

Don't Settle Prayer & Worship 6/4

Pillars Slide

Tomorrow is Memorial Day.

Its a day to remember men and women who died in service of our country.

I'm very thankful for the sacrifices so many people made to provide a better life for us all.

At the exact same time

In a 2024 survey- 57% of Gen Z indicated they want to be Social Media influencers as a career. One of the bigger reasons for that is the pursuit of fame and wealth.

<https://www.cnn.com/2024/09/14/more-than-half-of-gen-z-want-to-be-influencers-but-its-constant.html>

36% of Gen Alpha say "Its more important to look good online than in real life"- and 49% of Gen Alphas trust influencers as much as family

<https://explodingtopics.com/blog/generation-alpha-stats>

Sit with that a minute. Remembering people because of their sacrifice...and the aspirations of youth to become famous for being famous.

Something feels off with that.

My aim today- is not to be the "You kids get off my lawn with your loud music and new fangled technology" guy.

Not at all- actually that kind of attitude rarely helps anyone.

And- I can also report- that not all the news about the Next Generation is bad. There are some really hopeful trends happening too.

But today- as we continue talking about Pillars- and especially on Memorial Day weekend where we honor those who gave their lives- most of them quietly- without much fanfare- I want to show you the beauty of the background.

EXPLAIN PILLARS- SOME UP FRONT AND VISIBLE...others lead and serve in a different way.

To do that- we're going to go back to the OT book of Ecclesiastes.

Before we get there- I want to remind you or introduce you to a couple of ideas I want to keep in front of you during this year we're focusing on being the leaders that God calls us to be in his kingdom.

Reveal one line at time

Pillars Pray to Cultivate. Full of Grit.

Platformers Perform to Consume. Full of Self.

These statements are the difference in a person willing to lay their life down for others- and someone looking for the attention of the nameless crowd- to fill them up.

Grace & Grit slide

Available on the app

Point to make with G & G slide- to be a pillar- we have to have a deep sense of our own **spiritual poverty**- our need for God- his presence, strength, forgiveness...

and our **spiritual wealth** at the same time- we can accomplish what he calls us to- and we lack nothing to get it done.

Pillars Slide

Before we get to the text today- lets get a quick understanding of what the book of Ecclesiastes is.

It falls in a genre called Hebrew Wisdom Literature in the Bible. Those books- d Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

Ecclesiastes actually is called Qohelet in Hebrew... which means somebody who gathers a crowd or convenes an assembly.

Sounds kind of like an influencer doesn't it?

Its often translated "teacher" or "Preacher"- and its a bit of a strange title considering we're about to talk about NOT BEING up front and noticed.

So the main character in this book is the Qohelet- the preacher. And for the majority of the book- he's doing a philosophical thought experiment with us. Imagine you were rich and famous and had all the wealth and notoriety you could ever want.

Would you be happy?

His answer- is simply- No.
Not even close.

Now- Ecclesiastes can be a bit of a depressing book. The message for the majority is "Its all Hevel." A Hebrew word for mist...vapor....meaninglessness.

Every time you try to make sense of the world- every time you think you can predict it- the only thing that becomes predictable is that nothing is going to stop your death or give you steady happiness in the face of that death.

Qohelet will DEFINITELY ruin your party.

But you have to take Ecclesiastes with another wisdom book. Proverbs.

While Ecclesiastes emphasizes our spiritual poverty and inability to do anything for ourselves that matters...Proverbs emphasizes Spiritual wealth.

Proverbs is an Type A over Achiever

Proverbs Got all the days plans listed out. Eating Tomorrow's breakfast today.

Proverbs is all of these sayings that make sense of life- show you how to life hack everything. Here's how to be happy.

Then Qohelet comes in and is like "That's true Proverbs- but also- none of that stuff works."

A real practical way we experience this weird dichotomy is in raising kids.

I have a pastor friend that's a couple of years older than me. He says "If you want a great sermon on parenting- go listen to stuff I preached when my kids were under 5 years old. I had it all figured out back then. Because now that my kids are grown up- I realize how little control I actually have over who they become."

Because it is true- there are principles and strategies about raising kids and giving them a solid foundation that are really good. And what you do as a parent really matters.

Also- none of your strategy is a guarantee that your kids come out the way you hope.- That's Ecclesiastes.

