

COMMUNION

Ecc 9-10

Good morning and thank you for joining us! We're continuing our study through the book of Ecclesiastes, so would you please turn in your bibles to Ecclesiastes chapter 9?

I know it's been a couple of weeks, so let's take a moment to remind ourselves where we are in our study before we dive in.

The author of Ecclesiastes is the king of Israel, Solomon. And Solomon is the richest, wisest king in all of history. And you would think that a man who has all the money in the world, and all the wisdom in the world would be the happiest man in the world. But he's not. He's utterly miserable.

And what led him to his misery? Solomon's weakness was women. And it was these women who led his heart to wander from the Lord.

1 Kings 11 1 But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites— 2 from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. 3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. 4 For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God,

as was the heart of his father David. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David.

We're studying a man who has more money than we could ever dream of, more possessions, more houses, he has more sex than we could ever imagine, and he's empty. What you and I are reading are the desperate words of an empty man, searching for the meaning of life apart from God.

We're gonna study chapters 9-10

The title of this mornings message is Life's not Fair!

Let's pray

It's interesting, David was Solomons father. And it was David who penned these words

Psalm 39 6 Surely every man walks about like a shadow;

Surely they busy themselves in vain;

He heaps up riches,

And does not know who will gather them.

7 "And now, Lord, what do I wait for?

My hope is in You.

That was the difference between King David and King Solomon. David, despite his sins and his failures, constantly drew his heart back to the Lord. But Solomon refused to draw near to God, and

he's spiraling. Oh Solomon had the knowledge of who God is, but his wives drove his heart away from God.

And in this morning's text you'll see a recurring theme. Solomon is wrestling with the injustices in life. The world's wisest man in history can't figure out why bad things happen to good people, and good things happen to bad people.

1-2

1 For I considered all this in my heart, so that I could declare it all: that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God. People know neither love nor hatred by anything they see before them. 2 All things come alike to all:

One event happens to the righteous and the wicked;
To the good, [fn] the clean, and the unclean;
To him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice.
As is the good, so is the sinner;
He who takes an oath as he who fears an oath. Bad things happen to all people, and this can be a huge source of frustration. Sometimes life just doesn't make sense.

Deuteronomy 29:29 "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

It's impossible for us to plumb the depths of who God is and understand all His ways. There are some things that only God understands.

And Solomon in all his wisdom can't handle this explanation. His thinking is fatalistic-he says we'll it doesn't really matter. And now for the next several verses he's going to talk about the inevitability of death.

3-4

3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

4 But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. In ancient Israel, dogs weren't pets. **SHOW PIC** Just like in Haiti and other countries today, dogs are scavengers. They're dirty and they're mangy and they're despised. **CLOSE PIC**

Of course **SHOW PIC** the lion is the king of beasts, the mighty majestic animal. And Solomon says you know what, a living mutt is better than a dead king. **CLOSE PIC**

Hey as long as you're alive, no matter who you are, there's hope. There's potential to repent. And yet, the moment you die, you forfeit any possibility for change for all eternity.

For every person who's apart from Christ, death is the most ominous thing that they face because it means the forfeiting of change. Death seals your eternal state forever.

That's why death is such a big deal. Die without Jesus and you will live without Jesus forever in hell.

But die with Jesus and you will live forever with Jesus in heaven.

Better to be a living dog than a dead lion, at least you still have the possibility for change.

5-6

5 For the living know that they will die;

But the dead know nothing,

And they have no more reward,

For the memory of them is forgotten.

6 Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished;

Nevermore will they have a share

In anything done under the sun. Too many people live as if they're going to live forever. None of us are guaranteed our next breath.

You know, as a chaplain for the city and as a pastor I'm around death an awful lot. I could stand here for 2 hours and tell you stories you would not believe.

I'm just gonna tell you, in fact I'll plead with you. If there's a statement you need to make to someone, you need to say it today. Because once you're dead those chances are over.

If there's something you need to do for someone else, do it today.

We do not know what tomorrow holds. Please, do not take this day, this gift from God for granted!!

Now in the middle of Chapter 9, Solomon draws some important conclusions. He says that in light of death's inevitability, here are four suggestions for how we should live our life. Here they are.

1st is in v7 Since death is inevitable for all of us, enjoy life.

7 Go, eat your bread with joy,
And drink your wine with a merry heart;
For God has already accepted your works.

Life is short. Take some time and enjoy the blessings of God. Smile, laugh, enjoy what God has blessed us with.

Now here is the second suggestion, verse 8, make sure you're right with God.

8 Let your garments always be white,
And let your head lack no oil.

White is a symbol of righteousness. Oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit. The whole point of life here on earth is to know God and do His will. Life will never make sense if we don't live it for God.

Third suggestion he makes in light of the inevitability of death. Verse 9. Love your spouse.

9 Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun. Life is too short to waste it fussing and fighting with the person you love.

