

CHASING THE WIND
“Coming Attractions” Ecclesiastes 8
June 25, 2023

INTRO.: Good morning and welcome to our series, *Chasing the Wind*, from the book of Ecclesiastes which was written by Solomon, a king of Israel, and the son of King David. Solomon also wrote several chapters in Proverbs, a book noted for wisdom. I have titled the message this morning, *Coming Attractions*, taken from Ecclesiastes 8. I gave it this title because it reminded me of going to the movies. I don't like being late because I don't want to miss any of the movie, for which I have just paid. Even though I know they are going to show previews for coming attractions I feel I need to be there on time. What if they don't show as many previews? I could miss part of the movie. Yet, every time I get there on time they show 15 minutes of *coming attractions*. They're all *Coming Attractions*, some of which are somewhat related to the movie you came to watch but others that you wonder why they're showing them to you. As we read Ecclesiastes 8 we can see four coming attractions, truths for today and the future that should affect how we live. We're going to read through the whole chapter and see if you can pick out some of them.

Ecclesiastes 8 Who is like the wise man? Who knows the explanation of things? Wisdom brightens a man's face and changes its hard appearance. Obey the king's command, I say, because you took an oath before God. Do not be in a hurry to leave the king's presence. Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases. Since a king's word is supreme, who can say to him, "What are you doing?" Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure. For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a man's misery weighs heavily upon him. Since no man knows the future, who can tell him what is to come? No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death. As no one is discharged in time of war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it. All this I saw, as I applied my mind to everything done under the sun. There is a time when a man lords it over others to his own hurt. Then too, I saw the wicked buried—those who used to come and go from the holy place and receive praise in the city where they did this. This too is meaningless. When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong. Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God. Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow. There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: righteous men who get what the wicked deserve, and wicked men who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless. So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun. When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe man's labor on earth—his eyes not seeing sleep day or night—then I saw all God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning. Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it.

The four truths I want to look at are as follows:

***I'M HELPLESS**

***IT MATTERS**

***THE GIFT**

***ONLY GOD**

I'M POWERLESS

Solomon begins this chapter by talking about the power of a king. He instructs his hearers not to leave the presence of a king in a hurry. Back when this was written one had to be summoned to come into the presence of the king. You would be risking your life just showing up in his presence. To leave his presence quickly would also be risky because it would be taken as a sign of disrespect. We also read that the king can do whatever he pleases because his words are supreme. If you obey his command, you will be safe. As mighty as the king was, there were certain things over which he had NO control. What are those things? We see them in verses 7-8.

*knowledge of the future

*wind or the spirit of a person

*day of their death

We as humans think we have far more power than we actually possess. The truth is we have very little control over most of life. We have had several people pass from this life into eternity these past few weeks. Solomon addressed this in chapter 3 when he said:

Ecclesiastes 3:1 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:

What does he begin with?

Ecclesiastes 3:2a a time to be born and a time to die...

The author of Hebrews makes it even clearer:

Hebrews 9:27 (NASB95) And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,

Nobody likes to talk about this, but we need to! This day could come at any time for any one of us. You can say all you want about what great shape you're in, but great athletes also die. Several years ago, when we lived in the Poconos, I went to the ER with chest pains and difficulty breathing and shallowing. I knew I had some digestion issues which continued to get worse and I was beginning to change my diet. On the way into the ER, I got sick and momentarily passed out on the sidewalk. That automatically gets you to the front of the line and all kinds of attention. They came out and had me on a gurney as fast as you can imagine. They wheeled me back and began doing all kinds of tests on me for my heart. I told one of the doctors that I was sure it wasn't my heart because I was in some of the best shape of my life since I was training for a marathon. You see, I'm a distance runner! I will never forget his reply, short and to the point.

"They die too!"

I proceeded to close my mouth and let them work.

Here is what Solomon knew, "We are all terminal."

Apart from the Lord's return none of us are making it alive out of this world. Some would say, "That's not very encouraging pastor!" It is the truth. There is a message in all of this:

1) Do I know what's next for me? Are you sure where you are headed for eternity? The only breath we have guaranteed is the one we're taking now.

Some people say, "I'm going to enjoy my life and do my own thing until I get older. Then, I'll get serious with God."

Two problems with that: you could die before that and secondly, why would you want to live for something lesser than the glory of God?

2) Knowing that every moment is a gift why wouldn't I want to live it all out for the honor and glory of God, storing up treasures in heaven?

1 Corinthians 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Matthew 6:19–21 "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.

Solomon reminds us we are powerless over the time of our death so live like you mean it!! Secondly:

IT MATTERS

Solomon is struggling with how a person who is wicked would get praise at the time of their burial, and even in the city where they did this evil. Crimes are committed and the sentence for the crime is not carried out quickly. This just promotes more evil. How is it that those who do evil can live long lives? Let's be honest, many of us have struggled with this haven't we? The psalmist struggled with it!

Psalms 73:3–5 For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. **4** They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. **5** They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills.

What is the answer?

Ecclesiastes 8:12 Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God.

"I know that it will go better:" Those who are followers of Christ need to take the long view. The here and now cannot be compared to eternity. (BB in a freight car)

“God-fearing:” a right view of God, in awe of Him, recognizing who he is and who I am in relationship to Him. One day it will be well for those who know the Lord, but don’t expect it to be here and now!! Know that it matters that I trust Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. It matters that I give my life to God and live all out for Him.

“reverent before Him:” this reminds us of the nearness of God, that we live with a constant awareness of the presence of God.

Ecclesiastes 8:13 Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.

It’s not going to end well for those apart from God. Do you remember the two thieves on the crosses next to Jesus?

