

Teachings from the
 Teacher
 The Book of Ecclesiastes
 Chapters 10 - 12
 Thursday Morning Bible Study

1

Chapter 10:1-4 - Translation

- 1 - Just as a dead fly sours a perfumer's oil, so even a little stupidity undermines wisdom and unravels a fine reputation.
- 2 - The wise heart inclines toward what is right, while the foolish heart leans into folly.
- 3 - The foolish stumble even on a paved road, this is how you know them to be fools.
- 4 - If the powerful blow against you, hold your place, but do not resist; defeat them through yielding.

2

10:1-4 - Paraphrase

- 1 - It takes but one dead fly to spoil a jar of the finest perfume; it takes but one foolish act to sour a life of wisdom and honor.
- 2 - The wise learn to channel passion to serve their purpose. The foolish mistake passion for purpose and are forever at its mercy.

3

10:1-4 - Paraphrase

- 3 - Even if the foolish choose a path to follow, it is quickly abandoned when another suddenly appears more alluring. This is the sign of the fool: No purpose, just passion.
- 4 - Don't seek to dominate others. You cannot control even yourself. The pursuit of control is a quest tainted with terror.

4

10:1-4 - Commentary

- 1 – Our motivation for right behavior is that it will benefit others, not just us.
- 2-3 – A fool is someone who is not wise. A wise person has learned how to navigate life – to deal in a positive way with *chevel*.
- A fool is not someone who lacks intelligence, but someone who tries to fight against what is. The fool complicates the simple. He stumbles over nothing.

5

10:1-4 - Commentary

- 4 – Life is finding the balance. There is a time when you make your stand, but some things you just have to go along with. Don't find the powerful with brute force. Rather, go with it, and use their momentum to help topple it of it's own accord.
- The trees that grow are ones that are beset by storms. When they bend with the wind, they become stronger.
- Chinese proverb: "That which is hard and stiff is the follower of death; that which is soft and yielding is the follower of life."

6

10:5-11

- 5-7 – Don't expect much out of rulers. The wrong people are put in the wrong positions. It's just the way it is.
- 8-11 – This is not fatalism, but realism. There are risks in all things. Life is fraught with danger. It's just the way it is.

7

10:12-20 – Stuff and Nonsense

- 12-14 – The wise use words wisely. The fool confounds his folly by speaking too much.
- 15 – Could be translated: A fool would get lost if you put him on an escalator!"
- 16-17 – Solomon compares two kings: one who is child, and one who is of noble birth. In the first, the goal is simply to party. In the second, the goal is to govern well.

8

10:12-20 – Stuff and Nonsense

- 18 – a lazy man is destructive just by doing nothing.
- 19 - The point here is not that everyone has their price, but that every gift has its use and money is the most versatile of all.
- 20 – Brings us back to those in power: Spies are everywhere!. Don't fight it, just learn to live with it.

9

11:1-4 - Translation

- 1 - Toss your bread upon the waters, and in time you will find it again.
- 2 - Give widely to seven or even eight, for you cannot know where tragedy will fall on the earth.
- 3 - Clouds with heavy rain will drench the earth; a fallen tree remains fallen, be it in the north or the south.
- 4 - Those who watch the wind will never sow, and those who watch the clouds will never reap.

10

11:1-4 - Paraphrase

- 1- Toss your bread upon the sea – your fate will unfold as it will. Cast a net of kindness far and wide. Worry not about profit. Simply do what is right, with compassion.
- 2 - The future is uncertain; you can plan, but there is no promise. Do not invest your money in a single venture. Diversify your wealth, for you cannot know which will prosper and which will fail.

11

11:1-4 - Paraphrase

- 3 - There is an order to nature. Storm clouds spill their rain. A fallen tree does not stand up. A dead dog does not bark. But there is no such certainty in human affairs.
- 4 - Act without hesitation. Do what is right without thought of reward or consequence.

12

11:1-4 - Commentary

- 1 – Solomon is speaking about generosity, kindness, about sharing for the benefit of others. Be generous. Don't worry about it. A generous person never lacks. Don't try to control your wealth or hoard it out of fear. Casting your generosity wisely allows it to flow where it is needed most. Water flows to the lowest point. It goes where it is needed.
- 2 – Don't just give to the crises at hand, but be of help before the crisis happens. Be generous.

13

11:1-4 - Commentary

- 3 – The realities of life are unavoidable. Things happen when the conditions are ripe for them to happen. Much of what is going on in our society seems chaotic, but they are happening because the conditions are ripe for them to happen.
- 4 – If you wait for the right moment, things may never happen. So don't look for the perfect moment, just be generous.

