

Ecclesiastes 2 - Trying to Fill the Void with Emptiness

Wednesday PM 04/15/20

Introduction:

I remember being in High School and reading about a student about to graduate from college. He had inspired a lot of people around him with his zeal for knowledge and hard work. What stuck in my mind was the fact he was terminally ill. I kept on thinking, why? Why would someone want to go to college, study, take exams, and graduate only to face death shortly afterward. The fact is, we all have to answer the “why am I doing this?” and “What matters in life?” for ourselves. Our study in this lesson deals with man’s need to fill the void in his life.

I) Solomon identifies himself in **verse 1** and now again.

A) ***Ecclesiastes 1:12*** *I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.*

1. He states his purpose in life, or at least his purpose at this stage in his life.

Ecclesiastes 1:13 *And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised.*

2. To seek is to diligently look for something as opposed to a casual glance.
3. To search out means to leave no stone unturned, put forth great effort.

B) Solomon had great knowledge and wisdom

Ecclesiastes 1:16 *I communed with my heart, saying, "Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge."*

1. Yet with his great knowledge and wisdom came his observation that knowledge and wisdom by itself is not enough.
2. ***Ecclesiastes 1:14*** *I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind.*
 - a. Grasping for the wind – have you ever gone out and tried to grab the wind? Totally useless exercise in futility.
 - b. Today we might say something like “Herding cats” or “nailing jello to the wall.”
3. ***Ecclesiastes 1:18*** *For in much wisdom is much grief, And he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.*
 - a. Wisdom and knowledge without God cannot save you.
 - b. Why? Because you will not live forever in life under the sun.

II) Solomon’s Efforts at Filling the Void

A) Two things to keep in mind about Solomon

1. He knew God but departed from Him in his life. He built altars and worshipped idols.
2. He had great power as King of Israel and great wealth. So, he was able to do what others only dream about.

B) To fill the void

Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure"; but surely, this also was vanity. 2 I said of laughter-"Madness!"; and of mirth, "What does it accomplish?" 3 I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives. 4 I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. 5 I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. 6 I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove. 7 I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me. 8 I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds.

1. He decided to indulge in pleasure and party it up. A lot of people have done the same things.

2. The prodigal son-- **Luke 15:13** *"And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living."*
 - a. What does it accomplish? One may for a time have friends, forget their troubles, enjoy themselves but what then?
 - b. I imagine Solomon could throw a really great party but no party lasts forever.
3. He turned to "worthy endeavors" building things and planting things.
4. Notice from **verse 1 to 8** in our text the word "I" is used 13 times.
 - a. **Kings 6.1** *"he began to build the house of the Lord"*
 - b. **1 Kings 7.1** *"it took Solomon 13 years to build his own house"*
 - c. **1 Kings 7.8** a house for Pharaoh's daughter
 - d. **1 Kings 9.19** store houses for his chariots and calvary
 - e. **1 Kings 9.26** fleet of ships
 - f. Solomon mentions servants in his house; let us not forget he had 1000 women, 700 wives and 300 concubines.

5. Solomon had great wealth.
 - a. **1 Kings 10:6** *Then she (the Queen of Sheba, D.T.) said to the king: "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. 7 "However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard.*
 - b. **1 Kings 10:27** *The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedar trees as abundant as the sycamores which are in the lowland.*

C) Solomon was successful in what he set out to do.

1. How many people think they will be happy or made complete if only they had more, more things, friends, money, etc.
2. Things have not changed with man.
 - a. **Luke 12:15** *And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."*
 - b. **Luke 12:16** *Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 "And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have*

no room to store my crops?' 18 "So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" 20 "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' 21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

3. The fact is things won't make us happy but they can make us trust in the wrong things.
4. **1 Timothy 6:17** *Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.*

III) Why does the void remain?

A) **Ecclesiastes 2:12** *Then I turned myself to consider wisdom and madness and folly; For what can the man do who succeeds the king? -Only what he has already done. 13 Then I saw that wisdom excels folly As light excels darkness. 14 The wise man's eyes are in his head, But the fool walks in darkness. Yet I myself perceived That the same event happens to them all.*

1. Reason 1 – it has already been done before.
 - a. Both the fool and the wise, the poor and the

wealthy have the same end of life.

- b. Both will die and be forgotten. **V. 16**
 - c. It is grasping for the wind - ***Ecclesiastes 2:17***
Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind.
2. Reason 2 - ***Ecclesiastes 2:18*** ***Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me.***
- a. This is a reoccurring theme in Ecclesiastes – apparently it really bothered Solomon
 - b. In Solomon’s case Rehoboam was his son and he was a bad king.
 - c. What we leave behind and how it is used is beyond our control. Will it be wasted? Will it be used for good or evil?
3. Reason 3 - ***Ecclesiastes 2:23*** ***For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity.***
- a. Have you ever worked really hard only to be disappointed with the outcome?
 - b. Farmers are plowing up their fields of produce-strawberries, lettuce, tomatoes, milk being dumped, etc.
 - c. It hurts to see you hard work go for nothing.

IV) But With God

A) ***Ecclesiastes 2:24-26 NKJV 24 Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God. 25 For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I? 26 For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.***

1. Man does not live to work but works to live.
2. We are to be thankful for our food and drink but understand life is not just eating and drinking.
3. Wisdom and knowledge from God and aimed at serving God is good.

Conclusion:

Our relationship with God is what really matters in life. If we get that right then we can handle the knowledge, wisdom, things, and successes.