**Ecclesiastes: *Themes and Reflections***

**Ecclesiastes 1:2**  2 Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

Life is Meaningless – Life is Absurd – It is all vanity.

How do we read this through a lens of faith?

1. Partial Truth –
   1. If we find ourselves nodding along too vigorously then we know that we need to hear another word from scripture.
      1. God also wills that we enjoy this life
      2. There is meaning and purpose in God’s work
      3. Salvation (along with purpose) in Jesus Christ is both a now and not yet reality.
   2. Satire? Almost comical picture of the wise old man sharing his wisdom
      1. We can laugh at it even when there is a deeper truth

**Ecclesiastes 1:3**  3 What do people gain from all the toil at which they toil under the sun?

1. Implied Answer – Nothing
2. The Folly of Work Ethic
   1. Contrast to Protestant Perspective & Ancient Israel work ethic
   2. **Proverbs 14:23**  23 In all toil there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

**Ecclesiastes 2:12-17**

1. Both the wise and the foolish share the same fate.
   1. At this time there was no notion of a meaningful afterlife. Death and finality came to everyone. The best people could hope for after death was “enduring remembrance” (Verse 16) – the memory of good deeds. Qohelet is a realist that acknowledges what everyone already knows – that memories are short and the legacies of both the wise and foolish are quickly forgotten. (NIB –pg 301)

1. “I hate life” – but he does not choose death. – Still prefers light over darkness. (v 13)

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

1. Where is God in the timing of these things?
2. Chronos vs. Kairos
   1. The ancient Greeks had two words for time, chronos and kairos. While the former refers to chronological or sequential time, the latter signifies a time lapse, a moment of indeterminate time in which everything happens. What is happening when referring to kairos depends on who is using the word. While chronos is quantitative, kairos has a qualitative, permanent nature.
   2. *kairos* is "a passing instant when an opening appears which must be driven through with force if success is to be achieved."
   3. kairos means "the appointed time in the purpose of God", the time when God acts

**Ecclesiastes 5:1-7**

1. The organ at issue is the mouth. Quohelet warns his students against the hollow outward observance of religion, and he cautions them to be particularly careful in taking vows.
   1. A “Big Mouth” can get you in trouble.

**Ecclesiastes 6:1-2**

1. To have AND to enjoy is the grace of God… To have and never enjoy is “evil”.
2. Qohelet is rather deterministic - “God and God alone determines who will be able to enjoy and be happy – and faithful obedience, moral rectitude, prayer, and fasting will not affect this outcome in any way.” (NIB –pg 323).

**Ecclesiastes 7:1-6**

1. It is better to have sober contemplation of death than foolish laughter and hilarity about life.
   1. How can these be held in tension? (The church year is a model)

**Ecclesiastes 7:20-22**

1. Listening to Gossip is problematic. Why?

**Ecclesiastes 10:1-4**

1. A fly in the ointment
   1. Rottenness comes from folly as much as it does from sin.
   2. How is this a reality in our world?

**Ecclesiastes 11:5-10**

1. Light and Life are affirmed – hard work is affirmed – joy is affirmed… and yet it is all vanity.
   1. What would you affirm in this life that ultimately seems as if it is vanity?

**Ecclesiastes 12:1-8**

1. Remember your creator in the days of your youth because…
   1. Is all life (past, present, future) vanity?
   2. 0What is your hope?