

Wisdom In Showing Mercy – Part 2 (Ecclesiastes 11)

Episode 2

25:16

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

verse, life, god, solomon, lord, heart, wisdom, ecclesiastes, falls, truth, unproductive, pour, evil, message, tree, misfortune, praise, glory, study, desire

SPEAKERS

Associate Pastor Jeremy Preece, Pastor Alex Catarroja, RC Sproul

Associate Pastor Jeremy Preece 00:01

Contending for the faith one verse at a time. Thank you for downloading the Truth Matters Church podcast. Our mission is for men and women to encounter God's truth by teaching the Bible one verse at a time. We are committed to truth because truth is what sets you free. For the next few weeks we're highlighting several of pastor Alex Catarroja's past sermons, and beginning soon pastor Alex will begin a detailed expository study through the book of Romans. You can find out more at truthmatterschurch.org that's truthmatterschurch.org or connect with us on Facebook.

Today's message is part two of two, the conclusion of pastor Alex Catarroja's message titled Wisdom in Showing Mercy taught from Ecclesiastes chapter 11. If you haven't already, please download part one. Here we pick up in verse three and we encourage you to follow along in your Bible. Here is Pastor Alex.

Pastor Alex Catarroja 00:55

If the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth and whether a tree falls toward the south or toward the north, wherever the tree falls, there it lies.

And where Solomon's getting at here is, you know, if you see a rain cloud, you know rain will come. And if a tree that was planted, or to fall for whatever reason, wherever it falls, it falls. He says it another way in the beginning chapter of this book, verse 15, he says, "What is crooked cannot be straightened, and what is lacking cannot be counted." And here's where Solomon's getting at. Rain clouds are going to produce rain. A tree falling will fall, or what God has made crooked, man cannot make straight.

So here's a translation. And again, this is consistent with our communion message. There are certainties in life. And that certainty is this life is uncertain. Life is unpredictable. Good and evil are present all the time. And we do not know when good or evil will happen. We do not know the future. So anyone who claims to know the future any man who's predicting the future, you can't. No man knows the future, nor can we control the future. And all events and circumstances in life, everything. And this is peace. All of circumstances in life, the good and the evil are in the hands of God.

Cross reference, Ecclesiastes 7, verse 14, "in the day of prosperity be happy. But in the day of adversity, consider God has made the one that is the day of prosperity, as well as the other the day of adversity. And God made this so that man will not discover anything that will be done after him." Storms will come. Trees will fall. Decisions will be made that you wish you can take back. And it's not a matter of whether misfortune if misfortune will happen, it's a matter of when misfortune will happen. We live in a fallen world are both good and evil things happen. And we can change that.

And here's the application. We are to trust God in the good times, in times of prosperity, and we are to trust God in the times of misfortune, in the times of evil and calamity. We are to trust God when life is going good. We're to trust God when life is doing evil.

Is this not what Job happened to say? He praised God in the good. And when God decided to take it away, less than, you know, blessed to be the name of the Lord. He gives any takes away. Now more on this verse at the end.

Let's go to verse four. "He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap." And this is where Solomon is saying here, this is an expression. Solomon is here condemning idleness. And I want to refer I want to at least do a couple of verses here, Ecclesiastes, four verses five and six. "The fool folds his hand and consumes his own flesh. One handful of rest is better than two fistfuls of labor and striving after wind."

Again, there's a principle against speaking against idleness. Ecclesiastes 10, verses 18. "Through indolence, the rafters sag and through slackness, the house leaks." Proverbs 20:13 he says there "do not love sleep, or you will become poor. Open your eyes and you will be satisfied with food." Here's one more. Proverbs 22:13 "the sluggard said there's a lion outside, I will be killed in the streets."

You know, it's again an excuse for being lazy and speaking against that. So here's the application. Don't make the uncertainty in life. Because we know that life is uncertain. Okay? So I'm just gonna go ahead and be lazy and unproductive. Don't, do not do that. That's foolish. Stay busy. Stay productive, contribute to your family at the home, contribute in the workplace, pour into one another, serve one another in love.

