

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

June 14, 2020

SPEAKER

Brian Frost

SERIES

Meaning(Less)

PART

4

TITLE

Things That Make You Say “Oh No”

SCRIPTURE

Ecclesiastes 3:16-4:16



© 2020 Providence Baptist Church (Raleigh, NC)

Sermon transcripts may be used for preaching and teaching purposes, but may not be published or sold. While generally accurate, parts of this transcript may contain errors.

Providence reserves the right to correct and/or remove a transcript at any time.

What? Yeah, can I get a tow?

Sure what's your location?

Where did my money go? Nevermind.

So you don't need it?

Well Providence family, good morning? I hope that you are having a good week. If you're new with us, we're thrilled that you've joined us. I am really glad and I pray that while you listen, if you don't know Christ as your savior and Lord, I pray today that you would see that in Jesus Christ there's hope for our own heart, there's hope for the world. Actually, he's the only hope for the world. And so we are glad that you have joined us. If you have with you there in your homes, a Bible, I want to ask you to look with me to Ecclesiastes 3. We're going to be starting in verse 16. For those of you who have read this book, I know that, you know if you've read it that there's a lot of the book that is perplexing, it's disturbing. It can feel pessimistic. It's hard to read.

In fact, there's a lot of people who read through the book of Ecclesiastes and really don't love it so much because it can be so difficult to understand, and yet what I want to show you today is that all these years ago, when Solomon, the author wrote these words is that he was describing his world that is actually a tremendous description of the brokenness of our own world and the things that we're currently experiencing. And so you know what's happening in the world. There's brokenness everywhere.

Well, Solomon, the same sorts of things were happening in his day and age as well. We know that Solomon wrote this. He was the King of Israel. He was born into privilege and the Bible says that when he came to the throne, that God came to him and said, "Solomon, you can ask me anything that you desire and Solomon prayed, God, would you give me wisdom to know between right and wrong so that I can lead your people in justice and in righteousness." And the God says that he was so pleased. He was so pleased with what he asked for.

God not only gave him tremendous wisdom, but he also gave him everything that he didn't ask for. And yet, in spite of the amazing blessings that God had poured out to Solomon, there came a day in Solomon's life when he turned away from the Lord, his heart was literally magnetized to the world. Was drawn to the things of the world and he even began to worship idols. The Bible tells us that he went on a quest to find meaning and hope and purpose apart from God. Ecclesiastes is the travel log. It's the journals, the diary entries of Solomon. It's his conclusions of what he's learned as he looked into the world and he recognized that everything was broken. He's going to finish the book and he's going to say, "Look, I've said so many things to you, but this is what's most important is that you love God, that you fear God and you obey his commandments for this is the whole duty of man."

And yet what we find up until that place is a man who is so disturbed by the life that he is living and by the life that he sees around him. So he writes these things. Last week, in the first 15 verses of Chapter 3, what we saw there is that trying to see God's good plan on the earth. That God is sovereign, He's powerful, He's loving, He's good, He's he's in control and yet we see things that are broken in the world. So in those 15 verses what Solomon sought to teach us is the trying to interpret God's ways on the earth is incredibly difficult. It's like looking at a tapestry, but only being able to look at it from the backside underneath the loom.

Well, the Bible tells us that one day we are going to be able to see the top. We are going to be able to see God's handiwork and what he was doing to incorporate all of the broken pieces into a master plan of redemption for humanity. And yet for now we must see only the underbelly that has the knots and the frayed edges. It's not beautiful. It doesn't look good. It looks reckless. It can look uncaring, but one day we will see better things. Every one of us know that we have seen horrible things even this week. We've seen it in our world, we've seen it in our country, we've seen it in our city, we've seen it in our hearts. We've seen terrible realities, things that make us say, "Oh no." We have seen murder. We've seen racism. We've seen hatred. We've seen vestiges of anarchy and looting and rioting.

We've seen abuse of power and we've seen rebellion against God and even authorities that are established by God. What we find is amazing, is that Solomon himself. In his day and age, he looked around and he was able to see the exact same things. And there he ends with a conclusion and his conclusion, which is the thesis of these verses that we're going to look at here this morning is this, is that our only hope must come from beyond the sun. In other words, if we're looking for leaders or for parties in terms of politics, if we're looking for economies, if we're looking for systems of justice, if we're looking for things to be our savior here on the earth, there is no hope.

