

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

July 12, 2020

SPEAKER

Brian Frost

SERIES

Meaning(Less)

PART

8

TITLE

Looking To God In The Shadows

SCRIPTURE

Ecclesiastes 7:1-29



© 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Sermon transcripts may be used for preaching and teaching purposes, but may not be published or sold.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.

Yeah, can I get a tow?

Sure. What's your location?

Where did my money go? Nevermind.

So, you don't need our-

Well, it is great to see you Providence family, both in the room as well as for those of you who are at home. We're so thankful that you have also joined us. I pray that this time will be truly encouraging to all of us, all those who have walked up here, stood and looked out and saw faces. I can't tell you how really encouraging it is to see humanity in the room. I just need to take it in for a second, even though this is the second service, but it is great to see you. If you have a Bible with you, whether you're in this room or at home, if you would look with me at Ecclesiastes, chapter 7. This is a chapter that really requires tremendous effort to mine these treasures.

There's a value to preach through a book because if you don't preach through a book and you have to just pick passages that you think would be most encouraging and perhaps even easy for people to digest and understand and apply, most people would not preach Ecclesiastes, chapter 7. Okay? It's difficult. There's 29 verses and our goal is to honor the Lord and our hope is to finish all 29 verses, or at least give you some understanding of each one of them. But, I pray that it will be encouraging to you. I know that we need his help, so let me pray.

Father in Heaven, we look to you in faith and ask that you would do great things in our hearts, in our minds, that you would stir up curiosity, that you would cause us to pay attention. Would you help us to see what is written here is really for our good, and would you help us to be able to absorb the quantity that is there? We thank you for your love for us, for your spirit inside of us, for the Bible. We thank you that you have given us means to be able to know you and to know how to live in your world, and I pray, God, that you would give us grace now to understand more of it. We pray all of this in Jesus name, Amen.

Solomon, as you know, wrote this book and Solomon was the king over Israel and early in his reign, God came to Solomon and he said, "You can ask me anything you want." If you've been here these first six chapters, you know that Solomon looked around at all the things that he could ask for and he said, "You know what I really need, God? I need wisdom. This is your people and I need to know the difference between right and wrong, what is true and what is an error. I need wisdom." God was so pleased with him that he not only gave him wisdom but he gave him everything that he didn't ask for as well in terms of wealth and longevity of life and prosperity and blessing. He just blessed his life.

But in spite of all the blessing that Solomon received from God himself, the Bible tells us that Solomon turned his heart away from the Lord and as a result of that, his relationship with God was severed and there was a need deep within his heart for meaning and purpose, so Solomon for the rest of his life until the end went on this quest to find meaning and purpose, things that he lost in having a relationship with God. Ecclesiastes as a book, even though it's so perplexing, it's difficult to understand, it requires tremendous attention ... This sermon, there's going to be three major points. It's a lot of verses and it requires a tremendous amount of attention to be able to trace his argument.

For those that will give it that attention, I promise you this will be a blessing to you. If you don't, you're going to sit here and think, "When he's done?" That's how sermons work like this. But this is such a gift that we have Ecclesiastes and this is why. It's because it reveals the futility of his quest. And this is a gift because most of us are knocking and opening on doors right now, hoping to be satisfied by what is inside that door. We look at our life and we think we're in the darkness, and suddenly we see this door and there's light that's actually flowing through the little cracks and we think, "There must be hope. There must be purpose. There must be contentment. There must be good that I need that I must have that's on the other side of that door."

Ecclesiastes serves us, and this is how. When we're about to reach for the door handle, Solomon is coming out of the room saying, "I want you to know, it's not found in here. And, I have went through this room, searched every part of this room and unlike you, I've been able to search this room with unlimited resources. So, if you think it's about partying, I want you to know that I partied harder than anyone in the history of the world and had more resources to throw the coolest parties and I want you to know that's a dead end." So is construction, so is building utopian societies, so is parks and so is sex. He literally for six chapters, he just goes down the list and he says, "I want to serve you so much that you don't emulate and imitate the destruction that I brought upon myself."

