

CHASING THE WIND
“The Answer” Ecclesiastes 6
May 28, 2023

INTRO.: Welcome and thank you for joining us this morning as we continue our journey in Ecclesiastes, *Chasing the Wind*. Our theme this morning is, *The Answer*. Have you ever felt that in your life, not only were you unsure of the answers, but you didn't even know the questions. Back when I was in high school you had a choice of two academic tracks. They had what was called regents courses where if you did well enough in the course and the final exam you could earn a scholarship if you attended an in-state college. Each course had a final exam created by state educators. Everyone in the state took the same final exam. Toward the end of the year the teacher of your course would review with the class past regent exams so the students would have some idea of what might be on the exam. In my sophomore year biology was one of the regent's classes I took. Science was definitely not one of my favorite courses and biology would end up being the last science course I took in high school. In fact, I didn't even take a science course in college. Biology was my lowest grade through the whole year, and I was a bit concerned about how I might do on the final exam. I wanted this regent's scholarship because I knew things were tight financially for my family. The week before the final exam someone in the lower part of the state found a way to steal the exam and get all the answers. The answers were then published in the newspaper somehow. The regent's folks got together and determined that they would have to cancel the exam because it had been compromised. They allowed the schools to come up with their own exams or just allow the students to have the grade they currently had with no final exam but still get regents credit. Our school decided to make up their own exam using past regent's exams. This was great for me because we had gone over many regents final exams from past years. I ended up with the best grade I had all year. I say all this to point out that some people were willing to do whatever they could to get a hold of the answers to this test before they had to take the test. The whole book of Ecclesiastes is about Solomon searching for the answers to life, with his conclusion being, there are no real answers apart from God. The chapter we're going to be looking at this morning has been described by some as “one of the most depressing chapters of the Bible.” Yet I believe that it provides a great deal of encouragement as we see how Jesus Christ is the real answer to what Solomon describes. Three things I see that Jesus brings to all those who turn to Him for salvation. Through Jesus we go from darkness to light, from death to life, and from despair to liberty. This morning I am going to read Ecclesiastes 6 and ask you to follow along. As I read, I want you to try to process what Solomon is saying and note the desperation in how he is sharing his thoughts.

Ecclesiastes 6:1-12 I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on men: God gives a man wealth, possessions and honor, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires, but God does not enable him to enjoy them, and a stranger enjoys them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil. A man may have a hundred children and live many years; yet no matter how long he lives, if he cannot enjoy his prosperity and does not receive proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he. It comes without meaning, it departs in darkness, and in darkness its name is shrouded. Though it never saw the sun or knew anything, it has more rest than does that man— even if he lives a thousand years twice over but fails to enjoy his prosperity. Do not all go to the same place? All man's efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied. What advantage has a wise man over a fool? What does a poor man gain by knowing how to conduct himself before others? Better what the eye sees than the roving of the appetite. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. Whatever exists has already been named, and what man is has been known; no man can contend with one who is stronger than he. The more the words, the less the meaning, and how does that profit anyone? For who knows what is good for a man in life, during the few and meaningless days he passes through like a shadow? Who can tell him what will happen under the sun after he is gone?

There are three things that we clearly see in this chapter: darkness, death, and despair. Solomon begins by describing what he calls, *another evil under the sun*. Now remember, the phrase, *under the sun*, is an attempt to describe something apart from God. This is what you can observe with your eyes and your other senses without taking into consideration the spiritual realm. It is leaving God out of the picture, even though he mentions God.

What is this evil?

Ecclesiastes 6:2 God gives a man wealth, possessions and honor, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires, but God does not enable him to enjoy them, and a stranger enjoys them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil.

God gives a man, wealth, possessions, and honor. In past messages we have talked about how everything we have comes from God. The sooner we recognize this the better off we will be, which will help us place the right value on things. So, God gives these things, but He doesn't give man the ability to enjoy them. Why would God give these things and yet, not give the ability to enjoy them? What is God after?

