A Revival of Reverence – Eccl. 5:1-7

Intro:

1) **We are living in a world driven by trends**
    a. Every week there's something new that's blowing up
        i. A new dance, a new phrase, a new challenge
    b. One minute everybody's doing it
        i. The next minute it's gone
    c. You've seen it
        i. People doing things just because it's trending
            1. No thought, no depth, just following the motions

2) **Here's the effect of consuming that sort of lifestyle**
    a. People begin to say whatever gets them the most likes
    b. Act in whatever way gets them the most attention
    c. Show up just to be seen, not to be serious

3) **If we are honest – that same mindset creeps into the church as well**
    a. Truth statements:
        i. Not everything that trends is truth
        ii. Not everything that's popular is profitable
        iii. Not everything that's common is correct

4) **What we are experiencing is a church generation learning to:**
    a. Scroll quick - Speak quick - React quick

5) **Q – how does that impact you walk with Jesus?**
    a. In this fast-pace, ever-trending society – it's not often encouraged to slow down before God
    b. We've learned how to be casual about everything – and unfortunately, that has crept into our walk with the Lord
    c. Rather than approach God with reverence, it's trending to approach Him with recklessness

6) **It's like God saw that this was going to be a challenge and addressed it long before our time**
    a. In Ecclesiastes 5 we read how people were struggling in showing up to the house of God
        i. Talk too much
        ii. Thought too little
        iii. Treated the holy causally
    b. In Eccl. 5:1-7 Solomon gives wise advice of a reverential approach to God
        i. This is not about IF you come before God, this is about HOW you come before -+

7) If there has ever been a time for a revival, its now

a. Not a revival of attendance, we need a revival of reverence
b. Sermon: A Revival of Reverence
c. Text: Eccl. 5:1-7

<u>Be Ready – V1</u>

1) **Solomon opens up chapter 5 with a command that addresses having a meaningful, worshipful approach to God**
    a. Side note – Solomon gives a command as to how we are to come before God
        i. Regulatory language
        ii. Why? Because there is a right way to approach God
            1. Right God and right way
        iii. Story of Queen Elizabeth visiting Alice Frazier – Marshall Heights
            1. 1991 visit accompanied by Barbra Bush and Mayor Sharon Pratt
            2. 67 year old great-grandmother
            3. Alice hugged the Queen
            4. Newspapers – "Breach of protocol"
        iv. Sometimes we approach God that way – without reverence to His authority

2) **The Preparations of our hearts**
    a. Sentence – God is not merely concerned that we approach Him, but how we approach Him
        i. Before Solomon tells the worshipper what to say, what to sacrifice, or what to do – he addresses how they are to approach God
    b. "Keep thy foot" – watch your step!
        i. <u>Keep</u> – guard, protect, beware, take heed, careful attention
        ii. This word is used in the context of protecting something of value or having a careful observance of an obligation
            1. Ex – Gen 2:15
                a. Adam was entrusted with the responsibility of "keeping" the Garden of Eden
            2. Ex. 20:6 – "keep my commandments"
        iii. Likewise – Solomon is placing on the shoulders of the worshipper the responsibility of approaching God reverently
    c. 2 unique understandings as to what is being referred to here by this imperative
        i. Literal sense – take your time and contemplate your approach
            1. This is believed to be a reference to the southern steps of the Temple Mount
                a. Unearthed in the 1960's
            2. Unique design – irregular steps/staggered steps
                a. Shallow and deep
            3. This design was intentional – forced the worshipper to literally "watch their step"
                a. It interrupted their pace
                b. Deliberately made the worshipper slow down when entering and existing God's house
            4. Made the worshipper contemplate their steps as they ascended and descended
            5. Design was intended to make one slow down and think
                a. Don't rush thoughtlessly into worship

ii. How needed is this instruction!
1. We live in a culture of constant activity
a. Rush from one responsibility to the next
2. Unfortunately – that mentality can follow us to church
a. See if this is you
i. Arrive distracted
ii. Preoccupied with what comes "next" on the day
iii. Mentality and responsibly exhausted
iii. Challenge of this command - Don't let your mind be on the next thing, it should be on the main thing
1. Let Sunday worship interrupt the pace of our life like its supposed to
a. Get focused on the right thing - Jesus

