01-08-26a Ecclesiastes

Scripture reading to Psalm 94. Psalm 94, the portion of Ecclesiastes that we are studying this morning, talks about oppression of the poor, talks about what those in positions of authority often do. And it's good to reassure ourselves at the outset that God is aware.

The psalmist here is going to bring this sort of thing to God's attention. Psalm 94 says, O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs, O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth. Rise up, O judge of the earth, render punishment to the proud.

Lord, how long will the wicked, how long will the wicked triumph? They utter speech and speak insolent things. All the workers of iniquity boast in themselves. They break in pieces your people, O Lord, and afflict your heritage.

They slay the widow and the stranger and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, the Lord does not see, nor does the God of Jacob understand. Understand, you senseless among the people, and you fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, shall he not hear? He who formed the eye, shall he not see? He who instructs the nations, shall he not correct? He who teaches man knowledge? The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile.

Blessed is the man whom you instruct, O Lord, and teach out of your law, that you may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit is dug for the wicked. For the Lord will not cast off his people, nor will he forsake his inheritance. But judgment will return to righteousness, and all the upright in heart will follow it.

Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul would soon have settled in silence. If I say, my foot slips, your mercy, O Lord, will hold me up. In the multitude of my anxieties within me, your comforts delight my soul.

Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law, have fellowship with you? They gather together against the life of the righteous and condemn innocent blood. But the Lord has been my defense and my God, the rock of my refuge. He has brought on them their own iniquity and shall cut them off in their own wickedness.

The Lord our God shall cut them off. Well, this is not the first time Psalm 94 has been our scripture reading, but it is well worth revisiting. It's a great comfort because all of us at one time or another have felt the inequity, injustice, or even oppression of those who have authority over us and who misuse or abuse that authority, whether small or great.

And it is important to remind ourselves that God has not taken a vacation. He's not off busy doing something else. They used to, you may remember if you're old enough, the God is dead movement that came in the late 60s.

And people said, well, even if God's not dead, he does seem to be on an extended vacation because he doesn't seem interested in Vietnam or the Cold War or any of the other great issues that were on people's minds at that time. And we unconsciously sometimes adopt that same attitude. We think God is, or we act as though God is not aware and God is not going to act on our behalf.

But this is an exercise of faith. We have to trust that God sees, that God knows, and that God is only permitting these things for our instruction and for our benefit to give us a place to exercise faith. Well, without further ado, I want to turn back to Ecclesiastes chapter 5. You will remember the first section, which we have already covered.

I'll read this in the New King James. Walk prudently when you go to the house of God, and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God, for God is in heaven and you on earth.

Therefore, let your words be few. For a dream comes through much activity, it says here, but we know this is many answers. And a fool's voice in many words.

When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed. It is better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands? For in the multitude of dreams and many words there is heaven. So fear God.

That's my slightly amended translation. And you'll notice the correspondence between verse 3 and verse 7. The multitude of dreams and the many words, this is what's effusing up from the heart of the knowledgeless. The one who has not bothered to gather and apply the word and is unable to walk prudently.

And in summary, as you think about the larger theme of this book, what is Ecclesiastes about? It's about finding the prophet, the etrone in this life. Well, people who get straight on the fact that God is there and they belong to him and that God is involved in human life have taken one step down the road to laying hold of something that is eternal. But if you then turn around and decide that God is the genie of the lamp, he is the one who is going to enable you.

He's the advantage. He's the ace up your sleeve. He's the muscle man.

You know, you see these little guys. They used to do this in cartoons all the time. The little guy would come up and make demands and people would say, you pipsqueak, why should I pay attention to you? And then his big muscle man comes around the corner and you say, oh, that's why I should pay attention to you.

And they're all obsequious and falling all over themselves because he's got this power that was initially unaware. Well, a lot of times believers, and you see this all over the media, Christian media, think that that's basically what God is. God is the big advantage.

He's going to give you the things that you couldn't get by ordinary means, but people's sights are often still set on earthly things, security, advancement, finances, whatever it might be. You're being picked on by a bully and you say, well, this is the time for imprecatory prayer. I'm going to call down God's wrath on these people.

And what this overlooks is that in order to gain eternal profit, you have to have your eyes on eternal things. You can't be taking a hold of the eternal God and your relationship with him and then trying to leverage your earthly situation. And so as Solomon explores the different areas where people vainly seek gain, they seem to have acquired a gain, but it's temporary.

