

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

3rd - 8th October 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

A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth. Ecclesiastes 7:1

reading

Ecclesiastes 7:1-4 - A Good Reputation

notes

In the first six chapters the Preacher has shared with us his search for meaning, and his observations gleaned during the course of his search. His conclusion, repeated many times over, has been that life under the sun was meaningless. Nevertheless, in spite of this rather depressing conclusion, there is good that can be done, provided a person is blessed by God. In the remaining six chapters Solomon shares his counsel through a mixture of proverbs and narration. The counsel that he gives is intended to enable people to get the best out of this meaningless life!

There is a very strange juxtaposition of ideas in the opening verses of the chapter where the preacher quite rightly emphasises the importance of maintaining a good reputation. A good name (reputation) has much greater value than the most precious things in our possession (fine perfume). This is especially true for the professing Christian, for once the reputation is damaged, the testimony is of little effect. He follows this thought up with another that seems to bear little relation to it when he speaks of the contrast between death and birth, mourning and feasting and sorrow and laughter. So what lessons is he trying to teach?

a. A good name is maintained and fomented by thinking seriously about life and death. The more we reflect upon the shortness of life, the more we will be encouraged to live for eternity and not just for this life.

b. For the believer the day of death is a most glorious day for he leaves behind the sinful world with all its trials and temptations and is ushering into the presence of his Lord, to be with Him forever, death is the end of dying. On the day of the believer's death dying is for ever done with. The saints who are with God shall never die any more. Life is wrestling, struggling; but death is the end of conflict: it is rest-victory. (C.H. Spurgeon)

c. Sorrow is often better than pleasure for pleasure can dull the senses and drive out the awareness of sin.

questions

1. Why is a good name important?
2. Why is the day of death significant for a believer?

praise pray

Ps. 17:7-13

1. Give thanks for the eternity that awaits.
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

A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth. Ecclesiastes 7:1

reading

Ecclesiastes 7:26-29 - God's Way and Man's Schemes

notes

It may seem from these verses that Solomon had a very jaundiced view of the female sex, and it is probably true that what he says tells us more about his own choice of female companionship than it does about the relative wisdom of men and women! During his own life Solomon was unwise and sinful in the relationships he had with women, something that was acknowledged in 1 Kings 11:4, his wives turned his heart after other gods. He had not followed the practice instituted by God in the garden of Eden of marriage between one man and one woman but had loved many foreign women and had ended up with seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines 1 Kings 11:1,3. How much better it would have been in his own life if he had sought and married the noble woman spoken about by Lemuel in Proverbs 31. Had he done so, he would have been unable to make the comment that he did in ch. 7:28.

Whilst searching for an upright man or woman, the preacher quite rightly goes back to the beginning. If his search was fruitless, it was not because there was something wrong in the creation of man. God made man upright, but right from the beginning men have gone in search of many schemes. Not satisfied with the gracious and glorious provision made for them in Garden and not content with the level of knowledge and wisdom granted to them, Adam and Eve sought out and followed the devil's schemes. Not willing to accept God's way of presenting an acceptable sacrifice, Cain followed his own scheme, and so it has gone on throughout the succeeding generations and centuries up to the present time.

God made man upright, and God in his mercy has provided a way by which sinful man could once again be righteous in his sight, but man continues to devise many schemes either to ignore God or to please him in ways of their choosing! How foolish is man to reject God's perfect way in favour of his own flawed schemes!

questions

1. What went wrong with mankind?
2. What is God's perfect way of salvation?

praise pray

Ps. 18:25-30

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.
7th Oct.

Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn

A good name is better than
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of death than the day of birth.
Ecclesiastes 7:1

reading Ecclesiastes 7:19-25 - The Benefit of Wisdom

notes The 16th/17th century philosopher Francis Bacon is attributed with coining the familiar phrase, knowledge (or wisdom) is power. The same idea is expressed in verse 19 by Solomon when he acknowledges the great value of wisdom, especially in the context of those who would exercise authority or rule. Wisdom is also important in seeking to deal with the everyday issues of life on a personal level. There are two very important applications of wisdom highlighted in vs. 20-22.

a. To understand the true nature of man. In a humanistic age there is great emphasis placed on the ability of man to do whatever he pleases and to be whatever he wishes. Man is seen as being essentially good, and any harmful traits can be eradicated by better education, better housing, better employment and better socialisation. Solomon however, sees things differently when he says, there is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins. A truly wise man understands the sinfulness of man and therefore, his own sinfulness as well.

b. The second way in which he applies wisdom to personal life is to acknowledge that we all sometimes pay too much attention to what people say about us. How often do we think or say things about others that we don't really mean and would be horrified if they took them to heart! The wise man takes seriously the words of James, If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless James 1:26.

Although the preacher is clear about the desirability of wisdom, he also acknowledges the frustration that there can be in seeking to attain it. He found out, as many others have done, that the more we find out, the more there is to find out! The search for wisdom under the sun will lead to frustration but there is an answer, if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault; and it will be given to him. James 1:5

questions 1. How does wisdom help us understand man?

2. Why should we keep watch over what we say?

praise Ps. 18:19-24

pray 1. Give thanks for the wisdom of God.

2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.