Verse 5, "just as you do not know the path of the wind, and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things."

Now on this verse alone, we can definitely make a full, if not, it could be a series of a study in and of itself. And here's here's the premise. We don't know where the wind goes right? We don't know where the wind comes from and where it goes just like it is right of those born of the Spirit. We don't know that. We don't know those things. We don't know the activity of God. But we can get an idea. We have a general idea and sense that all things will work according to His purpose, and will we get that, but to know every detail of the activity of God, we do not know.

But here's the thing, too, is, again, this is a sobering verse. This peanut brain up here cannot possibly fathom all the things of God. So what I mean is this. Our puny little brains, even though with truth revealed in Scripture, can't quite comprehend and grasp the activity of God. And especially in the area of, it's called the doctrines of grace, where God in His sovereignty has a plan, a redemptive plan. And it's all orchestrated and controlled by the power and sovereign will of God. And then when it comes to human decisions and responsibility and things like that, and how all that thing pan out, this peanut brain cannot fully understand.

But here's the peace again. If everything is in the hand of Almighty God, everything, guess what? Satan's in the hands of God. The Fallen Angels are in the hands of God, evil, whatever evil may be, whether it's natural disasters, or whether it be an illness or a disease or anything of that sort. That too, is in the hands of God, and the good that can come out of this world or in this life. The meaningful relationships, the love all those things that is in the hand of God.

So here's the peace. It's actually good that we don't know and cannot know all things. But yet trust that everything is in the hands of God. And for this short time that we have to be here, that we are sensitive to do what he wants us to do, and that is to bring him glory and honor.

Verse 6, "sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sewing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good." So this is the opposite of verse four. He's saying instead of being idle, we're to be busy working. And again, the point is we're not to be lazy and unproductive. We're to stay busy, contribute. There's nothing worse than being unproductive and not adding any value, anywhere. There's a lot of Proverbs and wisdom that speaks against that.

But that's really where he's getting at. Don't be that person, contribute to whatever it is that may take shape in your life. And that is really elevating others around you.

Verse 7, "the light is pleasant; it is good for the eyes to see the sun." Well, I used to live in Daly City, and we were right off the coast. A normal day is pretty much fog. As a little kid I thought it was like that everywhere. I thought that's the world. One time I took a bus to Hillsdale in San Mateo. What's this light? Sun. So needless to say, light is pleasant to the eyes. There is something about daylight. When it's gloomy and depressing, when you don't see the sun, you don't see daylight. And let's say it's a gloomy rainy day. A lot of times you want to stay home. A lot of times you'd rather do something else. But when it's a good day, good weather, light, it's inviting to come outside. Light is pleasant to the eyes. So it's all I'm saying just says sunny days affect our mood, it affects our moods positively. And it is good to see the sun's here's where Solomon's getting at.

He's saying and it's again, if we were to keep the in keeping with the theme and flow of this chapter, get out of bed. Be out there and be productive, enjoy the daylight and provide for yourself and for others.

Let's look at verse 8. "Indeed, if a man should live many years, let them rejoice in them all and let him remember the days of darkness for they will be many. Everything that is to come will be futility." And

again, I'm preaching to the choir here. Life is a gift. Time is a gift. The most important thing that we can give someone else is the gift of time and energy that God has given us. If God were gracious and he were to give us a long life, Solomon says, rejoice. Every day is a gift. And anytime you get up to face another day, praise God, for that, too, is a gift.

And I have to just say this really quick. I remember as a baby Christian, and I had a brother, his name was Harold. And we, you know, we grew really close as early Christian and we did jail ministry together. And I remember just, you know, sitting there and just again, as a baby Christian, I just want to, I just want to give this good news, this joy that I have, and I want to share it with whoever is going to listen. And I remember him just out there appealing to, you know, those in jail there. And one thing he said that actually resonated with me and also stuck with me. And he says when you roll out of bed, hit the floor, if the Lord were to give you that grace, and you're able if you're able to put your feet on the ground, praise God for that. Praise God, don't take anything for granted. And that's one of those things that really resonated with me as a baby Christian.

