How to Start Enjoying Your Life September 25, 2022

*Ecclesiastes 2:1-26 Series: Israel’s Greatest Philosopher*

These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams, but God is the fountain. These are but drops, but God is the ocean. — Jonathan Edwards

Intro: Gotta catch ‘em all!

1. More of the good life isn’t the answer
2. When your heart is your guide, pleasure becomes your god

v. 1 *I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.*

v. 1 *But behold, this also was vanity.*

v. 2 *I said of laughter, “It is mad,” and of pleasure, “What use is it?”*

v. 3 *I searched with my heart how to cheer my body …*

1. You’re chasing the good life when it’s all about you

*my heart* (v. 3), *I built… for myself* (v. 4), *I made myself* (v. 5), *I made myself* (v. 6), *I also gathered for myself* (v. 8)

1. Pursuing paradise on earth won’t take you back to the garden

v. 10 *whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them*

v. 11 *I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.*

* I can understand that selfishness is morally wrong, but why does it make us miserable?
* Why doesn’t getting everything you want give you what will truly satisfy you?

1. More right living isn’t the answer
2. Wisdom is only relatively not ultimately better than foolishness

vv. 13-14 *Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness.*

vv. 14-15 *And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them. Then I said in my heart, “What happens to the fool will happen to me also.”*

1. Right living won’t help you avoid the unavoidable

v. 15 *Why then have I been so very wise?*

v. 16 *For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten.*

v. 16 *How the wise dies just like the fool!*

v. 17 *So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.*

* Why do we think bad things shouldn’t happen to good people?
* What problems can wisdom help us solve?
* What problems can wisdom not solve?

1. More success isn’t the answer
2. He found joy in work but hated that he had to leave it behind

v. 10 *my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil*

vv. 18-19 *I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool?*

1 Kings 14:25-26 *In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. He took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house. He took away everything.*

1. He hated that the rewards of work aren’t always fair

vv. 20-21 *So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it.*

* Verse 10 says that the reward of work is the joy of working. What do we usually think the reward of work is?
* In vv. 18-19, why did he start to “hate” his work just because he didn’t know what kind of person would inherit it?

1. Joy is a gift we receive today, not a prize we race to win tomorrow
2. Find joy in what God’s already given you

v. 24 *There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil.*

1. True joy is only possible when our eyes are on God

vv. 24-25 *This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?*

1. True joy comes in seeking God’s pleasure not our own

v. 26 *For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God.*

Philippians 1:21 *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

* Do you find enjoyment in your “eat and drink and … toil”? How?
* How does an awareness of God make true joy possible?
* How does the joy of God’s gifts in this life point us to the greater joy that awaits in the life to come?

Study ahead: Next week, we’ll study Ecclesiastes 3:1-22

Notes