d. Figurative sense – this is an edification to consistent faithfulness in your walk with Jesus
i. Guarding your foot is a reference to your way of life
1. <u>Keep thy foot –</u> Hebrew idiom for watching ones conduct and actions
a. This is not simply a command to pay attention to your footing – it's a command for a watchful care over your life
b. Imagery of the foot speaks of the direction and conduct of the way you're living
i. Ps. 119:101, Prov. 4:29
e. Questions to consider for preparation
i. Do I prepare my heart before coming to church?
ii. Do I pray for the service before arriving?
iii. Do I come expecting God to speak through His Word to me?
iv. Is there inconsistency in my daily walk and my Sunday worship?
1. Col. 1:10

3) The Position of our heart
a. This instruction is both unique and important
i. Solomon is not simply telling the worshipper to enter the temple quietly
1. He is instructing the worshipper to approach God with a receptive and obedient heart
b. Textual insight
i. <u>Be more ready</u> – qarav – to approach or draw near
1. Significant word in worship – frequently used in the context of approaching God and BRINGING something acceptable
a. Lev. 1:2 – "bring" – same word
c. Q – what are we bring?
i. Ans – a listening ear and submitted heart

d. <u>Hear</u> – to hear intelligently, carries the implication of obedience
i. "To hear implies not only hearing, but understanding and obedience as well." – Liberty Bible Commentary
ii. Key word – response
iii. In Hebrew understanding – "hearing" was much more than a passive reception of information
1. It carried an expectation of acknowledgement and action

iv. Interesting – hear – "shama"
1. Same word as Deut. 6:4 – the great doctrinal statement and proclamation of recognition and submission
2. Not merely a request to receive info, it was a call for grasping and obedience
v. IOW – "hearing" was intended to produce "doing"

e. When we come to the house of God – we come to listen to the Word of God and be changed
i. our hearts are to be positioned to receive and obey
ii. 3 key questions we should ask ourselves that will change your Sunday worship
1. Lord, what do You want me to understand?
2. Lord, what needs to change in my life?
3. Lord, how should I respond to what Your Word just said?

4) The Practice of our hearts

a. Q – Why do you think this needed to be addressed?
i. Evidently there was a problem with approaching God with mindless, heartless worship in Solomon's day

b. Here Solomon is addressing the temptation of religious ritualistic worship
i. Bringing a sacrifice because that's just what you've done and what you do
ii. Mindless approach with no response to God's Word

c. In this latter part of the verse Solomon contrasts 2 different types of worshippers
i. Hearers and fools

d. Notice what the offering in the hand without obedience in the heart is labeled here – "the sacrifice of fools"
i. Fool – in Hebrew literature, the fool was not someone who lacked intellectual ability
1. The fool was someone who lacked moral judgment and refused to submit to God's Word and Will
a. Ps. 14:1
2. The fool is characterized by:
a. Resistance to instruction
b. Careless speech
c. Siregard for correction
d. Lack of spiritual discernment
3. Prov. 1:7 – a great summary
a. The fool is not someone who has never received instruction – it is someone who, when received, rejected
ii. Notice – its evil
1. Strong Hebrew word indicating something morally evil
a. Root meaning a breaking up of what is good and desirable
2. Depicts something of poor quality or ugly appearance
a. Pharaoh's sick cattle – Gen. 41:3 – ill-favored

e. Challenge - Enter with a heart positioned to hear and do!
i. This tells me a key essence to worshipping God is how I receiving and responding to His Word

Be Reverent – V2-3

1) **Sentence – when we recognize the greatness of the One we are speaking tom we will be more careful and intentional about what we say**
    a. Let me ask you a question – If you were invited to speak to the president , would you prepare with diligence and reverence what you were going to say?
        i. How much more should we be reverent in our speech toward God?
        ii. That's what Solomon is addressing in verses 2-3
    b. Ps. 141:1-3

