Happy Monday, everyone.

Continuing with our walk through the Biblical books, this week we will take a look at Ecclesiastes. Written by King Solomon, Ecclesiastes can be a dour, difficult book to read. It explores the theme that life without God is meaningless, and no amount of money, fame, riches, or wisdom, which Solomon had in abundance, can overcome this simple fact. At its core, Ecclesiastes teaches that absent a reverential fear of the Lord, human life is empty and hollow.

Most people know Ecclesiastes from the famous passage from chapter 3: “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: A time to be born and a time to die…” (vs. 1-2). This passage was famously turned into a song by the Byrds in the 60’s. Since this passage is so well known, we will forego examining it in this brief study. Instead, let’s start at the beginning:

“The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:

“Meaningless! Meaningless!
says the Teacher.
Utterly meaningless!
Everything is meaningless.

All things are wearisome,
more than one can say.
The eye never has enough of seeing,
nor the ear its fill of hearing.
What has been will be again,
what has been done will be done again;
there is nothing new under the sun” (1:1-2; 8-9).

Solomon had it all. Great wisdom directly from God. Riches beyond compare. Palaces, jewels, and the respect and admiration of the world’s rulers. Seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. And at the end of his life, when Ecclesiastes was written, he realized that in having it all…he actually had nothing. He realized that his lifelong pursuit of material wealth, sensual pleasure, and earthly fame was meaningless. The Hebrew word here is hebel, which translates literally as “vapor” or “breath.” In other words, Solomon’s treasures, pleasures, and celebrity, when his life was coming to an end, were as breath in the wind.

And so it is. There’s nothing wrong with pursuing material comfort. But, as Solomon bitterly realized at the end of his life, as God’s created beings, our life is not about material pursuit alone. In Solomon’s words, such a life is “meaningless.”
IHS, Pastor Lou

June 7

Grace and peace to you this day.

Continuing with the book of Ecclesiastes, these are the further words of King Solomon:

"I denied myself nothing my eyes desired;
I refused my heart no pleasure.
My heart took delight in all my labor,
and this was the reward for all my toil.
Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done
and what I had toiled to achieve,
everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind;
nothing was gained under the sun" (2:10-11).

When I read this passage, I am struck by its self-centeredness

* "I denied myself nothing my eyes desired."

* "I refused my heart no pleasure."

* My heart took delight in all my labor."

"I." "My." "Myself." Solomon's focus was strictly on himself. He denied himself nothing, refused himself nothing, and delighted only in himself. The unfortunate lesson Solomon learned at the end of his life is that a life focused on the self is a life with no room for God. God gets pushed out when our ego is so large. He gets squeezed out when our pursuit is for things of the earth rather than the things of heaven.

This kind of life places God in some distant corner where He waits, as a Father for His son, for that son to return. As with Solomon, unless God is the central purpose of our life, at the end of the day, "nothing [will be] gained under the sun."

IHS,
Pastor Lou
Greetings, DGCC Family.

More words from King Solomon:

“Whoever loves money never has enough;
whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income.
This too is meaningless.

As goods increase,
so do those who consume them.
And what benefit are they to the owners
except to feast their eyes on them?

The sleep of a laborer is sweet,
whether they eat little or much,
but as for the rich, their abundance
permits them no sleep” (5:10-12).

In his day, no one was wealthier than King Solomon. For example, in 1 Kings 10:14-15 we read this: “The weight of the gold that Solomon received yearly was 666 talents, not including the revenues from merchants and traders and from all the Arabian kings and the governors of the territories.”

666 talents is about 25 tons. Doing the arithmetic, at today’s price for an ounce of gold, that means that every year, Solomon received about 1.5 trillion dollars worth of gold. Year after year. And that doesn’t include all of his other revenues. Move over, Elon Musk.

And yet, he realized too late that his relentless pursuit of personal wealth was a trap, an addiction worse than any drug. Despite being one of the richest men in the history of the world, he simply never had enough.

The apostle Paul famously said this in his first letter to his friend Timothy: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (6:10).

Jesus said it best with this admonition to His followers: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).
Solomon realized that for the entirety of his life, his heart was in the wrong place. And so, my prayer for you today is this: remember that there is nothing wrong in saving money, planning for retirement, and so on. In fact, that is certainly the responsible thing to do. But, that should not be our primary focus, nor should it be our only focus. Our primary focus should be placing our hearts in the hands of our Creator, who holds our true treasure.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

June 9
Greetings to you this day in the name of Jesus.
Solomon concludes the book of Ecclesiastes with these words:

“Now all has been heard;
here is the conclusion of the matter:
Fear God and keep his commandments,
for this is the duty of all mankind.
For God will bring every deed into judgment,
including every hidden thing,
whether it is good or evil” (12:13-14).

Trillions of dollars. Rulers seeking his counsel. A thousand women at his beck and call. Slaves to do his bidding. And what does Solomon conclude: “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.”

You can imagine an aged and despondent Solomon sitting on his throne, pondering his misspent life. Concluding that he had “gotten it wrong” all those years; years that cannot be taken back. And yet, he departs from us with words for the ages:

• Stand in reverent awe of the Lord.
• Obey Him in all things.
• That is our solemn and exclusive duty as His created people.

And to that, I say, Amen.

IHS,
Pastor Lou
June 10

Happy Friday, everyone. Here’s your groovy music devotional for today…and you know what it is!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snZKnES4ng4

Turn up the volume and enjoy.

IHS.
Pastor Lou