The only hope we have is that if a rescuer were to come from beyond the sun and come to this world and be a redeemer. This is what we find within the scriptures, and I know the world is shaking right now. The first point we're going to look at addresses the world's so poignantly, but I want you to know for those of you who are burdened even this morning by what's happening in Atlanta over the last 24 hours, it is a burden to see, it's a burden for Rayshard Brooks, it's a burden for his family, it's a burden for the city. It's a burden now, as we look into the world, we look into a city and we see people. And it just seems as though everybody has lost touch that there is a God, that there is an arbiter of right and wrong, of truth.

I want to pray, and then we're going to look at what Solomon saw in his day that we still see in ours. Father in heaven, we come to you and ask the word you have brought the savior to us and still we are needy. And it's not because Jesus' sacrifice was not sufficient. It's that so many people do not know or do not believe and they have not been changed by the savior of the world. And so I pray God that you would speak through weakness, that you would use this time to use your word, to address our hearts, to address how we should respond to the things that we see in the world today.

I pray for those of us who know Christ. I pray for the church, Lord that you would build the truth up in... God would you build the church up in truth and love? And God, I pray for those who do not know Christ, that this would be the day that they turn and look to Jesus Christ and are forgiven of their sin. So we look to you and we need your help. I pray in Jesus name. Amen. Well, the very first thing that we find here, the first note from the underside, the underbelly of this tapestry that he looks at, he looks into the world and he says, "This is the first thing I want you to know that I can see is absolutely broken, and it is the unjust oppression of the weak, the unjust oppression of the week." You know, here on the earth, there's supposed to be safe places.

Churches are supposed to be safe. Youth centers are supposed to be safe. Schools are supposed to be safe. The justice system is supposed to be safe, but here on the earth where things are broken, safe places are not always safe. And this is what we learn. This is what he saw in his own day. Look at verse 16 with me. He says, "Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness." The safe places are not always safe and when we find safe places and they're not safe, it creates chaos, not only in our culture, but it also creates a deep unsettledness within our own hearts.

You see, the Bible tells us in Romans chapter two that you and I were created in the image of God, and when he created us, he also wove his law deep within our heart so that when our eyes see injustices and oppressions and things that are wrong in the world that violate the law within our heart, that words come out of our mouth, and those words are, "That's not right. That's wrong. Where's the justice?"

This comes natural to you and to me. He's written his law in our hearts. So even kids, like you look at these kids right here. One's offended another. Look at this face. Even kids know that when someone takes their toy and hits them over the head with it, that a law has been violated and justice must be served. But here's the thing, the Bible tells us metaphorically that every single one of us as human beings have taken another child's toy and hit them over the head. We have all offended and affected somebody else. We have all mistreated somebody on the earth, Romans 3:10 says, "None is righteous. Not even one." So this is a great dilemma.

You see, God almighty knows that we need justice, and so what he does is this, God almighty knows that his plan is to rescue people from this earth by sending a savior to the earth, that was Jesus Christ. One day we are going to live in a place where Jesus Christ is King and his throne, it says will be marked by righteousness and justice and love and wisdom. But until that day, he entrusts authority here on the earth and he tells us to actually build justice systems on the earth in order to stem the tide of human depravity from washing over the rest of humanity.

But here's the problem we gathered together and we create justice systems, but they tend to fall short, and the reason is because systems of justice are only as good as the people given power to enforce them. And so we know that there are righteous and just pastors. We know that there are righteous and just coaches and youth leaders and children's volunteers. We know that there are righteous and just police officers, many of them in

our own community and in our own community of faith. I want you to know right now, because that is such a hot topic in our culture. I want you to know for every one of you who cares for people and protects people, who is just and righteous, not perfect. Seeking to honor God and honor people, we thank you. We thank you.

We know that there are just lawyers and just laws and we know that there are just judges. And yet we also know that in every one of those categories, from pastors to justices of the peace and everything around judges, laws, we also know that there are unjust ones. That creates a tremendous problem. That if you look down in Chapter four verse one, Solomon picks up and he says, "Again, I saw..." This is something else. He looks in the world and goes, "That's another thing that's broken. I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun and behold, the tears of the oppressed. And they had no one to comfort them. On the side of their oppressors, there was power and there was no one to comfort them."

