

June 25, 2017

“Encountering God in the Futility of Life”

Ecclesiastes 1-3

Intro

➤ *Location Amnesia*

- Do the familiar places of life now feel foreign?

Genre: Wisdom Literature

- Wisdom is about applying Divine principles to life experience.
- Wisdom literature helps us understand the world as both *created by God* and as *fallen and broken*.
 - Proverbs helps us see a world where God shines through everything.
 - Wisdom books like Job and Ecclesiastes help us see a world where God often feels hidden.
- These realities require meditation.

“The great Hebrew philosopher who wrote this book called Ecclesiastes calls us to joy, but to a joy which *thinks*, a joy which does not shrink back from the hard questions. He calls us to meditation... [We must not] rush headlong to pious and edifying conclusions before letting the force of Solomon’s observations and argument work into our souls. We must not hasten to heal this particular wound lightly. The meaninglessness of all things, as Solomon presents it, must work down into our bones. We should let the Word do its work before we hasten to make Ecclesiastes a grab bag of inspirational quotes.” –**Douglas Wilson**, *Joy at the End of the Tether: The Inscrutable Wisdom of Ecclesiastes*, 9, 16

Seeing Life Through Ecclesiastes

Futility Touches Everything (ch. 1)

- Theme of the book: “Everything is Vanity” (v. 2).

Hebrew: *Hebel* = Breath / Vapor / Mist

*Vain... Meaningless... Inscrutable... Empty... Hollow... Weightless... Fleeting... Futile...
Frustrating... Absurd... Unfulfilling... Unrewarding... Unsatisfying... Unproductive...
Monotonous... Insignificant...*

- The world as a Parade of Vanity (v. 3-11).

“A poetic picture of the structure of the world, this text depicts the human environment as a monotonous prison.” –**Duane Garrett**, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 284

- There is so much that we feel powerless to change or resolve.
- You live in a world that is under a curse. Do you face life with expectations that are sufficiently informed by that?

Chasing the Wind (ch. 2)

- There is nothing ultimately fulfilling in what you can find under the sun.

“In Ecclesiastes 1:2-2:26, we see that Solomon's experience shows that satisfaction cannot come from anything within the power or competence of man.”
–**Douglas Wilson**, *Joy at the End of the Tether*, 11-12

Knowledge (1:12-18)

- “*The Age of Anxiety*” by W.H. Auden

Pleasure (2:1-11)

Wisdom (2:12-17)

Work (2:18-26)

“Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.” (Ecc. 4:1-4)

“All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied.” (Ecc. 6:7)

Other Topics:

- Politics / Government (Ecc. 5:8)
 - Money (Ecc. 5:10)
 - Friendship & Loneliness (4:9-12)
 - Social Justice (Ecc. 4:1-2; 7:15)
 - Empty Religion (5:1-7)
 - Recognition / Approval of People (Ecc. 7:21-22; 9:13-16)
 - Education (Ecc. 12:12)
- God has poked holes in all the containers of life so that they don't hold what we think they do.

Time & Eternity (ch. 3)

- There are seasons marked by joy & seasons marked by sorrow—and neither is out of bounds.
- We are creatures of eternity experiencing the limits and frustrations of time. But it will not always be this way...

Savoring the Bitter & the Sweet Under the Sun

- Being honest before God...

Encountering the God of Eternal Glory

“The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.” (Ecc. 12:13-14)

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ...24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” (Rom. 8:18-25)