Solomon saying for the life as we know it, suffering will come to an end and this reference there, 2 Corinthians 4 verse 17, Paul writes there "for a momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory, far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen for the things we are, that are seen, are temporal, but the things which are not seen, are eternal." So life as we know it, again, it's a gift. And we're to look at all so this life is really temporary.

The life whatever you many years that God has given us to live, we're to look with it in wisdom and saying, Okay, in this small piece of time, in God's timeline of history, we are to view it as very temporal and whatever sufferings we may encounter whatever evil or tragedies or misfortune That may happen. We are to view and saying, you know, it's just like this for now. But we have for us an eternal home, right? We have an eternal glory to look forward to. And that's really where we're Solomon's getting out to more verses, and we're close.

"Rejoice young man during your childhood and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood, and follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes, yet know that God will bring to judgment for all these things."

Must I even say that the prime of life is short? Sorry, for those of us young men, young women, things are going great right now. You know, not many things hurt right now. You have one of the things I missed this, I missed this. I didn't realize this. If you're in your 20s do everything. Explore everything. I'm telling you why. When you get to your 30s or 40s, that energy and vigor - I used to be able to five things. We go here, here, here, here. Yeah, yeah, let's conquer the world! 30s good. Let's do some things 40s man, maybe not. So in Solomon says this kind of sarcastically, he says, "Go follow the impulses of your heart. Follow the desires of your eyes." Hmm. Yet Solomon says, "know that God will bring to judgment, all these things."

So here's what he's getting at. When you are in the prime of life, definitely use that energy to your advantage. But also do not use it foolishly. At the same time when a cross reference a verse member,

so he's really saying, you're going to you're going to so what you're going to reap, even in the prime of life when you could do more things. Galatians 6 verse 8, very familiar verse. "For the one who sows to his flesh, will from the flesh read corruption, but the one who sows to the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart and doing good for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary." So while we have an opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who are of the household of faith, then here's the application for us. We are not to use the best years of our life. Never use the best years of our life, to satisfy sin, or the sinful lusts or the sinful passions. Instead, we're to use our hands so that we're able to provide for ourselves, our family and help meet the needs of other.

Last verse, verse 10. S"o remove grief and anger from your heart and put away pain from your body. Because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting."

Have you ever heard of the phrase I'm my worst enemy? Have you ever even said that to yourself? Man, I am my worst enemy. It's another way of saying this, I've made foolish and stupid decision causing myself harm and causing harm to others. And a lot of that is because of immaturity. Solomon is exhorting us to act in wisdom and to view and approach life in maturity. Here's the goal of life for everyone of all ages, whatever age you are, here's the goal. It's to be a mature man and a mature woman. It is to think rightly, to think soberly, to view and operate life in the light of God's wisdom and judgment. By doing so, we're going to spare ourselves and those around us much grief, much anger, and much pain. And also when we arrive at the end of our life, if we do that, we're going to find ourselves not alone.

Now catch this, if you pour your life into others, you're gonna get a return on that investment. When you get to the end of life. And in that process, you poured yourself into others. When you get to the end of life, you're not going to be alone. But the opposite is also true, isn't it? If you don't pour into others, if you only pour into yourself, and you live out your days like that, it's going to be a very lonely and of life. And those around you are only going to be there because they're paid to be there or God put it on their heart to serve and to just be there as company and encouragement and to help give hope that takes us to the end.

So, we close right there, and really where he's getting at Ecclesiastes chapter 11. This is wisdom: Show mercy. See, that's the wisdom. And that's what the teacher really had to say in this entire chapter and what I want to end our message today.