Now, just notice these words right here. These words, there was power. Now not everyone has the power. Who has the power? It's on the side of the one doing all these horrible unjust oppressive things. This is what we find throughout history. It's one of the saddest things about humanity, is that history shows that when people have competing desires, the brutality of might making right begins to emerge. This mentality literally is the fuel of every domestic abuse, every sexual abuse, every child abuse. Is the fuel behind every abortion, slavery, lynching, rape, genocide. It is might making right when two or more people have competing conflicting desires. One says, "I want to live." One says, "I don't want to be a parent." When might makes right one gets affected by the other. One says, "I want to have sex with that person." That person says, "Well, I do not want to have sex with you." And if the person wanting to sex has the power, they can oppress the person without the power.

And so we see throughout the whole world is that when people who have been given power and capability and they use that power in order to inflict upon others, is it creates this tremendous chaos throughout the whole world. I want you to know it wasn't always this way. See, there's this thing called garden ethics. At least that's what I call it. See, the Bible says that we were created in the image of God and when God created us in the garden and we had not sinned against him, he put in us a relational virtue, an ethic of how we treat one another. And this is what that ethic was, my life for your good, my strength for your good, my capabilities for your good. It's, "I'm going to leverage everything that God has given me and all of my strengths, and I'm going to use them for the betterment of people."

But then when we sinned against God and we cut off the oxygen tube to our soul, suddenly our very nature was reconstituted into a sin nature. And that sin nature took on a different relational ethic. It turned it on its head so that instead of us thinking my life for your good, we begin to think your life for my good. If you have a strength then I want to leverage that strength to make my life easier. If you have something I want and I have the strength then I'm going to take what's yours, what's good for you, and I'm going to make it good for me. You know, this creates all manner of chaos throughout the world. And so Solomon picks up in verse two and three at chapter four and this is what he says. He goes, "When I thought of all this, and I thought the

dead who were already dead, more fortunate than the living who still are alive.”

So he pauses, he goes, “You know what? At least the people who already lived and who were in the grave, they don’t have to see continual, perpetual injustices.” But then he says, “You know what? Better still than both is he has not yet been and has not seeing the evil deeds that are done under the sun.” In other words, he says, “You know what? The one who has the most peace in their heart is the one who hasn’t seen all the injustice to begin with.” And so, as a result of this, what happens is we long for the day of justice. So we go back up to chapter three, verse 17, and this is what Solomon said. He says, “I said, in my heart, God will judge. God will judge the righteous and the wicked for there is a time for every matter and for every work.”

Now you remember in chapter three, verse one, it says for everything, there’s a season and a time for every matter under heaven. You look at this word time right here. We learned last week that the word time or the word season is actually an appointed time or a appointed season and God is the one doing the appointing. What this means is this, that when it says that God is going to judge, and that day is appointed, we find the same thing in the New Testament, Hebrews 9:27. “It is appointed.” That’s the time. “There is a time for a man to die once and after that comes judgment.” God will judge, but here’s the thing. Solomon recognized it in his day, is that when we forget about this day, when we will stand before God, or if we reject this as a truth, or if we don’t know that is a truth, and what happens is that we begin to live like animals.

And so he says in chapter three, verse 18 through 20, he says, “I said in my heart with regard to the children of man, that God is testing them, that they may see that they themselves are, but beasts for what happens to the children of man, and what happens to the beasts is the same as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath and man has no advantage over the beast for all is vanity, all go to one place, all are from the dust and to dust all return. Now the master key of Ecclesiastes, we’ve talked about this a few times. It’s that word under the sun. So critical that you understand what that means. Under the sun is not simply life on the earth. It’s life on the earth as though all we see is all there is. Meaning, if there was no God, if there was no savior, if there is no Bible, there is no revelation, there was no arbitrary of truth between right and wrong, there was no coming justice, if there was no heaven, no hell. If this was all there was, that’s what he means by under the sun.