14

11:5-6

- 5 – Just as you cannot explain the intricacies of the human body, so you cannot know or understand the God who makes all things.
- 6 – “Be urgent in season and out of season” – 2 Tim 4:2; “Making the most of the time, because the days are evil.” - Eph 5:16 Life is uncertain so get on with living!

15

11:7-8 - Translation

- 7 - Light is sweet, and it is good that the eyes see the sun.
- 8 So, cherish each day no matter how many you have; and yet know that days of darkness, too, will be many. For all that arises is fated to fall.

16

11:7-8 - Paraphrase

• Rejoice in the awesome beauty of nature: it is a balm for the eyes to watch the sun rise. Life itself is wonder. As long as you live, live in awe. And remember – some days are bright, others are dark, and both are life's shadow play. Make no snare for the light; there is no salvation in holding on. Make no drama of the dark; there is no reward for suffering. Rather, embrace each as it is, knowing that true joy resides in serving each moment in peace.

17

11:7-8 - Commentary

- *Chevel* is the ceaseless emptying of life and the uncertainty it generates. But this is not cause for despair. This is not a downer but an outlook of wonder. There is evening, so enjoy it. Each moment is fresh.
- The temptation is to cling to the light, but dark, challenging days are also a part of life. We want just the light, just the dawn, but the dark moments can be fresh as well.

18

11:7-8 - Commentary

- We often expect reward, even in suffering. I stand up for someone, and then expect some sort of payback.
- Don't expect anything, else you put yourself on a path for unnecessary suffering. Do what needs to be done and then leave it alone. The reward is in the doing.
- We are plagued with this illusion of self-importance. But we are not single people in control of our autonomous self. We are all connected. We are all connected to God.
- "Be still and know that I am God" – takes spiritual discipline.

19

11:9-10

- 9 – "Let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth." Enjoy life, for it is fleeting. The end will come.
- 10 – Don't be depressed. It's all *chevel*. Live each day as it comes.

20

12:1-8 – A beautiful metaphor of life

- 1 – Remember God – live your life in connection with the creator while you have the opportunity. The days are coming when what you could do in your youth you cannot do anymore.
- 2 – the end of one's life. Trouble follows trouble.
- 3 – "keepers of the house" – a metaphor for parts of the body. "strong men stoop" – we get old. "Grinders cease" – no teeth! "Windows grow dim" – can't see!

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12:1-8 – A beautiful metaphor of life

- 4 - The picture of a house in decline; "doors to the street" - can't walk outside. "rise up..birds" can't sleep and get up early, but can't really hear the birds' songs.
- 5 - "afraid of heights" again a condition of aging. "Dangers in the streets" try walking when your feet don't work well anymore. "Almond tree" a reference to the white hair.
- "grasshopper .." Normally very agile, it's slow movements on a cold morning recall the stiffness of aging. "Desire no longer stirred" guess what that is! "Goes to his eternal home" in the context, this probably refers simply to death and the finality of death.

22

12:1-8 – A beautiful metaphor of life

- 6 – The beauty and the fragility of the human frame. We are all masterpieces, yet as breakable as a piece of earthenware.
- 7 – The end of life. The "Spirit" – the breath of life that was God's ultimately is given back to God.
- 8 – It's all *chevel*.

23

12:9-12 – Conclusion

- The Teacher tells us how and why he wrote the book. And there is a point to all of this: His words are like prods to urge us to deal with the reality of life as wise. Like a shepherd who knows his people, he simply says: stay with the wise teachings of God. No more is needed.

24

12:13-14 - Translation

- After all that has been heard, the end of the matter is this: Fear God, make use of His connections! This is true for everyone. For God will respond to every deed, hidden and known, good or bad, and yield its judgment

25

12:13-14 - Paraphrase

- 13 - In sum, the Assembler (*Koheleth*) has taught us well: Stand in wonder before God, deal justly and kindly with all that come your way. Cling to absolutely nothing and allow everything to pass (vaporize); do not imagine that you can buy, negotiate, control, or manipulate your way to eternity.
- 14 - Whether for good or for ill, nothing stays secret or hidden. Measure for measure is an axiom of life under the sun. When all is said and done, remember this: open your mind to wonder, your heart to compassion, and your hand to justice so that you fashion a whole and holy world. And never forget that duality is an illusion, we are all part of the One.

26

12:13-14 – Commentary

- In the context of Ecclesiastes, good and bad are not simply moral categories. Rather, “good” means wisdom, living with *chevel*, navigating life as it is. “Bad” or “evil” is contrary to this. It’s trying to life in the past, trying to control, trying to manipulate the future.
- Each moment is a precious expression of God. Everyone provides you with the opportunity to grow closer to God or away from him.
- *Chevel* – a moment to experience God in that moment.

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