

## Ecclesiastes 2: **Bursting Bubbles**

### Summary from last week

#### (1:12-18)

<sup>12</sup>I, the Teacher, was king of Israel, and I lived in Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup>I devoted myself to search for understanding and to explore by wisdom everything being done under heaven. I soon discovered that God has dealt a tragic existence to the human race. <sup>14</sup>**I observed everything going on under the sun, and really, it is all meaningless—like chasing the wind.**

<sup>15</sup>What is wrong cannot be made right.  
What is missing cannot be recovered.

<sup>16</sup>I said to myself, “Look, I am wiser than any of the kings who ruled in Jerusalem before me. I have greater wisdom and knowledge than any of them.” <sup>17</sup>So I set out to learn everything from wisdom to madness and folly. But I learned firsthand that **pursuing all this is like chasing the wind.**

<sup>18</sup>The greater my wisdom, the greater my grief.  
To increase knowledge only increases sorrow.

### IN GENERAL...

“Everything”...Our lives are full of vanity, AND we are going to die.

- To be human is to be a creature, and to be finite.
- We are not God.
- We are not in control.
- We will not live forever.
- We will die.

### EVEN IN THE SPECIFICS

#### • Pleasure

#### 2:1-3, 8b, 10

I said to myself, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself.” **And behold, it too was futility.** <sup>2</sup>**I said of laughter, “It is madness,” and of pleasure, “What does it accomplish?”** <sup>3</sup>I explored with my mind *how* to stimulate my body with wine while my mind was guiding *me* wisely, and how to take hold of folly, until I could see what good there is for the sons of men to do under heaven the few years of their lives... I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men—many concubines... All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor.

## • Wealth & Things

2:4-8a, 9

<sup>4</sup>I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself; <sup>5</sup>I made gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees; <sup>6</sup>I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees. <sup>7</sup>I bought male and female slaves and I had homeborn slaves. Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. <sup>8</sup>Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. <sup>9</sup>Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me... <sup>11</sup>**Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.**

## • Wisdom & Education

2:12-17

<sup>12</sup>So I turned to consider wisdom, madness and folly; for what *will* the man *dowho* will come after the king *except* what has already been done? <sup>13</sup>And I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. <sup>14</sup>The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one fate befalls them both. <sup>15</sup>Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise?" **So I said to myself, "This too is vanity."** <sup>16</sup>**For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as with the fool, inasmuch as *in* the coming days all will be forgotten. And how the wise man and the fool alike die!**<sup>17</sup> **So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind.**

## • Work & Successful Career

2:18-23

<sup>18</sup>**Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me.** <sup>19</sup>**And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity.**<sup>20</sup>**Therefore I completely despaired of all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun.** <sup>21</sup>When there is a man who has labored with wisdom, knowledge and skill, **then he gives his legacy to one who has not labored with them. This too is vanity and a great evil.** <sup>22</sup>**For what does a man get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun?** <sup>23</sup>**Because all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity.**

## So Depressing...

- **We're going to die...**
- **We can't change it...**
- **What we do won't last...**
- **What we do won't be remembered...**

**If this is all True, What's the point? how then should we live?**

## “Happiness is a Cigar Called Hamlet...” (Video)

2:24-26a

There is nothing better for a man *than* to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God. <sup>25</sup> For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him? For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy,

**Accepting that God has Made and/or Allowed the Realities and Parameters of Life...Radically Changes One's Capacity to Receive and Experience Gratitude, Contentment, Joy, and Hope.**

*“Death can radically enable us to enjoy life. By relativizing all that we do in our days under the Sun, death can change us from people who want to control life for gain into people who find deep joy in receiving life as a gift. This is the main message of Ecclesiastes in a nutshell: Life in God's world is a gift, not gain.”*

--David Gibson

**Ecclesiastes teaches us to live in light of the end.**

**The gift of God does not make the meaningless go away; the gift of God makes this “vanity” (*hebel* –“breath”) acceptable and enjoyable.**

*“As men have not been able to cure death, misery, or ignorance, they have taken to not thinking about them at all, so as not to become unhappy.”* – Blaise Pascal

- We use **Pleasure, Wealth, Things, Wisdom, Education, Work and a Successful Career** to distract us from the anxiety of living in the shadow of an unavoidable end – death – and what that means...

*“Man is obviously made for thinking. Therein lies all his dignity and his merit; and his whole duty to is to think as he ought. Now the order of thought is to begin with ourselves, and with our author and our end. Now what does the word think about? Never about that, but about dancing, playing the lute, singing, writing verse, becoming king, without thinking what it means to be a king or a man.”* – Blaise Pascal

**Ecclesiastes Reorients Our Thinking...Renews Our Minds** (Romans 12:20)

- The world cannot be leveraged to suit me.
- Life is a gift to be enjoyed, not mastered.
- We can have enjoyment if we receive them as gifts from God; Otherwise, in and of themselves, Pleasure, Wealth, Things, Wisdom, Education, Work, Career, Even Family -- they will leave us unsatisfied if we seek them as gain.

See Jesus's similar comments in **Luke 12:15-34**