You know Proverbs be like "Train a child up in the way he should go, and he will never depart from it."

Then Qohelet is like

Ecclesiastes 9:11-12

11 Again I saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, or the battle to the strong, or bread to the wise, or riches to the discerning, or favor to the skillful; rather, time and chance happen to all of them. 12 For certainly no one knows his time: like fish caught in a cruel net or like birds caught in a trap, so people are trapped in an evil time as it suddenly falls on them.

Then Proverbs be looking back at Qohelet like

SIDE EYE GIRL PIC

Which honestly- this is all of our faces when we read Ecclesiastes.

Title Slide- "Poor, Wise, Forgotten: How Quiet Pillars Lead with Joy"- Ecclesiastes 9:13-18

By the way- anytime I hear about people leaving Christianity because its drained all the mystery out life and only comes back with certainty- I'm like- "Have you read the Bible?"

Have you considered that Jesus is both God and Man?

That God is both Three and One?

That God does all things according to his will and gives us free will at the same time?

That Jesus doesn't just preach truth- that HE IS TRUTH.

Paul says "Salvation is by grace through faith not by works!"

James says "Show me your faith by your works!"

And that SOMEHOW the same philosopher- this Qohelet can say both - "Everything is meaningless"- at the same time he says- at the end of this book "It ALL MATTERS".

If you are going to leave Christianity because it offers too neat and safe a view of life- please re-visit the Bible and consider that maybe the Christians you have been hanging out with aren't a good representation of the deep mystery that's actually in this book.

With that- Lets take a look in the book. We're actually gonna pick up this passage right where Qohelet just left off.

Ecclesiastes 9:13-18

13 I have observed that this also is wisdom under the sun, and it is significant to me: 14 There was a small city with few men in it. A great king came against it, surrounded it, and built large siege works against it. 15 Now a poor wise man was found in the city, and he delivered the city by his wisdom. Yet no one remembered that poor man. 16 And I said, "Wisdom is better than strength, but the wisdom of the poor man is despised, and his words are not heeded."

17 The calm words of the wise are heeded more than the shouts of a ruler over fools. 18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner can destroy much good.

Transition:

Here's the problem we're gonna have with this passage.

Why would I want to be wise- even if saves a city- if Everything I sacrificed for can be wiped out in a minute by evil person.

and there is no money or fame attached to this guy. He is poor and overlooked at the beginning and he's poor and overlooked at the end. So what is the motivation to be wise?

If it starts with nobody listening...and ends with nobody listening-

Is it all Hevel? Meaningless?

What is the value of Pillar that's not up front- who is hidden, and quiet.

The answer- our lives depend on these kinds of Pillars.

1) Pillars are content with being poor & overlooked because they see life as gift, not gain.

We live in a society of spectacle. Marketing is almost as important as substance. You can't own a service business without doing a dance on Instagram. Does my Plumber REALLY need to be able to do the latest Tik Tok dance?

We have largely become a people who want what looks and sounds good externally over the substance that matters. We choose our leaders like this.

Studies show that we are more likely to believe and follow an attractive person than someone we don't find attractive.

Take a look at this man who saves this city with his wisdom

9:14-15

Notice the comparison GREAT KING vs POOR MAN
Its

Reminds me of Mr. Miyagi- from Karate Kid

Resume Virtues (Great King) vs Eulogy virtues (Poor Wise)

Fluid knowledge vs Crystallized knowledge

One of the core pieces of wisdom in the Book of Ecclesiastes is that the wise treat all of life as GIFT instead of GAIN.

Ecclesiastes 1:3 & 2:11

**What does a person gain for all his efforts
that he labors at under the sun?**

When I considered all that I had accomplished and what I had labored to achieve, I found everything to be futile and a pursuit of the wind. There was nothing to be gained under the sun.

Life is a gift. Cannot be held. OPEN HANDS.

When Life is a gain- everything is a mountain to be conquered. People become cogs and gears in a system...you blink- your children are grown...life has passed you by...and you just have a pile of money and people that like you because you have achieved some notoriety.

