**Wisdom From Solomon**

**Ecclesiastes Sermon #2**

Ecclesiastes is wisdom literature.

It is humans speaking to humans, mostly about human things.

In our first lesson, Solomon asked the big questions:

Why am I here?

What is my purpose in life? What is the meaning of life?

Solomon, the wisest person to live before Jesus Christ, thought carefully about these things. His conclusions:

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11 Life under the sun. (v. 9)

Looking at life from a human perspective, In view of the vastness of time. Meaningless!!!

There is nothing new under the sun.

You represent 0.00000014% of all people living today.

Who will remember you 200 years from now?

Ecclesiasts 1:12-18

What about gaining knowledge and wisdom?

What is crooked cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted.

In the big picture, the great human problems will never be solved.

v. 14, v. 17 It is like chasing after the wind….

v. 18 Besides the more wisdom, the more grief.

“Wisdom is better than folly”, but it they give ultimate meaning or purpose?

Solomon’s answer: the gaining of knowledge and college degrees: meaningless!

Ecclesiastes 2:1-10

Well, at least we can have fun. At least we can pursue pleasure. That will give life meaning.

Solomon: No! Pleasure, too, is meaningless.

Solomon: If pleasure could create meaning and value, I would know. I had more riches than anyone before me. (300 wives, 700 concubines, fantastic wealth)

Been there, done that.

OK. In view of time, life is meaningless.

Wisdom and knowledge are meaningless.

The gathering of wealth, pleasure and fun are meaningless.

But, fortunately, great life achievements—having an impact—can give purpose and meaning to life!

Ecclesiastes 2:12-23

Work and accomplishments are meaningless.

And Solomon would know. He built the temple!!!!!! He built entire cities.

You spend 40 years saving for retirement, and then you die a week after you retire, and your irresponsible children, who do not deserve it, get it all.

Well, we are all now very depressed, Solomon. So, is there any meaning in life at all?

Hold on. We will get back to Ecclesiastes 12.

Now, let’s look at some more wisdom from Solomon.

This sermon is snippets of wisdom—no clear outline. It will go for the brain, not so much the heart.

Ecc 3:1-8 A time for everything…

The principle of balance.

A time to work and a time to rest. As humans we need both. Which are you better at?

Are you a workaholic? Are you a lazy person?

Had this discussion with Juan yesterday…

A time to weep and mourn and a time to laugh and dance. This is how God made us. We need to accept and even embrace mourning as well as fun.

Which are you better at? Are you better at fun, or at embracing struggle?

A time to embrace (show affection) and (believe it or not) a time withhold our affection.

A time to be careful and a time to throw caution to the wind.

We need to be careful who we give our heart to.

But… At some point we need to jump off that diving board and give away our heart.

Which are you better at?

v. 6 A time to search for your car keys, and a time to give up and let them come to you. Remember, Ecc is humans talking to humans.

A time to take control of things, and a time to let go of things, and let God do his thing…

Which are you better at?

v. 6 A time to keep and a time to throw away. Q: Which are you better at?

Jan and I are opposites on this!

v. 7 Wisdom says there is a time to say something and a time to hold your peace.

I had this discussion with Michael yesterday.

Do you have wisdom on this discernment?

Others…

v. 8 Might be controversial, but for humans…

A time to love and a time to hate.

A time to be angry and a time to forgive.

Ex: Elizabeth Hlavata and Marcella. At their funeral….

“Under the sun” (for humans), emotions must run their course.

Ecc 3:9-11 Because we are in the image of God, “He has also set eternity in the human heart.” We know that this life is not all there is. We know that there is a greater purpose.

Even atheists seek purpose and meaning, even though their philosophy tells them that there is none. An honest atheist is a nihilist, but almost none are.

What is your purpose?

“yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” God’s ways are and always will be a mystery to us. We are infinite beings in a finite body.

We soar to the highest heights when we hear Handel’s Messiah, but then we have dirt in our ears and bad breath.

This is life under the sun.

Ecc 3:16-17

3:16 There will be good and evil. We can never escape that there is evil in this world. We will not solve the world’s problems.

God will ultimately judge the corrupt rulers. We need to leave room for God in this, as not in a position of power—we, honestly, have little control over such things, other than acting honestly ourselves.

Like Jesus said in John 16:33 “In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world.

Rom 12:17-19 Let go and let God.

Life is not fair. Do not expect it to be.

