

Come Follow Me
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Week 36
Proverbs - Ecclesiastes

The word “Ecclesiastes” is a Hebrew word meaning Teacher or Preacher. As you may know the Book of Ecclesiastes is written by King Solomon son of David. Like his father David Solomon was himself a Songwriter and a Philosopher of sorts. Here in this book he seems to be contemplating life and the meaning of this earthly experience. He starts off:

2 **Vanity** of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all *is* **vanity**.

3 What **profit** hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?

4 *One* generation passeth away, and *another* generation cometh: but the **earth** abideth for ever.

5 The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.

6 The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirlleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to **his circuits**.

7 All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea *is* not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.

8 All things *are* full of labour; man cannot utter *it*: the eye is not **satisfied** with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

(Ecclesiastes 1:2-8)

Now, Just so we are clear on who Solomon was. He is considered to be one of the richest men to have ever lived. It is believed that he received \$40 billion in gold each year. Bringing his fortune to \$2.2 Trillion. Just to put that into perspective, Bill Gates today has a net worth of \$114 Billion. Solomon’s net worth was over 50 times that. This guy had everything that anyone could ever wish for. Money more than he could spend, power, popularity. And to top it all off in 1 Kings 11:3 we learn that he had 700 wives and 300 concubines. I’m not sure how that is even possible. Could you imagine trying to remember all of their names, not to mention their birthdays, and anniversaries. He must have been in trouble all the time. It’s no wonder he cries out “Vanity of vanities, all this vanity”. But, I believe there are several things we can learn from Solomon’s struggles.

First at the end of Chapter one, in verse 18 he says:

“For in much wisdom *is* much grief: and he that increaseth **knowledge** increaseth **sorrow**.”

He must be talking about worldly knowledge here. I believe he was watching too much on the news channels. That knowledge would definitely increase your sorrow, and your anxiety as you learn about all the awful things that happen throughout the world. But, heavenly knowledge, heavenly wisdom. Those are the things that bring great joy and understanding, great peace and learning. Those are the things that we seek after. Jesus taught:

“27 **Peace** I leave with you, my **peace** I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be **troubled**, neither let it be afraid.” -John 14:27

Perhaps Solomon was getting too much worldly media and not enough scriptures that caused him to curse knowledge and wisdom.

The second things we can learn from Solomon's trials is found in chapter 2 verse 17:

“17 Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun *is* grievous unto me: for all *is* vanity and **vexation** of spirit.”

We are currently doing a remodel of our house and my second oldest son who is 15 gets to be my helper in this whole process. At first he dreaded it. He had a bad attitude about the whole project. He spent hours upon hours tearing up tile and mortar, scraping and chiseling the floor to get it all up, then what seemed like millions of staples had to be removed. You could say that he hated life, and the work was grievous to him. But then something changed. As we worked alongside each other it actually became a wonderful experience for both of us. It was still the same work as before, but it felt different. We both had good attitudes, we joked and laughed with each other and the project became a delight. My wife asked him “what changed? What made the difference from when you started to now where it seems like you are having fun?” His wise words were this: “I put my pride on the shelf, I forgot about myself, and chose to have a good attitude.” My 15 year old son could teach Solomon the preacher a lesson or two.

I love the story I came across on my mission that has given my much encouragement over years, its called “The man and the rock”

“A story has been told of a time when the Lord told a man he had work for him to do.

The Lord showed him a large rock in front of the man's cabin.

The Lord explained that **the man was to push against the rock with all his might.**

This the man did, day after day.

For many months he toiled from sun up to sundown, his shoulders set squarely against the cold, massive surface of the unmoving rock, pushing with all his might.

Each night, the man returned to his cabin sore and worn out. Seeing that the man was showing signs of discouragement, Satan decided to enter the picture by placing thoughts into the man's mind such as:

“You have been pushing against that rock for a long time, and it hasn't budged. You are never going to be able to move it.”

These thoughts began to discourage and dishearten the man even more.

In the midst of battling discouragement, the man decided to make it a matter of prayer and take his troubled thoughts to the Lord.

“Lord,” he said, “I have laboured long and hard in your service, putting all my strength to do that which You have asked. Yet, after all this time, I have not even budged that rock by half a centimetre. I am failing You.”

To this the Lord responded compassionately:

“My friend, when I asked you to serve me and you accepted, I told you that your task was to push against the rock with all your strength, which you have done.

Never once did I mention to you that I expected you to move it. Your task was to push. And now you come to me, with your strength spent, thinking that you have failed. But, is that really so?

Look at yourself. Your arms are strong and muscled, your back sinewy and sturdy, your hands are callused from constant pressure, and your legs have become massive and hard.

Through opposition, you have grown much and your abilities now surpass that which you used to have. Yet you haven't moved the rock.

But, son, I did not ask you to move the rock. I simply asked you to push. It is my job to move the rock.”

I have found in my life that anything worth doing is worth doing right, and putting my whole efforts into. In that process I have found that the “work” becomes a joy and a satisfaction to my soul.

The last thing I would like to mention about Solomon's teachings is as he concludes this big saga about how life is hard and has sorrow and pain regardless of all the wealth one might have. In his final few verses he understands the meaning of all this. The purpose of life is outlined in one verse. Starting in verse 8 he says:

8 ¶ Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all *is* vanity.

9 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.

10 The preacher sought to find out **acceptable words**: and *that which* was written was upright, *even* words of truth.

11 The words of the wise *are* as **goads** (these were sharp sticks used to drive oxen), and as nails fastened *by* the masters of assemblies, *which* are given from one shepherd.

12 And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books *there is* no end; and much **study** *is* a weariness of the flesh.

13 ¶ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: **Fear God**, and **keep** his commandments: for this *is* the whole **duty** of man.

The original text reads just slightly different. The word “duty” you can see is in italics. Denoting that this word was added to make the sentence sound more complete. But listen to the meaning of that phrase without the added words.

“Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole of man.”

If we take away all the worldly distractions and look at the sole purpose of our existence in this mortal life it boils down to this one all important doctrine. Fear God, and keep his commandments. In this you will find safety and peace.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Link:

<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/richest-men-in-history-vladimir-putin-bill-gates-and-warren-buffett-arent-even-close-2017-08-09#:~:text=Then%20there's%20King%20Solomon%2C%20who,the%20richest%20of%20all%20time.>

Link:

<https://goodnewsunlimited.com/the-man-and-the-rock/>

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