Ecclesiastes 9:7-10

7 Go, eat your bread with pleasure, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart, for God has already accepted your works. 8 Let your clothes be white all the time, and never let oil be lacking on your head. 9 Enjoy life with the wife you love all the days of your fleeting life, which has been given to you under the sun, all your fleeting days. For that is your portion in life and in your struggle under the sun. 10 Whatever your hands find to do, do with all your strength, because there is no work, planning, knowledge, or wisdom in Sheol where you are going. -- Ecclesiastes 9:7-10 (CSB)

Stark contrast right? Gain is what the Great King is after

The Pillar receives life as a gift.

“Spiritual Poverty- RECEIVE results in Spiritual Wealth- the wisdom to conquer an army.

9:9

Key word is in v 9- PORTION- LOT.

Its what God puts in your hands. What he calls you to.

Receive the calling you have from God as a gift— and enjoy the present. The gifts in the moment that are here today- and maybe gone tomorrow

Eccl. 12:1

The wisdom the Qohelet is passing along is DON'T strive for gain! Start when youre young as seeing life as a gift. That's where the joy is.

Live open handed NOW.

Receive your portion. Answer your calling. BUT DON'T RIP IT OUT OF THE CREATORS HAND.

Let him take it out of yours- he will in time.

Meanwhile- In the church- we are called to honor the Miyagi's.

1 Corinthians 12:22-26

On the contrary, those parts of the body that are weaker are indispensable. 23 And those parts of the body that we consider less honorable, we clothe these with greater honor, and our unrespectable parts are treated with greater respect, 24 which our respectable parts do not need.

Instead, God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the less honorable, 25 so that there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same concern for each other. 26 So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. --

We remember the forgotten.

**2) Pillars know one person's wisdom can change everything.
And so can one person's sin.**

9:17-18

CALM WORDS of the wise heeded more than the shouts of a ruler over fools

Edwin Friedman Failure of Nerve
Characteristics of Chronically Anxious system

1- Reactivity

2- Herding

3- Blame Displacement

4- Quick-Fix Mentality

5- Failure of Nerve in Leadership

- 1- Everyone just reacting to the last thing said. Interrupting. Cutting each other off.
- 2- Gathering together around the least mature, most dysfunctional...because if you are going to be together- its a lot easier to stoop down- than to call up- typically loudest person
- 3- Blame Displacement- ITs their fault- OVER THERE
- 4- Quick Fix mentality- ITs the easy answer.
- 5- Failure of Nerve- no poor man in the city steps up.

Great example- of NAP-

Non anxious presence- Jesus on the boat.

Last week- the disciples wanted Jesus to freak out with him.

9:17-18

One sinner can destroy much good.

Story of Achan. Judges 7- His sin cost Israel the battle.

Are you taking your sin seriously?
Confess.

Romans 5:12 & 15-17

12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned.

15 But the gift is not like the trespass. For if by the one man's trespass the many died, how much more have the grace of God and the gift which comes through the grace of the one man Jesus Christ overflowed to the many. 16 And the gift is not like the one man's sin, because from one sin came the judgment, resulting in condemnation, but from many trespasses came the gift, resulting in justification. 17 If by the one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive the overflow of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

The poor overlooked wise man- Saves the city. His Sacrifice overcomes our sin.

Jesus is one man that through his righteousness- brought healing to the whole world.

3) The difference between the wise and the foolish is the ability to see over the sun by seeing the Son.

9:11

Under the sun in Ecclesiastes.

Nothing makes sense- UNDER THE SUN.

doesn't matter what you do. Its just death. Even what you enjoy. All goes away. So what justification can you give of living a beautiful life of overflow?

Why be a Pillar- when you can just be a pill? If it all just comes out the same?

But go to the end of the book- and it all makes sense. Once I get OVER the SUN.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

13 When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is this: fear God and keep his commands, because this is for all humanity. 14 For God will bring every act to judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil.

The transient and the permanent. The gifts (at least now are transient) and so is the injustice.

What is permanent- is God's Kingdom

He tells us THAT God will bring judgment- but doesn't say how you will be judged?

Romans 5:17

YOu have to receive life from him as a gift.

He is the poor wise man- rejected.

A city full of sin. A king, Religious leaders. Platformers.

He was crucified. But in so doing. He was overflowing a gift to us. Forgiveness...and Right standing with God.

Resurrection-

Only if you receive it as a gift.

See over the sun- by seeing the son