Leave room for God’s wrath.

Back to Ecc 3:17 And God will judge all such things.

Ecc 3:18-22

God puts eternity in our hearts (Ecc 3:10), but

3:18 He made us mortal. In at least one sense, we are like animals. We are born, we live and we die.

Friday we were at Lake Yosemite Park and a sign said “no animals allowed.” We turned around and left.

v. 20 Dust to dust….

v. 21 (Speaking as a human, physical sense only only….) Who really knows if our fate is different from that of the animals.

v. 22 So, speaking humanly, enjoy your life while you can.

We are VERY different from the unbeliever, but we do have this in common. It comes down to faith.

But… don’t forget Ecc 12

More wisdom from Solomon:

Ecc 4:9-12 Two are better than one.

Even in human terms, we need companionship.

Applied to marriage? Sure, but..

Seek close, intimate friendships with people you can truly trust to be there.

v. 12 Two can defend themselves. Look for people who will watch your back, and do the same for them.

We need deep, lasting friendships.

Are you that kind of person?

v. 12 And remember that a cord of three strands is not easily broken.

Is he talking about rope?

In human terms, close relationships give life some meaning, but if God is in there, that will be a fruitful relationship.

Ecc 7:1-2 Mourning is better than feasting. Why?

We love feasting. We prefer feasting. We avoid mourning. We love the mountaintop. We avoid the valley.

Why? We learn from mourning, not from feasting.

Go to funerals. Especially young people.

And pay attention!

Do not pretend you will live forever. Death causes us to evaluate our lives.

And besides, always remember this: Ecc 5:15-16 You cannot take it with you.

v. 16 and if physical life “under the sun”is all there is, then that is a grievous evil.

So, Solomon, what is the final analysis?

We already looked at Ecclesiastes 12:8-14

But let us go back to Ecc 12:1-7.

It is time for the young to pay attention.

Remember the Creator while you are young.

This is why Jan and I came here, specifically to Merced!

It is why I like teaching for the West Coast School of Ministry.

You say “I am busy now.” “I do not have time.”

“I have to study.” “I have to take care of my career.”

No!!!!!! Invest the time now. It will pay dividends.

Juan, Brianna, Garek: Go to the ICMC!!! Decide now!

What better investment is there than in God, and all financial advisers will tell you, the earlier you start, the better!!!!!

You know what they say: Better late than never.

True! But

1. Way better early than late! Invest fully in God NOW! Study the scriptures deeply, get involved in saving people, start a benevolent program, take a ministry class…

2. Ecc 12:2-5 It does not get easier as we get older. Let us make hay while the sun shines. What will you do with your college time? With your singlehood before marriage? With your DINK period? With your time with kids?

3. Ecc 12:6-7 Metaphors for death. And who knows when he or she will die.

Young people take note!

So, let’s look at Solomon’s conclusion once again

Ecc 12:8-14

(I am including v. 8 in his final conclusion.

If this life “under the sun” is all there is.

If, when you die, your are “dead like Rover, dead all over,” then

v. 8 Meaningless, Meaningless!!!

Q: What, then, gives life meaning?

v. 13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for the is the entire duty of mankind.

Folks, Life under the sun is NOT all there is.

There is a purpose and meaning in life.

God gives meaning to everything.

Outside of God it is “garbage in, garbage out.”

In Christ it is God in, God out!

In God, even the smallest thing has meaning

Put God into the equation and the math is completely different.

Anything with eternal consequences has great meaning. Fearing and serving God gives meaning. Helping people to be saved has meaning.

Conclusion: The things that are “meaningless” according to Solomon are given meaning if they are used toward eternal ends.

Even making your bed, paying your bills, going to work, taking your classes take on meaning in Christ.

Conclusion:

Solomon tells us to find balance in the way we live our lives.

He tells us life is not fair, but God will bring all into judgment.

He tells us “Two are better than one” Seek deep, intimate, meaningful relationships, and be sure to bring God into those relationships.

He tells us to make decisions and resolutions and vows to God, but to do so judiciously, and ALWAYS keep the vows we make to God.

He tells us to not avoid thinking about our mortality

But then he tells us the final thing.

It is God who gives meaning to the “Meaningless” life under the Sun.

In God, and in God alone, work, pleasure, wisdom, accomplishments and even relationships find ultimate meaning.

So, remember your Creator in the days of your youth!