

Everything is meaningless without Jesus

Lesson for Sunday, May 12, 2024

Text: Ecclesiastes 1:3-18; 12:8-14

INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ What is your least favorite physical exercise? *Let people share; if you have a humorous story share it with the class...*
- ⇒ One of the things that makes exercise difficult for some is the environment in which they have to work out. Nothing exemplifies this greater than a treadmill.
- ⇒ Many families have invested money (& their dreams) in a treadmill, only to use it as an expensive clothes rack within weeks.
- ⇒ Someone once observed that the issue with the treadmill is easy to understand. You spend all this time and all this energy, and when you are finished you are still exactly where you started. A lot of work to go absolutely nowhere!
- ⇒ As Solomon observed the world around him, he basically compared the events of life to a treadmill. There's a good chance that life seems like that to you. Let's see what Solomon has to say about it.

BIBLE STUDY:

1. All of our activity is pointless (1:3-11)
 - a. Remembering Solomon's perspective is critical in understanding this text. Pay attention to the phrase "under the sun" in verse 3.
 - i. Solomon is looking for meaning in this world as if God doesn't exist.
 - ii. "Under the sun" is a reference to the natural world with the absence of the supernatural.
 - b. Solomon's conclusion (3) is that if this world is all that there is then – what's the point?
 - i. Jesus said something similar in Mark 8:36. Life without God is futile!
 - ii. Solomon's point: Everything is meaningless without Jesus!
 - c. Verses 4-11 is a poem in which Solomon points to the repetitive cycles in nature. Even though there is a lot of change and activity, there is really nothing new – it is ultimately pointless.
 - i. The Generations (4): Humanity comes and goes – the earth stays the same.
 - ii. The Environment (5-8): Solomon gives three examples from nature.
 1. Vs. 5: He compares the sun to an exhausted track runner – he runs and he runs – but he is just running in circles.
 2. Vs. 6: The winds have their cycles that they continuously repeat.
 3. Vs. 7: The oceans have their cycles yet the sea levels stay the same – there is no net gain!
 - d. We see this in our own homes! Our tasks are never done.
 - i. The sink is full of dirty dishes. You wash them and put them away. You return the next morning, and what is there? More dirty dishes!
 - ii. These are the facts of life: more bills, more emails, more haircuts, more grass to cut...it never ends.
 - e. How do people deal with the monotony of life? Mid-life crisis; affairs; changing jobs, etc. We do all kinds of things to break from the dissatisfaction of life.
 - f. Solomon concludes in verse 8: Our existence is full of weariness. Our desires are never satisfied. We are not happy or content. We always want more.
 - g. Solomon summarizes the section in vs. 9-11 by saying, "There is nothing new under the sun." Most live and then die to be quickly forgotten.
2. Nothing truly satisfies (1:12-18)
 - a. Solomon's conclusion is that all of our activity is like chasing the wind.

- b. Our attempts to find meaning in pleasure, possessions, money or success are like trying to catch soap bubbles.
 - c. He points out the obvious in verse 15: We live in a messed-up world, and we are basically helpless to do much about it.
 - d. Solomon then begins to introduce his personal testimony in vs. 16-17. He basically says, "I tried it all and nothing brought any lasting purpose or meaning."
 - i. Don't forget who is saying this! He had it all! He had everything we dream about. In essence, his life wasn't any better than anyone else's.
 - ii. In fact, in verse 18, he says that all the wisdom in the world just brought him more grief.
 - e. We are not much different from Solomon. For most of us, there was a time when we begged God for the things we now have and take for granted.
 - i. We asked God for a spouse, we begged God for children, we begged God for a house and for a good paying job.
 - ii. Now we have those things and are still not content. The American dream is a lie and a failure.
 - iii. We live in a world with more money, more entertainment, more pleasurable experiences, more recreation, and more stuff that any previous generation could have ever dreamed, and pain pills and antidepressants fly over the counter of our local pharmacy.
 - f. What is Solomon's point? He wants to expose the meaninglessness of life in a cursed world in order to create a hunger for something better.
3. Our frustration is meant to drive us to Jesus (12:8-14)
- a. In verse 8, Solomon repeats his main point.
 - b. In verse 9, he calls the Preacher a wise man who has arranged his writings with great care. He says that his words are delightful and true (10).
 - c. In verse 11, he says his words are like goads – they aim to poke and prod the reader to wise living. He points out that the Lord is the true Author of his words ("one Shepherd") and He aims to convict.
 - d. In verse 12, Solomon says the words of Ecclesiastes are sufficient and should not be transgressed.
 - e. Vs. 13: Our obligation is to fear God and obey Him. Why? Because of verse 14!
 - i. Fear God = to reverence God and to worship Him wholly.
 - ii. Obey Him = to trust that God has our best interest at heart, and we will come to love Him as we serve Him.
 - f. THE POINT OF THE WHOLE LESSON: What is the difference between a meaningful life and a meaningless life?
 - i. Jesus makes the difference!
 - ii. Life without Jesus is meaningless and leads to endless frustration. But with Jesus, everything has meaning – everything is sacred.

APPLICATION:

- ⇒ Solomon's point for us to consider: Don't attempt to live life without a proper relationship with Jesus.
- ⇒ Discuss: How do we obey Matthew 22:37? How do we fall in love with Jesus completely? What are the obstacles that pull our attention away from Him and that relationship?
- ⇒ Discuss: How does a right relationship with God impact the other areas of our lives? Our families, our work, etc.?
- ⇒ Discuss: How much of your life this past week did you approach without Jesus? Remember, this will lead to frustration that will bubble up in various areas.