And so if we conclude with our life that there is no God, and if we conclude that there is no justice, then what Solomon says is this, if this is all there is, then what happens is we lose our honorable distinction as image bearers of God and we begin to stalk and kill and die like animals. This was written so many years ago, and yet he is describing America living as though there is no law, and being a law unto ourselves. So what do we do with this? Let me encourage you this first point. I know most of the time in these sermons, there’s usually one application per point or this first point has three applications. Okay? First thing I would encourage us to do as a family of faith is this, is let’s not condemn God for oppression that he hates. He deeply hates.

It's our instinct, that when we look into the world to blame God. We know that he's powerful, we know that he's loving and so instinctual for us, our rebellion against God, we just naturally look at things that are broken. We think, "You know what? Let's blame him." Let me encourage you to remember a few things though, that every injustice that you see with your eyes is hated by God. Every injustice that you see with your eyes will be perfectly judged by God, and every injustice that you see with your eyes is met with immediate mercy by God and we should all be glad this is why. You see, we begin to think that the world would be so much better if there was just a perfect standard of justice immediately on the earth. We think, "You know, wouldn't it be great that if somebody lied to us immediately, their tongue would just shrivel up and fall out of their mouth." Like yeah, justice. The only problem would be that we would have to live in that world.

You see, we have this love, hate relationship with justice. We deeply love it and want it when we are the one who is offended, when we are the one who is insulted, and yet we deeply want mercy when we are the one who is doing the offense and the affliction. I want you to see though that it is God almighty, who has a very different seat to view everything that's happening in the world. See, the Bible says that while our vision is limited to only what we can see, God sees everything. He sees the whole world all at the same time, he sees everything happening instantaneously on every part. Every injustice he sees. So we look in it and we have to look through it with tainted eyes because we're even a sinner in his eyes are so perfectly pure. He has to look upon everything that he created for his glory and our good. Everything that we have messed up, and he has to view all of it. But not only is he's the one who has to observe all of it, he is also the co victim of all of it.

The Bible teaches us that when we sin against one another, that we also sin against God. That when somebody is murdered, that God is a victim as well, because that person was created in the image of God. That God almighty is also offended and affected every time we sin against one another. And what that means is that every single sin that you see committed from one person to another person has an additional victim, and yet God is the common denominator victim of it all. And yet in his perfect love, though he was the offended party, he sent his only begotten son, Jesus Christ to this earth. And Jesus lived without any sin. He always leveraged his power, his strength for the good of others, always. And yet he went to a cross and there he paid for our sin. He was there in our place.

This proves the justice of God that not a single sin will be left unjudged but not only that, but he was buried in a grave, and three days later, he rose from the dead to prove that we are different than the animals, that there is life after death that we will spend forever in either heaven or hell. This is the reality, and Solomon, you can tell in verse 21 and 22, he's curious about life after death for humanity. So he says, he has two questions, "Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth?" And the second question, "Who can bring him to see, that is man, who can bring man to see what will be after him?" You look around the world today and there are four different views about what happens to humanity after we die. Three of them are invented by man and one of them is revealed by God.

Number one, we simply cease to exist. There's a lot of people who believe that once we die, our body goes into the grave and that's it. It's over. There's no more consciousness, there's no afterlife. It's just it. We just die. The second view is called reincarnation. There's a lot of people on the earth who believe in this and not only does the Bible not speak to reincarnation, it's actually a system of tremendous hopelessness, and this is why. It actually teaches that if you don't do enough good the first time, you stand before some power or some higher being or some God, and if you haven't done enough, right the first time you get sent back to the earth in a different form. You may come back as a butterfly or as a lizard or another person. But here's the thing in that form then you have to do enough in order to appease some higher being and you have to do so without the knowledge of who you were the first time.

And so you can't bring any lessons to the table. Every new life, you start at ground zero, with your knowledge of what is right and wrong. But the Bible doesn't teach this. The third is something though, it's the scale model or the merit model. This is held by the majority of people in the entire world, including many people, sadly who frequent a Christian church week after week. We imagine that there's this huge scale. On one side of the scale, God puts all of our good stuff, all of our good deeds and on the other side of the scale, he puts all the bad stuff. And depending on which side goes up, you go to heaven or hell, but don't you recognize that if this was true, not only is the Bible wrong, but if this is true, then God is wicked. This is how we know that, we would not allow any judge, we would not call any judge a just judge who would do that.

