

Wisdom

January 31, 2016

Ecclesiastes

Turn to Ecclesiastes chapter 2

Idol: A person or thing other than God we cling to for significance and satisfaction.

So this morning we will tackle the first idol: Wisdom

- Wisdom in the Bible = skillful living
 - o You know how to make it through life well
 - o How to make good decisions that lead to good outcomes

- In Ecclesiastes Solomon uses the words “wisdom” and “knowledge” synonymously
 - o And in our culture we would add the words “intelligence” and “education”

- Key is to understand that by wisdom and knowledge
 - o not just talking about knowing facts
 - o = our ability to use facts to our advantage

This is an idol that almost everyone in our culture worships. Our culture believes that education is the way to solve all our problems and make our world better. Is wisdom the silver bullet that can fix everything?

Start with the good news...

Wisdom is a great tool

3 Reasons

1) Helps us avoid pain – Read Ecclesiastes 2:13-14a

- o wisdom is better than foolishness as light is better than darkness
- o point: wisdom, like light, helps you avoid pain
- o So in life wisdom helps us avoid some of the pain that foolishness brings
- o Wisdom can save us from physical, financial, relational pain.

2) Helps us build wealth – *Read Ecclesiastes 2:26*

- wisdom usually leads to greater prosperity
 - the fool ends up giving his wealth to the wise man
 - not a guaranteed rule, but often true
- Get an education, save, avoids foolish expenditures, listen to wise council...
 - You will probably end up much wealthier than if you don't
- Down to earth example: *Read Ecclesiastes 10:10*
 - “work smarter, not harder.”
 - Use your mind to innovate, create, solve problems, and you’ll be successful

3) Helps us stay alive – *Read Ecclesiastes 7:12*

- Wisdom helps you avoid foolish choices that could shorten your life

So wisdom, education, intelligence – an incredible tool!!

- Students STAY IN SCHOOL... even though this sermon is about to take turn for worst!
- We SHOULD all become wise and intelligent and be a life-long learners

Wisdom is a great tool, but a lousy god

- Wisdom is NOT that silver bullet that will fix our world and give us meaning and satisfaction
 - If you trust in your wisdom to make your life work... you will be disappointed

Here’s why... 4 reasons

1) Wisdom is limited

- *Read Ecclesiastes 7:23-24*
 - Even the wisest people will never unravel all the mysteries of life
 - Solomon was the wisest man to ever live – if he can’t, we can’t!
- **Can’t decipher all of life’s mysteries... or fix all of life’s problems... *Read Ecclesiastes 1:13-15***
 - no matter how wise you become you’ll never solve life’s deepest problems
- So wisdom is good, but it is limited

2) **Wisdom is corruptible** – *Read Ecclesiastes 2:8-9*

- *Read Deuteronomy 17:17*
- **So when Solomon says “my wisdom stood by me” = proof wisdom can be corrupted**
 - Rather than preventing sin, his wisdom excused his sin
- *Read Ecclesiastes 2:1*
- **Before we judge Solomon – recognize we do the same thing!**
 - Use our God-given intelligence to come up with reasons why it’s ok to sin
- Wisdom can excuse any sin because our wisdom is corruptible

3) **Wisdom cannot eliminate pain** – *Read Ecclesiastes 1:18*

- Flip side of what we studied earlier!
 - Wisdom can help you avoid some types of pain in this life...
 - But it can actually increase other forms of suffering!
- The more we know, the more pain and suffering we see

4) **Wisdom cannot overcome death** – *Read Ecclesiastes 2:14-16*

- Wisdom can’t prevent death – the wise and foolish both die - guaranteed
- And after you die... the wise and foolish alike are forgotten

Wisdom is a great tool in life... but a lousy god

- So if you make wisdom an idol - worship it, trust it to make life work, find significance in it – then you will be disappointed

Your intellect /wisdom / knowledge / education are great tools to help you navigate life well. But lousy gods that will leave you broken, empty, and dissatisfied if you live for them.

Practical Q: How do we grow wisdom without worshipping wisdom?

Read Ecclesiastes 12:11-12

- **Good news:** Wisdom is a goad that drives us in the right direction
- **Bad news:** But if we live for wisdom, it will leave us “weary” and empty inside

So here’s the solution... *Read Ecclesiastes 12:13-14*

Make your first priority to Trust and Obey the One Beyond the Sun

- We need to understand that in God’s economy:
 - o Trust and obedience are more important than wisdom or intellect
- Who is first in the kingdom of God?
 - o The PhD with a Nobel Prize who occasionally gives God a Sunday
 - o Or the HS dropout who trusts God deeply and obeys God fully
- The second – because what God values most is not intellect - it’s trust and obedience

1) Trust the One beyond the sun – *Read 1 Corinthians 1:19-25*

- o The world worships wisdom / intelligence / education
- o FOOLISH! Doomed if you believe your intellect will save you from suffering and death
- o The only way to find salvation is to embrace the foolishness of the cross
 - Foolish to the world because it begins with an admission of failure
 - That’s not something human wisdom will ever accept - it’s humiliating!
 - But that’s how salvation begins... admit you failed... turn to God to save
- o If your intellect is keeping you from believing in Jesus, Bible, God...
 - Please come talk to me – I’ve wrestled with all the same doubts
 - I plead with you to see that your intellect is a false god – will leave you empty
- o True wisdom begins with faith in Jesus... and then continues with obedience...

2) Obey the One beyond the sun – *Read James 3:13*

- How different is this wisdom than Solomon’s!
 - o Displays itself not with wealth or worldly success... but good and gentle behavior
 - o = behavior that obeys God’s Word
- And notice – James gives us no caveats
 - o Obey... unless it seems unreasonable...
 - o Obey... unless you know better
 - o Obey... unless you’ll look like a fool or a bigot
- No... OBEY... just obey.

So, I ask you... are you obeying God in every area of life? Or have you made excuses for disobedience? If so... it’s time to repent. Admit sin is inexcusable, and commit to obey.