It's a vapor. We've seen that at the end of Chapter 4. The king who started out as a poor and wise youth and rose to the top of the heap, he got as far as you can go in the kingdom. He's kind of like Abraham Lincoln becoming president.

But when he's no longer teachable, that becoming king isn't going to stand him in any stead. He doesn't ultimately have anything but vapor. And that's how Chapter 4 ended.

Well, now, he says, here are people who take the religious route. They're not going political or economic or agricultural or some of these other places. They're going to go in the direction of God.

But when they get there, they're going to start trying to manipulate God to accomplish their goals. And it's an easy trap to fall into. We can decide, we can rationalize and say, this thing that I want to happen, this has got to be the will of God.

And we see things going on. I work at a charitable organization, and there are a lot of worthy ministries that go on dealing with orphans and people who need foster care or adoption or whatever. There's a lot of human needs that the organization seeks to meet.

And so people working in that venue can see a need and can decide just how that need ought to be filled and then go to God and say, oh, Lord, please make this and so happen because that will meet this person's need. Well, you think, what can be the harm in that? God talks about ministering to the widows and orphans, and so surely that's a legitimate prayer. Well, maybe it is and maybe it isn't.

What is the goal of that prayer? Are you wanting to see your ministry efforts succeed? Are you wanting to get the satisfaction of being the catalyst that brought about change and well-being for this family or this person or this situation? And there are people who sort of live for that sense of satisfaction and don't actually have their eyes on the kingdom of God. Is God going to be

glorified? Is the way in which I do this going to be pleasing in God's sight? When He looks at my heart, is He going to see me seeking my personal sense of satisfaction, or is He going to see me functioning as a steward, exercising genuine stewardship over the things of God and looking for the furtherance of His plan and His purpose as I carry out these functions? There is a subtle but very important difference in those two approaches. Two people can sit down and pray that something will happen, can come before God and make supplication before the throne of grace, but it is why we do what we do.

You can't just say, well, this is an intrinsically good thing, so I can pray for it any way I want to. We have to be thinking in terms of eternal weight of glory, and that attaches to God and the furtherance of His goals. So we have to walk prudently when we come to the house of God and draw near to hear, because in the situations that we tend to want to pray for, if we stop and listen, meditate on the Word of God, let God the Holy Spirit speak in our hearts about where the genuine prophet is, where the furtherance of God's plan is, how this thing can be done in such a way that God is glorified as well as these needs being met or these problems being solved.

We will not be rash with our mouth. We will not be uttering things before God that are not profitable. Our words will be few because we will be coming before God and confirming things that we have already seen and come to know from His Word.

We do not want to have our mouth cause our flesh to sin, but this is people seeking an advantage or seeking a gain. Why would you go to God? Why would any of these first seven verses even be in the Bible? Why would somebody be coming to God and speaking rashly or speaking a lot and making the sound of a fool? Because they want something to happen. This is where we get the motivation to go before God.

Something is up. There is a challenge. There is a problem.

There is a pressure. There is a need. And we go to God.

And the temptation is I am going to use any means possible. I will make God a promise. I will swear off all of my vices if He will just do this thing.

Well, this is trying to achieve a kind of profit, trying to achieve what we think is an advantage or a good thing under the sun, in the little glass dome of the terrarium that is this life. So there is a subtle but very important difference there. Well, now Solomon is going to transition and talk about a different area of endeavor where people think that they are achieving gain.

All of these sections, you can review the things that we have studied recently, all of these are different areas where people think that they have made their efforts worthwhile. Now we are going to find people who are in public service, people who are in the government. So looking at verse 8, he says, If you see the oppression of the poor and the violent perversion of justice and righteousness in a province, do not marvel at the matter, for high official watches over high

official, and higher officials are over them.

Moreover, the profit of the land is for all, even the king is served from the field. Well, you kind of get the idea in verse 8. When you get to verse 9, it seems a little bit more opaque. And if it makes total sense to you in verse 9, then you are in a very small and elite group because scholars have puzzled over verse 9 for literally millennia.

The ancient Jewish guys that came up with the Mishnah and the Talmud and the commentary on the scriptures had trouble figuring out verse 9. And people ever since have had trouble with it. I have had to really do a lot of digging and meditating to make sense out of it myself. And there is speculation that maybe there is a problem in Hebrew.

And I don't claim that I am just smarter than all the people in the last 3,000 years that I have figured this out. But I will give you what I think is a logical and fruitful translation and interpretation of these two verses. We begin in verse 8 where he says, If you see the oppression of the poor.

