**BCM Bible Study: March 24/25, 2021**

**Ecclesiastes 1:1-12-2:26**

We are still wrestling with the question from the first chapter. **Read Ecc. 1:3.**

Wisdom: **Read Ecc. 1:12-18**

The section can be understood by looking at it as two sections: 12-15 and 16-18.

* **Verses 12-15**. What is your initial understanding of what the Teacher is saying? What does he find after seeking out to understand the world?
  + What does verse 15 mean?
* **Verses 16-18**.What is the Teacher focused on here?
  + What does he discover about wisdom? What does it bring him?
* “It is often those who have pursued wisdom and knowledge most relentlessly and have probed reality most deeply who understand most fully just how limited still is our understanding at the end of the quest.” (Provan)
  + How have you experienced the limitations of knowledge in your field of study? In your pursuit of understanding God or the Bible?
  + **Read 1 Cor. 1:18-21, 2:6-7**. What does Paul say about wisdom? What does this mean for the way we should pursue and connect with God?
  + What is the proper place of wisdom and knowledge in life?

Searching for Satisfaction: **Read Ecc. 2:1-12**

* In what ways does the Teacher seek out meaning and value in this section?
* Here we have the Teacher “testing” three different areas: pleasure, work and profit. How have you experienced these things leading you to always desire more?
  + How does the Teacher’s perspective differ from how people usually talk about these things?
* Take a close look at verses 10-11. What is his judgment about his experience? What does it mean that he both found joy in the experience and also judges it as *hevel*?

**Read Ecclesiastes 2:12-16**. To what conclusions does the Teacher come in this section?

* Given what the Teacher said about wisdom in chapter 1, what value does he see in it here?
* How does embracing the reality of death change the Teacher’s perspective?
  + We live in a culture that generally doesn’t face death on a personal level to the extent of historical norms. Obviously, this has changed some with Covid. How does it make you feel to think about your own death? How would it influence the way you live to think about the inevitability of death?
  + Many face death and take the perspective outlined here: **Read Isaiah 22:12-13, 1 Cor. 15:31-32**. Have you encountered this perspective?
  + How does the resurrection influence the way we think about this conversation?

**Read Ecc. 2:17-23**. What is the Teacher’s lament in this section?

* This section has been called “The Confessions of a Workaholic.” Where do you see evidence of that in this section?
  + Would you call yourself a workaholic? What drives you to work so hard?
  + What would it look like for you to honor your God-given limits?

A Life Well-Lived: **Read Ecc. 2:24-26**

The Teacher finally tells us what a well-lived life looks like. What does he say?

* Does enjoying life and what it has to offer seem like an odd idea for God to propose? Why or why not?
  + How do these verses fit in with the passages in Isaiah and 1 Cor. that we discussed earlier?
  + What would it look like to live out these verses? What would it look like to enjoy your life and work as a gift from God rather than a means to an end?

Conclusion and Challenge

“Modern western life in the West, however, is full to the brim with illusion and delusion, as we are constantly told that there are “gains” to be made. There is yet another way to increase our income, yet another way to improve our health and stave off illness and death, yet another way to increase our sexual pleasure. Wisdom and knowledge are portrayed not simply as goods in themselves that enable us to live well in the world, but as ways of “getting ahead” – mechanisms that enable us to fulfill our own personal dreams.” (Provan)

* Can you relate to this statement?
* How have you been challenged by today’s passage? Where are you pushing the boundaries of what God intends for your life?
* This week, try one (or both) of these things as an act of embracing limits and enjoying life:
  + 1. Have a set bedtime this week that would give you a healthy amount of sleep.
  + 2. Intentionally do something you enjoy.