Remember what Jesus said was the greatest commandment?

Matthew 22:37–38 Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.

This man’s stuff was getting in the way of him worshipping and trusting God!

Matthew 6:19–24 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. **22** “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. **23** But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! **24** “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

You and I can only truly enjoy what we have when we understand that it all comes from God, He owns it and we are the stewards, and it is to be used for the glory of God. This is just the beginning of what is troubling this man. He is going to talk about darkness and death.

If a person has 100 children (can you imagine?), and lives many years, if he doesn’t enjoy his prosperity and doesn’t even receive a proper burial, a still born child is better off. Some of you know what it is to experience the awfulness of a miscarriage or stillborn baby. Solomon says this baby never sees the light of day and doesn’t have to deal with life’s frustrations. Even this child has more rest (they are with the Lord) than the man who lives 2,000 years and doesn’t enjoy his prosperity. When it’s all over don’t they go to the same place?

So this person has wealth, possessions, lots of children, a super long life and yet, no enjoyment with any of it. There is a sense of despair in all of this. Even as bad as this is, this person cannot stop from trying to get more.

More, more...

Ecclesiastes 6:7 All man’s efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied.

Last week we saw this as one of the reasons why money is a terrible substitute for God.

I am never satisfied with the amount I have

Others want a piece

Affects my health

I can lose it quickly

I can’t take it with me when I die

Ecclesiastes 6:8 What advantage has a wise man over a fool? What does a poor man gain by knowing how to conduct himself before others?

The wise and the foolish, the rich and the poor have desires that life cannot totally fulfill. Still there is that God-shaped vacuum in every one of our lives.

Ecclesiastes 6:9 Better what the eye sees than the roving of the appetite. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

God created our eyes to enjoy what He has created, and we have turned that into running after things. When you look at God’s creation, we should be drawn back to the creator but we struggle with what we can see but don’t have. As we run after those things instead of running after God, Solomon once again describes it as meaningless, a chasing after the wind. All these things are vapors, a puff of smoke, pointless. Nobody here can catch the wind.

This reminds me of Lillie, our dog. Every single morning when she goes outside she bounds around the yard barking at the birds. Sometimes a bird perches on the wire right over the backyard and Lillie stands underneath barking like crazy at the bird. It doesn’t phase the bird at all. Why? The birds knows Lillie can’t get it. There are times at night when Lillie will hear the Life Flight helicopter go over our house and she will bark at the ceiling. Totally fruitless! It’s the same when you and I make it our goal to chase after stuff instead of chasing after God.

Verses 10 & 11 remind us that there is someone stronger than us and mere words cannot solve our problems. Who is that One? It is God!

Philip Graham Ryken, Before we buy something or eat something or turn something on, it is better for us to talk things over with our Father in Heaven, saying something like, “Lord, you know how empty I feel right now. Help me not to run away from my problems but to turn them over to you. Teach me that you are enough for me. And by your grace, give me the peace and the joy that you have for me in Jesus.”

The chapter concludes with 2 questions which are the most exciting part of the chapter.

Ecclesiastes 6:12

For who knows what is good for a man in life, during the few and meaningless days he passes through like a shadow? Who can tell him what will happen under the sun after he is gone?

What is the answer?

I was listening to David Jeremiah on the radio this past week and he was sharing that in 2021 SiriusXM had a channel dedicated to Billy Graham during the Easter season. They played his messages 24/7 and at the end of the Easter season they stopped. People responded so positively, asking that his messages continue to be played, that SiriusXM now has an ongoing channel dedicated to playing his messages 24/7. You can probably imagine that there are a few to play since he preached for over 70 years. As David Jeremiah was listening one day to one of Billy’s messages, Billy made the statement that the gospel (the good news) is the answer to ALL of man’s problems. That statement was made decades ago and is still true today. So, when Solomon asks these two questions I get excited because God is the only answer to those questions. As I think about darkness, death, and despair that Solomon communicates in these few verses I am reminded that Jesus Christ is the answer to each one of these. It is through Jesus that we go:

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

What does darkness represent in the Scriptures? It is a picture of sin.

