

**Title:** Don't Live Your Life in Vain

**Passage:** Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

## Introduction

Hedonism

- What is it? Belief that happiness is the key goal of life and pleasure is the highest pursuit of life.
- What's the result? Still emptiness of the soul.

Story

- Well-accomplished lawyer. But felt there was nothing at the top of the ladder he climbed.
- Question: As we go up the ladder, do we know what will be at the top?
  - You will be deeply disappointed if all you're living for is y

Contrast:

- We should pursue happiness and pleasures in the ways God designed us to do
- Warning: Do not pursue it outside of His boundaries.

**Context of Passage:** Ecclesiastes 1:16-18

I said in my heart, "I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge." And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind.

For in much wisdom is much vexation,  
and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

**Passage:** Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?" I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life. I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man.

So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

## EXPOSITION

### Background

Book of Ecclesiastes

- written by Solomon near end of his life
  - Ecclesiastes = “preaching” / a preacher providing insights
- Purpose: Warn readers to not live a life based ultimately on human desires and pleasures.
- Pursuing pleasures on human desires alone is folly.
- Happiness can never be achieved by pursuing it apart from God

Solomon

- Who was he? King of Israel
- How can we relate to him? He became an experiential hedonist

### Ways one can pursue happiness

#### I. Knowledge and wisdom (Ecc. 1:16-18; 2:1)

Ecclesiastes 1:16-18; 2:1

I said in my heart, “I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.” And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind.

For in much wisdom is much vexation,

and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.” But behold, this also was vanity.

- A lot of knowledge leads to sorrow
- Problem: Knowledge cannot change people’s heart.
- Science doesn’t have

#### II. Entertainment (v.2)

Ecclesiastes 2:2

I said of laughter, “It is mad,” and of pleasure, “What use is it?”

- Comedy and laughter.
- But leads to viewing everything as a joke and never being serious.
- Gravity of death. Life is no laughing matter. People are dying without Christ so we should be serious about what is happening.
  - There is a time to laughter but also time to consider the truth.

#### III. Alcohol / Drugs (v.3)

Ecclesiastes 2:3

I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

- Wine = includes substances that dull or alter one’s consciousness (alcohol, drugs)

- Misperception: taking something external to get into a mental state of euphoria and happiness.
- Truth: Alcohol doesn't take away the underlying pain and suffering. It doesn't change circumstances.
- Only Christ can truly bring healing

#### **IV. Material Things (v.4-7)**

Ecclesiastes 2:4-7

I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.

1 Kings 7:1

Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished his entire house.

- Solomon built his own palace even greater than the Temple (which took 7 years to build)
- But material things cannot provide fulfillment and satisfaction.

Matthew 6:21

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- Your heart must be in the right place in God.
- Hold your material possessions loosely. If have trouble sleeping or anxious about loosing material things, a sign of your heart treasuring material things

#### **V. Money (v.8)**

Ecclesiastes 2:8a

I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces.

Solomon's Great Wealth

1 Kings 4:21-23

Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt.

They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.

Solomon's provision for one day was thirty cors of fine flour and sixty cors of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty pasture-fed cattle, a hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl.

1 Kings 10:10

Then she gave the king 120 talents of gold, and a very great quantity of spices and precious stones. Never again came such an abundance of spices as these that the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

1 Kings 10:14

Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold,

1 Kings 10:16-19

King Solomon made 200 large shields of beaten gold; 600 shekels of gold went into each shield. And he made 300 shields of beaten gold; three minas of gold went into each shield. And the king put them in the House of the Forest

of Lebanon. The king also made a great ivory throne and overlaid it with the finest gold. The throne had six steps, and the throne had a round top, and on each side of the seat were armrests and two lions standing beside the armrests,

1 Kings 10:21

All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. None were of silver; silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon.

- Misperception: If I had all that money like Solomon, I would have handled it differently.
- Truth: the more money you have, the more problems you will have. You will need more wisdom to manage/steward wisely.

Proverbs 11:28

Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.

1 Timothy 6:17

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

## **VI. Music and Partying (v.8)**

Ecclesiastes 2:8b

I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man.

Luke 15:13 (Parable of Prodigal Son)

Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.

## **V. Sexual Relationships (v.10)**

Ecclesiastes 2:10

And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil.

- Misperception: I deserved it. I earned it. So I did/do it.

1 Kings 11:3

He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart.

## **Self-Assessment**

Question: Honestly, would you be envious of Solomon?

- Wish you had a nicer home?
- Wish had someone else to do all your work?

- Wish had nicer or more modern things?

Truth: Like Solomon, we live like him (in some ways better than him)

- Live in better homes (with air-conditioning/heat)
- Eat with a wide range of foods (grocery stores)
- Listen and have access to wider array of music/entertainment options
- Access through internet supplies endless supply of partners and pleasure options

### **Application**

Ecclesiastes 2:11

Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

- Pursuit of happiness in this world cannot satisfy the human soul.
- Dissatisfaction of this life should point us towards God.

*True satisfaction and happiness can only be found in God.*

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

*Wrong way*

Jeremiah 2:13

for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

*Turn to God*

John 7:37b-38

"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

Once you know the God of Living Waters, from your heart will flow living waters.

- How? Acknowledge your sin, repent and turn to God for true living water

John 10:10b

I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

- God is not a joy-killer. He wants to give you life!

Psalms 16:11

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

- God us most glorified when have our joy and pleasure in Him
- We have legitimate desires and needs, only through God can we accurately enjoy them.
  - By glorifying God, we have fulfillment of our souls.

- We can thank God for being used by Him as an instrument to accomplish and do things for Him.
- Give glory to God in everything. This can be done in your work, with your possessions, and in relationships under the umbrella of God.
- But if you make an end of it, you will be doomed. It will not bring you true happiness.

### **Conclusion**

True satisfaction will come only if we are satisfied in God more than anything else. Don't live your life in vain.

Psalm 37:4

Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart.

Matthew 6:33

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.