

November Teaching Theme: Wisdom

讲员 Speaker: William R. Horne

题目 Topic: A Biblical Theology of Wisdom: Ecclesiastes

经文 Scripture: Ecclesiastes

Monthly Theme: This month we will be looking at the idea of “Wisdom” through the lens of the three major wisdom literature books in the Bible: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. These books are all seeking to address the same type of questions from a different vantage point. “What kind of world are we living in and what does it mean to live life well in this world?” For us to understand the full picture of Biblical Wisdom we have to examine all three books side by side. Last week we took a look at the overall message of the book of Proverbs and this week we examined Ecclesiastes.

Despite, what you might assume about Ecclesiastes, if we heed the wisdom of Ecclesiastes, we will be free to live life to the fullest.

Resources:

[Bible Project: Ecclesiastes \(Wisdom Series\) \[English 6mins\]](#)

[Bible Project: Ecclesiastes \(Wisdom Series\) \[Mandarin 6 mins\]](#)

[Sermon Video: A Biblical Theology of Wisdom: Ecclesiastes](#)

Discussion Questions:

- (1) Read Ecclesiastes 1:1-11 together. What observations do you make and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the passage?
- (2) The Teacher presents us with three disturbing realities of life: (1) The March of Time; (2) We are All Going to Die; and (3) Life is a Game of Chance. What do these realities tell you about life and how can they free you to live life to the fullest?
- (3) The Teacher’s prime metaphor for life in the book is the Hebrew word “Hevel,” which we often translate “meaningless” or “vanity,” but is best rendered “smoke” or “vapor” to understand his metaphor. Can you think of some way that life is like “smoke”? How does this help you understand the teacher’s message?
- (4) One of the key takeaways we can render from the three disturbing realities of Ecclesiastes is that “life is largely out of our control.” The Teacher tells us that since this is the reality we should stop trying to control our life and choose to be present in every moment God gives us (both good and bad). What are some consuming ways we try to control our lives? What are some ways we can practice “being present” in every moment?
- (5) Another key response to the Teacher’s words is our choice to invest in community and authentic relationships. Read Ecclesiastes 4:8-12 together. Reflect on the passage together. What are some ways we can begin to build our lives around God’s vision for the community as opposed to the Western value of rampant individualism?
- (6) Similar to Proverbs, the author of Ecclesiastes calls us to the “Fear of the Lord.” Despite the disturbing realities of life, we should seek to make wise, just, and good decisions. As

the Teacher has shown us, these decisions don't also guarantee successful outcomes, but they are right. Recall, the "Fear of the Lord" is a healthy respect for God's definitions of good and evil. How should this shape our pursuits in life? What does it look like to walk in the "Fear of the Lord," despite potential outcomes?

Important Notes (Pastor Will):

Reflections on Question 2: If I embrace and reckon with these disturbing realities of life, I am free to let go of insignificant worries and troubles, as I now can view them within the limited time frame of life. Why waste my limited time on concerns that in the grand scheme are small. The Christian life is so freeing because the true Christian is taught to embrace death early (dying to self), to live with eternity in mind, and to understand the limitations of pursuits "under the sun." With this perspective on life, I am now freed to focus on time and energy on things that matter most - to be present in the moment, invest in relationships, and make wise decisions with a broader perspective on life.

Reflections on Question 3: When you read Ecclesiastes closely, you will see the Teacher isn't saying that life is meaningless, but that life is never clear. Like smoke, life is confusing, disorienting, and largely uncontrollable. Embrace the moments in life's journey that aren't clear, knowing God will make your path straight when you live in his wisdom (good, just, right living).

Extended Reflections on Question 5: We must make space to build community and authentic friendships in our daily lives. We have been taught in our transient lives of seeking "upward mobility" that community investment and location are secondary to a "good job," "education," and "nice neighborhood." This mindset has built us into a people and society of shallow community.

Further, we are living in a society and time of incredible tribalism and polarization. We must be a people who spend time slowing down our thinking and vetting the narratives we believe while practicing authentic listening, empathy, and self-criticism. If we fail to take time to ask the question "what am I being formed by," the false narratives of the world will form us more than by the Scriptures and the way of the Kingdom. Community building can only truly happen in places of truth, honesty, and genuine love for the other. Often in our relationships, we opt for a "fake peace" instead of doing the hard work of truth-telling, listening, and reconciliation.