But you have to remember Ecclesiastes was written at Solomon's later years of life. So, he's gone through a tremendous amount of season in his life to where not only does he have a ton of regret, but he's also grown in wisdom and is an older man just like many of you. Now he's Grandpa Solomon. If you have a grandma or a grandpa, there are those precious moments, and you may not know them to be precious until it's too late, but when you are sitting there and they're sitting there and suddenly they want to teach you some things that they've learned in life, they want to impart to you some of the lessons, some of which that you would emulate and some of which, in order to protect you from the harm that they've experienced, that they know that if you don't hear this lesson, you may experience that same harm.

Ecclesiastes 7 is Grandpa Solomon sitting down with humanity saying, "Let me tell you what I've learned." It is such a gift. It's going to be broken down, even though they're big chunks, into three central lessons. The first lesson he wants to teach us is the blessing of difficulty. Most of us, if we have a choice between easy and hard, we choose easy. We typically choose the path of least resistance, so sometimes we take that mentality into really important areas that are very difficult and if we choose ease over difficulty, sometimes we don't

grow in the most important ways and that's what he's going to do. He knows that the blessing of difficulty is counterintuitive, so what he's going to do is he's going to give us seven examples of how a difficult thing in life is better than an easy thing.

So, let's go through each one of them. The first is character. He says in Chapter 7:1, "A good name is better than precious ointment." The word ointment is the same word for perfume, and the word name is really important here. A good name. The word name is also translated as reputation or reputable, meaning that when people think of your name, they think of reputable characteristics. They think of integrity and being trustworthy. This is somebody that I can lean my life against and I'm not going to fall on my face. He's saying that this is a blessing and this is what Solomon is saying as an older man. He's saying, "You know what? It's really easy to focus on the externals that make you look so desirable. You can get a tan and you can have a cool car, and you can put perfume on and you can have the right clothes, and you can work on your abs so that everybody goes, 'Wow, that person's so desirable.'"

But he's saying, "Who cares how good you smell if everyone scoffs at the mention of your name?" Unlike perfume that is really easy to apply to your body ... It's like open it up, put it on. Hey, done ... a good name is really difficult to obtain. It requires integrity. It requires self-control, self-discipline, repentance when do the wrong thing. It's faithfulness in a million different areas of life that creates a reputation that people look and says, "You see that person right there? When I think of that person's name, I think of the most admirable characteristics in life."

Here's the deal, though. That kind of name is really hard and yet, it is better. It's more desirable to have a good name at the end than to have some externals that people can look through and say, "You know what? He's not driving that car anymore because now he's in a casket." What do people know and think when they think your name? That's what he's saying. He goes, "It's hard to work on the heart." Just like the Pharisees, you remember Jesus? He looked at the Pharisees and said, "You guys clean the outside of the dish and the cup but on the inside it says that you guys are absolutely messed up." So, I encourage you, and he would encourage you, the blessing of difficulty in choosing to work on the heart even more than the abs.

The second thing he talks about, his second example, is death. We think, "Death? This is just getting worse." That's what he says. He says, "A good name is better than precious ointment and the day of death is better than the day of birth." Death is terrible. Death is difficult. No one wants to talk or think about death. You see a casket, you see an urn, you see a grave site, that's not something that we love to think about and meditate upon. That's not something that we love to visit. It's hard. It's difficult. But for the Christian who has trusted in Jesus Christ and will receive eternal life, I want you to know that we will rejoice more in the day that we have died and entered Heaven than the day that we were born on the earth.

So he goes on, and he says, “Now, there’s something about thinking about death even while you’re on the earth that’s helpful to you.” And this is what he says ... Look what it says ... “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind and the living will lay it to heart.” Now, let’s highlight just a few words in these sentences, or in this sentence. First he goes, “It is better to go to the house of mourning ...” What’s the house of the mourning? Well, it’s a funeral. It’s better to go to a funeral than what? Than to go to the house of feasting. Well, that’s a party. He’s saying, “Look, I know that parties are more enjoyable. They’re easier, but there’s a blessing in the difficult and this is why.” He goes, “Because, or for, this is the end of all mankind.” You know what that means? One day, people are going to come to your funeral.