The word for oppression here, and as I think I mentioned a session or two ago, the verses in the English are numbered differently than the verses in the Hebrew. What we have as 5-1 is actually in the Hebrew 4-17. So in Hebrew the numbers are one shorter in verse 5. So this is actually verse 7. And it says, If oppression of the poor and perversion of justice and righteousness you see in a province.

That is the actual word order. So there is some emphasis here. It doesn't start out saying if you see.

It says these are things that really strike you. If oppression of the poor and perversion of justice and righteousness you see in a province. And this is the word for province is medina which is a word that was in the old Aramaic and is used a lot in the later books of the Bible such as Ezra, Esther.

I think it occurs over 40 times in Esther and 30 something times in Ezra. And this is another one of those words that people use to argue that Ecclesiastes is late. However, this word also occurs in 1 Kings.

And there are people who try to argue that 1 Kings was composed during the Babylonian captivity. Be that as it may, there is nothing to prove that this word was not used earlier. It is part and parcel of having a monarchic form of government.

When you have a government that takes charge of a country which of course happened with Saul and then David and now Solomon as technically the fourth king. There was briefly a reign that didn't last. You are going to organize and you are going to have to find some words for districts and for offices that are not endemic to your nation.

They haven't been there before. It had been a theocracy and the organization was based on the

family priesthood and on a completely different model. And this is one of the things that Samuel chided Israel for and scolded them pretty severely when they said we want a king, we want to be like the other nations.

Well, when the monarchy came in, they had to borrow a lot of the structure and the offices and the functions and things from looking around at the neighboring nations. Naturally, they would look at those that were closest to them and that spoke a language most similar to their own. And there is virtually no surviving literature from the time of Saul and David and Solomon for Israel other than the word of God.

So, it should not be surprising. They say, well, we don't really see this word in common use until later on. Well, guess what? Most of the Old Testament that pertains to Solomon's reign was written after the fact, looking back, looking at the court records.

This is where chronicles and kings come from. So, to me, this is a completely spurious argument to say that the book has to be late because it uses a word for district that wasn't in use before Israel had a monarchy. You don't find it in the Law of Moses.

Well, gee, they didn't have that form of government back then, so why should it appear in Genesis when there's no such thing? Anyway, back to the word for oppression. The word for oppression here is oshek. Oshek.

And this word is used often in combination with the second word that we have here, which is gezel, the one that says perversion. These are found other places in Scripture in this same pairing. And it basically means a particular form of oppression.

This is oppression that manifests itself in extortion. It's a very specific kind of oppression. We have several different words for oppression, but this one has the idea of extortion.

We won't look at too many passages where this is used. It's fairly common in the Old Testament. But let's look, for example, at Ezekiel chapter 18 and verse 18.

Ezekiel 18, 18. Talking about ones who have committed various forms of crime. You can begin up in verse 13.

If he has exacted usury or taken increase, shall he then live? He shall not live. If he has done any of these abominations, he shall surely die. His blood shall be upon him.

If, however, he begets a son, who sees all the sins which his father has done and considers but does not do likewise, who has not eaten on the mountains, nor if lifted his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, nor defiled his neighbor's wife, has not oppressed anyone, nor withheld a pledge, nor robbed by violence, but has given his bread to the hungry and covered the naked with clothing, who has withdrawn his hand from the poor and not received usury or increase, but has

executed my judgments and walked in my statutes, he shall not die for the iniquity of his father. He shall surely live. As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, and that word in verse 18 for cruelly oppressed is our word, robbed his brother by violence and did what is not good among the people, behold, he shall die for his iniquity.

Remember, this is the section in Ezekiel where God is correcting a misunderstanding in Israel. They used to say, well, the sins of the father will be visited on the sons and even under the third generation and so forth. And here he says, not so.

The father will bear his own guilt. The son is not going to suffer for the sins of the father. They used to have the saying, the father has eaten a bitter grape and the son's teeth has been set on edge.

In other words, he's getting the consequences. But he says, no, each one is going to be accountable for his own sin. And in reality, it had always been that way.

It was a misunderstanding in Israel that an innocent son would suffer for the iniquities of his father. What God had said all along was that if there were generations where the son did follow in the footsteps of the father and the grandson followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, that God would cut that line off. The three-generation curse was if there were three generations in a row in a family or a clan in Israel, that basically three strikes and you're out.

