

Ecclesiastes- Chapter 3 Part 2

If you would be turning with me to the book of wisdom known as Ecclesiastes to the third chapter. We are back in chapter 3 today. You might recall last week my son Austin presented the first part of this chapter. I thanked him of course for using 3/4ths of the chapter and leaving me the deathly conclusion so to say, but in reality there is plenty for us here.

I will say Austin has been excited seemingly about doing some messages in this book since he found out that we were going to go through it. This really is one of his favorite books and has been for years and I think the love he has for this book really showed in his grasp of this chapter.

I have to admit sometimes I forget when listening to him that he is just 20 years old and not just listening to him, but seeing his walk daily for the Lord. He's seeking far greater what Solomon's conclusion is in this book, to remember his creator in the days of his youth and serve him, than most kids his age. Far more than I was at that age.

I have no doubt that the Lord has placed in him a great desire to preach the word to the lost and instruct the saints in righteousness because I see it daily.

Now with that said, let's jog our memories on what Austin taught last week or if you missed that message at least kind of get us on the same playing field. So last week we saw the message of life. Life is full of good times like birth and building up things and love. But life is also full of bad times like death and tearing down, and hate.

Everyone that survives past infancy become acutely aware that life is not always what you want. Forrest Gump gave us the quote life is like a box of chocolates you never know what you are going to get. I would submit to you

though in the Forrest Gump scenario that at least you have a box of chocolates and that can't be too bad.

The truth is sometimes in this life you don't even have the pleasure of the box of chocolates. Sometimes life is full of nothing but hurt and sorrow and pain. Sometimes there isn't even the taste of pleasure.

Sometimes you wonder if life is it really worth it at all and then Solomon reminds us in this chapter of the reality that all those times in life- the good times and the bad times alike- they are all from God.

The very best things in life when we are on the mountaintop so to say and the very worst of times when you are at your wits end. Both ordained by a sovereign God who allows both the good and bad to come into our life.

And you might wonder why God would allow any of that bad stuff in our lives, but again as Austin reminded us last time that God is using the good and the bad to make everything beautiful in his time. In God's time who has ordained the end from the very beginning.

Just as gold must be heated to be refined, we too must go through the process of refining in our lives so that God can mold us into the person that he desires we should be and folks that isn't a process that ever stops from birth until the death angel comes to take us out of this world. From life's first cry to final breath, he commands our destiny or as Solomon says to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

Now with that in mind let's read out passage through this morning beginning in verse 16. We do have a business meeting planned this morning that will take a little longer than normal I believe and therefore I'm going to Lord willing stay on the short side of things today to keep us on track as much as possible today.

Let's read,

Ecc 3:16 And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.

Ecc 3:17 I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.

Ecc 3:18 I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts.

Ecc 3:19 For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.

Ecc 3:20 All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

Ecc 3:21 Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

Ecc 3:22 Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

Alright let's turn our attention to verse 16,

Ecc 3:16 And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.

Solomon, beginning in this verse, begins to ponder two things. Judgment and eternity. Remember last week he told us that God has put eternity in our hearts. Man, even sinful man, has a desire to live for eternity and we are going to get to that eternity in just a few minutes.

But for the moment let's consider first judgment. Judgment is a word and process that inherently we don't like. We should be used to it. Every test we take in school. Every entry exam or even drivers test is a judgment of types. Every job evaluation is again a judgment.

So what's the reason we inherently don't like the thought of judgment? It is because we all have a desire to be perfect, but those tests remind us often very quickly we aren't. And sometimes those tests come with lasting consequences whether it is failing a class or not getting that license or maybe not a raise.

Growing up we had the judgment of our parents when we broke the rules and let's admit for just a moment that we didn't really like that. We wanted what we wanted when we wanted. So we broke the rules and judgment came. I imagine some of you all still remember what it was like to take the walk of cutting your own switch. I suppose those days are over for the most part. Now we ground our 8 year old's from their phones.

We live in a society with rules we call laws and when we break them, we have the judgment of our government upon us whether it is paying a speeding ticket or spending time in jail.

In those cases, again judgment is not something we necessarily like, but we are thankful when judgment exists for the guy driving 90 mph through our kid's school zone or the ones that seek to steal, kill and destroy aren't we?

Judgment is a reality in this life, but unfortunately all judgment in this life isn't fair. You see it is supposed to be fair, but it's not. That is why Solomon says here that wickedness was there, and iniquity was there in the place of judgment.

Think about it. Teachers grade essays of students they like often easier than those that they don't. Shouldn't be that way, but it happens.

Parents sometimes judge the motives of their children unfairly or some parents judge so harshly it is abuse.

Judges on elected benches often pass sentences that they know will garner votes or money for a new campaign or based on political bias. T

he fact of the matter is we know that justice is not blind on this earth and it never has been. The bible speaks about unrighteous judges from the Law of Moses and in the New Testament as well. As long as there has been judges there has been wickedness and iniquity as well. Perverted justice.

It's a perverted justice because man who is corrupt is making judgment on another. No judge on this earth is all holy. No judge on this earth is all righteous. And no judge on this earth judges with a perfect law at his side.

But there is a judge who is holy. There is a judge who is righteous. There is a judge who judges with a perfect law and that judge is God.

Look here,
Ecc 3:17 I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.

Solomon here reminds us that even though judgment is corrupt under the sun, there will come a day when all will be judged by a God in heaven that is all righteous and holy.

And the fact of the matter is, no man shall escape it whether they are righteous or whether they be wicked, but here is the truth of the matter, that is fully revealed to us in the New Testament. Are you ready for it? There is none righteous.