And the living, meaning while we are still alive, will lay it to heart. The word lay literally means to turn into. Isn’t it true that when we think about death, we want to turn away from it. We don’t want to think about it. We don’t want to think about preparing for that day because we don’t even want to think about that day. Solomon comes to us and he says, “It’s really important that you do so because funerals are more clarifying to life than parties.” You see, funerals are like plugging in destination to a mapping device. You put it in, there’s my funeral. It says, “You are here, and this is the day of your death.” Every time you think about that, every time you go to another funeral, you are confronted with the reality of your future and you think, “Okay, I’m on this line. Am I living the way that I want to live so that I’ll be remembered in the way that I want to be remembered?”

It’s so important, but yet none of us would choose ... If I send out an invitation and you didn’t know anybody there, and you said, “Hey, you can go to a funeral or a party?” What do you choose? Well, we’d choose a party. Solomon says, “But you would actually think more deeply about the most important things in life if you’re confronted with the reality of where one day you are going to go.” So, he goes on. He’s convinced that as an older man, that his grandkids are going to go, “Okay, Grandpa. He’s getting a little senile,” so he goes, “No, seriously. Let me reiterate.” He says, “Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face, the heart is made glad. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning but the hearts of fools is in the house of mirth.”

Do you know what that means? It means that we all go through sorrow. Everyone experiences sorrow on the earth. But the wise person, the wise person when they go through sorrow, they take stock of their life later making them glad. Maybe the gladness is only when you stand before God, but on that day, you’ll be glad that you took stock of your life. But you know what happens to the fool? The fool also feels sorrow, but the heart of the fool goes to the house of mirth. What’s the house of mirth? Well, that’s the party. That’s the brothel. That’s the porn site. That’s the club. That’s the bar. That’s the bottle. Let’s just laugh it off and as a result of that, there’s no gladness in the end.

Death is difficult. Funerals are difficult. “But in someways,” Solomon says, “there’s a blessing to the difficulty.” The third example that he gives is correction. How many here love to be rebuked? Nobody. Nobody loves to be rebuked, but notice what he says, “It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools.” What he’s saying is this, as the wise person surrounds himself or herself with wise friends who occasionally, through love and courage, rebuke us if they see us going off course, but a fool, they only want to hear their friends singing the song of fools. Now, what’s a song of fool? What is that? It’s simply to gather around myself the people that are going to support my folly. It’s having a group of friends who say to you, “If your heart says yes, then it’s yes no matter who says no, including God himself.”

Then he wants to make sure we get it, so in Verse 6, he says, “For as the crackling of thorns under a potential, so is the laughter of the fools and this also is vanity.” Some of you, you don’t do campfires but if you do campfires, this is what you know. If you have wood, you split wood, you put wood on it, it’s going to crack a little bit because there’s oxygen within the wood. But then what happens is it burns long and slow. It provides warmth and heat and refinement for a long period of time. But, it’s more fun to put thorns in. You know why? Because you throw some thorns, and you throw them into the fire and you know what happens? Oh, it’s like a little firework show. They pop and they burn real fast, but then they’re gone.

This is what he’s saying. He goes, “Just as the thorns crackle and burn and then they’re gone, so the song of fools bring no lasting warmth or light or refinement to our lives.” But, you know what? It’s really hard to have friends who correct you. It’s easier to have a bunch of fools around you that just say that you’re the best no matter what you do. Solomon says, “In this case, the more difficult is the more gratifying. It’s the more helpful.” He goes on, and he wants to talk about faithfulness. Verse 7, he says, “Surely oppression drives the wise into madness and a bribe corrupts the heart.” What he’s saying is this, there will be times, there will be times in life when the weight of life is so heavy that you will be tempted to do one of two things; to either despair life, meaning take your wisdom and say, “Oh, it’s nothing,” or there will be times when you will be tempted to actually do what you know is wrong, like a bribe, in order to make things right.