You get a generation, a second generation, and a third generation. And if three generations in a row were disobedient and did the kind of things that are described here, God would end that line in Israel and not perpetuate it. Well, people misunderstood this to say, oh, my goodness, it doesn't matter what kind of son I am.

If my father was a bad man, I'm going to suffer for it. So Ezekiel clarifies that here. But the idea, when you look back up there, withholding a pledge, robbing by violence, he does the opposite.

He gives bread to the hungry. He gives clothing to those who need it. He supplies the needs of the poor.

He doesn't take away from them. That's what this type of oppression has to do with. You can see a similar usage in Psalm 62.11, which, of course, is going to be verse 10 in the English.

And this pertains to our passage. You can begin up in verse 8 of Psalm 62. Trust in Him at all times, you people.

Pour out your heart before Him. God is a refuge for us. Selah.

Then he says in verse 9, Surely men of low degree are a vapor. Men of high degree are a lie. If they are weighed on the scales, they are altogether lighter than vapor.

Do not trust in oppression, nor vainly hope in robbery. If riches increase, do not set your heart on them. God has spoken once.

Twice I have heard this, that power belongs to God. Also to you, O Lord, belongs mercy. For you render to each one according to his work.

So there is no virtue in being poor for poverty's sake alone. Nor is there virtue in achieving financial security and getting that security at any cost. But in verse 10 where he says, Do not trust in oppression, nor vainly hope in robbery.

Those two are set in parallel. The word oppression is the one that we have here. Why is it important to establish that this particular type of oppression is extortion? Well, if you hope to figure out verse 9, you have to have a clear grip on verse 8. So this is, if you see extortion from the poor, this is financial reaping from the poor.

This is excessive taxing of the poor, levying heavy burdens on the poor, and denying justice and righteousness in the province. Why is this specifically in the province or in the district, the medina? Because this is being done by the government. This is starting with your county commissioner and going up to your state commissioner and going all the way up the chain.

You've got one guy after another and there is a chain of graft and there is a chain of extortion that is described here. He says, do not be surprised. Do not be shocked.

Do not be dismayed at this sight. And all of the English translations seem to say do not be shocked at the sight. But in reality, this word is the word for delight.

This is chepets. And this is the same word we had earlier. This is chepets.

And remember earlier on when Solomon said he was going to examine and supply himself with every form of delight and test it and see if it had any lasting value? Well, he had the word chepets. But this literally says, if oppression of the poor and perversion of mishpat, which is justice, and tzedek, which is righteousness, you see in the district, in the medina, do not be surprised. Do not be shocked at the delight.

Nobody is particularly shocked, I don't think, at the fact that people like to take advantage of other people. But the shocking thing about it is that there are people who actually delight in it, who take pleasure in it. Now, I don't watch... In fact, I make it a point not to watch mafia movies.

I've never seen The Godfather or Godfather 2 or 3 or 4, however many of them they made. I didn't watch Goodfellas. I didn't watch whatever other... If it's a mafia movie, I don't watch it.

I don't like mafia movies. To me, why just go down in the sewer and explore? People seem to have some kind of a fascination with the family, with the whole Sicilian thing. I don't get it.

I think in some ways it tends to glorify and assign an attractiveness to that whole thing that I don't see there. But in that type of environment, one of the things that they often depict in these movies is that there is a satisfaction. People are patting each other on the back when they are able to raise the amount of money that they're getting out of a neighborhood or out of a section of businesses or whatever.

And in many ways, it's like a business. And any time a business scores a big success, they get a new client, they make a big sale, they increase the profit margin, there's congratulations all around. There are toasts and banquets and awards for the man of the year and this kind of thing.

And it goes on in the underworld just like it goes on anywhere else. And they take pleasure in having been able to ratchet up the pressure and squeeze more out of whoever it is they're squeezing. And the thing that is shocking, the thing that creates a sense of dismay, and this word means to be shocked or dismayed, it says do not be dismayed at the delight.

People have taken oppression and extortion up to the level of an art form. And it is shocking to see that people not only... I look at this in the Christian world. I see people that are extorting by putting a form of spiritual pressure on people and making out like, well, you really haven't bought into the harvest, you're not really a part of the march forward to the kingdom and so forth, and you don't contribute to certain ministries.

And they put this kind of pressure on or they by one means or another motivate people to take their limited bank account, write a check and send it in for some reason other than a genuine desire to see the word of God go forth. In some cases, very seedy and unfruitful ministries are contributed to by people who really are contributing for the right reasons and they just are unable to see. And oddly enough, God is going to honor the giver, but he's not going to honor the givee.

