



This Sunday we concluded our series in Ecclesiastes, in chapter 12.

1 – Remember your creator (who is the giver and taker of life) (12v1-8)

In this final section of the teacher’s narrative (1v12-12v8), he uses the idea of God as “creator” to begin to resolve the tension between his instructions to seize the day and his reflections upon the meaningless of life. We know that Christ, as part of the Trinity, is our creator, too. This truth is a helpful perspective shift in a western world in which we think ourselves autonomous.

2 – Listen to your teacher (who speaks wise words) (12v9-12)

Although we may not have felt sure about the teacher’s words at points, the writer affirms them as true, good, and what we need to hear, though hard. In Christ we have the word of God himself come down to us. This is a great reassurance when we struggle with the hard truths of the Bible, struggle to see our sin reflected back at us, and struggle with the world’s criticism of Scripture.

3 – Fear and obey your God (who will judge all things) (12v13-14)

The writer gives his judgment on what the teacher has said. We are to fear and obey God because he is judge. This is reassuring; nothing will escape his notice. But it is also troubling, for “there is no one on earth who is righteous” (8v20). It would not be good news for us to have all hidden things revealed.

Here is where we must jump ahead from Ecclesiastes to the gospel...

4 – Know your God (who is the resurrection and the life)

There are two things that seem to be missing in Ecclesiastes:

1 – God’s covenant name (Yahweh – translated “the LORD” in our English Bibles)

In his hunt for knowledge, the teacher doesn’t know God himself very well, using a generic Hebrew name for him. God is present, truths are spoken about him, but he isn’t known. Yet in John’s gospel we learn that through Christ we can know God (1v18, 10v14, 14v7, 17, 17v3). But who is the God we can know?

2 – God is the resurrection and the life

The teacher grasped at but ultimately failed to find anything beyond this life. But Jesus revealed that there is something more and he will bring us to it (eg. John 11v25). He is the judge who saves us from judgment via the cross.

Therefore, we can enjoy life and endure the meaninglessness, knowing that he is our creator and judge, that we can know him, and that he will bring us to eternity.

Here are a few questions you might want to use with your group or for personal reflection...

1. How do you think thinking of God as “creator” might begin to resolve some of the tensions in the book?
-- Why do we perhaps not think of God as creator as much as we could in well-off, educated, British evangelical circles?
-- What could we gain by enjoying this truth more fully?
2. What does it mean and what does it not mean to “remember” God as creator?
3. Many readers have felt that we should disregard much if not all of the teacher’s words in 1v12-12v8. How might 12v9-12 suggest that we don’t do that?
4. What other ‘words’ do we find ourselves turning to instead of Scripture?
5. Do you think that the command to fear and obey (v13) translates into the New Testament church and beyond? Why/why not?
-- If it does apply, what does it look like to fear and obey God today, and why does it matter that we do so?
6. What would you say are the key ways in which the gospel answers the cries, longings and struggles of Ecclesiastes?
-- Which New Testament passages might you go to to help someone struggling with the bleakness of Ecclesiastes?