Both despair and doing the wrong thing are easier than faithfulness, but both will drain vitality and joy from your heart. So, Grandpa Solomon, he says, “Look, when those moments come, and you’re on the verge of either despair or on the verge of taking a bribe or doing something you know is jeopardizing your own integrity, but man, it might just help me do this one little thing. Then, I’ll be faithful after that.” He says, “Just be faithful. It’s harder. It’s so much harder, but it’s so much better.”

Then he goes to the next one, which is endurance. He says, “Better is the end of the thing than it’s beginning, and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.” Now, what does that mean? The end is better than the beginning, and then he talks about proud people and patient people. How do you put these together? Well, think about it like this. Proud people can start a marathon. “Oh, it’s just 26 miles. Who cares. I don’t even have to train. I’ll just go out there, I’ll just run a marathon.” Proud people can start a marathon. Patient people finish them. Not only that, the starting line is fun. In fact, if you’ve ever been to a marathon, it’s really

fun. It's like a festival at the starting line. Everybody's joyful. They wear costumes. They got clown noses on. All kinds of stuff happens at the starting line.

And then all of a sudden people run 26 miles. What he's saying is this, "The start is fun but the finish line is fulfilling." Look at this. Do you see these people? This is the Boston Marathon 2019. You see this face. I don't know if you can see this face. This is like, "I'm the champion of the world." And this person, that's what you do when you win a race. There's four people right in front of her who are all going to beat her, and you know what's crazy? Three hours and 38 minutes. You look it up and the winner finished in two hours and seven minutes. So the winner has been done with this race for an hour and a half. They've already cleaned up, showered up. They're back at the restaurant. The race is over. Why do they look they have accomplished something? Because they finished something hard. They finished something hard.

So what keeps us from finishing things that are hard? Now you know you have a list of things you've not finished, right? Some people, they don't finish marriage because it's hard. Some people, they don't finish parenting because it's hard. Some people don't finish cabinets because it's hard. There's all kinds of things that we start and we're like, "Man, this is hard. Let me get out." And, we miss out on the gratification of finishing. So he says, "Let me tell you two reasons why people miss out. First is because of anger." Verse 9, "Be not quick in your spirit to become angry for anger lodges in the heart of fools." I've done this before. I've started a project and then all of a sudden I get to the place where I either don't have the tool or the knowledge to know how to do it and I get angry and I just quit and I'm never able to enjoy the gratification of finishing.

Sometimes it's anger. Sometimes it's focus. In verse 10, this is what he says, "Say not, 'Why were the former days better than these?' For it is not from wisdom that you ask this." Do you know what that means? It means that every single one of us, we get to unsettling times in life. It leads us to look back to the good old days, and the reason we look back to the good old days is because we forgot how unsettling the good old days were when we were in them. The Israelites in the Bible, 400 years they're slaves in Egypt. God delivers them. Three days out ... Three days out ... they come upon a problem and you know what they say? "Let's go back to Egypt where the food was free." Except you were slaves.

We do this through our whole life. We're in high school, we're not all that settled. We're like, "Man, college is going to be so great. When I get out of this, I'm going to get to college ..." When you get to college, you're like, "You know, high school, it was just so nice. All my friends were there." And then you get out of college and you're like, "Man, I got a job now. College was so fun. I had all that time I could just ..." We're never satisfied where we're at. Life happens when you're waiting to live. It's now. It is right now. You see we will not run ... Look what he's saying, "You're not going to run a straight line looking backwards." Endurance requires finishing. Finishing. Finishing is hard.

The next one is wisdom. Number six. The sixth illustration, wisdom. He says, verse 11 and 12, "Wisdom is good with an inheritance, an advantage to those who see the sun. For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it." What does that mean? It means this. Grandpa Solomon sits us down. He goes, "Look, I'm almost in need of a nap but let me get this in. Protect and pursue wisdom like you protect and pursue your money. For while wisdom and money can both protect you in different ways, only wisdom will preserve your soul by drawing you near to the Lord."