One of the great dangers of our postmodern society is the ways in which we can silo ourselves by the ways we think and see the world, ignoring other people's experiences and realities. This reality takes away our ability to be self-critical, something critical to the community's well-being. We fall for "confirmation bias," being drawn to ideas and people that support what I already believe. When we are trapped in the cycle of "confirmation bias," we readily discredit anything we hear that is different from what we already believe. Thus, we have lost our ability to assess and discern where we have potentially gone wrong. Being self-critical is the one antidote against dangerous tribalism. Thinking about this biblical, we can look to the prophets. There was no one more pro-Israel than the prophets who spoke because they cared about their people deeply.

Simultaneously, there was also no one more self-critical to their own tribe. As we see in the Old Testament prophets - their self-criticism of Israel was out of love, but most often, their own people hated them for it. Interestingly, the part of this self-criticism that made it in the Bible was not the defenders of the tribe but the prophets who criticized them. We see a similar attitude from Jesus, who was the hardest on those who thought they knew God's will best but were actually missing on God's will.

To build an authentic community, we must be self-critical, slowing down our thinking and pursuing hard after truth.

Sermon Summary (Elder Yin):

圣经中的智慧：传道书

Pastor Will

“在耶路撒冷作王、大卫的儿子、传道者的言语。传道者说：虚空的虚空，虚空的虚空，凡事都是虚空。人一切的劳碌，就是他在日光之下的劳碌，有什么益处呢？一代过去，一代又来，地却永远长存。日头出来，日头落下，急归所出之地。风往南刮，又向北转，不住地旋转，而且返回转行原道。江河都往海里流，海却不满；江河从何处流，仍归还何处。万事令人厌烦，人不能说尽。眼看，看不饱；耳听，听不足。已有的事后必再有；已行的事后必再行。日光之下并无新事。岂有一件事人能指着说这是新的？哪知，在我们以前的世代早已有了。已过的世代，无人记念；将来的世代，后来的人也不记念。”

传道书 1:1-11 CUNPSS-神

<https://www.bible.com/48/ecc.1.1-11.cunpss-神>

初看传道书，你可能想到生活的虚空。但如果我们听从传道人所说写要我们改变我们的世界观，思想以下三个很非常的问题，跟从传道书的教导得智慧，我们将获得充实的人生

一、三个今人不安的现实

1, 时光流逝

1: 4-5

1: 11

宇宙中我们都是点。我们的生命象青烟，人的世代短暂，自然界不改变。时间不停，人类无法改变

2, 我们终都要死

9: 2-3a

7: 2

人和动物一样都会死。作者说死是邪恶，不是自然的过程，因为亚当夏娃创世纪中的罪，世人都终于一死。死是众人的结局，生好于死，生必死，但活人还有机会可思想生命的意义和将来的死

3, 生命是机会，充满变数

9: 11

生命不一定是因果关系，而箴言所说那么黑白分明，时间有限，计划不能实现，因有不测风波。倒霉人是否真做了坏事？

二, hevel 虚空,

Hevel 烟雾，很美但变状，从你手指间穿过，生命象烟雾，不只是虚空，而更是不能掌控，失方向，迷茫。让人不知如何反应

三, 我们如何反应

1, 选择珍惜活在当下

不要犹豫，珍惜当下的生命，选择每天的美好，太阳或下雨。

3:11 神造万物将按其时成为美好，将永生安置在世人心里。

3: 13人人吃喝，在忙碌中享福，这是神的恩赐。

选择满足，保罗说要喜乐，非利比.4: 11-13

2, 选择花时间在群体生活。成为社区的一部分。很多孤独因为单独生活不在社区中。只注重自己的生活和工作的。

4:8

4:9-12 两个人总比一个好。孤身跌倒, 没人扶起。

生命不能掌控但我们可以选择参与社群。圣经要我们成为一个团队。而不是孤军奋战。建造生活和神的社区联合起来。个人主义使人富有但孤独。神要我们一起生活在神的社区中

3, 选择敬畏神

12:13-14

有一天神会清楚烟雾, 让我们看清一切。

敬畏神不是为了做了正确的事, 并不是为了得祝福, 箴言, 1:7, 开始讲敬畏神。传道书敬畏神也是结束, 神给我们生命中最需要的好生活, 是要敬畏神。当无法掌控将来, 就是要我们依靠神。

路9:24

人想定善恶结果和生命树断, 耶稣给新的生命, 耶稣有一天回来, 那时烟雾扫光一切都是清晰了。

启21:4-5

箴言1:7,

盼望在主里, 参与社区, 敬畏神,

得自由如跟随传道作者

A biblical theology of wisdom: wisdom according to Ecclesiastics

Pastor Will

Ecclesiastics 1:1-11

This month we study 3 wisdom books of the Bible, to look at the same questions from different angles. We did proverbs last week, if the book of Proverbs is isolated, you might see the world as black and white, seemingly overly optimistic, we need the other two books to bring in the balance, the whole picture, b/c life is complicated.

