

Sunday, September Twentieth

Remember this lyric from Queen – “Does anybody know what we are living for?” As we approach the halfway point of our journey through Ecclesiastes, it seems as though Solomon would likely echo the sentiment of this question. So far, he has determined that everything is meaningless, but does that mean that the world is truly void of anything meaningful? In today’s passage, Solomon begins to build the groundwork for a possible answer to this question.

Read: Ecclesiastes 7:1-14

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- Given what he laid out in the first six chapters, why might Solomon contend that the day of death is better than the day of birth? (see verse 1)
- According to Solomon, what is the destiny for everyone? (see verse 2)

Solomon is partially right – all of us will eventually die. But as Christians, we know that our ultimate destiny lies on the last day when Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead, and we who believe will experience the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting (Apostle’s Creed for the win!). In this sense, death does not have the final say as Solomon seems to believe it does.

- How does Solomon describe the nature of wisdom? (see verses 11-12)

Respond: Apply what you’ve learned in prayer and action

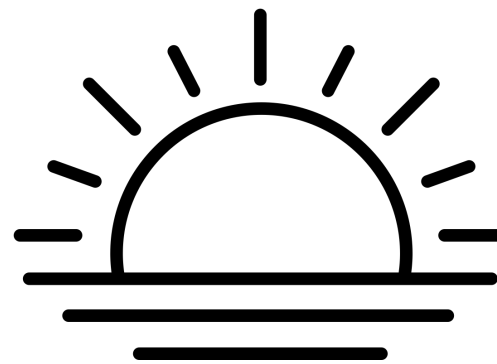
Is there someone in your life who might share Solomon’s thoughts regarding our destiny? Consider how you might be a witness to her or him in terms of what followers of Jesus can look forward to on the day when He returns.

Questions? Comments? Contact Pastor Chris at chris.futch@oursaviorfl.org or (727) 344-2684.

Read through the Bible



Ecclesiastes Week 1



Monday, September Fourteenth

Welcome to our two-week journey through Ecclesiastes! This booklet is laid out to help you walk through a portion of the events in Ecclesiastes every day. Whether you start off your day with this, find some time during your lunch break, or sit down with it before you go to bed, the hope would be for you to engage with the Bible on a consistent basis as God engages you and calls you into His story. May your journey be filled with newfound perspective as you dive into this account of the meaning of life! – Pastor Chris

Read: Ecclesiastes 1:1-18

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

For a brief video introduction to Ecclesiastes, please check out our website (oursaviorfl.org) or our Facebook page.

- What is Solomon's initial thesis for his book? (see verse 2)

Solomon's claim that everything is meaningless is a pretty shocking claim given that he was the king of Israel at that time. Would God agree with his assessment?

- According to Solomon, why is there nothing new under the sun? (see verses 3-11)
- Why does Solomon conclude that his quest for wisdom was merely "a chasing after the wind"? (see verses 12-18)

Solomon had everything that the world had to offer – power, riches, fame, you name it. And yet, as he makes clear in this rather depressing account in chapter 1, Solomon desires something more. We'll find out what that 'more' is over these next two weeks!

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

As you begin this journey through Ecclesiastes, take some time to think about what is meaningful in your life right now. What are you thankful for? What are you concerned about? In what ways are you looking to grow? Take some time to pray through these things with your heavenly Father. He's listening!

Saturday, September Nineteenth

In the TV show *The Good Place*, people who die are either sent to "the Good Place" or "the Bad Place." Each person is assigned a numerical score based on their morality and conduct in life, and that number determines where they end up. If they go to "the Good Place," they receive everything they could ever want, but if they end up going to "the Bad Place," they experience an eternity of torture. With this premise in mind, the show begins with a woman who ends up at "the Good Place" by mistake. Not only must she hide her past sins, but she also has to work to fit in as a righteous and virtuous person. In today's passage, Solomon lays out his own philosophy on the nature of the afterlife by providing us with a rather different take than *The Good Place*.

Read: Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- According to Solomon, what is the problem for those who have great wealth, possessions, and honor? (see verses 1-3)
- What conclusion does Solomon make concerning where all people go? (see verse 6)

The Old Testament understanding of the afterlife was murky at best. Solomon, for example, simply assumed that when people die, they all end up in the same place (although he wasn't quite sure where that place was). However, when Jesus came into the world, He revealed the nature of the afterlife as well as the notion that not all will end up in the same place (see Matthew 25:31-46). Today, we can be assured that those of us who are in Christ Jesus will spend eternity with Him!

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Take some time today to thank God the Father for assuring us of our salvation in His Son, Jesus. Specifically, give thanks that we do not have to let our hearts be troubled because we have heard and believed the good news of the Gospel.

Friday, September Eighteenth

This past summer, a Tennessee state senator was charged with stealing more than \$600,000 in federal grant money in order to pay for personal expenses like her wedding, honeymoon, and later on, her divorce. The money was supposed to fund a nurse training program, but the state senator transferred the cash instead to her own personal accounts. So, how exactly did she get caught? The Health and Human Resources department of Tennessee received an anonymous tip back in 2016 from someone with proof that she had purchased a \$550 Louis Vuitton handbag with the grant money. In today's passage, Solomon points out how this sort of corruption is nothing new under the sun.

