

Ecclesiastes 1:1-7

Introduction: Has someone ever given you advice that at the time you didn't care about or pay much attention to at the time? Only to remember it after a time that you could have really used it? This morning we are going to begin a study in the book of Ecclesiastes. Solomon is writing this book at the end of his life. He was a man who started off strong in his faith by asking for wisdom instead of a long, wealthy life (cf. 1 Kings 3). But like many of us Solomon made some poor choices and got off track (cf. 1 Kings 11-all of his wives and concubines). At the end of his life Solomon is finding a renewed faith of God. So the book of Ecclesiastes serves as a warning for us to not pursue the same things of the world that Solomon pursued because it won't give you the happiness that you are looking for. Solomon is essentially saying "you don't want to go there because I've been there and it's not pretty."

Breakdown of the Text:

V. 1: We get the author of the book identified here. The word "Ecclesiastes" means preacher. So the author is identifying himself as part of God's plan. We see the author is the son of David. The last phrase in Hebrew indicates that the author was the "king in Jerusalem" not that he currently was. Therefore, this clearly identifies the author as Solomon.

Vv. 2-3: The word "vanity" in the book of Ecclesiastes and much of Scripture means "emptiness in final results." It also means that everything is short lived. When Solomon says "all is vanity" he is not talking about everything in the universe. He is referring to everything "under the sun" or everything here on earth. Solomon's main point here is that if this life and the things that are in it are all there is then life isn't worth living.

Vv. 4-7: The endless cycles of nature illustrate the futility of life. Everything goes in cycles. It rises and falls but overall things stay the same. Generations come and they go but there is very little to no positive change to the world. This sounds like the words of a bitter old person who has gotten to the end of their life with nothing to show for it. However, what Solomon is trying to do and will do throughout the book of Ecclesiastes is show the difference between the things of the world and a

relationship with God. In this text I believe Solomon was asking himself as well as us this morning two important, fundamental question. One deals with our allegiance and the other deals with our legacy.

The Two Questions of Ecclesiastes 1:1-7:

‡ **What good is it to gain material things?** This question deal with our allegiance. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, “No man can serve two masters.” Jesus later said in Matthew 12, “a house divided against itself cannot stand.” When you and I spend time trying to get “stuff” we push God out. Jesus said in Matthew 6, “where your treasure is, there you heart is also.” Many times you can tell what has captured a person’s heart by what they talk about and how they spend their free time. In a culture that constantly says “I have more things to do than time to do it in” we still manage to find time to do the things that we want to do don’t we? So the question becomes, do we not have enough time or are we mismanaging the time we have? Jesus asked the question in Matthew 16:26, “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and yet lose his own soul?” So many times we read in the news of a famous person that we think has it all but they have turned to drugs, alcohol, or even taking their own life. And when we hear about it we ask “why?” And so many times the answer is they had things, but they felt empty. They were trying to find happiness and satisfaction in the things that the world is offering only to find out that at the end of the day they are still miserable, lonely, restless people. That is because happiness, love, and peace cannot be found in stuff, it can only be found in a relationship with Jesus Christ. What has your heart this morning? If people were to listen to what you talk about, see where you spend the majority of your money, or see how you spend your free time, what would they learn about you? What would they say has captured your heart? Please understand there is nothing wrong with having hobbies and doing things that you enjoy. The problem comes when instead of you controlling them, they control you. Christ cannot be a part of your life, He must be your life and if He isn’t your life then you have an idol or idols in your life that you must destroy before they destroy you. So we have the question of our allegiance, but the second question I see here is:

† **What are you doing with your life that will make an eternal difference?** A couple years ago Max Lucado wrote a book entitled, “Outlive your life: You were Created to Make a Difference.” I think this goes right along with Solomon’s main point of these verses, if this is all there is to life, it isn’t worth living, it is pointless because it is so short lived. You were created to make an eternal difference. How do you do that? By first having a relationship with Jesus; which ensures your eternity will be spent in heaven. But also while you are here, you need to invest in others that they may come to know Jesus. We do this by sharing the Gospel with people. We do this by teaching people about God. When the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, God told Joshua to have 12 men grab a stone from the middle of the Jordan River and build an altar of those stones on the other side. Why did he do that? The answer is recorded in Joshua 4:6-7. They were to do it to serve as a reminder to themselves of God’s faithfulness, but also to be a memorial so that when future generations asked about the altar, the people could tell the children about what God had done for them. These two things make up what we know as the Great Commission as given in Matthew 28:19-20. We are told to “Go and tell” (share the Gospel-evangelize), but also we are to “teach them all things we have been commanded” (discipleship). The truth of the matter is this, we are just one generation away from being a godless country. The first generation that does not share the Gospel and teach people about who God is, will be the generation that sees America’s Gospel light go out. This morning I have two closing questions. First, is there anything that has captured your heart other than God? Secondly, what will your legacy be?