Rom 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

Rom 3:11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

Rom 3:12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

So, if there are none that are righteous how is it that the righteous shall stand before God? After all, in our natural state all of our righteousness is as filthy rages before him.

Well we know that through the revelation of the New Testament that our righteousness can only come through Christ right? It can only come when we as Ephesians says,
Eph 4:24 put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

The man who has been made righteous in Christ will not stand before God in judgment for sin, because Jesus Christ has already bore that sin. The sin we committed yesterday, the sin we commit today, and the sin we commit tomorrow. He died for them all. He bore our judgment.

But you know what I will still stand before God. I will still stand in judgment, not for my sin, but rather for what good I have done.

Mark your place here in Ecclesiastes and turn with me to:

1Co 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

1Co 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

1Co 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

So, the one who has been made righteous in Christ will stand before God who will judge us not for sin, but for reward. Judge us for what we have done to build up his kingdom.

But the one who has not put on Christ, the one who has never confessed him as Savior will have to stand before Christ our God and stand in judgment for their sins and folks that will not be a happy day.

Scripture describes this event in Revelation 20. This all takes place after the Judgment Seat of Christ in which those clothed in Jesus will be judged for reward. This will take place at what the scripture calls the Great White Throne Judgment.

Rev 20:11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Rev 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

Rev 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Rev 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Scripture teaches us that we shall all be judged and that every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess. My hope and prayer are that all those who are listening might do that in this life while there is still hope because if you wait for the life to come to make things right with God it will be too late. Your eternity will be sealed.

Scripture though teaches us as we looked at on Wednesday night, that if we believe in our heart that Jesus died and rose again with all of our heart and confess him with our mouth he will be just to save.

Let's look back to our next verse in Ecclesiastes. Solomon is still concerned with this thought of finality of life and what is to come. Here dwelling mainly on life's end.

Ecc 3:18 I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts.

For the sake of clarity, I want to read this to you from the ESV as well.

Ecc 3:18 I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts.

So, if you caught it this phrase that God might manifest them, speaks of testing. Solomon goes back to that time for every purpose thought that he began in verse 1. The cycles of good and bad. The cycles of building up and tearing down. They all are a firm reminder that the only thing that is constant is that life is always changing, and nothing lasts.

So man under the sun, man in his unregenerate state, living for the world realizes that even though he might build mighty works and do great things in this life in the end it is all going to fade and he is going to die just like the cattle in the field that never planted a single crop or built a single thing and will never be remembered. In the end both man and beast are going to die just the same.

Let's read on as Solomon explains his thoughts further,

Ecc 3:19 For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.

Solomon in these next couple of verses is not speaking of eternal destinies, but rather immediate realities.

Here is the reminder that even though man may have dominion over the earth and can tame the creatures that live upon it, the same fate happens

to us all. Eventually the breath of life stops, and man and beast die alike. There is no stopping it.

Man can try to eat right. Exercise a lot, but in the end, you are going to die. You might die healthier than the next guy and you might live a little longer and that is great, but again you are going to die, and it might be sooner than you expect. None of us young or old has the promise of tomorrow. We don't even have the promise of the next hour.

Again, let's read,
Ecc 3:20 All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust is the phrase we hear at times at the burial of man. Man came from the earth. Man shall return to this earth. You can be embalmed and put in the thickest of vaults and it might delay the process that besets men and beast alike, but eventually the flesh will fade. Eventually the bones will rot. Eventually the earth takes back what was taken from it.

Now again, as Solomon speaks this, he is not talking about final destiny. He is not insinuating that at death we die and that is it. After all, he has already hinted at a judgment before God that doesn't come in this life.

There is more to life than our life. Death is just the beginning of an eternal destiny.

Let's continue the thought,
Ecc 3:21 Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

Solomon speaks these words based on observation. When we look at life around us, we see birth and we see death. We see all of life around us die from our precious pet fluffy to the opossum in the road to the dearest of companions to us.

Birth, life, death that is what we see in all of creation. One cannot observe that process in and of itself and come to a conclusion that beasts rot away while there is something more for man.

On the surface it appears we all meet the same fate. All go to the same boneyard. And many of unbelievers believe just that. They believe that when they die, they will just cease to exist just life fluffy.

Now Solomon is giving us the perspective here not of one following after God, but rather one who is living under the sun. The one who walks not by faith, but rather by sight. Sight says that everything with breath comes to an end and because they cannot see more than that- the end must be the end.

So if the end is the end, then what should you do in this life. Solomon answers that next,
Ecc 3:22 Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

If a man walks not by faith, but rather by sight and death seems to be the end then the logical conclusion is to eat, drink and be merry as much as one can. Enjoy always the fruit of one's labor.

And truly many live their life that way. But you know what God has put eternity in the hearts of man and as many that think that death is the end many more are looking for more than that.

Some may think they are going to be reincarnated. Some may believe they are going to one place or another. But much of the world lives in hope that at death there is something more.

And let me assure you this day, there is something more brothers and sisters. You are not a cow or dog. God has made man different

from the creatures of the field. God has made man for eternity.

When we die, we will either go to the reality of one or two places. For those who walk by faith, and not by sight and have put their faith in Christ we know that when we die that we shall be in the presence of Christ. Paul spoke of his hope of that.

For those that have put on Christ they will stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ and be judged not for sin, but for reward.

And for those that die that have put their faith in everything and anyone else who cannot save they will pass from this life into a place of fire and torment. Then will come the Great White Throne where they will be cast into the Lake of Fire for the remainder of eternity. Which means forever.

As we end here this morning, I want to ask you, have you prepared for the eternity to come. It is not death to die. You will continue on. You will stand in judgment before Christ our God. Again, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess. Will you do it in this life or when it is too late?