

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

19th-24th September 2016
Ecclesiastes



Let's Worship God is a ministry of



Airdrie Reformed Presbyterian Church

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Family worship, a joy to be experienced every day!



Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn

Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few. Ecclesiastes 5:2

reading Ecclesiastes 5:1-3 - Preparation and Attitude

notes After speaking of all the things he sees in the world that appear to him to be futile or meaningless, the preacher now draws the attention of his readers to something that has the greatest possible value and meaning - the worship of the living God.

His first words in verse 1 are ones that have universal application and need to be borne in mind by those who attend places of worship today! 'Guard your steps when you go to the House of God'. Alexander Maclaren makes a very interesting comment when he says. 'fruitful and acceptable worship begins before it begins'. Going to church week by week to worship God becomes so routine that we tend to give little thought as to how we come to worship. Do we spend time quietly before we even leave the house considering what it means to offer to the Lord acceptable worship? Do we consider what the Lord Jesus Christ taught in Matthew 5:24 or do we sometimes go to worship God with unresolved conflicts with our brethren? How prepared are our hearts to worship the holy God and to hear him speaking to us?

If our preparation to worship God is important so is our attitude in worship. The preacher stresses the importance of coming to the house of the Lord more eager to listen than to speak. The verb 'to hear' has the double meaning of to 'pay attention' and also to 'obey', just as the prophet Samuel instructed king Saul, 'to obey (literally to listen) is better than sacrifice'. In worship we listen to the Word of God read and preached but how careful and diligent is our listening and how zealous is our obedience to what we have heard. The parable of the sower shows us that the same Word can have a variety of effects in those who hear, it is no wonder therefore that the Lord Jesus Christ urged men to be careful how they heard Matt. 13:9.

- questions**
1. How can we prepare for worship?
 2. What should our attitude be in worship?

praise pray

- Ps.9:7-10
1. Pray that we would begin preparing for worship.
 2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
 - 3 Pray for family matters.



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reading Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 - Joy in Work

notes The preacher comes to a realisation about the best course of action that a person can take as he seeks to profitably use the time that God has given to him in this world. He is not encouraging us to be profligate with all that God has given us, nor yet to indulge our sinful appetites, but rather to use wisely all that we have been enabled to obtain for our good, the good of our families, and for the glory of God.

The life that we have is a gift from God, and he has appointed the length of time that we will spend on this earth Job. 14:5, and so it is our duty and privilege to use the time allotted to us in a way that pleases God. It is God's purpose for us that we work, but that work must not become drudgery, neither must we become slaves to our work. We are called upon to find satisfaction in the work that we do and to be happy in it.

It is a great blessing to be happy in our work and to be content to be in the situation in which it pleases God to place us, whether that be in the enjoyment of material prosperity or not. To 'accept our lot and be happy in our work' is seen by Solomon as being a gift from God. To submit cheerfully and willingly to the providence of God is able to make even the most unpleasant and arduous tasks a means of bringing glory to God. It is hard to imagine that all that the apostle Paul went through in his missionary labours could be described as pleasant or enjoyable, and yet the knowledge that he was following the path that God had planned for him, enabled him to say, 'I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances' Phil. 4:11. Is it not a great thing for us to be able to say that God keeps us occupied with gladness of heart? v. 20.

- questions**
1. What should be our attitude about work?
 2. How should we see the providence of God?

praise pray

- Ps. 13:all
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.
23rd Sept.

Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn

Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few. Ecclesiastes 5:2

reading Ecclesiastes 5:13-17 - Eternity

notes As the preacher continues looking at life 'under the sun' especially with regard to material possessions, he comments on what he sees as a 'grievous evil' vs. 13-14. He imagines a man hoarding up wealth only for that wealth to be harmful to him or for that wealth to be lost through some misfortune or other! Losing wealth through misfortune is quite understandable, but it seems more difficult to see how great wealth could cause harm to the owner. From an 'under the sun' perspective, that might be so, but not when viewed from a Biblical perspective. Wealth can make a person proud, self-secure, and can draw their hearts away from God. For this reason, Jesus said that it was hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 19:23.

There is an undeniable truth expressed in verse 15 that should cause people to consider things other than material possessions or status in society; 'naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs'. This knowledge caused the preacher to continue contemplating the foolishness of living life solely for the purpose of acquiring riches.

It is true that with regard to the body that we go as we came - when there a committal at the graveside of someone who has died, the words 'dust to dust, ashes to ashes' are pronounced, but as Matthew Henry comments, 'sad is our case if the soul return as it came, for we were born in sin, and if we die in sin, unsanctified, we had better never have been born'.

There is a solemn warning in these verses for those whose focus is more on the things of this world than on those things that continue beyond the grave. It is indeed a grievous evil to spend one's life working for something that cannot be held on to v. 15b - no wonder the Lord Jesus Christ urges us to 'not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.' John 6:27

- questions**
1. Can you take anything with you into eternity?
 2. What are the dangers of wealth?

- praise pray**
- Ps. 12:all
1. Pray that we would use the blessings God gives us wisely to His glory.
 2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
 3. Pray for family matters.



Tue.
20th Sept.

Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn

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reading Matthew 6:5-8 - Prayer

notes One important element of worship is prayer, and it is to this activity that the preacher now gives his attention, 'do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God'. The reason for the warning is given in verse 2b where the infinite distance that there is between God and men is set out. He is almighty, sovereign and of absolute and perfect holiness and we are fallible, weak, and sinful. Matthew Henry puts it so well when he says 'We are on earth, the footstool of his throne; we are mean and vile, unlike God, and utterly unworthy to receive any favour from him or to have any communion with him. Therefore, we must be very grave, humble, and serious, and be reverent in speaking to him, as we are when we speak to a great man that is much our superior; and, in token of this, let our words be few, that they may be well chosen, Job 9:14'.

Words spoken to God should be from the heart and should always be the product of the meditation of our heart, but not only so; the preacher also stresses the need for our words to come from a thoughtful heart. It is very easy to speak rashly or hastily with giving sufficient thought to what we are going to say, so we are warned to let our words be few!

There is a very good illustration of what Solomon is talking about in the story told by the Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 18:9-14. The Pharisee had no problem making a well-constructed and articulate prayer which would no doubt have been applauded by his fellow Pharisees. It was not his prayer however that was found acceptable to God, but rather that short, heartfelt prayer of the tax-collector.

There are, of course occasions when long prayer is acceptable and necessary, after all, Christ prayed all night; and we are directed to continue in prayer. But what is condemned is careless, heartless praying and vain repetitions (Matt. 6:7).

- questions**
1. What does Ecclesiastes teach us about prayer?
 2. What is the prayer that God will not hear?

- praise pray**
- Ps. 10:1-6
1. Give thanks for the privilege we have in prayer.
 2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
 3. Pray for family matters.



Wed.
21st Sept.

Let's Worship God

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reading Ecclesiastes 5:4-7 - Promises

notes

Making promises or vows to God has always been a regular part of the worship and life of the people of God, but sometimes promises are made without due regard to the seriousness of the action. That this has been a problem throughout the history of the church is evident from the repeated warnings about it in Scripture, 'when a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said'. Num. 30:2 (Deut. 23:21-23, Psalm 15:4, Prov. 20:25, James 5:12).

The preacher takes up this theme in verses 4-7 and gives us three very important principles with regard to making promises to God:

1. God does not take broken promises lightly. A broken vow may well result in the anger and judgement of God upon our work v. 6b. Psalm 15 gives a picture of the person who pleases God and one of his qualities is that, 'he keeps his oath even when it hurts'. Unfortunately, failing to live up to solemn promises made to God (perhaps on becoming a member) is an altogether too common an occurrence amongst professing Christians.

2. Those who wish to honour God will not be quick to make promises to God, but when they do make them they will be deadly serious in making sure they fulfil them. It is so easy, as the preacher says, for our mouth to lead us into sin v. 6a. Making a vow or a promise to God is so serious that it requires diligent thought and prayer before so doing. We cannot later say that we did not mean it or that it was a mistake - if we vow to God, he will expect us to fulfil our vow. A foolish vow can be extremely costly as Jephthah found out in Judges 11.

3. Broken promises must be regarded as sin against God and will need to be repented of - not simply brushed aside as 'errors'! This attitude will be helped by a genuine reverence of fear of God.

questions

1. How does God view our promises?

praise Ps. 10:7-10

pray

1. Pray that we would keep the vows we make.
2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
- 3 Pray for family matters.



Thur.
22nd Sept.

Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn

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reading Ecclesiastes 5:8-12 - Total Depravity

notes

We are often surprised by things about which there should be no surprise whatsoever! In so much of society there is unfairness in the way that people who are poor or powerless are treated by those in authority and when it happens, we are shocked or surprised, for we expect people to be better than they are! Solomon had no such surprise v. 8, for he seemed to understand what was in man. A proper understanding of the doctrine of the total depravity of man will help greatly in the perception that we will have of even the best of men! Total depravity does not mean that every person is as bad as they possibly could be, only that he is depraved in every part of his being - in his unregenerate state there is absolutely nothing that man can do to please God. Gen. 8:21, Psalm 14:1-3, Rom. 1:28-32, Rom. 8:7-8. It is only the restraining grace of God on the unregenerate and the saving grace of God in the regenerate that allows society to function without total chaos!

The preacher returns to his theme of the meaninglessness of wealth and as a man granted an abundance of riches, he knew what he was talking about! More than any man Solomon knew that the gathering of riches did not satisfy. As Derek Kidner says, 'If anything is worse than the addiction money brings, it is the emptiness it leaves. Man, with eternity in his heart, needs better nourishment than this.' There is a rather dismal picture painted of the man who has great wealth:

- a. The more he has, the more expenses he has - in employing people etc.
- b. The more conspicuous his wealth the more 'hangers on' there will be seeking to 'share' the good things.
- c. With great wealth comes greater worries.

The contrast is made with the poor labourer who sleeps well because he has worked hard and has no possessions to worry about! A true lesson in contentment.

questions

1. Why should we not be surprised at the sin of men and women?
2. What are the problems of a man with great wealth?

praise Ps. 11:all

pray

1. Give thanks for the restraining grace of God.
2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
- 3 Pray for family matters.