

Enjoyment from God
Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14, 2:18-26
July 31, 2022

How many people here like to enjoy themselves? We all do. We go on vacations and take time off to enjoy our time with others or even just to do things by ourselves the we like to do. It is good to disrupt the day to day grind and get away from it for a little while to rest and enjoy what this world has to offer.

Solomon was thinking about enjoyment even in his work. We think of him as the wisest man that ever lived besides Jesus. He asked for wisdom on how to rule the people of God and God not only gave him an ordinary wisdom but a wisdom that was seen by the world as the greatest wisdom anyone had ever seen. So wise, wisdom to do all that he did and yet, here in the passage from Ecclesiastes, he uses the word vanity.

Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity, is how Solomon begins the text for today. Vanity. What is the definition? Merriam-Webster says it means something is empty or useless. Solomon is complaining that using all his wisdom, the wisdom God gave him, is only benefiting someone else, someone he may not even know. What use is that?

He has done the work and someone else gets to enjoy it. You may be thinking too of things you have done in your lives where others are enjoying it. It is one thing to have done something and then give it to someone to enjoy because you want to, but what about when you have no choice or direction in the matter? That is a different story.

Today, we make plans for who will enjoy our labors when we die. We have wills and other directives to let others know our wishes when we die. The law is even on our side in this IF we have a will or other directives that are recognized by the Law.

Solomon describes how those who trust in the Lord will benefit by all this. For unbelievers though, Solomon seems to say that those who don't know the Lord will be the ones who will do a lot of work only to have believers benefit.

We might be thinking that is OK. Why shouldn't the Lord bless believers that way? But Solomon is thinking of his situation. He is reviewing his life. Yes, he was blessed, beyond measure, but what was going to happen to all that he had accumulated?

How much time and effort do we take to deal with what happens after we die? We want to see things passed down to our children and grandchildren. We want to know who is going to get things that we have so that others will benefit from our life's work.

Many want to be remembered for this life and what they have done. Yes, they want to enjoy this life while they are here but then what, what do people have once they die?

You know what awaits you or at least you know it will be better than anything we could experience here. We look forward to no more pain and suffering, no more hunger or thirst, no excess heat or cold. We are promised a new heaven and earth which to my way of thinking will be like the first, perfect heaven and earth with the potential to sin, not there.

We look forward to that but what about what we leave behind? That is Solomon's point. Why work so hard to find enjoyment? So many say, "I just want to be happy or I just want others to be happy, enjoy life." Yet, is that what we should be thinking about, our being able to use what God has blessed us with?

Solomon puts it this way: Ecc. 2:24-25 There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

This is what we know as believers. Apart from God, what do people have? Ours is anchored in the Lord, theirs, in themselves and their ability so when that runs out, what next?

Yes, too many times we work in this life only to be thinking of this life. We want the enjoyment of work and of other activities and yet if we do them outside of seeing the Lord in it all, are we any different than those who don't know Him?

Solomon could see, that without the Lord in all this, then it is vanity. What good is this life without the Lord? It is no life at all.

Solomon saw that the Lord is the one who was responsible for any enjoyment he had, even in his work, which for most of us, it would be work that we would have a hard time contemplating let alone bringing about on our own. No, as Solomon mused, he had done so much and yet what did it all mean as he lived out his short life here and his life to come?

We think of our work here in this life. Yes, we find enjoyment when as some have said, “a plan comes together”. Yet, when compared to another plan, ours pale in comparison.

When Adam and Eve failed in the garden, they had to live their lives knowing it was them that caused sin to enter into the world. They had experienced what it was to live life before sin. Did they tell that to their children, their children’s children and maybe even to the child who would become the grandfather of Noah?

They were promised a Son, born of a woman who would set things right. They didn’t see it with their own eyes at the time, they died with the promise still in their ears, yet knew the Lord would keep His promise. It would be few thousand years before the promise would come to fruition though.

We see the promise throughout the Old Testament. The prophets pointed to Jesus, especially the prophet Isaiah but we can point to others as well, especially when we celebrate the coming of Jesus at Christmas time.

Jesus was promised to Adam and Eve but didn’t show up until just the right time for God. We can conjecture as to how this time was the right time but at the right time for God, He entered the world.

We may wonder if it was enjoyable for Jesus to come to this earth. The writer to the Hebrews wrote this in the 12th chapter:12:1-2 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

What was that joy that was set before Him as he hung on that cross, enduring the pain of the crucifixion? He had in mind joy though. Here He was suffering for your and my sins and yet looking forward to joy.

I know it isn’t the same thing but think of a woman as she endures the birth of a child. Yes, while going through it, there may be all sorts of pain and there may seem to be no joy in this at all and yet, what is there once the little child is in her arms, nursing at her breast? Is there joy? Yes, joy. Then there is enjoyment as the child grows and matures, surpassing all the challenges from crawling, speaking, walking, putting sentences together, graduating, getting married, providing grandchildren and the like.

Yes, so much enjoyment over time, once the child is born. There is that expectation of what is coming that brings joy. Jesus had that because it was a promise

fulfilled by God to His creation of His coming and doing what it would take to bring about that relationship He had looked forward to.

He enjoys His creation, you and I. He wants the best for us and for all of His creation even though so many times it looks like we don't think what we are going through is the best for us.

Just like Adam and Eve thought things could be better if they disobeyed God, they found out things could get amazingly worse. They sinned and brought about a world that would one day have to be destroyed first by water and then in the end by fire, to make way for a new heaven and earth.

We sin but with less consequences. Yes, it affects us and others but not the whole world. Yes, we sin but knowing we can go to Jesus with those sins and He will forgive them. He is like a good father who loves us so much he wants the best for us even if he may have to discipline us.

We know the love of Jesus for us. He went to that cross for us. He suffered there where we should have been the ones suffering, paying the price that we should have paid for, only to have Jesus, not only pay for our sins in full but then rise again from the dead being the first of many who will rise on the last day.

We have been blessed by His work that He found satisfaction in as He fulfilled the promise of the Son to come who would take on sin and win. Like a hard job that is well done, Jesus was told by God the Father that it pleased God the Father that the Son came to do what He came to do, knowing He would fulfill what He came to do.

The Lord has us here at this time. He wants us to enjoy this life that He provides for us but ours is not to look to this life but to the life to come as Paul wrote to the church at Colosae: 3:1-4 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

That is to be the focus on our enjoyment. This life is short, and even though there are many things to enjoy here from our toil, if it were not for the joy to come, then what would all this really be worth?

Solomon was thinking of what he had accomplished and knew how hard it was to accomplish. He knew though but for the Lord, his life would have been very different.

He knew that it was only through the Lord that any work could provide the Lord's type of enjoyment for himself and for all who look the Lord forever.