So let's just bring it down to our level. Let's just say that somebody in our community rapes and murder somebody. They go to a judge and they plead guilty. They say, "You know what? I did that." But then they say, "But you know what? Every Tuesday, for the last three years, I've been volunteering in this great community center in order to feed people who don't have any food, and so can you take that into consideration?" Now, if a judge on this earth looked and said, "You know what, man, a lot of years, a lot of hours helping people, man, you have one bad decision. It was really, really terrible decision, but you know what? We're just going to go with not guilty." We would declare that judge not just, evil and wicked. And yet that is what we presume upon God.

If somehow he's going to look at everything that we have done as an offense and simply zero it out on the basis of a better day. There is a fourth option though, and it's the option that we find within the scriptures. It's revealed to us from God himself. And that is that in John 3:16, it says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life." What this means is that Jesus Christ came to die in our place. He was condemned in our place.

It should have been us, but he died for us. And the Bible says that if we will trust, place our faith in Jesus Christ, by admitting we cannot save ourselves by putting our faith in Jesus and confessing him, Lord of our life. The Bible says that he forgives us of our sin and the reason that he can do this and still be just is because he'd killed his own son. That Jesus Christ took all of our sin. He already died for it. He was already punished for it.

I urge you today for those of you who've never trusted Jesus to trust Jesus Christ and be justified. To put your faith in Jesus. The Bible says that there's this amazing exchange where he says, "If you trust in me, you put all your sin on your platter and I'll put all my righteous to some I platter and we'll trade. I will look at you as righteous and I'll declare you as righteous. I will justify you." You can trust Jesus Christ right now. If we can help with that, I would ask you to send us a text. You can text us PBC one and send it to 313131, and we would love the opportunity to talk to you about Christ.

I know that many of us have trusted Jesus Christ. So the third thing I would encourage us to do in light of the unjust oppression of the week that we see in our own day and age is to pursue justice as we await perfect justice. This involves opening up our mouth when we see things that are wrong and today in our day and age, it's a scary thing to open your mouth. It almost feels like that we're on a bridge and we want to get from this side of the bridge, to the other side of the bridge and yet there's all these people in the middle of the bridge and they've adopted a slogan and a set of words. And if you don't use their set of words, they don't let you cross the bridge.

They condemn you as lacking empathy, or lacking concern or contributing to the violence. Let me encourage us, Providence family. Those of you who know God, I want to encourage those of you who know Jesus Christ, we have the Bible. We do not have to be confined to the narrative of a fallen culture in order to speak grace and truth into our culture. The Bible tells us this, the Bible says that every single one of us have been created in the image of God. And what that means is this, every single human life is important to God and should be important to us.

We also know that God created us, wrapped us for his own pleasure and glory, with different colors of skin and in America, people with darker skin, brown skin and black skin have been mistreated historically throughout the history of our country. We recognize that as wrong, as sin. It's not just. The might of the many has contributed to the oppression of the few. It's wrong and we acknowledge that it's wrong. I would encourage us as we pursue justice to remember this though, oppression is a sin and sin only has one remedy and that remedy, which is Jesus Christ has been entrusted to the local church, to the church on the earth to be stewards of this truth, to be able to share the gospel with others.

The most important thing you can do for the cause of justice is to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with people who don't know. The Bible says it's of first importance, this gospel. But the fact that he says it's of first importance doesn't mean that there are things that are unimportant, that don't need to be spoken. There are other things we need to talk about. There are other things. Which is why we need to confess our sin, which is why we need to acknowledge that wrong has occurred in our heart and in our world. I urge you to be about justice as we wait for Jesus Christ to rule with perfect justice. Pray for that day. Jesus ask us to pray your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

I urge you to vote. I urge you to comfort people. Solomon looked and he said, “These people who are oppressed, they have no one to comfort them.” We have been placed on the earth and saved by God to be a comforting force to people who are oppressed. So I urge you, however, the Lord places upon your heart, within the confines of what’s permitted and instructed and recommended and commanded in scripture to be about the cause of justice and to rest upon the Bible that you do so. If you’re wondering, there’s three more. So the first thing he saw was the unjust depression of the weak.

