

Stop Learning the Hard Way: ECCLESIASTES

Nov. 18/19 Sermon Notes

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

¹ These are the words of the Teacher, King David's son, who ruled in Jerusalem.

² **"Everything is meaningless,"** says the Teacher, **"completely meaningless!"**

³ What do people get for all their hard work under the sun? ⁴ Generations come and generations go, but the earth never changes. ⁵ The sun rises and the sun sets, then hurries around to rise again. ⁶ The wind blows south, and then turns north. Around and around it goes, blowing in circles. ⁷ Rivers run into the sea, but the sea is never full. Then the water returns again to the rivers and flows out again to the sea. ⁸ Everything is wearisome beyond description. No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content. ⁹ History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new. ¹⁰ Sometimes people say, "Here is something new!" But actually it is old; nothing is ever truly new. ¹¹ We don't remember what happened in the past, and in future generations, no one will remember what we are doing now.

Wisdom is meaningless

Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

¹² I, the Teacher, was king of Israel, and I lived in Jerusalem. ¹³ I devoted myself to search for understanding and to explore by wisdom everything being done under heaven. I soon discovered that God has dealt a tragic existence to the human race. ¹⁴ I observed everything going on under the sun, and really, it is all meaningless—like chasing the wind.

¹⁵ What is wrong cannot be made right. What is missing cannot be recovered...

¹⁶ I said to myself, "Look, I am wiser than any of the kings who ruled in Jerusalem before me. I have greater wisdom and knowledge than any of them." ¹⁷ So I set out to learn everything from wisdom to madness and folly. But I learned firsthand that pursuing all this is like chasing the wind.

¹⁸ The greater my wisdom, the greater my grief.

To increase knowledge only increases sorrow.

Pleasure is meaningless

Ecclesiastes 2:1-2

I said to myself, **"Come on, let's try pleasure. Let's look for the 'good things' in life."** But I found that this, too, was meaningless. ² So I said, "Laughter is silly. What good does it do to seek pleasure?"

Ecclesiastes 2:9-11

⁹ So I became greater than all who had lived in Jerusalem before me, and my wisdom never failed me. ¹⁰ Anything I wanted, I would take. **I denied myself no pleasure.** I even found great pleasure in hard work, a reward for all my labors. ¹¹ But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless—like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere.

Work is meaningless

Ecclesiastes 2:18-26

¹⁸ **I came to hate all my hard work here on earth,** for I must leave to others everything I have earned. ¹⁹ And who can tell whether my successors will be wise or foolish? Yet they will control everything I have gained by

my skill and hard work under the sun. How meaningless! ²⁰ So I gave up in despair, **questioning the value of all my hard work** in this world.

²¹ Some people work wisely with knowledge and skill, then must leave the fruit of their efforts to someone who hasn't worked for it. This, too, is meaningless, a great tragedy. ²² So what do people get in this life for all their hard work and anxiety? ²³ **Their days of labor are filled with pain and grief; even at night their minds cannot rest.** It is all meaningless.

ECCLESIASTES 3:9-13

⁹ What do people really get for all their hard work? ¹⁰ I have seen the burden God has placed on us all. ¹¹ **Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart,** but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end. ¹² So I concluded there is nothing better than to be happy and enjoy ourselves as long as we can. ¹³ And people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor, **for these are gifts from God.**

Bottom Line: God Brings Meaning to the Meaningless

Ecclesiastes 2:24-26

²⁴ So I decided there is nothing better than to enjoy food and drink and to find satisfaction in work. Then I realized that these pleasures are from the hand of God. ²⁵ **For who can eat or enjoy anything apart from him?**^[b] ²⁶ God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please him.

ECCLESIASTES 12:13-14

¹³ That's the whole story. Here now is my **final conclusion**: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty. ¹⁴ God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.

Next Step Questions:

1. What do I tend to find my meaning and worth in?

Wisdom, Pleasure, Work

2. How might my relationship with God bring meaning to these things? Do I have a real relationship with God?