I've heard it said, often the difference between a successful marriage and a mediocre marriage consists of leaving about 3 or 4 things a day unsaid. Life is too short to trade barbs with our spouses.

Well the 4th suggestion Solomon has for us because of the brevity of life, **verse 10 no half-hearted efforts**

10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going. Once you are dead and gone, there are no second chances. Which tells us life is too short for half hearted efforts.

If there is a cause worth believing. If there is a job worth doing. If there is a deed worth undertaking, if there is a game worth playing, then give it all you've got. Give it your best shot, that's the way to live life.

So the 4 things Solomon says here...

V7 Enjoy life

V8 Make sure you're right with God

V9 Have a happy marriage

V10 Give life your all

In v11 he begins to list out several injustices in life, and show how life just isn't fair sometimes.

11 I returned and saw under the sun that—

The race is not to the swift,

Nor the battle to the strong,
Nor bread to the wise,
Nor riches to men of understanding,
Nor favor to men of skill;
But time and chance happen to them all.

In other words, life doesn't always reward the most talented or the hardest worker. and this is frustrating.

Solomon is grieved over the less talented person who just stumbles across success. It's not fair

12 For man also does not know his time:
Like fish taken in a cruel net,
Like birds caught in a snare,
So the sons of men are snared in an evil time,
When it falls suddenly upon them. Have you noticed how little control we have over the circumstances we find ourselves in? You plan your life, you've got all these things that you want to do and all of a sudden, boom! Something happens that blows all your plans up. And there's nothing you can do about it.

Of course we know that we can't control our circumstances, but we control how we respond, and Who we cling to when times get tough.

13-17

13 This wisdom I have also seen under the sun, and it seemed great to me: 14 There was a little city with few men in it; and a great king came against it, besieged it, and built great snares[fn] around it. 15 Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he

by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that same poor man.

16 Then I said:

“Wisdom is better than strength.

Nevertheless the poor man’s wisdom is despised,

And his words are not heard.

17 Words of the wise, spoken quietly, should be heard

Rather than the shout of a ruler of fools. Solomon describes another frustration.

The person who really deserves recognition is the person who gets overlooked or slighted. In this example he describes a poor man who saves the whole city, but nobody ever remembers him.

18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war;

But one sinner destroys much good.” Here's another frustration

One person makes a mistake and it can ruin it for everyone else.

Adam's sin brought ruin on the whole human race.

In Joshua, Aken’s disobedience caused the defeat of an entire nation.

SHOW PIC One guy jumps off sides and the whole Bengals defense gets penalized. **CLOSE PIC** it’s just not fair!

Chapter 10

As chapter 10 begins Solomon is gonna give several examples of injustices in life.

1 Dead flies putrefy[fn] the perfumer's ointment,
And cause it to give off a foul odor;
So does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honor. A
single dead fly in a bottle of perfume will ruin the fragrance
Likewise, one blemish on a person's record can ruin their
reputation

I can think of no more classic example than **SHOW PIC** Richard Nixon. You know if you examine Nixon's record in office, you'll see a long litany of incredible achievements, especially in foreign diplomacy. And yet today, when you hear the name Richard Nixon, you don't think of a distinguished statesman who served his nation for five decades. **SHOW PIC** Now you think of the shame of Watergate, don't you? It's not fair that one blemish can expunge 50 years of public service. **CLOSE PIC**

It was J Vernon McGee who said "A mother spends twenty-one years teaching a son to be wise, and some girl will come along and make a fool out of him in five minutes."
It's not fair!

2 A wise man's heart is at his right hand,
But a fool's heart at his left. Since the right hand was regarded as the side of strength, skill, and favor, the wise man's heart is known as a strength to him. This isn't the case for the fool, whose heart here is depicted at his left.

3 Even when a fool walks along the way,
He lacks wisdom,

And he shows everyone that he is a fool. The foolish person has a way of making their foolishness evident. Oh it may take time, but eventually their foolish behavior and decisions will come to light, their folly will be revealed.

**4 If the spirit of the ruler rises against you,
Do not leave your post;
For conciliation pacifies great offenses.** Conciliation simply means to pacify- to stop someone from being angry.

Solomon is saying hey, even if you're in a difficult situation, don't leave your post.

The wise person doesn't quit their job when the boss gets angry with them. No, wisdom says to maintain your composure, and it can smooth over your mistake.

The lesson is that the self-controlled person who has less rank is really more powerful than the out-of-control supervisor.

5-7

**5 There is an evil I have seen under the sun,
As an error proceeding from the ruler:
6 Folly is set in great dignity,
While the rich sit in a lowly place.
7 I have seen servants on horses,
While princes walk on the ground like servants.** Unfortunately, sometimes a person's work doesn't always receive the recognition it deserves. It's not fair!

One of the tough life lessons young adults have to learn is that working hard, saving money and studying late don't always mean you'll become a success.