But you look and you see people that just seem to delight in doing this and pat themselves on the back as though they're doing a good thing when in fact they're extorting and they're going to pay a heavy penalty, if not now, certainly at the judgment. So this literally says, do not be shocked at the delight. And this is specifically in levels of government that is taken in raising taxes, in skimming from that and aggrandizing themselves with this booty.

Same thing when you see the violent perversion of justice and righteousness in a province, because obviously if someone is overtaxed, if by paying this tax it bankrupts them and then their land has to go to the government and be taken over, and they try to go to court and say, this wasn't right in the first place, not only are you excessively taxing me, but you're taking my land. Think about the tremendous sense of grievance that somebody is going to feel when this happens. He says, don't be surprised.

Then he says, it says high official watches over high official and higher officials are over them. This word for high official is an adjective actually that means lofty or high. And the latter part of it

that says higher officials, this is the dual or the plural of that same word, Geboim.

And this is the one that's translated in other places as a title for God, the most high. That's this word. And you may find in the Old King James and a few of the other versions where this says a high official watches over high official and the most high is over them all.

And this was doubly confusing because you get the idea that God is sort of seeing this and letting it go on. But that's not what it says at all. Although this is the same word that is translated most high, it doesn't refer to God here.

It is talking about those who are lifted up, these lofty ones. It's used other places for high hills, lofty mountains and that sort of thing. So it's in the Koine Hebrew of the time, this is the higher ups.

Higher up watches over higher up. And what it's talking about is this is a good old boy system in the government where a guy that's doing this, his boss knows it, but he's getting his cut and the guy up above is getting his cut and they're all benefiting. So why should they change it? Well, you can think about our government today.

And you think about Congress voting itself raises and voting to increase taxes and so forth. And why can we not get campaign finance reform passed? Because the candidates are now elected officials who benefit from the way the financial contributions currently come in and they're not going to cut themselves. It's fairly obvious.

So that's what Solomon is referring to here. Now, this is another argument that is made about the book that, well, you remember I told you back in the introduction that they said the identification of Solomon, the king of Jerusalem, son of David and all this, is just, it's what they call the Solomonic fiction. This is actually an author writing hundreds of years after Solomon and he sort of struts about in the persona of Solomon at the beginning of the book and then he drops it after chapter 2. And they point to this passage and they say, see, when you get to the second part of this, the prophet of the land is for all, even the king is served from the field.

They get the idea that, see, even the king, this graft extends all the way up to the king and this author is throwing rocks at the king. So how can he be the king and be writing this and condemning, you know, if he's the king, why doesn't he do something about it? Well, now we come to verse 9 and if we straighten out verse 9, we'll be able to answer that question. Verse 9, which is 8 in the Hebrew, literally says the first word in it after the conjunction and is Yitron.

Yitron, you may remember that word, that's the word back from the very beginning of the book. What is the prophet? This is what's left over after you subtract your expenses out of the gross. What do you have left over that's going to last? So, we have the Yitron Eretz.

Eretz Yisrael is the land of Israel. This is the land. This is the nation.

And sometimes it's used for the literal, physical earth that constitutes the land. More often, it is used as the national entity. So, the prophet of the land and then we have Bachol.

Bach is the preposition that means in, by, or with and kol means all. Then we have the pronoun hu. And we have the Masoretes used to sort of keep text notes when they didn't want to change the text but they really thought it was something else and this is called Kethiv Kere.

Kethiv means what is written. Kere means what is read. And so, they would make little marks in the text where they would say, you know, even though this is, I'm pretty sure this is a mistake, I'm not going to take it upon myself to change my copy of the text that I'm copying.

I'm going to copy it exactly as I see it but I'm going to make a note that I really think you should read a different word. That's Kethiv Kere. It's one of the great things the Masoretes did that helped preserve the text because they didn't just take it upon themselves to try to fix the text if they saw a problem.

They would just make a note. Well, we have a Kethiv Kere here and the pronoun who, which means he, is a masculine thing here. That's the Kethiv.

The Kere is he. And we used to have a thing, you know, first year Hebrew students always learned this thing. Who is he? He is she.

And so, who is the masculine and he is the feminine that means him, her or sometimes it. And that's the first phrase. All right, so we have Vayitron Eretz Bakol Hu.

Well, this is what scholars have wrestled with. Translators have tried to make sense out of this. And what you have in your New King James, even the king is served from the field.

