

At the start of the Reformation of the Church in Scotland in 1557, John Knox wrote to his congregation before going into exile and said,

“You are bishops and kings; your wife, children, servants, and family are your bishopric and charge. Of you it shall be required how carefully and diligently you have instructed them in God’s true knowledge . . .

And therefore I say, you must make them partakers in, exhorting, and in making common prayers, which I would in every house were used once a day at least.”

Let's Worship God

12th-17th September 2016
Ecclesiastes



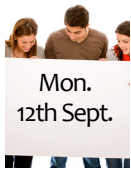
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Airdrie Reformed Presbyterian Church

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Family worship, a joy to be experienced every day!



Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn
Better is a handful of quietness
than two hands full of toil and
a striving after wind.
Ecclesiastes 4:6

reading Ecclesiastes 4:1-3 - Oppression

notes The preacher continues with his observations and analysis as he seeks for purpose for life upon the earth. He looks around him and sees the condition of those who are being oppressed; he sees their tears and is concerned because they have nobody to care for them! Concern for the oppressed is a common theme in the Old Testament: Oppression of people by a king Prov. 28:16, oppression of a servant by his master Deut. 24:14, oppression of the poor by the wealthy Prov. 22:16, oppression of the poor by those in authority Eccles. 5:8, oppression of the stranger, the widow, and the orphan Zech. 7:10, and oppression by deceit Hosea 12:7.

The preacher thought of the painful and tear-filled lives of the oppressed. In an 'under the sun' world - where this life is all there is, he came to the very sad conclusion that the dead are better off because they are delivered from the oppression they suffered in life, and even better off are those who have never been born! He could only say what he did because he had no certain knowledge of the world to come. The puritan John Trapp, who was famous for his very quirky sayings makes the following comment, 'Men, like silly fishes, see one another caught and jerked out of the pond of life but they see not, alas! the fire and the pan into which they are cast that die in their sins.'

Unfortunately, there are many in this world who live without God and yet somehow believe that all the wrongs they suffered in this life will automatically be rectified in the next! It is, course true that God will execute just judgement for eternity, but the basis of judgement is on the relationship that a person has with the Lord Jesus Christ during their lifetime. Jesus himself said with regard to the one who betrayed him that 'it would be better for him if he had not been born'. Matt. 26:24.

- questions**
1. How should we view the oppressed?
 2. On what basis does God judge men?

**praise
pray**

- Ps.6:all
1. Give thanks for the salvation we have in Christ.
 2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
 - 3 Pray for family matters.



Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn
Better is a handful of quietness
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Ecclesiastes 4:6

reading Ecclesiastes 4:13-16 - Popularity

notes We have seen in this chapter the foolishness of selfishness and greed and the foolishness of isolation, the preacher now considers the foolishness of popularity. He had already made a very strong case for people not to isolate themselves and to seek the support of others, but now he wants to show that a person cannot rely absolutely on being popular with other people.

It may be that in the story the author now tells in verses 13-16, he had particular people in mind, or it may be that it was a made up story to illustrate the point he wanted to make. He tells us about a powerful king who had ruled for many years. However, this great king became foolish. His advisers warned him that the people did not like his laws. But the king would not listen to their advice. He was becoming very unpopular, but he would not recognise that fact. When the foolish king loses the support of the people, he is replaced by a new, young king, one who begun life in poverty and had even spent time in prison!

Although initially very popular, he too lost the support of the people and also became unpopular. His support had seemed very strong but, in reality, it was very weak. Just like the king he replaced it ended in failure. "All political lives, unless they are cut off in midstream at a happy juncture, end in failure, because that is the nature of politics and of human affairs." Enoch Powell.

What is true in politics is true in life. Many people whether in entertainment, sport, or any other field, who have enjoyed enormous popularity find that it is fleeting and transitory and to seek for such popularity - even on a very small scale is truly 'a chasing after the wind'.

King David who was at times a very popular king, realised that his security and safety did not come from the support of a fickle population, but on the sovereign God of heaven Psalm 62:1-2.

- questions**
1. What is the danger of popularity?
 2. What did David realise?

**praise
pray**

- Ps. 9:1-6
1. Pray for the preaching and hearing of God's Word tomorrow.
 2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
 - 3 Pray for family matters.



Fri.
16th Sept.

Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn
Better is a handful of quietness
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Ecclesiastes 4:6

reading 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 - A Three-Fold Cord

notes There are many ways in which the last phrase of verse 12 can be taken - 'a cord of three strands is not quickly broken'. In the immediate context it has to do with the strength that comes through unity and is reinforcing the teaching that the preacher had been giving in opposition to selfish isolation and as such makes a very strong point. There are however other ways in which this 'proverb' could be applied.

1. There have been those who see in this three-fold cord a useful illustration of the Trinity. Although this must never be used as a 'proof' text, it is nevertheless a useful way of trying to understand a very difficult and complex concept. Speaking of the unity of believers, John Gill makes the following comment, 'And if this is true of the united love and affections of saints, it must be much more so of the love of Father, Son, and Spirit; that threefold cord, with which the saints are drawn and held; and of which it may be said, that it not only is not quickly broken, but that it cannot be broken at all; and therefore those who are held by it are in the utmost safety'.

2. One of the most common applications of this 'proverb' is in Christian marriage. It was God who instituted marriage in the Garden of Eden and marriage between a man and a woman united not just in their love for one another, but also in their love for God is much more likely to flourish and prosper.