I promise you the last three are a little shorter. The second thing that he shows us is the restlessness caused by envy. In other words, when we don’t find meaning and hope, peace in God. He looked around the world and Solomon says, “You know what I’ve noticed? I’ve seen a lot of people motivated by envy, working so hard and they are so restless within them.” You see, the Bible teaches us and what we see within the world is that no matter what we have, we tend to see what other people have that we don’t have. And this causes envy. You look up envy in any Google search, and you’re going to find the color green. It’s really an interesting thing. We liken the color green to the sin of envy.

I think it’s so interesting because green typically is also the color that we talk about when we know that we’re sick. When we are so sick that we’re wanting to throw up, we want to vomit, we typically think of the face turning green. It’s not a pleasant color. So we at least down the face, and so we attributed envy to a particular kind of sickness. You see every one of us, we come into this world and if we don’t find our joy in God, what happens is we assume that we would be happy if we only had the things that other people had. And this is what Solomon noticed.

Look here, “Then I saw all the toil and all the skill and work come from a man’s envy of his neighbor. This is a vanity and a striving after the wind.” And then what he says is there’s some people, he calls them fools who look at the folly of working themselves to death in order to have stuff that’s going to make them happy anyway. And they respond by saying, you know what? I do not want to be motivated by envy to the place of restlessness. What I’m going to do is I’m just going to become lazy. And he says, “Well, the fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh.” In other words, what he’s saying is this, is that either extreme workaholism or laziness, being a sluggard is a dead end for our joy.

And so let me encourage us as a church family is let’s balance work and rest. This has always been God’s plan. He’s woven these two into the rhythm of life. And you can see that Solomon recognize this in verse six. That is what he says. He says, “Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and striving after wind.” In other words, if there is a rope that is thrown over a beam and you see both of them and you can say, okay, over here, there’s rest, and over here there’s work. He says that it is a foolish person that takes hands off of either one of them and holds one. If you hold everything on being lazy, or if you hold everything on work, then what happens is you fall to the ground.

He says, “Better still is to be wise enough to recognize that God has ordained a balance between these things on the earth.” We know even from the law of God, that six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. I would encourage you to consider the fact that in God’s economy, one day of rest is the counterbalance of six days of work. That’s how heavy it is. That’s how effectual and potent it is. That’s how needed it is that one day of rest equals six days of work. So let me encourage us to fight the dissatisfaction that emerges in our heart at the prosperity of others. Let’s love people well, let’s work hard and let’s rest, let’s rest.

The third problem area that he sees when we do not find our meaning in God is the loneliness of chasing success. Here, Solomon has in view the lonely CEO. I know there’s many people in our city who are terribly successful. There’s so many people in our city who work and work and work and work, and they work so much that they have no friends. This is what he addresses in verse seven through 12. He says, “Again, I saw vanity under the sun. One person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil and his eyes are never satisfied with riches so that he never ask, ‘for whom am I toiling and depriving myself a pleasure?’”

This also is vanity and an unhappy business. So who is Solomon describing? He’s describing the scrooge, someone who works all day returns to a drafty, dark home, where he counts his money, and he goes to bed without any friends. In Solomon’s case, which is most tragic he even puts his own kids into that category. It’s amazing to me, most of us who have kids, we look at that day when we pass and we’re able to give to our children one last tangible gift. Most of us look at that as a good thing. Solomon resented the whole thing. And this is the tragedy of Solomon as he made so much money yet he would come home. There was a thousand women in his palace who lived there, 700 wives, 300 concubines, tons of kids and he didn’t know any of them.

There was no relationship with any of them. So he resented the day that he died and he had to give us stuff to his own kids. What a tragedy? What a tragedy to be wealthy and to choose the job that gives you 20 or 30,000 more dollars at the expense of your relationship with kids, even your own. So let me encourage us church family to pursue friendship because it’s not good for the man to be alone. Solomon goes out of his way in verses nine through 12, to tell us some of the benefits of friendship. He says, “Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow, but woe to him who is alone when he falls and he has not another to lift him up.”

