

- I. Intro/Recap
 - a. Last week we took a look into the teaching of Solomon in Ecclesiastes and how he pursued the pleasures of the world in order to find meaning in life.
 - b. Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself."
 - i. Here we see Solomon who has been searching for the meaning of life in all sorts of places, frustrated that he hasn't found anything satisfying so he says, "I have all this at my disposal, let me indulge myself in it. Maybe these things will bring me satisfying pleasure."
 - ii. We saw last week all that he had, right?
 1. He was so wealthy that he made silver as common as stones.
 2. He was the most well-known and powerful man in the world as he was the king in Jerusalem, the center of the world.
 3. He built numerous houses for himself with lush gardens in the midst of the desert.
 4. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines.
 5. And yes, most impressively, he had apes and peacocks as pets.
 6. Everything that we say "If only I had x, then I'd be happy," Solomon had at his fingertips.
 7. Yet what do we read in Ecclesiastes 2:11
 - a. Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.
 - c. You see, I firmly believe that we as humans were created with this void inside of us as a result of being made in the likeness of man.
 - i. Adam was made in the image and likeness of God
 1. Genesis 5:1 This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.
 - ii. Seth, on the other hand, was made in the likeness of Adam.
 1. Genesis 5:3 When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.
 2. Adam had a sin nature that when Seth was created, was passed along in his likeness. He was still created a tripartite being in the image of God just as his father, with body, soul and spirit.
 - d. We spend the whole of our lives trying to fill this void.
 - e. This is what I was referring to when I spoke of our pursuit of happiness last week.

- i. As we live on this earth and experience the day-to-day grind, we all pursue happiness one way or another.
- ii. But what we are really trying to do is fill that void so that we have peace and can be satisfied regardless of the situations we find ourselves in.
- iii. Last week I clustered happiness and joy together but there is a difference between the two that as we continue on should be distinguished.
 - 1. Happiness is an emotion and it's opposite is sadness.
 - a. One's happiness can change in a second. Somebody can say something and you're no longer happy.
 - b. You can start thinking about something and all of a sudden your whole demeanor can change as you become sad.
 - c. One can be happy but still feel empty inside.
 - d. We attempt to make ourselves happy several ways but they all have a common denominator.
 - e. When it boils down to the root of the issue, we try to make ourselves happy by giving ourselves over to pleasure, to the desires of our flesh just as Solomon did.
 - f. Things get boring and we want something new so we turn to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life in an attempt to liven things up.
 - 2. Joy is a state of being and regardless of one's emotional state, one can still have joy in the midst of suffering or in the midst of sadness.
 - a. One can be emotionally sad over tough circumstances yet still filled with joy because you have hope and believe that as Romans 8:28 says, "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."
 - b. You see, the opposite of joy is fear and unbelief.
 - c. You may be going through a tough time yet you have joy because you know God is faithful and that by you faithfully enduring whatever circumstances you find yourself in, you are being refined and conformed into the image of Christ and that is the best of things and good for everyone.
- f. The question that we examined last week and will look at again today is where do we go to pursue meaning in life?

- g. As we try to balance out those good days and bad days and, what is our perspective on life and how does our perspective inform us of how we define “happiness?”
- h. Last week we looked at places we go and pleasures we indulge in, in order to help us discover our perspective and if we are honest with ourselves, I think we each saw that at times our perspective is on the things of this world, that at times we doubt the truth of what we see in Scripture and instead turn to the lust of our flesh and the lust of our eyes.
 - i. We all know the right answer.
 - ii. We all know that our perspective should not be for this world yet all too often we find ourselves seeking the pleasures of this world to fill the void inside and by doing so, we are saying that whatever it may be we have turned to is the greatest good in life.
 - iii. And I don’t think it is typically something we deliberately test ourselves with so to speak.
 - iv. This is something that our actions reveal more to us about what we truly believe.
 - v. I don’t know about y’all but in my head I say I believe in the kingdom and that faithfully suffering in this world by putting my flesh to death is going to put me in a place where I can reign with Christ as His Bride.
 - vi. Yet when the week is over and I look back on it, I realize that my actions didn’t necessarily support that belief.
 - vii. In fact my actions reveal that I believe the opposite of that at times.
- i. Well today I want to examine what our perspective should be and we are going to take a look at what Solomon concludes is the meaning of life.

