

Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:12 Discussion Questions

Outline of Pastor Mike's Sermon

Intro

- Recapping Ecclesiastes
 - Answering the question about pursuing what will endure
 - Hearing a unique voice in the Scriptures outside of more historical or prescriptive text
 - *The neighborhoods of Ecclesiastes are filled with wisdom streets. Many Christians have grown up traveling the prophetic roads of the Old Testament and the Pauline highways of the New Testament. Wisdom highways are less traveled. The Song of Solomon is like a back-road brothel to us . . . Job is like a long stretch of desert road with no night light and no gas stations or rest stops for miles. People can get stuck out there with no help, so we rarely travel there without a great deal of preparation . . . Ecclesiastes sounds like a crazed man downtown. He smells like he hasn't bathed—looks like it too—and as we pass by he won't stop glaring at us and beckoning to us that our lives are built on illusions, and that we are all going to die. So, most of us choose to get our lunch at a different shop on a less dreary corner of town.* - Zach Eswine, *Recovering Eden: The Gospel According to Ecclesiastes*
 - Ecclesiastes provides a theology that speaks in the voice of the realities in which we live
 - Understanding the difference between the author and the Preacher
 - The author is using the Preacher's voice as an extended illustration of a worldview in which the individual is seeking to finding meaning independent from a trust in the sovereign, covenant keeping God.
 - The phrase we used for this was autonomous epistemology
 - Ecclesiastes is difficult because it uncomfortably exposes a worldview that is obvious outside the people of God and at times, subconscious, yet just as prevalent among the people of God.
 - Specifically regarding money
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 - What is the True Gift (v.18-2)
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Empty Pursuits (v.8-17)

- Oppression and hierarchy
- Riches cannot fulfill the promise of meaning and satisfaction
 - Increased wealth, increased consumption
 - No rest compared to the laborer
 - Riches can be easily lost and ultimately impossible to keep
- The personal testimony of the Preacher- Ecclesiastes 2

The True Gift (v.18-6.2)

- It is a gift from the Lord to be able to enjoy what has been given
- The Preacher considers it a grievous evil that some do not have this gift

Grasping for Rest (v.3-12)

- Graphic comparison to express the trouble of wealth.
 - The wealthy has carried the burden of broken creation and cannot attain rest.
 - There is a greater enjoyment in the content of what is seen and possessed vs the unsatisfied appetite for more

Implications

- The levels of pursuit
 - Those who are oppressed (1 Timothy 6.1-10)
 - To Timothy (1 Timothy 6.11-16)
 - To those who are rich (1 Timothy 6.17-19)
- How should believers approach wealth
 - *When they [Christians] attempt to understand their lives within the world of biblical narrative, they are caught up in the double movement of enjoyment and renunciation. Neither half of the movement, taken by itself, is the Christian way of life. In order to trust, renunciation is necessary, lest we immerse ourselves entirely in the things we possess, trying to grasp and keep what we need to be secure. In order to trust, enjoyment is necessary.... Indeed, affirmation must ... have the final word ... because created goods are channels through which the divine glory strikes us ... to renounce all enjoyment of created things—to delight in nothing ... must be hell.- G.C. Meilander, Things That Count: Essays Moral and Theological*

Discussion Questions

Read Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:12

1. In this passage the preacher spends a lot of time reflecting on the themes of power and wealth.

a. What would you say is his main idea?

b. What does he see as the ideal or what does he consider to be the gift of God?

2. What's the difference between pursuing wealth or loving money, and simply being responsible and providing for you and your family?

3. Where do you lack contentment? Where in your life do you lack the ability to simply rest and enjoy what God has given you?

4. Pastor Mike made the point that for many of us we see busyness as an indication of significance. If this is true for you, how do you strike a healthy balance between being productive and just being busy to feel like you are successful or important?

5. What is the thing that you are currently striving after?

6. Pastor Mike suggested that believers ought to approach wealth with a balance of renunciation and enjoyment: we renounce dependence upon our wealth as a sign of our trust in God, but we are still able to enjoy what God has given us as a blessing from him.

a. How are you tempted to rely on your wealth? What would it look like to renounce it?

b. Most of us have an easy time enjoying the blessings that God gives us. What's the difference between enjoying wealth as a blessing from God versus enjoying it as a means of idolatrous self-gratification and self-aggrandizement?