

# **Ecclesiastes Chapter Two**

## **Review**

- In our last session we took a brief look at the Author – Solomon – wealth and wisdom
- Common themes – Vanity used 38 times in the book; Under the sun used 29 times
- Relevance for today – injustice to poor, crooked politicians, incompetent leaders, guilty unpunished, emptiness of materialism
- Three parts to the chapter
  - Nothing has changed in the natural order – people come and go – earth remains
  - Nothing is new under the sun
  - Nothing understood – only God and make straight what is broken (crooked); wisdom doesn't give us an answer to all our questions.
- Chapter 1:4-11 as about the monotony of life
- Chapter 1:12-18 is about the vanity of wisdom

## **Chapter Two**

- The futility of wealth
- The certainty of death
- The challenge to accept life and enjoy it with God's blessings

## **Solomon Tested Life with heart in two areas: Enjoyment and Employment 2: 1-11**

### **Enjoyment**

- Solomon conducted his inquiry with great intentionality, thoughtfulness, and care
- Hebrews believe God gave us the earth to enjoy (Ps 104 and 1 Tim 6:17)
- Explored wine and laughter – A banquet with wine, entertainment and laughter brings a temporary escape or distraction from life; however, when the banquet ends so does the pleasure.
- Solomon concluded this was vanity and left him unsatisfied.
- How much of our contemporary society is seeking a distraction from life through entertainment?
- How much money do people pay for a ticket to the show, the concert, the game, the experience?
- The pursuit of pleasure had a downside of diminishing returns.
  - What was unique at first becomes common and less fulfilling
  - What helps at first demands more later (alcohol, drugs, sex, money, success)
  - Without depth that touches the whole being (body, soul, spirit) the superficial only touches the body (physical pleasure).

## **Employment**

- Projects of great works, homes, vineyards, gardens, orchards, fruit trees, pools, and waterways.
- Building the temple
- Having a great number of servants and maids (up to 30,000 workers)
- Success and accumulation of gold and silver
- The best entertainment with the arts
- Greatness compared to all who came before me
- I withheld nothing from myself, whatever my eyes desire I pursued
- I withheld nothing from my heart in pursuing joy
- Conclusion – striving after the wind and vanity

## **Some thoughts**

- Matthew 16:2 “What if a man gains the whole world and forfeit his soul?”
- Luke 12:15 “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”
- Hebrews 11:23-26 – Moses made a choice
- Isaiah 55:2 – labor that brings true satisfaction
- Solomon is not condemning work, but exposing the error when work become an end in itself – Solomon also exalted diligence and condemned laziness in Proverbs
- Sometimes retirement is a burden for those whose identity is in their work alone.

## **The Certainty of Death 2:12-17**

- Both the wise man and the fool die
- What is accumulated is left for another
- Who knows if those who receive your wealth will do well with it?
- Can we leave our wisdom behind to guide the next generation?
- Psalm 78: 1-8
- Biblical Citizenship – teach our children the Constitution and Bill of Rights – our history as a nation under God.
- Wisdom is a greater value over folly for it understands we will die and thereby live accordingly
- The wise look ahead and choose what is worthwhile with God to enjoy this life
- Both the wise and the fool will be forgotten (mostly, not all but most)
- Verse 17 – I hated life (under the sun, life without eternal perspective and without God)
- 1 Peter 3:10
- We are to life by promises not by explanations (faith not sight)

## **What About Wealth 2:18 – 23**

### **First: You Cannot Keep It.**

- Solomon saw a day when he would leave his wealth to another
- Would they be careless?
- Would they value what they did not work for?
- Quote from the Wall Street Journal “money is an article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven, and as a universal provider of everything except happiness.”
- Biblical worldview – stewardship vs. ownership
- We have the privilege of use of money but will be held accountable for how we use it.

### **Second: You Cannot Protect It**

- Will a wise man or a fool have rule over my labor that I leave behind
- Rehoboam (Solomon’s son) – was a fool with Solomons kingdom. Caused civil war and divided the kingdom.
- What Solomon left was lost and wasted

### **Third: Sometimes We Cannot Enjoy Our Wealth**

- Worry and anxiety about wealth can steal our joy
- Trying to control one’s wealth from the grave
- Using wealth to control others or punish those who anger you

### **Solomon’s Conclusion: He Accepted Life 2:24-26**

- Enjoy life while you can
- Thank God for what you do have; enjoy it and give God glory
- Eating and drinking and working can be seen as blessing from God as gifts to us.
- Apart from God it is all vanity
- Who can eat and have enjoyment without Him
- From a merely human point of view life is filled with vanity
- From an eternal perspective life is what it is so make the most of it
- We are in His hands, so enjoy life and be thankful.
- First mention of God is in verse 24