And I want to read, I want to go back to a previous verse, verse three of this chapter. And it's a pretty, at least for me, I found it fascinating. And it's one of those things that actually stuck with me as well. Let me reread that verse to you. "If the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth, and whether a tree falls toward the south or toward the north, wherever the tree falls, there it lies." It seems like a pretty obscure verse. But in fact, this particular verse was the verse that converted one of the great theologians of our day and that is none other than RC Sproul. So what I like to do, I'd like to close us with a brief testimony from RC himself. Concerning verse three:

RC Sproul 19:07

I'm coming up on the 60th anniversary of my conversion to the Christian faith. It was in September of 1957. And I will never get I think I'm the only person in the history of the church to be converted by a particular verse that God used to open up my heart and my eyes to the truth of Christ, okay, from the book of Ecclesiastes, these were the author of Ecclesiastes six describes in metaphorical terms, a tree that falls in the forest and where it falls, there it stays. And God awakened my soul. But considering that passage, as I saw myself as a tree fallen and rotting and decaying, and that was a description of my life, that's where I was. Nobody had to tell me that I was a sinner. knew that that was abundantly clear to me. But as I went to my bedroom that night and got on my knees, my experience was one of transcendent forgiveness. And I was overwhelmed by the tender mercy of God, the sweetness of His grace, and the awakening that he gave me for my life. And I pray that any of you who have not yet experienced an awakening to the reality of Christ would have that experience in your life, that you would look carefully thick scriptures, the Word of God, and that that word may be used in power, too quick in your soul and your spirit, that you too may be awakened to the fullness of glory and peace and joy that is ours in Christ.

Pastor Alex Catarroja 20:55

Amen. Amen. And RC bless his heart. He, after many, many decades of faithful ministry, he had gone home to be with the Lord in December of 2017. But yet his work is available resources are available. So his life definitely was not lived out in vain.

And interesting that that particular verse, as obscure as it was, God used to reveal his and confirm his utter sinfulness but also the need and desire for a savior. And God saved him using this verse. So I'd like to for us to close in prayer, and to just take a step back and allow the message the words, the truth, to resonate our hearts.

Oh Heavenly Father as we took a journey through your marvelous word. Lord, we are encountered with truth we are encountered. with wisdom, Lord, we are encountered with life and its purpose in where its pursuit should be. Lord, every single one of us here are guilty of transgressing against your word, your law. Lord, we know that in our heart of hearts, we fall short of your glory. Lord, we know that we have sin. And, Lord, we know that death is inevitable for each and every one of us. But Lord, thanks be to your name. That you have given us a way out. And that Lord is the greatest wisdom and that is to repent and turn from our life of sin and to embrace Christ as Savior. And Lord, we know even in that great wisdom, we can't do it when apart from your work in our hearts.

So Lord, for those of us who have given our lives to you, and whom you have saved, Lord, we bless you and we praise you and we thank you for work that you've done in our heart, and the work that you're continuing to do, and to bring us to completion and to bring us home. And Lord, we know that the time that we do have here, it is not so that we can use it for our own benefit, but for the benefit of others, namely, their souls. And Lord, if there's any of any one of us here, whether they're here in person or listening to us on the airwaves, Lord, my prayer is that whether it be this study or a compilation of studies, Lord by your word, that you would stir within their heart, the unknown, avoidable and unceasing desire to seek after you, Oh, Jesus, Lord Jesus, would you be pleased to open up the hearts of those who are hurting and beyond despair maybe, or even those who think life is good, but

Lord, you would use life to knock them down. Lord, be pleased to bring those in to bring money to faith in you. So they, too, can use the rest of their days to live in wisdom and that is to show mercy to others. Surely we're grateful for this study and we are looking forward to what else you have in store for us. Going forward. Do thank you for this time, seal the message seal the truth, your will be done in our hearts as it is in heaven. We pray and ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.

Associate Pastor Jeremy Preece 24:22

Thank you for listening today to the Truth Matters Church podcast. To recap both parts of this message, Ecclesiastes 11 is often used as biblical advice for investing our money. But King Solomon was really highlighting a different matter here, investing our time, energy and money into other people through acts of generosity and mercy. You see, God blesses us with gifts, talents and financial resources not to make us happy, but in order to bless others through us. We cannot use the best of our lives and the best of our blessings selfishly, we are to share them with others just as God has shared them with us. If you enjoyed today's study, please consider subscribing to this podcast and perhaps sharing it with a friend. You can also connect with us on Facebook at Truth Matters Church or truthmatterschurch.org. Contending for the faith one verse at a time. This is Truth Matters Church