

Ecclesiastes– It is Better...

Ecclesiastes 6:10-7:14

“We pursue being a disciple making family: surrendered to Jesus, transformed by the gospel, and saturated in His word.”

The Teacher in this text makes it clear that we are not the sovereign of the universe. We don't know what tomorrow will hold or even what today will hold. Like we see in James 4:14, our life is like a mist or a vapor. In this text in Ecclesiastes, we read that our days are like a passing shadow. We are confronted with several proverbs relating to death and life, sorrow and laughter, patience, pride and anger, and wisdom and folly. We are reminded about what “is better.” In this sobering text the Teacher calls on us to consider God and trust that God is over all of our days whether we see them as good and joyful or sad and filled with adversity.

1. We see in v.10-12 that we are not as in control and in charge as we might tend to think we are. There is a clear reminder that we are not responsible for creation or the days after we are gone. The questions the Teacher gives may be rhetorical questions, but they have deep practical applications for us. How do we tend to figure out what is good for man while he lives his days of life? Be honest and transparent here. It may not be as spiritual and God centered as we would like to think (i.e. responding to authority, work, rest, raising children, singleness, finances, etc.). How much is based on culture and peer response versus submission to a sovereign God? How can we relate and see the “vanity of words” in our culture towards disputing God?
2. There is a very sobering proverb that is given that it is better for the day of death than the day of birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the home of feasting. Sorrow is better than laughter. This proverb is not saying that celebrating, laughing, and feasting are bad. They are good things and should be done. The Teacher is pointing out that they don't have the same impact and reflection on life that mourning brings. We often try to numb sorrow and grief with folly instead of letting it have its work in us. How have you seen this to be true in your life and others? How has mourning and sorrow lead you to examine your own life and the mortality with which we all carry?
3. As the Teacher has pointed out there is a time for everything under heaven. We should not live defeated and depressed lives. This is not what the text is saying. We have been rescued and redeemed by the glorious work of Jesus on the cross. We should be the most joyful people on earth. Death for Christ followers is to close our eyes in a broken, sick, and sin-filled world to ultimately open them in unspeakable joy. How does this hope impact how you live life under the sun? How should it guide us in the great commission of sharing the gospel?

4. In the next portion of the proverb it points out wisdom and folly. It shares that rebuke is better than the flattering song of a fool. How have you experienced this to be true in your own life for the good or the bad?
5. The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. We are cautioned to be slow to anger for anger can lodge in our hearts. There seems to be a progression here. We are impatient in spirit because we believe in our pride that we deserve something or don't deserve something and whatever it is needs to happen quickly. This delay leads us to anger and we tend to lash out with a quick temper or hold it in and eventually go nuclear on someone. How can you relate to this and how can we keep this from being our rhythm?
6. We are called to consider the work of God. This is the key to everything. He is able to make all things crooked straight. We know ultimately this happens in heaven but our daily lives may seem to be filled with good or overcome with adversity. Whatever we experience we can know that God is in control. An interesting part of the proverb is not to ask "why were the former days better than these?" We tend to forget the struggles of the past and only remember the good. By constantly wishing for former days, we can miss the present. The dissatisfaction of the current can lead us to neglect the goodness of God today. How have you been guilty of this? In what areas do you tend to want to focus on the former days (i.e. ministry position, previous job, status, finances, etc.)? What was so appealing about those days? What can you celebrate today as you walk with God in the present day?