**BCM Bible Study: April 21/22, 2021**

**Ecclesiastes 9-10**

Worrying About Tomorrow: **Read Ecc. 9:1-6**

* Looking first at verses 1-2, what is the overall point the Teacher is making?
* Verse 3 continues this point saying that all people experience “evil” or misery during this life. We are all touched by “madness” whether it be in our own thinking or the thinking of others.
  + How have you experienced the reality of these verses – the “mixed bag” of good and bad in life?
* Verses 4-6 are tricky, but I believe this summary captures the point: “Life may bring its own trials, and it may sometimes seem that it would be better to be without them; yet in the end, life is better than death.” (Provan)
  + What does the Teacher say when he looks at the inevitability of trials?
  + **Read 1 Peter 4:12-14, James 1:2-4**. What do these verses say about trials? How does the Bible tell us to engage with trials?
  + **Read 2 Cor. 12:9-10.**
    - What is the message of these verses?
    - How have you seen God work in your weakness or trials?

**Read Ecc. 9:7-12**. We have talked about the concept in verses 7-10 quite a bit in previous studies. Have you found that this idea is difficult for you to live out? Why or why not?

* Verses 11-12 serve to wrap up this section. What is the Teacher’s conclusion statement?
  + In what ways do you try to gain control of life?
  + **Matthew 6:31-34**. What is Jesus’ response to such thinking? Why do you think it’s difficult for you to trust that Jesus will provide for you?
* At the heart of much of this section is a desire to live a fulfilling life and see things play out like we hope they will. In our society, “we are given ever-increasing permission to ignore – and if necessary dispense with – whatever and whoever stands in our way in this quest, be it life in the womb, children, spouses, the poor, foreigners, or the aged.” (Provan)What future plans/hopes define your life right now? How does this quote challenge you?

Living in a Backward World: **Read Ecc. 9:13-10:3**

* What is the message of this story?
* How have you seen strength valued over wisdom and discernment?
* Have you seen a foolish person or idea overvalued? How did this result in the destruction of good? (9:18)
  + Why do you think wisdom is undervalued compared to strength or foolishness?
  + **Read 1 Cor. 1:18-21**. What do these verses say? How does the wisdom of the cross compare to the wisdom of the world?

**Read Ecc. 10:4-11.** What are some truths that the Teacher reports in this section?

* What wisdom does the Teacher offer for living in a broken world?
* Verses 8-11 discuss the difficulty of living in the world. The dull ax in v.10 is a metaphor for a wise person who is not having the desired success. In such a situation, perseverance is needed.
  + In what areas of life is perseverance difficult for you? What makes you want to give up?

**Read Ecc. 10:12-20.** First focus on 12-15. What is the fate of the fool in these verses?

* What makes this person foolish?
  + What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom? How could the two intersect?
* Now turn to verses 16-20. Consider also 10:6-7. What is the message of these verses? Is it surprising to you?
  + **Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4, Romans 13:1-2, 1 Peter 2:13-17**. What do these verses say about our relationship with rulers? Why are we called to act this way?
    - What does this mean about advocating for justice? **Read Isaiah 1:17, Matthew 23:23.**
    - Do you struggle with relating to the authorities as described in the Bible? Why or why not?

Conclusion: These verses challenge us to approach the world with humility and meekness, knowing that God alone is in control. What act of service can you do as an outward sign of this acknowledgement of this humility? (Bonus points if this is done for an enemy!)