

Friday, February 3, 2017

**Inclination**

Ecclesiastes 10-11

*The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left. Even as he walks along the road, the fool lacks sense and shows everyone how stupid he is.*

Ecclesiastes 10:2-3

Again we see the difference between one who is wise and one who is foolish. The difference is the inclination of the heart. The interesting thing in these verses is the statement of just how obvious the difference is. One cannot hide the inclination of the heart, even as he or she is merely walking down the street. It is obvious whether a person is wise (righteous) or a fool (wicked). Our world tends to like the shades of gray. The world tells us that we are able to walk the middle of the road, choosing neither good nor evil. These verses teach that it is not possible. One will incline one way or the other because of the core of who they are. Careful examination reveals the stupidity of the foolish person. The fool inclines his or her heart to themselves, away from God. The fool loves to look at the things that please a wicked and self-serving heart. The problem in our world is that, while it is obvious that this is stupid, the media has portrayed it as wise and beautiful and entertaining. If I am not careful, I can allow the input of the world to convince me that foolishness is right and wisdom is stupid. I can be convinced that serving the King is something to hide while serving the pretender prince is something to be bold about.

*O LORD, how many times have I been swept into believing the lies of the pretender prince who tries to convince me that evil is good? Guide the inclination of my heart. May my heart be given over and devoted to You. Keep me wise and make it obvious in my life. Amen.*

Saturday, February 4, 2017

**Conclusion**

Ecclesiastes 12 - Song of Songs 1

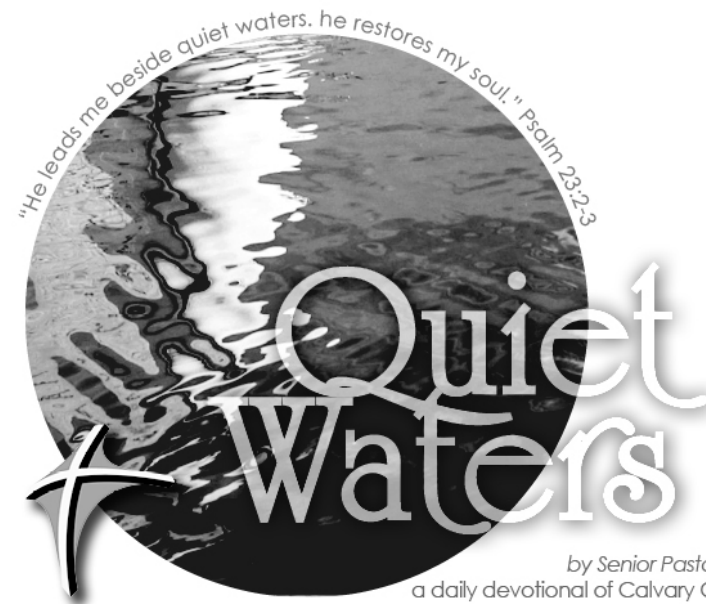
*Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body. Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.*

Ecclesiastes 12:12b-14

There is a conclusion to all that has been written in the book of Ecclesiastes. It has been hinted at all throughout the book. Man exists for God's purposes. There are many books written every day. When it comes to those written to help the Christian, many times they serve the opposite effect. When books that are written about the Bible cause the Bible to be focused on me and my needs, I am drawn away from the real purpose of Scripture. The Bible is given so that those who have been created in His image can know Him and His purposes. It is in discovering Him as the center of all things that I find my purpose and am able to live out my life in joy. When I discover Him as the center of all things, I can truly fear Him. When I discover the depth of His holiness, I am drawn to have holiness be the defining characteristic of my life. This is wisdom. The pursuit of anything less is foolishness. It is foolish to think that God is a cosmic genie of some sort waiting to meet my every whim and need. It is a waste to think that God is simply there to help me feel better when things go bad in this fallen world. It is wise to remember that God has an eternal plan that He is working out and that I have been created by Him to be a part of His plan.

*Dear God, remind me often that You are working out an eternal plan. Thank You for choosing me to be a part of that plan. Use my life in whatever way You choose so that Your truth may go forth in a world that is so quickly moving away from Your loving embrace. Amen.*

January 30-February 4, 2017



by Senior Pastor Chuck Cervenka  
a daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

Monday, January 30, 2017

**Happy**

Ecclesiastes 2-3

*I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him.*  
Ecclesiastes 3:12-14

Many times I have heard people make excuses for their sin by making the claim that God wants them to be happy. I have also seen people trying to be pious who have inserted rules on Christians that seem to be designed to remove any possibility of happiness. Where is the balance? The writer of Ecclesiastes seeks to answer the question. Great happiness is possible for each person who understands and embraces the truth that God is sovereign over all things—and all times. God makes everything beautiful in its time. All of the efforts of man to control his own time or place are futile apart from the understanding that God is in control of it all. And yet, the understanding of God's control allows for happiness in all of life. It is a gift from God for me to understand Him as He has revealed Himself to me. The metanarrative of the Bible is that God is in control and He is working out His purpose in all time. When I try to look at God's purpose through my need, I miss the metanarrative and then I miss the happiness of knowing that God has seen fit to create me to delight in Him as I delight in the life He has given me—whatever turn that may take. Happiness is not something I need to leave behind in my walk with Christ. It is something that finds its most fulfilling completion in Him. "Now I am happy all the day"—as the song says!