In other words, when you have a friend, you have somebody who can help you when you fall. Verse 11, “And again, if two lie together, they keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?” Well, it’s obvious. Another benefit of friendship is that when you’re cold, you can sit close to somebody that you care about and stay warm. Then he says in verse 12, “And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him. A three fold cord is not quickly broken.” There’s a lot of people who liken this threefold cord to like God, and then our friendship. It’s not really what he’s saying. What he’s saying is this, is that when somebody

threatens us, there's strength in numbers. And so if it's good to have two friends to protect you, it's even better to have three.

So let me encourage us as a people to pursue friendship, and that gets to the very last one, which is very brief. That's the peril of popularity. People who are not content with God, they feel like they have to be somebody that God never made them to be. So notice what he says in verse 13 he says, "Better was a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish King who no longer knew how to take advice. For he went from prison to the throne though, in his own kingdom, he had been born poor." Now, what does that mean? It means this, is that this is somebody who has had a unexpected rise in popularity or power.

Somebody who was in prison and went to the throne like a Joseph, somebody who was poor, became rich. And then notice what he says, he goes, "I saw all the living who move about under the sun." And he goes on and he says, "He sees all the living under the sun, and he says along with that youth who was to stand in the King's place, there was no end of all the people, all of whom he led." Notice what he's talking about here. Maybe it was his own day when he was inaugurated king, or maybe he was looking at others. But this is what happens, says on the day that he came or on the day that somebody assumes power, says that all the people gather around and celebrate this person.

This happened to Solomon when David was transferring the kingdom, all the people came out in order to celebrate Solomon and say, "You're going to help us. You're going to save us. You're going to deliver us. You're going to be the one that we need." But here's the problem, the more people who celebrate you, the more risk you carry as a leader and becoming so proud that you don't take advice. So he goes on, which is the last verse in our text, and this is what he says, "Yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind." What does that mean? It means, after the day of inauguration, life happens, bad stuff happens to people.

Somebody has to be blamed and human nature is always to blame someone else. So all the people that once gathered at the palace in order to say, "Yay, Solomon, you're a King. You're our hero." Now, once life happens, they're like, "Get rid of Solomon. We need another hero." You see, ever since the fall, we choose others to blame, especially when their head is exposed due to leadership or fame. So let me encourage us in conclusion to look upward before we look outward. Let me just say this for two different kinds of people. First, for those of you who are aspiring to popularity or to leadership, I urge you to guard your heart. It is not the palace of peace that you might expect. People will clap one day, and then the next day, they'll talk about you in words with their friends and sometimes with you that are not that flattering.

But let me also talk to those who look to human beings to be the solution. All the people, that would gather before the palace to say, "This is our king, this is our functional savior." Let me encourage you to look first to God. You got a problem in your life, don't look to the president, to the mayor, to the governor, first look to God and then look to yourself. This is confession, repentance. "God, is there anything that I have done that

has contributed to the chaos.” And then look to others. There are times when leaders need to be replaced, but it is also true too often that we miss out on the possibility of growth in our own life, because our eyes are fixed on the wrong savior.

Only Jesus Christ will rule with perfection and so Providence, I urge you to orient your whole life around Jesus Christ for doing so will motivate justice and kindness and contentment and friendship and humility for his glory and for our good. So let me pray, father, in heaven, we thank you for your kindness to us. And I pray that you would use these words, the words that we find in Ecclesiastes and the rest of the scriptures, Lord to be the source of courage and strength that we need in days of adversity. I pray for the Providence family. God, I pray that you would bless us and keep us, make your face to shine upon us. Help us to be people who are awaiting the day of justice and yet pursuing justice for the oppressed here on the earth.

I pray that you would give us balance in our working so that we pursue friendship and rest. God, I pray that you would help us to see that one day we will be ruled by a king that we have not elected. In Jesus Christ, we will find hope, and righteousness, and justice, and equity, and peace forevermore. We pray that day comes, and we pray God that he would come soon. And so, as we sing to you now, Lord, and as we give, we pray that you would be honored as we respond in faith. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.



© 2020 Providence Baptist Church (Raleigh, NC)
Sermon transcripts may be used for preaching and teaching purposes, but may not be published or sold. While generally accurate, parts of this transcript may contain errors.
Providence reserves the right to correct and/or remove a transcript at any time.