

Relentless - Repetitious - Vanity
EBC - April 28, 2012

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Last Week Began Series in Ecclesiastes
 - a. Noted book PRESENTS radically different world views.....*SECULARISM & FAITH*
 - b. Noted book PRODUCT of a master *wordsmith* - (qôheleth - ***Ko-helleth***)“***The Preacher***”
 - 1) Deliberately & thoughtfully weighs, studies & arranges words with meticulous care
 - 2) With those words - he goads our conscience & fastens truths in our minds
 - c. Walking in the shoes of secularism - Preacher presents what the world considers its best & noblest
 - 1) Ask a parent what he desires for his children - & his list is probably topped with these matters
 - 2) Love - fame - riches - success - science - knowledge - achievements - awards
 - d. One by one Preacher shows that each & all of these virtues or achievements without God vanity -, i.e., - *that which is without substance & quickly passes away.*
 - e. Echoing through the valley & reverberating from the mountains is his cry

Ecclesiastes 1:2 - Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

2. But The Preacher Is Not Merely a Skeptic or Pessimist
 - a. There is purpose in his method
 - 1) He is tearing down to build
 - 2) Before he can build - he must tear down - brick by brick - building by building
 - b. After declaring all is vanity HE DECLARES - IT ALL MATTERS

Ecclesiastes 12:14 - For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

3. Today
 - a. Text - **Ecclesiastes 1:1-11**
 - b. Subject - RELENTLESS - REPETITIOUS - VANITY

B. I HEARD A FLY BUZZ

1. Emily Dickinson (December 10, 1830 – May 15, 1886) Regarded As One of America's Greatest Poets

a. One of her more popular poems is..... *I HEARD A FLY BUZZ*

1) I 1st read this poem when I was in college

2) Made an indelible impression upon my mind & I have thought of it often

b. Poem reads

I heard a Fly buzz – when I died –
The Stillness in the Room
Was like the Stillness in the Air –
Between the Heaves of Storm –

The Eyes around – had wrung them dry –
And Breaths were gathering firm
For that last Onset – when the King
Be witnessed – in the Room –

I willed my Keepsakes – Signed away
What portions of me be
Assignable – and then it was
There interposed a Fly –

With Blue – uncertain stumbling Buzz –
Between the light – and me –
And then the Windows failed – and then
I could not see to see –

2. I'm Reminded of This Poem At Momentous Moments - Moments When It Seems Like the World Should Stop & Take Notice of What Is Happening.

a. Such moments may be

1) Individualsuch as the birth of a child or the death of a loved one

2) National such as the explosion of a space shuttle or the assassination of a president.

b. We experience the weight of such events & we feel that

1) the Heavens should be silent

2) the World should pause

3) the Universe should observe a moment of silence

c. BUT it is not so.

1) As the shuttle explodes over the Gulf of Mexico - group of seagulls nosily argue over the bloated carcass of a dead fish

2) As the newscaster speaks with solemn & quiet cadence - a mocking bird is singing in the background

3) As life ends - ***THERE IS THE STUMBLING BUZZ OF A FLY.***

d. And in that moment we are reminded of the ceaseless continuation of the world

- 1) Moves on without even a pause
- 2) Without even taking notice of the event that has so moved me
 - World keeps on spinning
 - Sun keeps on shining
 - Birds go on singing

C. TEXT

1. Vs 2 - Is the Preacher's Thesis

- a. Vanity - means what is brief & pointless
 - 1) Keddie - *"The accumulated despair of the whole world seems to well up within his soul"* (21)
 - 2) But it is as if the world is blind & the Preacher is trying to shake them awake!
- b. Keddie notes - *"He questions, even ridicules, the status quo with merciless verve"* (12)

2. Vs 3-7 - Describes An Endless - Relentless Cycle

- a. Cycle of
 - 1) Death & life - a generation goes AND generation comes
 - 2) Sunrise & sunset - sun rises AND sun sets
 - 3) Wind & water - winds blow & rivers flow
- b. Generation after generation the cycle continues - - - Since the beginning of time the relentless - repetitious cycle continues
 - 1) How many sunrises & sunsets have there been since God created the sun?
 - 2) For millenniums the waves have rolled in and rolled out as the tide ebbs & flows
 - 3) The wind blows from the south - then the north - -
 - El Niño winds from the south
 - La Niña winds from the north
- c. You & I know about this cycle
 - 1) We mow AND grass needs mowing
 - 2) We wash dishes AND dishes need washing
- d. These things continue now as they have been since creation What has changed?
 - 1) Nations rise & fall
 - 2) Kings coronated & cremated
 - 3) Men live and I die & the fly buzzes
- e. vs 3 - REAL point of the cycle is vs 3
 - 1) What does this - *Relentless - Repetition* - profit a man?
 - 2) In the words of Tennessee Ernie Ford

Some people say a man is made outta mud
 A poor man's made outta muscle and blood
 Muscle and blood and skin and bones
 A mind that's a-weak and a back that's strong

You load sixteen tons, what do you get
 Another day older and deeper in debt
 Saint Peter don't you call me 'cause I can't go
 I owe my soul to the company store

3. **Vs 8-11** - Man's Attempt to Break the CycleBy Giving Meaning to the Treadmill
 - a. **vs 8** - POSSESSIONS never satisfied
 - b. **vs 9-10** - PROGRESS - new inventions & progress will not change the matter
 - 1) I suppose since the Tower of Babel men has thought that his problems could be fixed by ingenuity & determination
 - 2) But not so
 - c. **vs 11** - PROMINENCE - *What I do will bring me fame* - Preacher says - *It will not be remembered.*
 - 1) People often say - *We'll never forget!*
 - 2) Really? - Never is a long time
 - 3) I'd say one of the issue we face today in our nation & world IS WE HAVE FORGOT
 - Forgotten God
 - Forgotten what made us a great nation
 - Forgotten sacrifices made
 - 4) People are ignorant of the past and rushing headlong to repeat it
 - 5) But even if you can remember with perfect clarity - what happens when you are no more?
 - 7) Like a picture hanging on a wall - no one knows
 - So will be all we do & all we are
 - In a few generations - name on a tombstone no one recognizes!

D. APPLICATION

1. Three Facts From Text
 - a. Some day you will die one generation goes & another comes
 - b. This world will never satisfy youeven if you gain the whole world - lose your soul
 - c. Nothing new - the cycle repeats
 - 1) We have computers & travel & changes occur at greater and faster rate than ever
 - 2) Yes - and the winds blow & tide rolls & men die AND satisfaction & meaning are still not found in POSSESSIONS - PROGRESS OR PROMINENCE
2. BUT in This World of Relentless - Repetitious - Vanity - THERE WAS/IS One Exception
 - a. God became man - Light shined in the darkness & He said

John 10:10 (ESV) — The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

- b. In Christ
 - 1) Old man becomes new creature - old mind & heart become new - new outlook - new purpose - new goal
 - 2) Your labor in the Lord is not in vain!

3. Hear the Gracious Invitations of God

Isaiah 55:1-3 (ESV) — ¹ “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. ³ Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV) — ²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

EXHORTATION

We met today to worship the Lord - Now let us go & tell others about Him!

BENEDICTION

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (ESV) — ²³ 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.

1 Thessalonians 5:28 (ESV) — ²⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.