

Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

Introduction: Last week we looked at the fact that Solomon says everything under the sun (on earth) goes in cycles, but that God created us for more. In fact as we will see in a few weeks, God has created us for and put a longing in our heart for the eternal rather than the temporary. As we begin this morning's study we are going to find the wisest man that ever lived saying that knowledge and wisdom are not enough to satisfy in this life.

Breakdown of the Text:

V. 12: If you remember back to last week we said that verse one in the Hebrew actually means that the author of this book was the king in Jerusalem, and now we have confirmation that that is what he meant here in verse 12.

Vv. 13: It is interesting to note that this passage affirms the limitations of a person gaining wisdom, while another book Solomon wrote, the book of Proverbs, actually speaks of the benefits of gaining wisdom. The difference between the book of Proverbs and the book of Ecclesiastes is time. Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs around the middle portion of his life and he was passing on wisdom to his children. When we get to the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon is older and he is not refuting the advice given to his children, but rather warning them not to make that the pursuit of their life, because even with all the knowledge in the world you can't answer life's toughest questions. The word "exerciseth" there is also translated as humble. In other words, God allows us to pursue wisdom to show us that while we may think we know a lot, we really don't.

Vv. 14-15: In these verses Solomon is essentially saying, "I have got the best education known to man, I have most of the alphabet behind my name in titles, but I still didn't have what I looking for." It is so interesting the scientific and medical advances that have happened over just my life time. It used to be if you got cancer it was a sure death sentence, but now the overall cure rate for all forms of cancer is over 60% in the United States according to 2007 research findings. We can send people to the moon, but how a bee is able to fly defies the laws of aerodynamics. We have basically eradicated several deadly diseases such

as small pox and polio, but we can't find a way to cure the common cold. With all we have learned you would think a question such as, "What is the meaning of life" would be solvable, and yet it still plagues the human race today because many look for life and purpose outside of God. This is the main point of this passage; Solomon is saying that gaining wisdom that doesn't draw you closer to God is pointless. This is because everything began and will end with God. All of our knowledge and our wisdom should bring us to God, and if we somehow miss that, then we are not more intelligent, we are actually more ignorant than when we began our pursuit which is what Paul was saying in Romans 1:18-22 (**Read**).

Vv. 16-18: Solomon continues this point in these last verses by saying, "I am the wisest person on earth" and I can tell you this, wisdom apart from God is like chasing the wind which is what he meant when he called it a "vexation of spirit." Solomon sums it all up by essentially saying, the wiser you are the more worries you have and the more you know the more you hurt. Maybe this is where we get statements such as "Ignorance is bliss" or "What you don't know can't hurt you."

Wisdom versus Faith:

✠ **Wisdom apart from God is limited and leads to pride.** Despite the internet and the vast amount of knowledge that is available on it or in all the libraries of the world, a person can only learn so much. Many people refer to the mind as a sponge and that is an accurate illustration. A sponge can absorb for a while, but eventually the excess just runs off. Our minds are the same, we can study and study and learn and learn, but eventually we get to the point that we can't hold anymore. The problem is not wisdom or even the accumulation of information. The problem is that with wisdom and accumulation of information we feel superior to those who do not know as much as we do. In fact in 1 Corinthians 8 Paul says that "knowledge puffs up." When we believe that life's problems can be solved through education and innovation, we are ultimately saying that we don't need God. Proverbs 16:18 reminds us that pride comes before destruction. That destruction spoken of there is eternal condemnation in hell.

Knowledge that does not lead us to Christ is fool's gold; it looks right, it feels right but in the end it is worthless.

✝ **Faith in God is unlimited and leads to humility.** Romans 1:22 reminds us “professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.” Socrates had a good quote when he said, “True knowledge exists in knowing that you know nothing.” For all that we know, have learned, and will learn, there are still things in life that we can't explain or understand. In the Bible they are called mysteries. These mysteries show the limitation of human wisdom, because although we don't understand that mystery God does. The mysteries of God are designed to show us that we need God, they are there to cause us to not look at ourselves for every answer, but rather to look at God for answer. In fact we are told in the first part of Deuteronomy 29:29, “The secret things belong to the Lord.” Many people argue “faith doesn't make sense to me, because you are believing in something unknown and unseen.” To that I say, just because I don't know it doesn't mean it is unknown. All it means is that I don't know it. My faith is not blind, it is simply trusting that what I don't know, God knows and has judged that it is not important for me to know at this time. Not knowing everything causes me to want to pursue and stay close to the One who does know it all and that is the greatest pursuit of life we can ever make. That is what God desires, for us to come to Him and seek Him for everything. Are you pursuing fool's gold or real gold?