

Friday, February 22, 2019

Burden

Proverbs 31-Ecclesiastes 1

I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a heavy burden God has laid on men!

Ecclesiastes 1:12-13

There is a burden that God has placed on people. Solomon is setting out to use his wisdom to understand God and His purposes for mankind. At the time of the writing of Ecclesiastes, the redemptive plan of God had not yet unfolded to the revelation that is found in Christ. He is left to use his wisdom to understand all that is done under heaven. Even the wisdom of Solomon is insufficient for that task. And yet, he understands the burden that God has placed on the creatures He has created to bear His image. The burden placed on men is the need to make sense of life. Contained within that is a longing for fairness and purpose. I have been created by God in His image with a need for purpose. That is unique to humans, and it is a burden as well. The animals do not carry this burden. It is a heavy burden only when I try to fulfill the purpose in a way other than that designed for me. All is futile for me if I am not looking to God. This causes me to think about what Jesus said about burdens: *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30). Without Jesus, this burden is perceived as heavy; with Jesus the burden is light. In Jesus, I enter into the relationship that lets me live out my purpose!

Dear God, It is a burden that You have laid on people. Thank You that through Jesus this is not a heavy burden, but a burden that is light. Thank You for redemption. Amen.

Saturday, February 23, 2019

Happy

Ecclesiastes 2-3

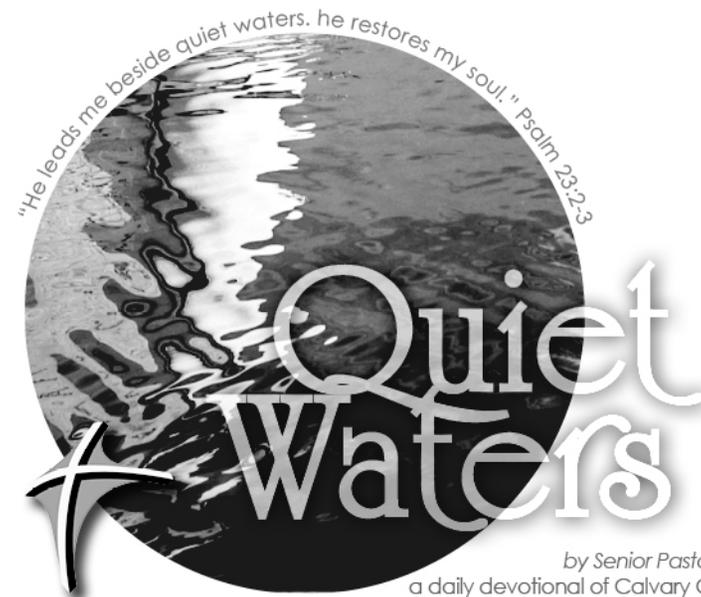
I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does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

February 18 - 23, 2019



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

Monday, February 18, 2019

Filled

Proverbs 23-24

By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.

Proverbs 24:3-4

In Psalm 127, Solomon states that unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain. This proverb seems to expand that thought. While this may apply to an actual structure, I believe it is appropriate to apply it to every area of my life. It applies to my family, my relationships, my home, my career, my entertainment, my recreation, and so on. With what are the rooms of my life filled? Do I find rare and beautiful treasures or common trash? These are very good questions for me to ponder. The things of this world that seem so alluring are not rare and beautiful. They are quite common and they are temporary in nature. They are not the beautiful treasures of heaven that are eternally enduring. These beautiful treasures withstand the testing of fire. Knowledge comes through the Word of God. Knowing God as He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures is indeed a rare and beautiful treasure that fills the rooms of my life. As I make room for these treasures, the common trash—the knowledge of evil—is forced from the rooms. Wisdom allows for the building of my life by and for God. Understanding Him and His Word establishes my life in the same way as the wise man who built his house on the rock. Knowing God (and being known by Him) fills my life to overflowing.

Dear God, fill the rooms of my life to overflowing. May every corner be filled with the knowledge of You. I long to know You more and more as You have revealed Yourself in Your Word. Amen.

