

Ecclesiastes 4: *With or Without You*

Summary of the Preacher's Main Points So Far:

1. **The Whole of Life is *vanity* – a mere breath in which none of our personal accomplishments or legacies will survive or be remembered** (Ecclesiastes 1).
2. **Even those specific things that are precious to us, that we hold onto so tightly and invest so much in, also have little or no lasting satisfaction** (Ecclesiastes 2).
3. **Life is not about struggling to gain; but rather letting go, and learning to simply receive and enjoy life as a gift -- accepting this is the beginning of true Joy, Hope, and Freedom** (Ecclesiastes 3).
4. **A) Making life about “ME” is the source of most pain.**

B) Making life about others -- you will find true joy and contentment that cannot be matched elsewhere under the sun (Ecclesiastes 4).

Matthew 16:24-26

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. ²⁵If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. ²⁶And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?”

Philippians 2:3-5

³Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

Read the three different sections of Ecclesiastes 4 below, and share how in each section the Preacher supports and conveys the above propositions of 4A & 4B along with Jesus's and Paul's summation of how to live.

Ecclesiastes 4:1-6

Again, I observed all the oppression that takes place under the sun. I saw the tears of the oppressed, with no one to comfort them. The oppressors have great power, and their victims are helpless. ²So I concluded that the dead are better off than the living. ³But most fortunate of all are those who are not yet born. For they have not seen all the evil that is done under the sun.

⁴Then I observed that most people are motivated to success because they envy their neighbors. But this, too, is meaningless—like chasing the wind.

⁵“Fools fold their idle hands, leading them to ruin.” ⁶And yet, “Better to have one handful with quietness than two handfuls with hard work and chasing the wind.”

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- **Matthew 20:24-28**
 - **Ephesians 4:28**

(4:7-12)

⁷I observed yet another example of something meaningless under the sun. ⁸This is the case of a man who is all alone, without a child or a brother, yet who works hard to gain as much wealth as he can. But then he asks himself, “Who am I working for? Why am I giving up so much pleasure now?” It is all so meaningless and depressing.

⁹Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. ¹⁰If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. ¹¹Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? ¹²A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.

Luke 12:16-21

1 Timothy 6:9-10

(4:13-16)

It is better to be a poor but wise youth than an old and foolish king who refuses all advice. ¹⁴Such a youth could rise from poverty and succeed. He might even become king, though he has been in prison. ¹⁵But then everyone rushes to the side of yet another youth who replaces him. ¹⁶Endless crowds stand around him, but then another generation grows up and rejects him, too. So it is all meaningless—like chasing the wind.