II. What our Perspective Should Be

- a. Last week we saw how Solomon experimented with the many pleasures that life and this world has to offer.
- b. He discovered firsthand that wealth, possessions, power, all of it is vanity.
- c. It is all fleeting and meaningless.
- d. His life was still empty and the void inside remained.
- e. Now remember, this is the same Solomon, son of David, who God chose to build His temple.
 - i. 1 Chronicles 28:6 He (God) said to me (David), “Your son Solomon is the one who shall build My house and My courts; for I have chosen him to be a son to Me, and I will be a father to him.”
- f. Solomon walked in the way of the Lord but like many believers today, he lost sight of God’s perspective and instead of living for the Lord, began living his life for the things of the world.

- g. I venture to say that we've all been there.
- h. We've all started to stray at one point or another, if not many times.
- i. But what do we know?
- j. If we stray one degree and don't correct our path, we'll eventually be so far off course that we will miss our target by miles.
- k. Once we go off course, once we begin to live for the pleasures of this world, we look at life from the wrong perspective and we then base our meaning in life off of this wrong perspective if it goes uncorrected.
- l. We will remember that the term Ecclesiastes comes from the Hebrew word meaning teacher.
- m. Solomon writes this book, or sermon if you will, in order to advise other believers to not follow the path he has taken.
- n. But he doesn't just leave us with the depressing news that everything under the sun is meaningless.
- o. After writing the book of Ecclesiastes, after expressing that all is vanity, everything under the sun is meaningless, Solomon gives us the conclusion of the matter.
- p. He has searched for meaning in life everywhere possible under the sun.
- q. And after all his searching, he has found one thing which is not vanity.
- r. One thing that should be pursued above all else because it is NOT meaningless.
- s. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. 14 For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.
- t. Some translate verse 13 as "fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man"
- u. But that's it. That's the answer to the meaning of life. This is that which we should spend our time under the sun pursuing.
- v. And the beauty in this is that it doesn't matter if you have inordinate amounts of wealth or concubines of women or apes and peacocks.
- w. You don't have to be the king of the country that is the center of the world.
- x. Everyone can fear God and keep His commandments regardless of the situation you find yourself.
- y. And this is what fills the void.
- z. This is what brings joy and peace that is satisfying.
- aa. Think about your own life. Think about times when you have been obedient to God. I can confidently say that regardless of what was going on in your life at that time, you were still filled with a sense of satisfaction, a joy that can truly only come from the Lord.
- bb. Illustration: Friend was just in town and we were reminiscing and some volleyball stories got brought up. Playing volleyball and how I had just received some bad news but for the two hours we practiced I was free, wasn't thinking about anything, I was just in the moment. As

soon as I left it was back on my mind and I couldn't sleep that night. The next morning we had a game and once again, for those two hours, I wasn't thinking about anything else, just in the moment.

- cc. This is the type of peace that God gives us, the joy that fills the void inside.
- dd. But we must have the proper perspective and not pursue the pleasures of this world.
- ee. Instead, we are told to (1) fear God (2) keep His commandments and (3) prepare for final Judgment and it is these three areas that I want to look at today because I am convinced that if we are faithful in these three areas that we will be filled with joy and the void inside will be filled as the Spirit overflows from us. (Perhaps the void is made apparent from the lack of the Holy Spirit's presence when we live according to our flesh)
- ff. For the rest of the day, I want to take a look at these three areas.

III. Fear God

- a. What does it mean to fear God?
- b. There are many commentaries on this. Many study this phrase.
- c. The word fear used here in Ecclesiastes is Yare' and means to fear, revere, be afraid, stand in awe of, honor, respect.
- d. It is translated the majority of times as fear/be afraid.
- e. Yet today, we like to make it mean honor or respect.
- f. While honor and respect are certainly part of the meaning, you cannot ignore that there is a huge element of fear in this word.
- g. We are to fear God.
- h. God is a just God and should be feared because of this.
- i. God hates sin.
- j. We, as believers, should fear His discipline.
- k. I think because we as believers don't have an understanding of the judgment that will take place of believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we lose this aspect of fearing God.
- l. Anytime we see judgment in the Scriptures, we make them to refer to that which Christ settled on the cross so there is no reason to fear judgment in the future.
- m. But what does Proverbs 1:7 read?
 - i. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.
 - ii. Once we understand that it is healthy for us to have this fear, that is where knowledge begins as it reveals our perspective is in the right place.
 - iii. Fools, those who live according to their own pleasures, have no fear of God because they don't have the right perspective.
- n. What did Moses tell the Israelites in Deuteronomy 10:12, 20-21?
 - i. Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and