*Dear God, help me realize that as I revere You I am most able to delight in You. Help me to find all the happiness You have designed for me in this life—a life lived out in Your purpose. Amen.*

Tuesday, January 31, 2017

**Listen** Ecclesiastes 4-5

*Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God.*  
Ecclesiastes 5:1-2a

After speaking about worshiping money, the writer turns to the worship of God. There is a difference between the worship of the wise and the worship of the fool. The fool does not even realize that his or her worship is wrong. Literally, this phrase means that they sin without thought. True worshipers of God worship in spirit and in truth. This is not easy for me because my self is constantly telling me to worship me. That is what fools do. Without any thought, they open their mouths and make empty vows and declarations that they think will sound right and good. The wise come to worship God with great care and attention, knowing they are coming before the Holy Almighty One. There are ways this relates to church attendance. For many years, as I played the fool, I came for selfish reasons. I needed to feel good about myself, I needed to get it checked off my list, I needed to look good for others. I sang the songs and made the vows within, but I was a fool, sinning without thought. It looked as though I was worshiping God—but there was not really a connection. How much greater is it for me to come carefully and thoughtfully into worshiping my God? As I come to worship, I need to spend time preparing myself to remember that it is all about Him. Then I find myself folded into His purpose and plan—joy.

*Dear God, forgive me for the times I have played the fool. I love to come into Your presence and worship You and You alone. Let my words be few as I carefully consider the things I say to You. Amen.*

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

**Consider**

Ecclesiastes 6-7

*Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked? When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.*  
Ecclesiastics 7:13-14

Consider the truth of God's control. Apart from God's ultimate and supreme rule over all there is, life is meaningless. The love and pursuit of money will not satisfy. Rather, it will lay waste to a life. The search for significance, satisfaction, and security is deep within each person. It is this need that draws one to the Creator, but, in the fallen world, it is also this need that draws one to fulfill the need on their own. The thirst for this security, satisfaction, and significance draws people into materialism. Accumulating and holding on to wealth and possessions allows the illusion of control. If I have enough, I will be secure, I will have significance, and I will be satisfied. And yet, the opposite happens and I do not own my possessions; rather, they own me. I find, soon enough, that all that I have collected will not ensure the future I have designed for my life. So I need to consider all that God has done. How many times do I think I need to straighten out what God has made crooked. Do I really think God has made things crooked and that I, the created, am somehow able to "fix" it for Him? Arrogance in the extreme. Yet I see it every day in the world around me and in my own heart. I must consider that God has this all under control. All that *is* and *has been* and *will be* is fulfilling His purpose. He holds the future—it is secure.

*O, dear LORD, how many times have I doubted that You have this under control? How many times have I thought I needed to straighten something out for You. It really is rather comical when I think about the foolish arrogance it displays. Forgive me. Help me consider Your works. Amen.*

Thursday, February 2, 2017

**Predictions**

Ecclesiastes 8-9

*I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all. Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come:*  
Ecclesiastes 9:11-12a

There are so many different ways that the future is predicted. Daily weather forecasts are just one small example. I have read many different predictions in my life. One of my favorite magazine articles was found in *Mechanix Illustrated*, November 1968, entitled *40 Years in the Future*, by James R. Berry. In the article, Berry makes many predictions about what the world will look like in 2008. There are some that he had right but many were not. He suggested that the average work day would be four hours with about two hours of home study to keep up with the technology advances! I don't know many people who work four hours a day. As a people, we believe in cause and effect. As such, given the right amount of information, we believe we can predict the outcome of a certain event. And so, people bet on the races, but all too often, the surefire winner is not the one that crosses the line first. The writer of Ecclesiastes discloses the folly of predictions in these verses. Cause and effect do not take chance into consideration. The turtle just might win the race. Once again, I see the folly in trying to state with certainty that which only God can know. I also see the folly in expecting God to observe my equation.

*O LORD, You alone know the outcome of every situation. I can rest in the fact that You hold the future—every moment of it. I have learned to appreciate the unexpected outcomes in life and see them as Your way of showing Your sovereignty. Keep my perspective pure. Amen.*