

Ecclesiastes– Wisdom and the Unpredictable

Ecclesiastes 9:11-10:20

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

We see in this text the reminder that the Teacher has been sharing throughout Ecclesiastes. We all know the end and that eventually death will come to us all. We also can see that fearing God is the beginning of wisdom. There is a way that the wise live life and the way the foolish live life. Even though they both will eventually die there is a reward to wisdom and ruin to folly. In the monotony and the craziness of life there is an unpredictability to life that will in turn lead us to live a life of either wisdom or folly. Let's look at this wisdom and unpredictability of life.

Discussion Questions* -- *do not feel the pressure to cover them all

1. We see in v.11-12 that life is unpredictable. We don't know what tomorrow holds or even today for that matter. Sure, we know there will be death to us all but it's in the living that we can get tripped up. We can make foolish, rash, and self-seeking decisions and choices. The teacher points out that neither ability nor opportunity guarantee success. For example, the race is not to the swift. The ability and the opportunity may be there, but we can't guarantee a win. This is a sobering fact that we have seen many times. How has this played out in your life? How did you respond and react to this time in your life? (i.e. question God, get angry with God, blame others, etc.). How do we work to deal with this unpredictability in our own lives and the lives of those we love (our family and children)? How does the gospel impact our view of this unpredictability?
2. One of the ways we tend to try to handle this unpredictability is through control. Whether this is through education, helicopter parenting, obsessive diet and fitness, or incessant curation of our life on social media we seek to control our lives and our message. The Teacher points out that those who are wise may not always be remembered. The loudest and most opinionated may not be heard. Quite honestly one sinner can destroy much good. One act of folly has the ability to ruin a lifetime's wisdom. In 10:1, we see the danger of having a fool in high places or leadership. The effect of foolishness as a fly in the ointment can be seen in positions of authority. What are the key elements of leadership found in 10:16-20? How have you seen this foolishness played out in leadership? What are some positive examples in your life of wise leadership? How does it impact a team, a business, a nation, a family, or a church? What should be the gospel's response for believers to this control and this folly in leadership?

3. The Teacher points out in 10:11-14, 20 that a fool's tongue gives him away. How controlled is your tongue (James 3:1-12)? Our words have a way of getting back to others. How should the gospel impact our speech? Where do you find this to be the most challenging to speak from wisdom versus folly? How do we use our words to deal with the unpredictability of life? How do we use our words to build up or tear down authorities in our life?
4. There are five pictures of foolishness in 10:8-10. What are some moments in your life that mirror or parallel these pictures? How could you prevent these moments of folly from happening in the future?