2) **Addresses the Restraint of our words**
    a. Solomon is basically saying – Watch what you say!
        i. Specifically – "before God"
        ii. Reference to times of public worship
    b. Textual insight
        i. Rash – be in a hurry, overhasty, to accelerate, used as a response to fear - flee
        ii. Hasty – to be quick, at once, swept away
            1. Translated – straightway, make haste, quickly
    c. Did you know your heart utters?
        i. Matt. 12:34, Luke 6:45
        ii. IOW – Every time you open your mouth, your heart is on display
    d. Cultural connection
        i. In the culture of the ancient Near East, appearing before a dignitary or a king was deeply serious and operated with the rigor, danger, and formality of a legal trial
        ii. IOW – when before God, let your words have weight

3) **Addresses the Recognition of God's Worth**
    a. Notice why we need to watch what we say
        i. "…for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth."
    b. This is not a statement about distance, this is about distinction
    c. Solomon is putting us in our place
        i. God is not like me, He is holy and should be approached as such
        ii. Ill - That's no way to speak to mom! – Me to Nate
    d. Key insight – my words bear reverence when I'm mindful of who God is and who I am
        i. Isa. 55:8,9
        ii. Right worship begins with right theology
    e. Let thy words be few – not condemning lengthy prayer, but thoughtless prayer
        i. Vain, empty words – performative religiosity

4) **Addresses the Responsibility of our Words**
    a. Notice how Solomon explains this reality – V3
    b. Basically – dreams and sleep manifest that one is busy and tired, so a multitude of thoughtless words manifest that one is a fool
    c. Prov. 29:11
    d. Prov. 10:19- "In a multitude of words there wanteth not sin…"
    e. Prov. 17:27,28 *

5) Practical application – when we speak before God, do we mean what we say?

a. When we sing – do we mean it?
b. When we praise – do we mean it?
c. When we pray – do we mean it?
d. Is there heartfelt speech before God?

6) My words must have reverence and restraint in the worship of God

a. James 1:19

Be Reliable – V4-6

1) **Solomon closes this thought out by exhorting us to do what we say**
    a. V2-3 Solomon is teaching us to refrain in what we say
    b. V4-6 Solomon is teaching us to follow through with what we say
        i. IOW - Let your word be reliable

2) **Addresses the Promises we make – V4,5**
    a. In Biblical times people often made vows to God, usually in the context of public worship
        i. Deut. 23:21-23
        ii. Mosaic Law did not require a person to make a vow, but when they did, they were obligated to fulfill it

    b. Interesting - We read vow language all through the Bible – in many context, it was made in the atmosphere of distress/desperation
        i. Hannah – 1 Sam. 1:11 – barren and wanting to be with child
        ii. Jacob – Gen 28:20-22 – after the frightening dream of "Jacob's ladder" (V17)
        iii. Jonah – Jonah 2:9 – praying from the belly of the fish
    c. It's east to make a promise to God during times of desperation than to fulfill it during a season of comfort
    d. The context here in Ecclesiastes is talking about making a vow to God – a holy promise to God
        i. The point of these closing verses is simple: if you make a vow, be sure to keep it
        ii. Notice – V5
            1. Old saying – its much easier to make a promise than to keep a promise
        iii. Another way to state Solomon's point – Don't play games with God
            1. Be real – be reliable

3) **Addresses Promises we must not minimize**
    a. Listen to the warning of V6
    b. There are many ways our mouths lead us into sin, here it's highlighting the sin of going back on your word
    c. Angel – messenger, probably a priest
        i. Job was to go around and check on those who made a vow and haven't followed up
        ii. Key word – accountability
    d. Notice the reply – "it was an error" – mistake
        i. Don't make excuses

4) **Application**
    a. Follow through with what you said you would do
        i. Was there conviction in the sermon and you said you wold do something?
        ii. Was there a commitment to a ministry you made before God and have not fulfilled?
        iii. Have you made a vow to raise your child right?
        iv. Marriage vows?
        v. Be consistent in church attendance?
    b. Here's a good word – delayed obedience is not really obedience

5) **When your worship is serious so will your words be**
    a. Ps. 66:13,14

Closing

1) **Solomon closes the passage by describing a right attitude of heart before God**
    a. Fear the Lord
    b. Prov. 1:7 – "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

2) **To fear God is to have a right view of His might and majesty**
    a. Ps. 89:6,7 – " For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him."

3) **What does my life look like when I truly worship in the fear of the Lord?**
    a. I'll come ready
    b. I'll speak reverently
    c. My words will be reliable