Let me tell you something. It is easier to earn a buck than to become a wise person. It's easier but it is better to be wise. It's better. So, we get to the last one. He brings up pain. "Consider the work of God who can make straight what he has made crooked." Do you know what that means? It means when we sinned against God in the garden, God cursed the earth with thorns and thistles and that's why it doesn't work for you. That's why you plant one thing and all of a sudden weeds grow up right next to it and choke it out. That's why you can work all day on a Friday only to make more work for you on Monday. There's this futility to life. There's pain to life and there's nothing you can do about it. That's just where you live. This is life, and here's what he says, "God cursed the earth after we sinned against God."

So then he goes on, "And in the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider God has made the one as well as the other so that man may not find out anything that will be after him." See what they're saying? They're saying that God almighty is the one that's made both. He is the one that makes pain. In other words, some of our sorrow is sent by God. And you know why he does it? He says at the very end, "So that we'll become dependent upon him." You remember the Apostle Paul? He has all these amazing experiences and God comes to him and he goes, "Look, I don't want you to become arrogant so this is what's going to happen. You're going to get a thorn in the side."

All of a sudden, he gets a thorn. We don't know what it is. Some people, "Oh, it's physical." Or, emotional, spiritual, social ailment. Something's happening to him and making him uncomfortable. So much so that he's like, "All right, God, look. You know that I'm in the whole mission thing. I'll go anywhere. I'll do anything for you. All I want to do is serve you with my life, but this thing, it hinders me so I'll tell you what. Why don't you take it away and ... If you take it away, I'm not going to revert back to whatever I was doing. It's mission, mission, mission. It's you. It's all about Jesus."

God says, "No, I'm going to leave it." It says, "Three times, I prayed, 'God, all I want to do is serve you.'" And God comes to him and he goes, "Look, this is what I want you to learn and that is that my grace is sufficient for you. If I take that away, then every time when you had it, and when you have it now, every time you feel it and it causes you to turn and look back to me, I don't want you to lose out on that. I want you to be dependent upon me." So, he gives these seven, and here's the application for us, I believe, and that is let's trust God by pursuing the fruit among the thorns. If you ever picked a blackberry, they've got these big bushes and they're all filled with thorns. Always the best ones, they're always hidden right behind those thorns. The thing is this,

if you pick blackberries, you're going to get scratched.

But, blackberries are really good. And this is what he said, "Things like correction and faithfulness, endurance, wisdom, pain, character, being reputable, having a name that you're proud of, living for the glory of God, they're all hard things. They're the blackberries. Reach through the difficulty and get them." Second lesson he wants to teach us is the burden or righteousness. This is verse 15-24. See every culture has some idea of what we have coined karma, and that is this idea that good visits good people and bad visits bad people. So we say things like, "You know what? He had it coming." That's what we mean. We say things like, "You know what? Of all the people in the world, how in the world could this person who's good and so kind get cancer?"

Without saying it, that's what we're saying is that we have this operating system that says, "This is how it should work. Bad should happen to bad people and good should happen to good people, and Solomon says, "I know that's out there." It was out there in his day as well, but let me tell you how this breaks down. The first way that it breaks down is he says, "You're all bad people." You're like, "No, he doesn't." Look. Look at verse 20-22. "Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins." You know what that means? All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, so if we want a system that says that bad things happen to bad people, good things happen to good people, that doesn't benefit us.

He goes, "I know you don't believe me, so let's work through a simple example." He goes, "Let's talk about how we curse one another." He goes, "Do not take to heart the things that people say lest you hear your servant cursing you." You know what that means? It means if we lived in a world of perfect karma, and we said, "You know what, man? There should be some perfect justice right now." What that means is this. Every time somebody curses me, all of a sudden their tongue falls to the ground. I'm like, "Yeah, I want to live in that world." Solomon goes, "Really? Have you ever cursed anyone with your tongue?" So he says, "All right, this is the first problem with it and that is that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But then there's another problem, and the other problem is that it's a broken system." Look what he says in verse 15, "In my life, I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evil doing."

