

A Wise Investment Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

1. Introduction.

- a. 11:1-6 begins the final section of Ecclesiastes. It's a section which captures the essence of how to live out the world-view that Solomon's been teaching.
- b. Our lives are incredibly short, but the ironic thing about a life under the sun is that while we might have knowledge of what's to come in eternity (i.e., judgement), no one has knowledge of what's to come for them in this short, temporary life.
 - i. Nobody can know what is to come for them in life—good or bad.
 - ii. Nobody can control what is to come for them in life—good or bad.
- c. From 11:1 - 12:14, Solomon is going to call us to pursue life fully and with much boldness, but also with an understanding of how God desires us to view His good gifts. Everyone will give an account for what they've done with His good gifts.
 - i. This is as close as Solomon gets to talking about faith.
 - ii. However, while it's a kind of faith that's unable to predict what may come for you under the sun, it's a kind of faith that lives with absolute certainty of what will come for you above the sun.

2. Vss.1-2 – Solomon, the Financial Advisor.

- a. Two popular views.
 - i. View 1: Almsgiving and generosity.
 - 1. Similar language to that of proverbs found in the Near Ancient East (ANE).
 - a. *“Do good, throw away your bread on the waters, and one day you will be rewarded.”* (Arabian)
 - b. *“Do a good deed and throw it in the water; and when it dries, you will find it.”* (Egyptian)

2. Similar themes found in other biblical proverbs (e.g., Prov. 19:17).
 3. This is the traditional understanding of the proverb's meaning.
- ii. View 2: Investment, especially in overseas trade.
1. Solomon was heavily invested in overseas trade (1Kings 9:26-28, 10:22).
 2. Proverbs 31:14 uses the language of ships involved in foreign foods (cf., "bringing bread from afar").
 3. V.1 should be held together with v.2, which is an obvious allusion to financial investment.
 - a. It would be difficult to understand v.2 as somehow being a reference to "almsgiving/generosity."
 - b. Understanding v.1 as a statement about generosity is the traditional view, but it came about due to a poor translation of the Hebrew verb rendered as "cast." Despite most translating the term as "cast," many scholars agree it should be rendered "let loose" or "send."
- iii. The second view, then, is the better understanding of the proverb's meaning.
- b. The point of the proverb is Solomon's way of calling us to just do something.
- i. Solomon despised hoarders and misers (cf. 4:8).
 - ii. Solomon is concerned about the joyful life, and as we saw in 10:19, money is a great means to obtaining joy in life.
 - iii. To Solomon's mind, there is zero value in simply hoarding and saving your money, especially if it's due to fear of the unknown. For life is far too short to worry.
- c. Whatever the exact meaning of verses 1-2 the underlying principle is clear—you only lose what you choose to keep. Therefore, do something.
- i. On the surface, this appears to be a rather worldly principle, indeed, even unspiritual.

- ii. However, a proper view of money doesn't separate the secular from the spiritual. God gave us money and is concerned with what we choose to do with it. Therefore, the call to enjoy your money is actually godly counsel.

3. V. 3.

- a. God created the world a certain way, therefore, a level of expectation for what will happen in life is appropriate.
 - i. As sure as a rain cloud will pour forth its water, or a tree lies where it falls, so also there's a certain level of expectation to the nature of how money works.
 - ii. A wise investment—or better, a diversified investment— should yield an expected value.
- b. The point of illustrating with rain clouds and falling trees is simply to communicate the absurdity of not following the counsel.
 - i. No one debates that a rain cloud will bring forth rain, or that a falling tree will lie where it falls. So also, no one should argue with the wisdom of a diversified investment. It is an obvious reality to life, yet so many fail to understand the wisdom.
 - ii. It is the fool who either chooses to spend everything, or hoard everything. In the end, these are the ones who lose everything.

4. V. 4.

- a. The mark of a fool is one that is constantly paralyzed by the fear of the unknown.
- b. Solomon's point is there will never be a perfect time for anything. If you wait for a perfect time, soon it will be too late for anything. Therefore, get some urgency and do something.
 - i. Stop trying to discern that which you cannot discern.
 - ii. Instead, live in accordance to principles of known wisdom.
 - iii. For it is the one who lives in paralysis who misses opportunities for joy.

5. V. 5.

- a. This world is controlled by a Sovereign Creator.
 - i. Few people always have things go according to plan.
 - ii. This is the reason so many live in a constant state of anxiety. They are trying to control that which they can't control, or trying to understand that which God has not revealed.
 - iii. Instead, we all must embrace the fact that God ordains all things after the counsel of His will, and then rest in this truth.

6. V. 6.

- a. Since we don't know if tomorrow will bring something good or something bad, do something now so that you are prepared for whichever comes.
- b. In other words, preparation is wisdom.

7. Conclusion.

- a. The passage is marked by a thrice-repeated phrase—"You do not know" (2, 5, 6).
 - i. The overwhelming point is that we do not know, and therefore, cannot control.
 - ii. Wisdom prepares, but also recognizes preparation does not guarantee.
- b. Luke 12:17-21.
 - i. There is a kind of wisdom and preparation that may make us rich in this world, but does not make us rich toward God.
 - ii. True wisdom says, do not invest in the temporary self, but in eternity.
 - iii. What controls your time and money? What's the motivation for why you do what you do?
 - iv. What you do now will determine much of what will come for you in eternity. This is not a statement about salvation, but reward!

- c. Matthew 6:20.
 - i. Jesus commands you to store up for yourself treasures in heaven.
 - ii. The lie of this age is that whatever you give away (e.g., finances, time, skill) is what you have lost. Jesus states the opposite—only what you give away in the name of Christ is what you will keep. In fact, this was the motivation of Christ Himself at Gethsemane.
- d. When all is said and done, this is a call to faith. It's a call to trust in the promises of God.
 - i. Solomon says to be wise so you might not find yourself in earthly poverty.
 - ii. Jesus says to be wise so you might not find yourself in eternal poverty.

Small Group Questions:

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. What are some wise, or maybe unwise, practices you have regarding your time, skills, and money? Why?
3. What does Jesus call a wise investment? Why does He say this?
4. What are ways you can start investing into eternity? And if you're not, what are some lies you're maybe believing that are preventing you from investing into eternity?
5. What are some systems you can put into place to help you change?