When Your Goals Are Big and People Are Small October 9, 2022

*Ecclesiastes 4:1-16 Series: Israel’s Greatest Philosopher*

When we pursue gain because we think that’s all there is to be had, others are going to get hurt. – David Gibson

Intro: When coffee isn’t just coffee

1. You trade peace for success
2. We’re destroying each other

v. 1 *I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them!*

v. 2 *I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive.*

Proverbs 14:31: *He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker … whoever is kind to the needy honors God.*

1. Envy drives the elevator to the top

v. 4 *I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor.*

James 4:2-3 *You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.*

1. Selfishness robs everyone of peace

v. 5 *The fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh.*

v. 6 *Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind.*

Proverbs 14:30 *envy makes the bones rot*

* Why do Canadians struggle to sit down and drink coffee?
* What could we do as a group to comfort the oppressed?
* What are some ways that envy tempts us?

1. You trade satisfaction for riches
2. There’s no satisfaction in a life without we

v. 8 *one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil*

v. 8 *his eyes are never satisfied with riches*

v. 8 *… he never asks, “For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?”*

Luke 12:19–20 *‘I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.” ’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’*

Philippians 2:4 *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

1. Relationships are vital for help, warmth, and protection

v. 10 *if they fall, one will lift up his fellow*

v. 10 *woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up*

v. 11 *if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone*

v. 12 *though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him*

Mark 6:7 *he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two*

* How does answering something other than “me” to the question of v. 8 influence a person’s satisfaction in life?
* How can a church-going Christian go it alone?
* What are some ways to make more room for people and deepen the relationships in your life?

1. You trade love for power
2. Everybody loves a rags-to-riches story

v. 13 *Better was a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who no longer knew how to take advice …*

v. 14 *he went from prison to the throne, though in his own kingdom he had been born poor*

v. 16 *There was no end of all the people, all of whom he led.*

Genesis 41:39-40 *Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.”*

1. Achievement never earned a person a true friend

v. 16 *Yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind.*

1 Corinthians 13:1 *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*

Luke 10:29 *But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”*

* Given the way that the wise, rags-to-riches king was forgotten, do you think we should seek to leave a legacy?
* How well do you know your neighbours?
* What do you think it would mean for you to make people bigger and your goals smaller in your life?

Study ahead: Next week, we’ll study Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

Notes