All of us know this. You have some people and they shake their fists at God, and they're just absolutely wealthy and they live a forever long life, and you have somebody else who's on their knees and they have to bury their own kid. He goes, "This system is busted up." He goes, "So, what should we do about it?" Notice what he says ... This is humanity speaking. You ready? "Be not overly righteous and do not make yourself wise. Why should you destroy yourself?" Now, this is an amazing thing. There's a lot of people who are like, "Hey, I finally found a verse that works for me." Be not overly righteous. Look, he's not advising moderation and doing what's right. He's not saying, "Look, you want to cuss, just wait until you get out to the car and do all your cussing in the car." It's not what he's saying. He's not saying, "Look, you can punch your sister just one time a day. Only get drunk on Fridays. All the rest are moderation. Let's do this righteous ..." That's not what he's saying.

This is what he's saying. The key is in the verb make yourself. Make yourself, he's referring to self-righteousness. Self-righteousness is defining ourselves right by what we do and what we don't do based on comparison to other people. Anytime we look at other people, we can always find somebody that's worse than us. That's why you look at any news station, you're like, "I'm not that bad." Jesus wanted to talk about self-righteousness because he knew that it was a dead end, so in Luke 18 he tells a parable and he says, "Two guys go to church ..." This is a paraphrase, by the way. He goes, "There's this super hired holy man and then there's this wicked tax collector. This holy man, he sits in the front. He's all proud and he says, 'God, I want you to know that I know that you're proud of me. It's a good thing I'm on your team.'" He actually says, "I am so thankful that I am not wicked like this awful tax collector in the back of the church."

And then he says ... This is Jesus ... He says, "But the man in the back, the tax collector, he wouldn't even look up. He'd just beat his chest and he kept saying, 'God, would you have mercy upon me, a sinner.'" Jesus says, "I want you to know something. He says it was this man who went home justified and not this man." The word justified means to be made righteous, to be declared righteous. This is when God looks at you and he says, "You are now right with me. Your guilt is taken away." So, he says, "I want you to know that if you try to make yourself that kind of righteous, it's a dead end. So much so ..." Notice what it says in this verse. He says, "Self-righteousness, why should you destroy yourself?" You pursue your own righteousness and what you're going to do is destroy yourself.

Well some people say, "I don't want to do that so I'm going to do the opposite." So he says, "Well, that's a dead end, too." Watch. Verse 17, "Be not overly wicked. Neither be a fool. Why should you die before your time." In other words, if you give yourself over to full wickedness and folly, you may die prematurely because you do stupid things. So he says, "Well, what should we do then?" Verse 18 and 19, "It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, for the one who fears God ..." The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God, "... shall come out from both of these." Both of what? Self-righteousness and a life of wickedness and folly. Being really bad and being really good. This is the dilemma that most people can not grasp in the Gospel. Your righteousness has nothing to do with you.

Your worst day, your best day. It doesn't contribute anything with God. You're a sinner and so am I. He says, "The one who fears God will avoid this. The wisdom gives strength to the wise man even more than ten rulers who are in the city." Then he goes to verse 23 and 24 and he goes, "You know what?" This is all before Jesus Christ came to the earth so he's still perplexed about how God's going to work this out and this is what he says, "All this I have tested by wisdom." He goes, "I'm looking at self-righteousness doesn't work, and evil and wickedness doesn't work. I said, 'I will be wise,' but it was far from me. That which has been is far off and deep, very deep; who can find it out?" You see what he's saying?

