

Sermon Notes: Intro to Ecclesiastes

Text: Ecclesiastes 1:1–11 (NKJV) — 1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. 2 “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher; “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” 3 What profit has a man from all his labor In which he toils under the sun? 4 One generation passes away, and another generation comes; But the earth abides forever. 5 The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, And hastens to the place where it arose. 6 The wind goes toward the south, And turns around to the north; The wind whirls about continually, And comes again on its circuit. 7 All the rivers run into the sea, Yet the sea is not full; To the place from which the rivers come, There they return again. 8 All things are full of labor; Man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor the ear filled with hearing. 9 That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun. 10 Is there anything of which it may be said, “See, this is new”? It has already been in ancient times before us. 11 There is no remembrance of former things, Nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come By those who will come after.

Take Away: *Ecclesiastes is an uncomfortable book to us, not because Solomon is a downer, but because Solomon is the one who points out our delusions. He cares far more about showing us the truth rather than making us feel good. “The wounds of a friend are faithful.” He is ruthless in pointing out that you and I are not the main character of the story. Nothing that we can build here under the sun will fix the fundamental problem of the human heart. You and I don’t have the power to shape reality to our desires. Reality under the sun always bites back. True biblical wisdom begins by acknowledging that principle in contentment and gratitude. Ecclesiastes is ultimately a book about faith that is gracious, content, and seeks to enjoy the gifts God gives.*

- I. **Who is the Preacher?:** *(References: Ecclesiastes 1:16, 13-14, 12:13-14; 2 Chronicles 5:2; Ecclesiastes 2:3; Matthew 10:16; Proverbs 8:15-16; Hebrews 5:14)*

- II. **What is the Meaning of “Vanity”:** *(References: Jeremiah 10:15-16; Ephesians 1:11; Ecclesiastes 1:18; Genesis 4:25)*

- III. **The Gospel and Ecclesiastes:** *(References: Ecclesiastes 2:13-14; Romans 5:3-4; Philippians 2:17; Ecclesiastes 9:7; 12:10-11; Colossians 2:2)*

Questions for the Table:

1. Share a story where you endured a crisis and God grew you in faith and wisdom through it.
2. Why is it so easy for us to spin *totalizing narratives* in our minds? Are the stories we tell ourselves reliable? How does Scripture help us here?
3. Discuss Romans 5:1-5. Why is suffering a key component of growing in wisdom? If it is truly godly wisdom, what should it produce in us?
4. Are there areas of your life where you are tempted to seize control of the cosmic levers? (E.g. a new job, marriage, retirement)
5. How should you prepare yourself now for the next “crisis” that is bound to come your way?
6. How does the gospel break the spell of *hevel* under the sun?