3. Pray for family matters.



Tue.
4th Oct.

Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn

A good name is better than
precious ointment, and the day
of death than the day of birth.
Ecclesiastes 7:1

reading Ecclesiastes 7:5-9 - Wisdom Not Folly

notes A wise man accepts rebuke. There are doubtless many who would be very happy to listen to information on a vast array of subjects from a person considered wise in that particular area, but how few there are who cherish the rebukes of a wise man! We do not like having our faults exposed or our weaknesses outlined, even when it is done humbly and lovingly by one who cares for our soul. We do not, however do ourselves any favours by reacting badly to gracious rebuke, for as Proverbs 6:23 tells us, the corrections of discipline are the way of life.

The preacher contrasts our reluctance to receive correction with the alacrity with which we listen to what he calls the song of fools. There is of course, nothing wrong with listening to music even if it is composed or performed by those whom the Bible would call fools Psalm 14:1, but the contrast is nevertheless, well made. It is so easy to give a lot more time and attention to that which, while not wrong or sinful, is insubstantial and fleeting rather than that which is substantial and permanent. So many professing Christians would be able to recite or sing the words of the latest pop song but would struggle with the words of the Psalms or catechism!

A wise man resists temptation. Solomon speaks of how extortion and bribery can turn even a wise man into a fool and corrupt his inner being. Christians must expect opposition and attempts to make them compromise their walk with God, but the Lord Jesus Christ left us an example to follow, for when he was tempted, he used the words of scripture to defeat the devil. Matt. 4:1-11.

A wise man is patient and calm. It is true wisdom to be able to wait to see how something will turn out rather than to react immediately v. 8. Hasty judgements are very often wrong! Humility and calmness of spirit were so often seen in the Lord Jesus Christ who when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously and should therefore be seen in his followers.

questions 1. What are characteristics of a wise man?

praise Ps. 18:1-6

pray 1. Pray that we would be wise.

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
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Ecclesiastes 7:1

reading Ecclesiastes 7:10-12 - True Perception

notes

We are all very prone to romanticise the past to look at the past through rose coloured spectacles and to think that everything was better in the past. Perhaps Reformed Christians in general and Covenanters in particular are more liable than others to give in to this temptation! We look back to the days of the Reformation or to the time of the second Reformation in Scotland and think how wonderful it would have been to live in such days; or we look longingly to the days of Cameron and Renwick when the faithful gathered in the fields to hear soul stirring messages from faithful men of God. Wonderful though aspects of those times undoubtedly were, they were also days of opposition, persecution, defection, and iniquity in both church and state.

The preacher cautions against this tendency and tells us that it is not wise to think that past days were any better than the ones we currently enjoy. He rather encourages us to see things rationally and to have a proper perception and perspective of the past and of the present. As Christians we often complain that the times we live in are more corrupt and godless than those of the past and whilst there may be elements of truth in that assertion, people in former times were just as wicked as they are now and iniquity just as widespread!

Solomon makes the very telling observation that people can seek comfort and security from all that goes on under the sun in one of two ways by trusting in wealth to be shield from whatever life may bring; or to find shelter and safety through the application of wisdom. His own understanding was that the path of wisdom was the path to tread for wisdom preserves the life of the possessor v. 12. The wisdom that gives to men and women, the opportunity to see both past and present in the proper perspective, is the fear of God Prov. 9:10.

questions

1. How can we properly view the past?

praise pray

Ps. 18:7-12

1. Give thanks for God's blessings in the past.
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
A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth.
Ecclesiastes 7:1

reading Ecclesiastes 7:13-18 - A Balanced Life

notes

We hear much about balance in our lives most particularly about what is called work/life balance, and whilst it may be good to consider such things, the preacher here is looking at a balanced life from a somewhat different perspective.

He begins by drawing attention to the immutable counsel of the sovereign God and acknowledges that what He has done cannot be undone, and that the best course of action is to accept that both good and bad times are in the hand of God. Unfortunately, this knowledge leads him to a measure of despair when he says, a man cannot discover anything about his future. The contrary however, is the real truth! It is precisely because God is in control of all things that the future can be made clear! Even in the Old Testament God revealed his will to his prophets and with the completion of the Biblical canon of scripture God has revealed his purpose and plan for men plainly and simply.

As the preacher looks at life he sees things that appear to be wholly out of balance the good suffering in or for his righteousness and the wicked living long and prospering in his wickedness and he judges that it isn't fair! The psalmist in Psalm 73:3 came to the same conclusion, and we must confess that sometimes the same thoughts go through our own minds!

Solomon's solution to this problem is one that may well be advocated by many today in the search for a balanced life. Goodness is ok, but not too much, wisdom is fine, but not too much, even a little bit of badness is ok, but not too much! This is a common approach to life, thinking that everything is good in moderation. This has some truth to it, but does not define a wise or good life. (Campbell Morgan). Living for the honour and glory of God permits no degree of wickedness and promotes the highest degree of righteousness and wisdom possible a life in balance with God.

questions

1. What does Solomon realise about God's plan?
2. Where do we find God's purpose and plan?

praise pray

Ps. 18:13-18

1. Give thanks that God is unchanging.
2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
3. Pray for family matters.