There's no solution under the sun. There's no hope. There's no salvation. There's no savior under the sun. Somebody must come from beyond the sun, under the sun, in order to rescue us and this is the Gospel. This is the rest of the Bible. This is the rest of the Bible that says that God in love, he saw our predicament and he said, "I'm going to send my own son," and Jesus Christ came. He came as a man and he lived on this earth, and he never sinned. And yet, he went to a cross and there he paid for our sin. He was buried in a grave, and then because he's the son of God who has authority over life, evil, death and everything else, he rose from the dead. When he rose from the dead, he extended an invitation to you and to me, and it's this.

"If you put your faith and trust in me, I will take your sin and I will give you my perfect righteousness." This is the Gospel. There is no other. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, since we've been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." You see, being given perfect righteousness by grace is the good news of Christianity. So friends, let me encourage you to trust Christ and be made righteous. You do this by admitting to God that you're a sinner, by putting your faith and trust in him and confessing to this Lord of your life, and the Bible says that he will make you righteous. That this dilemma, this burden of righteousness, it's all fixed because the perfect one gives you his righteousness. He declares you justified.

The last thing before we take the Lord's Supper is a doozy, so hold on. It's the beauty of walking with God. You say, "Well, that should be easy." We got to walk through a minefield to get there. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. On the sixth day, he created humanity. He created the man, and for a period of time, the man was on the earth without the woman. His name was Adam. Suddenly, Eve was created by God and when Adam set his eyes upon Eve ... This is a person who's never sinned so he has a perfect relationship with God ... all the meeting and purpose, it's already filling his heart so he looks at Eve and all of a sudden he begins singing a song. He's singing poetry. He goes, "At last, bone of bones and flesh of my flesh." He's just so mesmerized the goodness of God to give a woman to the earth. Not only to him, but to humanity to be the mother of all.

It's an absolute gift, and then they sin against God's only command in the garden and everything broke. Fast forward hundreds of years, and this is where we get to Solomon, and this is what he says. He goes, "I turn my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the scheme of things, and to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is madness." In other words, he goes, "I've giving myself to figure out why this place is so busted up." He says something that's stunning. Look what he says next, "And I find something more better than death." You're like, "Oh, this is going to be bad. What is it?"

Oh, it's a woman. Now, if you're a woman here, you're like, "Hey, back off." This was written by a man ... I'm going to explain to you in just a moment. You're going to be like, "Oh, I think I get it now." But just before I read, just think of the difference now. Before sin, a man looks at woman and says one of the greatest gifts in the history of the world, and now all of a sudden through all this brokenness, another man can look at women and say, "You know what's worse than death? It's these women." This is the brokenness of the world. "The woman whose heart is ..." I know you all are like, "Easy." Just stay with me. I promise we're almost done, and

it gets really good here in a just a second, okay?

“The woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her.” Don’t forget, here’s the clue, as a young man, Solomon, he turned away from God and when he turned away from God, the oxygen tube to his soul was cut off. So, he had to run to something in order to satisfy him and he ran to money and to women. He decided to get married so he got married to one wife. She was great for a week and he was like, “You know? My heart’s still not satisfied so I think I just need another one.” So, he got two. That was a fun week. “My heart’s not satisfied.” So, he gets to 700, but he had this thing for sex like it was his idol. So, he wasn’t satisfied. He turned to sexuality and so he’s like, “700 wives walking around the house, that’s not enough.”

So you know what he did? He gets 300 concubines. You know what a concubine is? It’s a naked supermodel girlfriend. There’s 1000 women walking around his house. Most of the women were pagan, which took his heart further from the Lord, but listen, every one of them was an idol to him that he added to his life and household in order to replace what he lost in God. So, notice what he says, verse 27 and 28, “Behold, this is what I found, says the preacher while adding one thing to another to find the scheme to things, which my soul has sought repeatedly but I have not found ...” Now, watch this, “One man among a thousand I have found, but a women among all these I have not found.”