Tuesday, February 19, 2019

Broken down

Proverbs 25-26

Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.

Proverbs 25:28

I pause as I consider this proverb. To what does my lack of self-control expose me? A city whose walls are broken down is a city that is exposed. It has lost its line of defense. It is also a city that has been attacked. In that attack, major damage has been done.

So, in what ways am I like that city if I lack self-control? I can think of examples in my life that bring clarity to this question. I can think of times when people said things I didn't like. Times when I responded with lack of self-control by losing my temper or gossiping about them. Times when I indulged in a gluttonous fashion. Lacking the self-control to stop. Not just with food, but with other desires as well. How much is enough for myself to be satisfied? My self has a thirst that cannot be quenched. It always longs for more. I must learn how to control myself if I am going to build up the defenses I need to withstand the attacks of the evil one. I have suffered major damage to my defenses by all the times I have given in, allowing myself to be exposed. But those walls can begin to be rebuilt in a moment as I allow myself to abide in Christ. The fruit of the Spirit within me includes self-control. It is not something I can necessarily produce, but I can certainly allow the Spirit of God within me to strengthen me to rebuild the walls of defense.

O dear LORD, how I have allowed myself to be exposed in so many different areas, and yet I see all the places that You are working in me to help me rebuild the walls that have broken down. Thank You for the Spirit, who brings the fruit of self-control into my life. Amen.

Wednesday, February 20, 2019

Counsel

Proverbs 27-28

Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel.

Proverbs 27:9

What is it that brings joy to my heart? This proverb declares that perfumes and incense bring joy. The sweet aroma that fills a room when perfume is worn or when incense is burned can bring great joy. I have a friend who needed to spend time in a hospital room for some treatment. She was there for extended stays. In her room she placed a diffuser with essential oils. The staff commented that whenever they went into her room, instead of smelling like chemicals, it smelled like a spa. There is a joy that comes from a sweet aroma. It can be extremely therapeutic. Friendship holds that same potential. How can sweetness spring forth from a friendship? This proverb causes us to consider that it comes from honest and earnest counsel. This is counsel that says tough things when needed. This is counsel that is trusted because the relationship is trusted. By nature, I am hesitant to allow myself to have this depth of relationship with people. It comes with extreme risk. There is great potential for hurt to come from relationships that are this vulnerable and this deep. I have felt this depth of pain. It causes me to want to move into a protective position that does not allow the trust necessary for this depth of friendship. And yet, the sweetest aroma comes from that type of relationship. It is an aroma that brings joy to the heart.

O LORD, You know the places where I have put up walls in my life to try to avoid the pain that can come through vulnerability. Yet I know that the friendships I have that allow for this type of counsel bring the greatest joy to my heart. Help me not only seek to have these friends but to be the type of friend for others who is worthy of this depth of trust. Amen.

Thursday, February 21, 2019

Trust

Proverbs 29-30

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.

Proverbs 29:25

At different times in my life, I have placed my trust in various things. For the vast majority of my life, I have put my trust in the things I thought I could control. Of course, I have come to learn that there is very little, if anything, that I can control. Placing my trust in things such as financial security, job fulfillment, relationships, abilities, or other changing things, I can get caught in a snare. It is a trap of trying to find the security I have been designed to find in Christ, in other things or people. The Lord is unchanging. He alone is able to keep me safe. Paul puts this thought into words in Galatians 1:10: *Am I now trying to win the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.* David declares the truth of this verse in Psalm 56:11: *In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?* As a servant of the most high God, I must learn to place my trust in Him and Him alone. My Master will keep me safe. He has promised that He holds me in His hand and that I am secure. Nothing can separate me from His care and He is always working His best plan in my life. I know the trap of being in awe of temporary things. I know as well the safety found in the Lord. I choose to trust in God.

O LORD, You know that it is easy for me to fall into wanting to trust in things other than You. Remind me of the way that You are holding me. I am safe in You and Your plan for my life. Amen.