Read: Ecclesiastes 5:1-20

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- According to Solomon, what should you do if you make a vow to God? Why might it be better to not make a vow at all? (see verses 4-7)

Jesus echoed Solomon's sentiment in Matthew 5:33-37 by calling on people not to take an oath, but rather to respond with a simple 'yes' or 'no.'

- What should people not be surprised by? (see verses 8-9)
- What problem does Solomon present for those who love money and wealth? (see verse 10)

British Old Testament scholar Derek Kidner provides great insight into this problem: "If anything is worse than the addiction money brings, it is the emptiness it leaves. Man, with eternity in his heart, needs better nourishment than this."

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

What sort of value do you place on money and wealth? How do Solomon's words encourage you to guard against the dissatisfaction that can come about from not having "enough"?

Tuesday, September Fifteenth

Did you know that over the next 10 years, it is estimated that a couple hundred thousand people will be moving to the Tampa Bay area? That may seem like a crazy estimate, but when you think about it for a minute, our area truly has a lot to offer: sun, beaches, professional sports teams, restaurants, museums, and let's not forget, Mazzaro's Italian Market! With so many pleasures all nearby, it's no wonder that Florida is one of the fastest growing states. In today's passage, Solomon talks about his experiences with life's pleasures and provides another sobering conclusion.

Read: Ecclesiastes 2:1-26

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- How did Solomon feel after experiencing all of the pleasures that life had to offer? (see verses 1-11)
- While Solomon concluded that it was better to be wise than to be foolish, what did he realize would happen to both the wise person and to the fool? (see verse 16)
- Why does Solomon find work to be meaningless? (see verses 17-21)

Solomon realized that storing up treasures on earth was meaningless because once he died, somebody else would take possession of his treasures, and who knows what she or he would do with them. This is why Jesus tells us to store up our treasures in heaven instead (see Matthew 6:19-21). As Christians, our faith in Jesus provides us with meaning in a seemingly meaningless world!

- Who does Solomon believe is the source of what we experience on earth? (see verses 24-25)

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Think about the pleasures in life that you are currently chasing after. How does they satisfy you? How do they fall short? Consider removing one of those pleasures from your life this week and replacing it with some meaningful time in prayer.

Wednesday, September Sixteenth

What's your favorite season? Summer? Fall? Winter? Spring? Six days from now, we will officially leave Summer behind and step into Fall. This change in season will also mean many changes in our daily lives too – from a lower power bill (hopefully!) to an increase in consumption of pumpkin spice flavored goodies. In today's passage, Solomon discusses the many seasons that we experience throughout our lifetimes.

Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-22

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- According to Solomon, what sorts of seasons do we experience in life? (see verses 2-8)

Notice the variety of seasons that Solomon lists, but also consider the monotony as denoted by the continual use of the word 'time.'

- What does Solomon mean that God has "set eternity in the human heart"? (see verse 11)

As His created beings, God has placed a longing and an awareness for the eternal on our hearts. Perhaps this was why Solomon was desiring something more than the pleasures and toils of earth.

- How does Solomon's question in verse 21 demonstrate his struggle to find meaning in this life and the next?

Today, we don't have to wonder what will happen when we die because God has graciously revealed to us that those who believe in Jesus will not perish. Instead, we will experience eternal life (John 3:16).

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Consider the 'season' of life you are in right now. How have you seen God at work during this time? Take some time to thank Him and praise Him for being with you in both the good seasons and the not-so-good seasons of life.

Thursday, September Seventeenth

When God created the heavens and the earth, every time He created something, He saw that it was good. But when God created Adam, He noticed that something was not good – Adam needed a relationship. Since that time, God has shown time and time again that He prioritizes relationships. In today's passage, Solomon also speaks to the value of relationships.

Read: Ecclesiastes 4:1-16

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- Why does Solomon say that the dead and the unborn are better off than those who are alive? (see verses 1-3)
- What did Solomon observe in regard to someone achieving success? (see verse 4)

Solomon observed that those who work hard and are successful oftentimes attract envy from those around them. In this sense, if hard work and success only attract jealousy and hatred, what incentive is there to continue doing these things? Consider, for example, a young lady who grows up in poverty. In her teenage years, she works hard to be able to go to college only to have her family members ridicule her and put her down for it. With jealousy and hatred abounding from people who are supposed to support and encourage her, what incentive does she have to keep going?

- How does Solomon affirm the importance and power of relationships? (see verses 7-12)

For perhaps the first time in his book, Solomon finds something that is not meaningless – relationships! Specifically, he finds value in the companionship and friendship that comes about when two or more people are gathered together.

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Especially amidst this pandemic, we are reminded that God created us to be in relationship with Him and with those around us. Take some time today to contact someone you care for.