You’re like, “Should I be angry with him?” No, you should pity such a man and this is why. All the people in his life, he found one friend and it happened to be a man, but among the 1000 women walking around his house, he had no respect or connection. You see, an unsatisfied soul, a soul that is not connected to Christ, that’s not connected to God, if they direct their attention towards sexuality what happens is the eyes begin to see a body void of a soul. This is the power of pornography. This is why it’s such a horrible idol is that people can look at a human body and they see it void of a soul. So that body is objectified. It’s just there for me. It’s just there for my pleasure, and you know what happens in time? We begin to resent ... Those who pour their life into pornography, it’s amazing. They go to it every day and yet they hate it every day.

You see, friends, everybody will soon lament their idol. Whatever yours is, and you say, “Oh, this is really hard on the women.” If this was written by a woman ... In fact, we don’t have to say it that way. Let me say it this way. How many of you have watched somebody, you know somebody in their life and they literally go from man to man, and every one of those men, they’d hurt them, objectify them, take something from them and eventually the woman gets to the place where they say, “You know what? I’m sick of men. I hate men.” This is exactly what Solomon’s saying. “I look at all these women and now I resent them all. They all live in my house and eat my food, and I have no connection to any of them. No respect for any of them.” You know why? Because he turned them into an idol.

So he concludes ... Don't forget, this is Grandpa Solomon. He's trying to teach us something ... He goes, "Now look at this. This is important. See, this alone I found ..." What he's saying is don't emulate. Learn. "... that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes." You know what that means? It means life was meant to be lived upright. Upright is straight. It's a straight line between us and God. God, you're there, I'm here, relationship with you. There's tons of blessings in my life and because I have a relationship with you, my heart is satisfied in you. These things become blessings and not idols. But, you cut off your relationship with Christ and you run after many schemes. Maybe these people, maybe another wife, maybe this, maybe this, maybe this. He says, "You will wreck your life."

The better way is to find your rest in God. Jesus said, he was on the earth and he said, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." So Providence family, let's trust Christ's ability to satisfy our soul. I know some of it, you just don't believe that, and that's why I said trust. You need to trust. Christ said, "I can satisfy your soul." He said he can do it. You got to trust him. You've got to run to him. You got to keep running to him. And one of the gifts that he's given us to run to him, to remind ourselves that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is everything is the Lord's Supper, which we're going to do in just a moment.

For those of you who have never trusted Christ, we encourage you to do just what the Bible says and that is to let these things pass. But if you know Christ, the Savior and Lord, then we invite you to take them. Hopefully when you came into this room, or if you're at home, hopefully you have those things near you, but what we want to do even before we take the Lord's Supper is he tells us this. He goes, "Before you ever do this, you need to confess your sin to God." So right where you're at right now, just take a moment. If there's anything that you've heard from this text or anything you even knew when you came in these doors that you know there's sin in your life and you need to confess it to him, go ahead and confess that to him so that you can take this with a clear conscience.

We ask God that you would do just what you promised, that if we confess our sin, your faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

So, on the night that Jesus was betrayed, he took bread ... You've got your little cup, you can go ahead and open those up, but he took bread, he broke it and he gave thanks to his Father, to God, and he began talking about how that bread was symbolic of his own body that was soon to be broken on a cross so that we could have a relationship with him. So all these years later, here we are, a people who are believing in Jesus. So, I invite you that if you know Christ, the Savior and Lord, and have a relationship with God the Father because of it, you take and eat in remembrance of him.

Then he had a cup in hand, and inside that cup was liquid that looked just like blood. It was wine. He began talking about how it was symbolic of his blood that would be shed for the forgiveness of sins, how he was going to die on a cross and inaugurate a new covenant to not only cover our sin but to take our sin forever from us. It's a blessing to have your sins forgiven, isn't it? For those of you that are here and you know the joy of a clear conscience that's made possible only because of the blood of Jesus Christ, then take and drink in remembrance of him.

So Providence, I want to ask you to go ahead and stand with me, with us, and we're going to sing a song and as we do, I just want to encourage you with this central truth. I know you're chasing a lot of things in life, and I would just make an appeal once again to you today to find your satisfaction in Jesus. So, let's sing together.



© 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.