We are studying Ecclesiastics today

There are 2 primary voices in this book—the teacher or preacher, and the narrator (at the beginning and ending) or the voice of the author

Primary claim: if heeding the wisdom in Ecclesiastics, we will be free to live life to the fullness

Road map:

1. Three disturbing realities

2. Hevel hevel hevel

3. How should we respond?

Starts w/ 3 disturbing realities

A. The March of time:

1:4-5, 11 generations come and go, sunrises sunsets, none will be remembered, all are forgotten

We are just a dust in this universe, in the scope of eternity

Star forms and dies

Endless cycle

Our life just vapor and blink in time

The time races in the universe, nature cycles, indifferent to our existence

Romans 8 Paul expressed similar reality, creation subject to bondage and decay

B. We are all going to die

9:2-3a good or sinful, all share the same destiny, death overtakes all

7:2 death is the destiny, so the living shall take this to heart

Death is the evil enemy, called by the author, not as a natural cause (modern concept), b/c of the sin at the beginning of genesis, humans were cut off from the tree of life

The rich, the poor,

So fill our life with distraction, insignificant things

But still treasure life b/c those died don't have the opportunity

C. Life is a game of chance

9:11 no favor, time and chance happen to all

Not like sayings in proverbs, no matter how hard we try, seems life doesn't work out as we plan

Our time, so limited, in God's hand

Our chance, life throws at us, out of course, like this pandemic, we have to through away our plan;

For example, an injury of an athlete could throw him off course, best plan has to be on hold, life is not predictable, may not be the result of anybody's fault

2. Hevel hevel hevel (Hebrew translation is emptiness)

More than emptiness

Smoke or vapor

Like smoke, one moment is in beautiful shape, the next moment changes, cannot grab it through your finger, can't see, hard to breathe

Life is like that smoke

Life is not simply meaningless, not clear, confusing, largely out of control

3. How should we respond?

What to do in order to live life in the fullness?

A. Choose presences in the moment

Live a life according to the wisdom, even though we may not success

Learn to deal w open mind

Attitude, treasure the presences--good conversations w friend, good meal, sunny day before thunderstorm

Learn to just be

Good and bad, all riches from the lord

3:11 god made all things beautiful, though man can't fathom god's design

We can't fathom how god wants us to use this moment

3:13 eat drink, find satisfaction in all the toil-gift of God

Paul asked the Philippians to "rejoice"

Philippians 4:11-13 content in all circumstances, do all through Jesus

B. Choose to invest in community

Our society treasures individualism, ignore the community, lead of loneliness

61% of population (2018-19 US survey) reported loneliness

Too much work

Too much sleep

4:8-12 loneliness, miserable life; 2 better than 1, a cord of three strands not easily broken

Biblical teaching is about interdependence, not independence

Our culture today build around individuals not community

But native tribes in community

Something to reflects on

Build our life in God's vision of community, togetherness, invest our time in true community, enrich our life

C. Choose to fear the Lord

12:13-14

At the end of the book

Fear God, keep his commandments, this is duty of all mankind, god will judge all deeds

Life , under the Sun, like smoke, make us feel powerless, so humble yourself, trust

God, one day He will clear up all smokes

Live a life in fear of lord

Not for his blessings but because it's right thing to do

Give us true freedom

Unchanging god and his characters in this constantly changing world

The freeing act of being human is to fear God because He made us and knows every hair on our head

Creator dictates the way creatures live, in radical dependence in Him

Luke 9:24 whoever loses their life for the sake of Jesus will save it

Although nothing new under the Sun, Jesus did a new thing, gives us new life, invited

us to return our life to His tree of life, when He returns, he will clear the smoke,

wipe away the tears, in Revelation 21:4-5 behold, I am making everything new!

Put trust in king Jesus

Treasure every minute

Walk in path in the lord

Fullness in life

3:11-13