John 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Literally, Jesus is saying, “I, I am, the light of the world.”

Look at what John 1 has to say about Jesus:

John 1:1–9 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was with God in the beginning. **3** Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. **4** In him was life, and that life was the light of men. **5** The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. **6** There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. **7** He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. **8** He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. **9** The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

As I think of this, I am reminded of this picture I have shown before. In the darkness the light of the cross shines brightly. The cross led to the empty tomb.

In this passage He is also referred to as the Word. We know that God’s Word provides light as we walk through life.

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

The French philosopher Voltaire once said, ‘A hundred years from my death the Bible will be a museum piece.’ In 1764 he wrote, “The Bible. That is what fools have written, what imbeciles commend, what rogues teach and young children are made to learn by heart.” “We are living in the twilight of Christianity” (*Philosophical Dictionary*). In a 1767 letter to Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, he wrote: “Christianity is the most ridiculous, the most absurd, and bloody religion that has ever infected the world.” On the very same printing presses Voltaire used to print his blasphemy, Bibles were printed after his death. In fact, after his death the French Bible Society set up its headquarters in Voltaire’s old home in France.

Through Jesus we go:

FROM DEATH TO LIFE

Solomon has much to say about death in Ecclesiastes 6. It is better to not be born than to live and accumulate stuff and not enjoy it.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 5:24 “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

“*hears:*” present tense participle

“*believes:*” present tense participle

“*has:*” present tense

“*crossed over:*” perfect tense

The picture of this birds nest reminded me of that this week. What is behind the nest? It is the cross!

Jesus said this when talking to Martha after Lazarus had died and Jesus hadn't called him from the grave yet.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;

Jesus clearly reminds us that this isn't all there is to life. For the believer death isn't the end, it is just the beginning! That's why the Apostle Paul could say: “For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

You and I are living for another world! This is just preparation for eternity. If that is so, why would we want to store up treasures here? Live with eternity in mind! There are many folks who have passed into eternity from this fellowship that lived with this in mind. Can I tell you that the younger generation needs to see the older generation living with eternity in mind! Finish well!

Through Jesus we move from darkness to light, from death to life, and:

FROM DESPAIR TO LIBERTY

Much of Ecclesiastes 6 has the tone of despair throughout it. How does one get past the emptiness of life, the lack of fulfillment in collecting possessions and money? It almost seems like a gerbil on the wheel. Are we just doomed to be trapped by our sinful desires and tendencies?

John 8:31–32 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. **32** Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Jesus alone brings freedom from sin and death!

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

At the moment of belief, the Holy Spirit comes to reside within us and we possess a new nature. We are now able to display the *fruit of the spirit*.

Galatians 5:22–23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

This truly gives us hope! Jesus is the answer!

SO WHAT???

I have recently been reading a book about the life of Steve McQueen. Here is a man who had everything the world could want when it came to money, possessions, and fame. He rose to the top of the acting charts in the late 60's into the 70's. He starred in several hit movies. Yet, he came to the place where he admitted that he was miserable, and something was missing in his life. He came to faith in Christ six months before being diagnosed with mesothelioma and was gone within a year. Jesus does change everything! In closing I want to share something with you that I found this past week. It's called *the three circles*. If we believe Jesus is the answer we better be telling people about the answer. You can get this as an app on your phone. It's called, *Life on Mission*. It goes like this:

We begin with:

God's design:

Genesis 1:31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Psalms 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Man Sins:

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Leads to Brokenness:

Romans 1:25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

The gospel:

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Colossians 2:14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

Repent & believe:

Mark 1:15 “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Ephesians 2:8–9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—**9** not by works, so that no one can boast.

Recover & pursue:

Philippians 2:13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

*Have I come to know the One who moves us from:

-darkness to light

-death to life

-despair to liberty

*With whom am I sharing this message?