with all your soul...20 You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name. 21 He is your praise and He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen.

- ii. These are God's chosen people and what are we told He requires of them?
 - iii. Fear the Lord your God and
 - iv. To walk in all His ways and love Him
 - v. Interesting that these two seem to be connected, fearing God and walking in His ways. Just something to keep in the back of your mind.
- o. Hebrews 12:5-11
- i. And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; 6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they discipline us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.
 - ii. He is our father and as such, disciplines us just as our earthly father disciplines us.
 - 1. When I was in high school, I didn't have a set curfew.
 - 2. My parents dealt with each of my brothers and I in similar ways yet when it came to certain things, they made it specific to each one of us and our tendencies.
 - 3. With me, there was a unwritten law that if I respected them, they would respect me and there would be some give and take.
 - 4. I rarely was out late enough to where I would even need a curfew, that's just not the type I was-to stay out late every weekend.
 - 5. But if there were an occasion where my folks knew it'd be a late night, they would say "be home by x"
 - 6. Well one night I was over at a friend's house and we were all watching a movie.

7. I had lost track of time and the movie ended maybe 15 minutes before I was supposed to be home and I lived a good 30 minutes away, easy.
 8. I drove home, more like flew in hopes of getting home on time.
 9. You see, I knew that if I wasn't home on time that there would be consequences.
 10. I was about 3 minutes from home but maybe 10-15 minutes after curfew when I got a call from my dad asking where I was.
 11. They had actually just gotten home and saw that I wasn't there.
 12. So I got home and I don't think my folks really had to say anything and if I recall correctly, I wasn't punished by taking the car away or anything like that.
 13. You see, I got home and I was almost in tears.
 14. It hit me at that moment as I was minutes from home, that I had betrayed my parent's trust.
 15. More than fearing consequences, which I did fear, I feared a possible schism that may have been caused between my folks and I as a result of my lack of responsibility.
 16. I feared my father.
 17. And I believe because of the way they handled it, because I continued to have that healthy fear, I was never late again.
- iii. But looking at that passage, did you notice the end?
1. "Shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?"
 - a. Basically, shouldn't we fear God and by doing so, live?
 2. "10 For they discipline us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. "
 - a. We will be disciplined in this age, we will endure sufferings, go through tough circumstances where we will want to give in but what is the end result? That we may share His holiness, that we may be co-heirs with Christ if we partake in the sufferings of Christ.
 3. "11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.
 - a. It's not going to be gravy all the time; it's going to be sorrowful.

- b. But what does it yield? The peaceful fruit of righteousness.
 - c. That sounds like something I want to spend my life pursuing.
 - d. That sounds like something that can give me peace when my circumstances are uneasy, because I am filled with the hope that all of this, everything I endure in the day-to-day grind is training me and if I successfully train, I will receive the peaceful fruit of righteousness.
 - p. So, Fear God.
 - q. By doing so, it will help you maintain the proper perspective in this world.
 - r. You will fear the consequences of your sin as our God is holy and just and as such, must stay true to his nature.
- IV. (Keep His Commandments)
 - a. So, you fear God, now what?
 - b. Well, as I mentioned earlier, when we are told to fear God, it is often followed up with “and keep His commandments.”
 - c. Let’s take a look at why.
 - d. John 14:15 If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.
 - i. Pretty straight forward words spoken by Christ.
 - e. Again, in 1 John 5:3-4 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.
 - i. It is explicitly stated that love=keeping commandments
 - ii. It is not a burden to keep His commandments.
 - iii. You see, we fear God, we fear the wrath of God, we fear the consequences of our sins.
 - iv. We realize that the commands of God our for our protection more than anything and so if we love God, we will keep those commandments He has given us because it is the faith that we have the peaceful fruit of righteousness awaiting us that gives us hope daily in the midst of our circumstances.
 - f. John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.
 - i. Same thing once more but here we see that it is he who loves Christ and keep His word that Christ and His Father will fellowship with.
 - ii. That is the only thing that will fill the void inside.
 - iii. That the Father would come and dwell inside us.
 - g. 1 John 2:3-6 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is