Luke 23:39–43 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” **40** But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? **41** We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” **42** Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” **43** Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Whatever happens here on earth will be worth it all to hear, “Well done, my good and faithful servant.” We like to have results now and see those who are evil face the consequences for their sin. Just remember, from last week, it’s a good thing God doesn’t treat us as our sins deserve.

How does this work practically?

- 1) Remember that God is the judge, and He gets it right every time. It will be well with me in the end when I fear God and serve Him.
- 2) I need to pray for and reach out to those who have yet to come to Jesus. Eternity is a long time.

As a coming attraction I must remember I am powerless over life and death; it will be well in the end for those who fear God;

THE GIFT

In response to Solomon’s observation that the righteous get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked get what the righteous deserve, he concludes:

Ecclesiastes 8:15 So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun.

Where does joy come from in this life? True joy has God as its source. As a Christ follower we recognize that the work we have is a gift from God. You may say that you earned your degree, looked long and hard to find your job, worked hard to get that promotion, and it’s all about you. I need to tell you that you are sadly mistaken. When I can admit it is all from God that brings true joy.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “Our life is not only a great deal of trouble and hard work; it is also refreshment and joy in God’s goodness. We labor, but God nourishes and sustains us. There is reason to celebrate.... God is calling us to rejoice, to celebrate in the midst of our working day.”

Philip Graham Ryken, “Without the saving, personal knowledge of Jesus Christ and the certainty of eternal life, it is hard to have much joy at all. Even the best moments in life are tinged with sadness because we know that life will not last forever.”

Even when work can be difficult, hard, and seemingly unrewarding, we can have joy, knowing God’s grace and provision. Once again Solomon reminds us that every moment we have here on earth is given by God. Believers should be the most joyful people at their workplace. Why is that?

- *This moment is a gift
- *God is always with me
- *This job (at home, school, workplace), my possessions are provided by God
- *God has a plan for my life where I am right now

Don't be consumed with the apparent unfairness of life, but with the goodness of God.

I love You, Lord
For Your mercy never fails me
All my days, I've been held in Your hands
From the moment that I wake up
Until I lay my head
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

And all my life You have been faithful
And all my life You have been so, so good
With every breath that I am able
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

I love Your voice
You have led me through the fire
In the darkest night
You are close like no other
I've known You as a Father
I've known You as a Friend
And I have lived in the goodness of God (yeah)

Cause Your goodness is running after
It's running after me
Your goodness is running after
It's running after me
With my life laid down
I'm surrendered now
I give You everything
'Cause Your goodness is running after
It keeps running after me

Here's the movie of my life, the coming attractions:

*I'm powerless over the time of death: make sure of eternity, live like you mean it

*It matters that I fear and love God: it will be well in the end

*The gift of life, work, and all I have is from God. Revel in the goodness of God.

ONLY GOD

I have been to a few of the superhero, avenger, marvel movies. I have watched: Superman, Wonder Woman, Spider-Man, Captain America, Iron Man, Ant-Man, Thor, Batman. These movies are extremely popular and successful financially.

Many things in life we will never be able to figure out for only God knows. All the way through Ecclesiastes Solomon is attempting to figure out life. We as humans like to try to figure out everything. Some things we just need to give over to God and not get consumed by them.

Ecclesiastes 8:17 then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning. Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it.

Let me ask you. Anyone here have life all figured out? We don't have all the answers. In fact, we don't even have the questions many times. Unbelievers may mock us and give us a hard time about this but God has given all that we need to live godly lives in Christ Jesus. Are you and I willing to be content with not knowing everything?

Derek Kidner, "In 2006, over 15 years ago, it is estimated the world generated 200 gigabytes of digital information every year. Yet none of the data could even begin to explain the mysteries of the sovereignty of God."

Some choose to conclude that there is no God. We read this in Macbeth by Shakespeare, “Life is only a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”

Wouldn't it be better and wiser to admit that we are finite beings with fallen minds and that therefore incapable of understanding everything that happens. It is arrogant of us to think that we can explain all that happens in life, like we are the master of it.

Romans 11:33-34—Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! **34** “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?”

*Wouldn't it be better to respond in worship?

*God has the answers and He will reveal to me what I need to know

SO WHAT???

What difference do these truths make in my life? A striking example comes from a 2008 essay by a prominent atheist about a strange phenomenon he had observed in Africa. The journalist Matthew Parris wrote a piece for The Times entitled “Why Africa Needs God.” Although Parris made it clear that he does not believe in God at all, he admitted that Christianity made a tangible difference in the lives of people he knew in his boyhood home of Malawi and in other countries across Africa. Not only did he admire the good work that Christians were doing to care for the poor and sick, but he also liked the way they looked. “The Christians were different,” he wrote. “Their faith appeared to have liberated and relaxed them. There was a liveliness, a curiosity, an engagement with the world.... Whenever we entered a territory worked by missionaries, we had to acknowledge that something changed in the faces of the people we passed and spoke to: something in their eyes.”

What I've shared today needs to make a difference in my life and in your life. These truly are the coming attractions: for the present and the future.

*God is in charge of the length of my life: how am I living my life to the glory of God with eternity in mind?

*It Matters that I fear God, recognize Him for who He is, and submit my life to Him. What are my goals in life when it comes to my walk with God? In what ways am I getting off course?

*The Gift: am I trusting God for everyday life and recognizing all I have is from Him? What is my level of joy?

*Knowing that only God knows what lies ahead and that only He can make sense of this life. How am I expressing my trust in God?

When I go to a movie and see the *Coming Attractions* make it an opportunity to reflect on my relationship with God and others.