

A BIBLE STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

Theme: Solomon and Jesus,
Both Sons of David, say:
“Fear God and keep his commandments,
For this is the whole duty of man!”

Trinity Lutheran Church- Norman, Oklahoma
Pastor David Nehrenz Date: 11-15-15 Lesson: 10



A. TEXT (Chapter 10)

(1) Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a stench; so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor. (2) A wise man's heart inclines him to the right, but a fool's heart to the left. (3) Even when the fool walks on the road, he lacks sense, and he says to everyone that he is a fool.

(4) If the anger of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your place, for calmness will lay great offenses to rest. (5) There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were an error proceeding from the ruler: (6) folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place. (7) I have seen slaves on horses, and princes walking on the ground like slaves.

(8) He who digs a pit will fall into it, and a serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall. (9) He who quarries stones is hurt by them, and he who splits logs is endangered by them. (10) If the iron is blunt, and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength, but wisdom helps one to succeed. (11) If the serpent bites before it is charmed, there is no advantage to the charmer.

(12) The words of a wise man's mouth win him favor, but the lips of a fool consume him. (13) The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness, and the end of his talk is evil madness. (14) A fool multiplies words, though no man knows what is to be, and who can tell him what will be after him? (15) The toil of a fool wearies him, for he does not know the way to the city.

(16) Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, and your princes feast in the morning! (17) Happy are you, O land, when your king is the son of the nobility, and your princes feast at the proper time, for strength, and not for drunkenness!

(18) Through sloth the roof sinks in, and through indolence the house leaks.

(19) Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life, and money answers everything.

(20) Even in your thought, do not curse the king, nor in your bedroom curse the rich, for a bird of the air will carry your voice, or some winged creature tell the matter.

STUDY NOTES:

1. A little bit of folly – (2 Ki 20:12-19)
2. To the right or to the left – to the right or to the wrong (Gen 48:13-20)
3. Words from a wise man's mouth (Prov. ch. 15) Keep in mind that in a society in which most people could not read, you would have to go to a renowned wise man, ask him questions, and then remember what he said, without writing it down. As a result, in the ancient world, people's minds were so well trained that they could remember long speeches and sayings and stories after hearing them one time. Many of the sayings of Jesus would have been remembered this way. People would travel a very long distance to hear a wise man speak.
4. Some servants who became kings were usurpers and up-starts who were vicious in taking down a proper king and then bringing ruin on the kingdom (2 Ki 15:8-25; Hos 7:3-7)

5. Do not leave your place at the table when the king is angry, because it may imply your guilt. Stay calm and ride out the storm as best you can (**1 Pet 2:13-25**)

6. Saying that “money answers everything” shows that people have always spoken about money like that. We say, “Money will buy you anything,” or “Money talks,” or “Show me the money.” It is a wry comment on corrupt human values, “Every man can be bought,” or “Everyone has his price.”

(Mt 6:24; 21:12; 27:1-8; 28:12-15; Mk 12:41-44; Lk 3:14; 16:9,13,14; Acts 8:18-20; 17:9; 24:26; 1 Tim 3:3; 6:10; 2 Tim 3:2; Heb 13:5)

7. “Even in your thought, do not curse the king, nor in your bedroom curse the rich, for a bird of the air will carry your voice, or some winged creature tell the matter.”

A NEHRENZ VIGNETTE:

When we were children in Lakewood, Ohio, we grew up in family of 10, with mom and dad and 8 kids. The houses on our street, Elmwood Ave., were built close together with big front porches. We knew all our neighbors and we could hear what was going on in other people’s houses if we listened carefully. Around the table, at the end of dinner, my father would hold forth with pithy words of wisdom. Once he said exactly this saying in his own words, “Don’t say bad things about another person, because a bird will be at your window and hear what you said. Then the bird will fly to that man’s house and window and tell him what you said about him! Then you will have real trouble!” Since our dining room had three windows that were open to let in fresh air (we had no AC), as kids we would always be looking out the windows to try and see that bird!

8. Jesus calls us to live a life radically different from the world - speaking well of others, blessing those who curse us and loving our enemies. So the greater than Solomon, Jesus, adds to wisdom by being the Son of God who took on our human flesh and is HIMSELF – WISDOM INCARNATE – WISDOM IN THE FLESH. So the more we read God’s Word and the more we get to know our Lord Jesus, his words of wisdom and life fill us and spill out into the lives of other people. (**Mt 5:14-16; Lk 6:27-38; Rom 12:14-21**)

Luther’s Works on ch. 10

“This, too, is a proverbial saying. It means: A wise man has control over his heart. If he sees people acting foolishly and refusing to listen, he can temporarily refrain from giving advice. He is able to make use of his wisdom according to the place and the person, on the basis of his seeing that his advice will be neglected on the right or on the left.

But a fool does not have control over his heart, and so he makes up his mind to break things up just because he feels like it. It is a great thing to be able to control and moderate one’s heart, something that no one has ever done or can ever do unless he knows the world and respects the judgment of God.

This is what happens to fools, who want to give the appearance of being wise and who regard everyone else except themselves as foolish: whether they are beginning or concluding, their entire speech is sheer foolishness. The more a fool wants to appear wise, the more foolish he is; and yet he prevails over the wise man and consumes the best of counsels.

So the Pharisees prevailed over Christ, the best of teachers, and the Jews and false apostles over the apostles. The Arians consumed the good teachers. Today, too, we are preaching Christ, but the heretical persecutors come along and consume us. But let us await greater things to come, and meanwhile let us count it a gain that we still retain some good things and that there are still some who retain the correct doctrine.”

LIFE APPLICATION:

1. “He who digs a pit will fall into it.”

How is it that men lay traps for other people and then fall into it themselves?

2. “Through sloth the roof sinks in, and through indolence the house leaks” Where do we see laziness today?
3. “Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life” In what ways does this exalt the simple things of life?
4. “Money answers everything...” But list the things of God, which money cannot buy...