3. If the three-fold cord illustration is applicable to ordinary human relationships, how much more to the relationship that believers ought to have with one another, for there is a third person in the relationship - the Lord Jesus Christ. It is his presence in the relationship of believers that enables believers from different backgrounds, of different ages and with different interests to be bound together in an unbreakable bond.

questions
1. What does a three-fold cord teach us?
2. What do believers have in common?

praise pray
Ps. 8B:all
1. Pray that we would show godly love to each other.
2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
3. Pray for family matters.



Tue.
13th Sept.

Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn
Better is a handful of quietness
than two hands full of toil and
a striving after wind.
Ecclesiastes 4:6

reading Ecclesiastes 4:4-6 - Envy

notes Turning from the oppression he saw all around him, the preacher now focuses his attention on those who work hard and achieve success, and he came to the conclusion that it simply brought envy and sometimes hatred from others. This common jealousy of success made life seem like vanity and grasping for the wind.

Envy of somebody else's success can lead to a variety of actions, two of which the preacher mentions here. One is simply to be lazy and to do nothing, and the other is to strive for more and more and never to be satisfied.

The preacher gives a very graphic picture of the lazy man - when he sees somebody else getting on and perhaps having some understanding of how hard the person had to work to get where he is, simply 'folds his hands' and does nothing. Not only is such an attitude foolish, it is also wicked, for God created man to work. The Scripture is quite clear that God made man to work - God instituted work with creation, prior to the Fall Genesis 2:15, and throughout the Old Testament God gave directions with regard to work Lev. 23:22. This command confirms the importance of work. God does not tell the people to harvest everything and then simply give food to the poor. Instead, He tells them to leave enough of the grain to allow the poor to work for themselves. Work has a way of giving us a sense of purpose, productivity, and dignity. (see also Prov. 14:23, Prov. 6:6-11 & Eccles. 9:10). The same principles are carried over to the New Testament 2 Thess. 3:6-10.

It is also possible to see success and to have such a desire to emulate it that the possession of wealth becomes all-consuming to the exclusion of everything else. The preacher draws attention to the very important Biblical principle of contentment - to be satisfied with what one has is truly something to strive for - Phil. 4:12-13, Heb. 13:5, 1 Tim. 6:6,7, Lk. 12:15.

questions
1. What is envy?
2. Is work good or bad?

praise pray
Ps. 7:1-5
1. Give thanks for the work we have to do.
2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
3. Pray for family matters.



Wed.
14th Sept.

Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn
Better is a handful of quietness
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Ecclesiastes 4:6

reading Luke 18:18-28 - Selfishness

notes The preacher notices something else in the life of man that he sees to be meaningless! Following on from his observations about work and the acquisition of riches, he now considers the foolishness of those who spend all their time and energy in getting more and more and are so intent upon it that they have no time to enjoy what they have. Verses 7 and 8 give us a picture of utter selfishness:

1. He is such a slave to his work that he has no interest or inclination to share his life with anybody else, he has nobody to care for or to be concerned about other than himself, and yet he still works day and night to gain more. This is not somebody working long hours in order to survive, but a manifestation of unrestrained greed.

2. He never thinks he has enough. Graphically described by the phrase 'his eyes were not content with his wealth' - as one Puritan writer puts it, 'He has enough for his back, for his belly, for his calling, for his family, for his living decently in the world, but he has not enough for his eyes'. Whatever he sees, he wants - what the Bible calls covetousness 1 Tim. 6:10.

3. He denies himself the enjoyment of what he has. The sad thing is that those who are consumed with gaining wealth most often have no time for spiritual things 'how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven' Luke 18:24. But how truly miserable it is to 'bereave themselves not only of the favour of God and eternal life, but of the pleasures of this world too'. (Matthew Henry)

4. He has no idea of the foolishness of working so hard for nothing! He does not work for the glory of God which is man's chief end, he does not work for his family or to help the needy - no wonder the preacher sees this and calls it a 'miserable business'

questions

1. What does the selfish man look like in these verses?

praise Ps. 7:6-10

pray

1. Pray that we would put the sin of selfishness to death.
2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
- 3 Pray for family matters.



Thur.
15th Sept.

Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn
Better is a handful of quietness
than two hands full of toil and
a striving after wind.
Ecclesiastes 4:6

reading Ecclesiastes 4:7-12 - Friendship

notes In contrast to the solitary and selfish man who lives only for his possessions, the preacher now draws attention to a universal truth that 'two are better than one' v. 9 In the perfection of the world before the Fall, God himself stated the same truth 'it is not good for the man to be alone, Gen. 2:18. There are so many ways in which this truth is made abundantly clear in the everyday life of men. Verses 9-12 show us the great value of human relationships, that two are better than one. Living and working together is a great advantage to living and working alone, and adds these four things to life:

1. A more productive work. The preacher puts it in terms of having 'a good return for their work'. Working together - in business or in church - means that there is regular help and advice, strength in weakness and encouragement for the tasks.

2. Help in times of difficulty - 'if one falls down, his friend can help him up'. It is hard to face trial and difficulty alone for often it is impossible to get up again unless there is somebody there to help. This is particularly true in the spiritual realm. When we fall into sin a Christian brother or sister can help to restore us in a spirit of meekness. When we face trouble of one kind or another a friend can come alongside and help to bear the burden.

3. Comfort and companionship in life. The picture of two lying down together to keep warm is a wonderful illustration of how true friendship can warm the heart. For the Christian, real fellowship in the Lord can stimulate and encourage deeper devotion and love for Christ.

4. Safety and security. It would always be advisable not to journey alone in dangerous places - a travelling companion would help to deter those who might seek to cause trouble! Our brethren in Christ can strengthen our hands in the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged.

questions

1. What are the benefits of friendship?
2. How can a Christian help their friends?

praise
pray

Ps. 8A:all

1. Give thanks for the people God has put in your life.
2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
- 3 Pray for family matters.