not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner He walked

- i. The sign of spiritual maturity is that you keep His commandments.
 - ii. You see, it's not good enough to simply say that we fear God.
 - iii. Our hearts may deceive us.
 - iv. We typically have a better view of ourselves than we really are.
 - v. The proof is in how we act.
 - vi. Do we keep His commandments?
- h. Matthew 7:21 Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.
- i. Unfortunately, not all believers who simply confess their love for God will enter the kingdom.
 - ii. What did Samuel tell Saul? That to obey is better than sacrifice.
 - iii. It is easier to fall on the sword for a cause but it is often much harder to live for it.
 - iv. But that is what is required if we desire to enter the kingdom and dine with our Father.

V. (Prepare for the Final Judgment)

- a. So, we finally grasp that we need to fear God and not live for the pleasures of this world that leave us unsatisfied.
- b. But then we realize that fearing God means we are to keep His commandments.
- c. But why do we do that? Why do we obey?
- d. Because by doing so, we are preparing ourselves for the final judgment as Solomon explained is the conclusion of the matter.
 - i. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.
- e. 2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.
 - i. The apostle Paul is speaking here and is referring to all believers appearing before the judgment seat of Christ.
- f. Matthew 16:27 For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.
 - i. Christ will return and at the rapture of the Church we will appear before Christ and be judged on our level of faithfulness in the roles given to us and our obedience to the Word of God while on this earth.
- g. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13

each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

- h. 1 Peter 4:13 But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.
 - i. Between these two passages, there is much that we have to rejoice over.
 - ii. We have great hope that is more than enough to carry us through our life on this world.
 - iii. When things are tough and we start to lose perspective, the hope contained in these verses should get us back on track, help us correct our course because we are forfeiting rewards if we don't.

VI. (Clean Garments)

- a. I want to conclude by taking a quick look at another conclusion made by Solomon.
- b. Ecclesiastes 9:8 Let your clothes be white all the time, and let not oil be lacking on your head
 - i. Clothing in Scripture has to do with our actions, whether we are faithful or not.
 - ii. If we are faithful, then our clothes will be white.
 - iii. If however, we are unfaithful, our clothes will be stained.
 - iv. Revelation 3:4-5 4 But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 5 He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.
 - v. James 1:27b James admonishes each one of us "...to keep oneself unstained by the world."
 - 1. This word unstained comes from the greek word ἄσπιλος (as-pee-los) and means spotless and unstained, irreproachable, free from vice, unsullied.
 - 2. It is so easy to allow the things of this world to sidetrack us and to stain us.
 - a. 2 Timothy 4:10 For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica
 - i. One of Paul's own disciples deserted him because he was stained by the world.
 - ii. He lost perspective

VII. Conclusion

- a. I believe this is our pursuit in life.
 - i. To maintain the proper perspective in the midst of the many distractions.
 - ii. This is what gives us meaning.
 - iii. If our perspective is on things above and not below the sun, if we fear God then this is what gives us meaning in life because of the end result.
 - iv. This is how we can have a smile on our face and a peace inside even if our world is crumbling around us.
 - v. This is how we can balance our lives and make everyday a day with purpose and a day worth living.
- b. Warren Wiersbe said "The joys of the present depend on the security of the future."
 - i. If we have no hope in the future then yeah, wealth, prestige, power, possessions, the pleasures of the world will be the greatest good in life to us.
 - ii. But, if we have hope in our future, we will have joy because whatever happens in the here and now pales in comparison to the future.
 - iii. The only question is how secure are you in your future?
 - iv. The answer to your question is in the way you live your life.
 - v. Do you fear God?
 - vi. Are you keeping His commandments?
 - vii. Let us press on and truly live a life of victory and not vanity.