Think about it. **SHOW PIC** A guy hits a little round golf ball and makes millions of dollars a year, while families with hard working folks struggle to make ends meet. It often doesn't make sense.

CLOSE PIC

This is why it's so important when we're faced with that which we don't understand, to go back to what we know.

God is still in control! **Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.**

now in v8-10 he gives us examples of foolishness in action

8 He who digs a pit will fall into it, If you dig a trap for someone, you're the one who will fall in it.

And whoever breaks through a wall will be bitten by a serpent.

Notice they don't tear down the wall-this is describing impulsive behavior-there's a cost to acting rashly.

9 He who quarries stones may be hurt by them, In Solomon's day, stones or large rocks were placed as land markers. He's saying "If you try and change the boundaries, the very rock you moved will fall on you,"

And he who splits wood may be endangered by it. I'll never forget watching my brother split wood in our backyard 30 years ago, and

a piece of the steel chisel flew off and wedged into his knee. That reminds me of v9.

V10 is our memory verse

10 If the ax is dull,
And one does not sharpen the edge,
Then he must use more strength;
But wisdom brings success. The foolish will continue to use a dull ax, instead of being wise and sharpening the edge.

Hey and this can be us! We live in a busy world. And we can be busy doing good things for God. But in time, we too can become like a blunt axe. We get run down, and wore out.

So how do we sharpen our blade? By spending alone time with the Lord, asking Him to empower us that we may do the work He's called us to do.

Tragically, lots of Christians just think 'I have to try harder, push harder, think longer to get it done.' No, what's needed is some sharpening through empowerment by the HS. and that comes from spending time in the Word and prayer.

Now v11-14 talks about the speech of the foolish

11 A serpent may bite when it is not charmed;
The babbler is no different. Like a snake who must continually be charmed with a flute, babblers must be kept happy or they'll bite you.

12-14

12 The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious,

But the lips of a fool shall swallow him up;

13 The words of his mouth begin with foolishness,

And the end of his talk is raving madness.

14 A fool also multiplies words.

No man knows what is to be;

Who can tell him what will be after him? The foolish person speaks a multitude of words with absolute certainty, but he can't really say for sure all that he's babbling about. Isn't this what we see today-so many experts who really don't know what they're talking about?

15 The labor of fools wearies them,

For they do not even know how to go to the city! The fool has no desire to work; or when they do eventually work, they quickly become weary. They can't see that it is wise to work now in order to prepare for the future.

The fool has no sense of direction or goal. They live their life as if it were meaningless, directionless.

We live in the information age. We have more knowledge at our fingertips than every previous generation put together. But remember what the bible says in **2 Timothy 3:7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

Now the rest of the chapter details how foolishness corrupts a nation.

16-18

16 Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child,
And your princes feast in the morning!

17 Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles,
And your princes feast at the proper time—
For strength and not for drunkenness!

18 Because of laziness the building decays,
And through idleness of hands the house leaks. V18 pictures the
fall of a nation, and the previous verses give the reason for fall —
leaders who are foolish, selfish, and concerned only for their own
pleasure and good will cause the ruin of a nation.

19-20

19 A feast is made for laughter,
And wine makes merry;
But money answers everything. Money has an answer, it's always
talking, and it's saying buh bye! See ya later!

20 Do not curse the king, even in your thought;
Do not curse the rich, even in your bedroom;
For a bird of the air may carry your voice,
And a bird in flight may tell the matter. This is where the saying,
“A little bird told me” comes from. How many times have we been
shocked to learn that which we've spoken in secrecy has been
revealed to others. It's not fair!

Solomon is bemoaning life's injustices over and over again.
We've seen over these few weeks he says under the sun nearly
30 times The wisest man in the world is saying-when you look at
life, life just isn't fair.

And that's the conclusion we will always come to when we look at this life on the horizontal, under the sun. Think about it.

Under the sun...

Its not fair that Jacob blessed Ephraim instead of Manassa

Under the sun...Its not fair Moses had to wander the wilderness for 40 years

Its not fair Joseph had to suffer

Its not fair Jonathan son of saul died in battle

Its not fair Jeremiah never saw revival

Its not fair Daniel led into captivity

Its not fair JTB was beheaded

None of these make any sense on the horizontal do they? Hey We all have things we look at in our lives where we're left scratching our head-this isn't right-it's just not fair.

But remember, Solomons problem was he was looking under the sun. He has to look over the sun, to the perfect Son Jesus Christ to get the proper perspective on this life.

Hey and talk about fairness, what's more unfair than God sending His perfect Son Jesus Christ to die in our place? That doesn't seem fair does it? No that's the love of the Father for His children.

I'm so grateful for that aren't you?

1 Cor 11 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat;[fn] this is My body which is broken[fn] for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

1 Cor 11:25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

When we struggle with the injustices of life, we must put our confidence in the sovereignty of God.