identifies himself as the son of David. (v 1) Well, that narrows it down a little, but David had many sons. Which one is the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes?

The statement "king in Jerusalem" in v 1 could refer to David; or it could be a reference to the preacher. If it means that the preacher is the king in Jerusalem that would eliminate many more of David's sons. Solomon was the son of David that became king, but the Bible also uses the term "son" for grandsons, and great-grandsons, etc. Jesus was referred to as a "son of David" many times.

However, verse 12, eliminates any doubt as to whether the preacher was a king in Jerusalem.

"I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem." - (Ecclesiastes 1:12)

Solomon was the last king to rule over all of Israel from Jerusalem because the northern kingdom of Israel split from the southern kingdom of Judah soon after the death of Solomon, early in the reign of Solomon's son, Rehoboam.

Since we have concluded that Solomon is the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes, then we can also be sure that the date of the writing would be no later than 931 BC, as Rehoboam (Solomon's son) becomes king in 930 BC.

Introduction (Read Ecclesiastes 12:1 – 14)

This morning, we are going to skip through the entire Book of Ecclesiastes and examine Solomon's final conclusion regarding living life, *His Bottom Line of Life*, which is stated in v. 13:

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

According to the Word of God, Solomon was at one time the wisest man that ever lived. The Bible tells us more than once that *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."* (Proverbs 9:10) Solomon feared the Lord, especially in his younger days.

According to 1 Kings 3:3 – 15 we find out that Solomon started out offering sacrifices in the high places, but after God gave him wisdom, he went to Jerusalem, to the place where the Ark of the Covenant rested. This is the place where Solomon would build the Temple.

If we were to continue reading in 1 Kings 3, we would see a story that shows us the first test of Solomon's wisdom, a dispute between two women about a baby. (See 1Kings 3:16 – 28)

1 Kings 10:1 – 9 shows us that Solomon's reputation for being very wise had spread all the way down to Africa. The queen of Sheba came to see Solomon after she had heard about his wisdom:

"Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard." (1 Kings 10:7)

Solomon wrote three thousand proverbs, many of which are recorded in our Book of Proverbs. It is believed that Solomon wrote many of His Proverbs early in his reign as the King of Israel when He possessed this great wisdom from God. Ecclesiastes, however, was probably written at the end of Solomon's life, after He had unwisely chosen to pursue after other things rather than God.

Solomon literally had it all; he experienced everything that life could offer:

1. He possessed wealth – 2 Chronicles 9:13 – 28
2. He produced many works – He built a house for himself, and the Temple of God. (Ecclesiastes 2:4 – 20)
3. He pondered many natural wonders:

"And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes." (1 Kings 4:33)

Yet, at the end of his life, Solomon concluded that all the stuff he pursued was vanity or emptiness, that it didn't really matter, especially in the light of eternity.

Solomon's downfall, however, was women. They pulled his heart away from God.

4. He pursued women – 1 Kings 11:1 – 8

What was Solomon's conclusion:

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." (Ecclesiastes 1:2)

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

Let me be clear – there is nothing wrong with possessing wealth, as long as that wealth doesn't possess you. There is nothing wrong with learning, as long as you

use what you learn to glorify God and be a blessing to others. There is certainly nothing wrong with loving a woman – singular:

*"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD."
(Proverbs 18:22)*

"Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth." (Proverbs 5:18)

There is also nothing wrong with pursuing life to the fullest as Solomon did.

Jesus said:

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

An abundant life has God in the very center of it. Solomon's problem was that somewhere along the line he started pursuing things rather than God.

How can you and I have an abundant life and a life that will count for something as far as eternity is concerned:

I Fear God and Keep His Commandments – that was Solomon's conclusion.

A It Begins with Salvation – Are you saved?

B It Blossoms with Submission

1. To His Word

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105)

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." (Psalm 119:9)

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." (Joshua 1:8)

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a

tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." (Psalm 1:1-3)

The Word of God is God's blueprint for life. It will show you what you should do, and what you should not do.

2. To His Will

Find out what God particularly wants you to do in this life and do it.

Lee Roberson said the secret to a successful life was to find the will of God and do it.

*"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, **doing the will of God from the heart;** With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." (Ephesians 6:5-8)*

Christian, we need to live for God's purposes – we need to glorify Him and fulfill His will. Solomon got off track. He was derailed. At the end of his life, He realized, perhaps too late where he went wrong. You and I can learn from Solomon's mistake.

II Find Balance (Ecclesiastes 2:24 – 26; 3:1 – 8; 5:18 – 19)

- A Worship God
- B Love Your Family
- C Serve People
- D Work Hard (Ecclesiastes 9:7 – 10)
- E Enjoy the Journey

Take time to enjoy the blessings and gifts that God has given you.

III Focus on the Eternal

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not

at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Corinthians 5:1)

The bottom line is that much of what we pursue here on this earth really does not matter considering eternity, but everything that we do for God and for His Kingdom will last forever.

Conclusion

Fear God – Find Balance – Focus on Eternity

Don't wait until you are old to do these three things:

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;"
(Ecclesiastes 12:1)

Don't live for possessions or wealth

Don't seek pleasure

Don't seek power or accomplishments

Don't seek the world's wisdom

Seek God – and God will reward you with many of these things.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)

Whatever you decide to do, you will ultimately come to the same conclusion that Solomon did:

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." (Ecclesiastes 1:2)

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)