The New American Standard says, after all, a king who cultivates the field is an advantage to the land. So, you can see, and I could give you lots of other translations. I'll just give you those two.

But they're trying to make an interpretive choice here to tell you what it's trying to say. After all, a king who cultivates the field is an advantage to the land. Well, that's a nice try, but we want to try to stick as literally as we can to the text.

And in a nutshell, what this is saying is the all here is referring back to the people we just talked about. Look at the context. One official, one higher-up watches over another higher-up, and there are higher-ups over the higher-ups.

And the profit of the land, the increase of the land that ought to be going to the people who work the land, which are the poor. There's your blue-collar laborers, your shepherds, your tillers, your reapers, your harvesters. The profit of the land is going to all these guys we just talked about.

The profit of the land is being soaked up by the government. Well, turn with me back to 1 Samuel

chapter 8. 1 Samuel chapter 8. It came to pass when Samuel was old, he made his sons judges over Israel. It talks about the firstborn.

Look at verse 4. The elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, Look, you're old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us.

So Samuel prayed to the Lord, and the Lord said to Samuel, Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day, with which they have forsaken me and served other gods, so they are doing to you also. Now therefore, heed their voice.

However, you shall solemnly forewarn them and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them. Kind of reminds you of the beginning of chapter 5 of Ecclesiastes, doesn't it? Don't go in there with a rash prayer. Don't go in to give God your many answers.

The Israelites are going to the prophet of God saying, Give us a king. God's going to answer that prayer in the affirmative. And it is a prayer they should not have prayed.

So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who asked him for a king. And he said, This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you. He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen.

And some will run before his chariots. He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties. He will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks and bakers. And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards and your olive groves and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage and give it to his officers and servants.

And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men and your donkeys and put them to his work. He will take a tenth of your sheep and you will be his servants. And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves and the Lord will not hear you in that day.

Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. They said, No, we will have a king over us that we may be like all the other nations and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles. Samuel heard all the words of the people and he repeated them in the hearing of the Lord.

So the Lord said to Samuel, Heed their voice and make them a king. Samuel said to the men of Israel, Every man go to his city. And it goes on from there.

Well, they go ahead and do this and you know the story of Saul becoming king and so on. Turn a few pages forward to chapter 12 of this same book. First Samuel chapter 12.

Look at verse 13. He is rehearsing for them their history. He says in verse 12, When you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, No, a king shall reign over us when the Lord your God was your king.

Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take note, the Lord has set a king over you. If you fear the Lord and serve him and obey his voice and do not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the Lord your God.

However, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you as it was against your fathers. Now therefore, stand and see the great thing the Lord will do before your eyes. If today not the wheat harvest, I will call to the Lord and he will send thunder and rain that you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord in asking a king for your kingdom So Samuel called to the Lord and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel.

All the people said to Samuel, Pray for your servants to the Lord your God that we may not die for we have added to all our sin the evil of asking a king for ourselves. Then Samuel said to the people, Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness yet do not turn aside from following the Lord but serve the Lord with all your heart and do not turn aside then you will go after empty things which cannot profit or deliver for they are nothing for the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake because it has pleased the Lord to make you his people.

Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should cease to serve the Lord in praying for you but I will teach you the good and right way. Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart for consider what great things he has done for you but if you still do wickedly you shall be swept away both you and your king. One other verse in here that pertains I think you can see the connection to our passage in Ecclesiastes.

Also take a look at Samuel's statement where he says at the beginning of the chapter I've made a king over you here's the king walking before you I'm old and gray headed look my sons are with you I've walked before you from my childhood to this day here I am witness against me before the Lord and before his anointed whose ox have I taken or whose donkey have I taken or whom have I cheated whom have I oppressed and that's our word from Ecclesiastes 5 or from whose hand have I received any bribe with which to blind my eyes I will restore it to you and they said you have not cheated or oppressed us nor have you taken anything from any man's hand this is what Israel gave up when they chose the monarchic form of government that's what Solomon is talking

about in chapter 5 so you can see the continuation forward don't be rash in asking something of God don't be making all kinds of promises and going before God and asking something one of the worst things that could happen is God might actually grant that request and the consequences are going to be exactly what you see because that system is not from God there's not a prophet accountable to God instead you have this system of government that's accountable only to itself high official watches over high official and they're all aggrandizing themselves at the expense of the poor well we need to pause here and take our break when we come back we're going to continue our translation and interpretation of verse 9 and see exactly why we should care that there was oppression in Israel back in Solomon's day let's pause here and take our break