

01-10-14a Ecclesiastes

Let's continue our worship this morning by turning for our scripture reading to Psalm 90. Psalm 90. This song is one of my favorites.

You know, whatever I'm looking at tends to be my favorite at that moment. But this is a prayer of Moses, the man of God. It's one of the oldest recorded songs in the scriptures.

And it's just packed with great truth and great insight from Moses. And it bears specifically on the passage we're looking at this morning in Ecclesiastes chapter 7. And indeed, it bears directly on the idea of the whole book of Ecclesiastes. And I find it interesting that you have sort of inside brackets.

When you think about the age of Israel, you have Moses writing near the beginning of that age. And you have Solomon writing near the end of that age in terms of revelation of scripture. Where, you know, granted you have the prophets and so on.

But in terms of the revelation of God's plan and purpose, Moses stands near the beginning. And Solomon logically stands near the end. Moses, not so much chronologically as logically or revelation-wise.

If you think about it, written revelation to Israel began with Moses. And the highest attainment, the highest expressions of wisdom came from Solomon. He was pressing the envelope of understanding in the Old Testament age.

You have the prophets writing later than that. But they are generally rebuking Israel as sheep that have gone astray. They are calling Israel back to repentance.

They are operating at the very foundational level. You know, the author of Hebrews says, Let's not have to go back and lay again the foundation of change of mind away from dead works. And the prophets are harping over and over trying to call Israel back.

They are the man on the wall calling the warning out that judgment is coming or that the enemy is coming. But Solomon takes everything that Moses revealed and all of the revelation up to his point. And with the gift of wisdom that God gave him, he is reaching upward to understand as much as he can and find the genuine meaning of life to make the most of the short time that we have in this life.

So I think this is a great relationship that exists between the book of Ecclesiastes and not only everything that Moses wrote down for Israel and what God the Holy Spirit revealed to them through him, but this psalm in particular. And the superscription in the New King James says, Moses prays for the knowledge and sensible experience of God's good providence. And of course sensible here is the old English use of the word where you have the sense of it, you

experience it.

It is experiential to the senses, it is tangible. And the psalm begins, Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth or ever you had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

You turn man to destruction and say, return, O children of men, for a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past and like a watch in the night. You carry them away like a flood. They are like a sleep.

In the morning they are like grass which grows up. In the morning it flourishes and grows up. In the evening it is cut down and withers.

And if you think about the passages that we've studied thus far in Ecclesiastes that talk about the cycle of life and the rising and setting of the sun and how like a vapor much of life is, especially left to itself, this is not unique and new to Solomon. Moses understood this. For we have been consumed by your anger, and by your wrath we are terrified.

You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your countenance. For all our days have passed away in your wrath. We finish our years like a sigh.

The days of our lives are seventy years, and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow. How many times have we seen the word amal in Ecclesiastes? Labor. And we're going to see the word sorrow today.

For it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knows the power of your anger? For as the fear of you, so is your wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Return, O Lord, how long, and have compassion on your servants. O, satisfy us early with your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days in which you have afflicted us, the years in which we have seen evil.

Let your work appear to your servants, and your glory to their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us. Yes, establish the work of our hands.

I could spend a lot of time on this psalm, and I may do that before we finish Ecclesiastes, because almost every verse in this psalm connects to Solomon's expressions of truth in that book. But you'll notice that he talks about the eternity of God at the beginning, and then he says in verse 3, you turn man to destruction, and say, return, O children of men. And what does it mean when it says God turns man to destruction? Well, the theme of this psalm is that life is brief, and we need to learn to take advantage of the time that we have.

Teach us to number our days. So God directs our attention to the fact that life is short, that there

is a termination, there's an ending of life, and whatever we do in this life is going to perish. That's the destruction.

Physical life is destroyed. It's destroyed by sin. The reason our lives end is because sin and death have passed on all men, for all have sinned.

You go to Romans and the argument there that we've seen about in Adam, all die. And I often see, I don't know if you've ever seen the entertainment tonight where they say whatever happened to... and they show the TV stars of former days, whatever happened to Red Fox, whatever happened to Sandra Dee, whatever happened to people that were seen on TV in days past. And they had a thing on educational TV looking back on 50 years of television, the 50th anniversary, and going back to all of the early shows.

You see people when they were young and in their prime. And one of the things that television and film has done just in the last several decades is preserve and really photography in just the last 100 or 150 years has given us something that we never really had before unless you had really expert portrait painters. And that is to freeze in time the way someone looks when they're young.

And film in particular is more than just a static photo of someone. It shows what their abilities were. They could sing or they could dance or all of their talents, great athletes and so on.

And what we've seen in the last 50 years in particular is the effects of sin and the effects of onward creeping death when you see someone who is old now. A lot of people didn't really know about Jimmy Durante until he was really, really old or George Burns until he was really, really old. But you look on film and see them when they were young and in their prime.

And as we see that, we see the withering of the grass and we see the fading of the flower in a very graphic way. And when you look at the ravages of time and the ravages that take place on us as we get older, and of course as we get older we experience it ourselves, it is a graphic reminder of what the Bible has told us from the beginning that we are like the grass or the flower that springs up a day and then withers and is gone. And Solomon says, you know, there is really no remembrance that your works and your presence and everything perish away.

People have to work very hard to find out about their relatives just a hundred years ago. There is only a fraction of the population that can even tell you who their great, great, great grandfather was or their great, great, great grandmother or where they lived or what they did and all of their struggles and all of their triumphs and sorrows and everything they went through in their life. Did they lose children? Did they have to move a lot? Did they have economic problems or were they prosperous? All of the hue and cry that takes place in life has perished away.

I can show you a picture of my great, great, great grandfather and I can tell you about five details of his life, but the man lived for 70 something years and I can tell you virtually nothing and I am

his direct descendant. So what has happened to all of the dream and straying of his life? Well, it has just perished away. God turns man to face the fact of destruction that because of sin, because of the fall, this life is brief and unless God's grace is allowed to intervene, it is all vapor.

It all just perishes away. Why does God allow this destruction to prevail? Why does God permit death to pass unto all men and let lives blow away like the chaff in the wind? There is a purpose for it and that is what Moses tells us in verse 3. You turn man to destruction and you say, return, have a change of mind, children of men, sons of Adam. This is beneath Adam, you sons of Adam.

You have got to do something. You have got to make a decision when faced with this. Why do we see the decrepitude creep upon us? Why do we see death and people who die even in the prime of their life? A lot of the TV stars die in their youth.

Why is that? Why does God turn us to destruction? He is saying this ought to create in you a desire for deliverance. You ought to turn. You ought to change your mind.

For God, a thousand years are like yesterday when it has passed, like a watch in the night. And verse 5, when it says, you carry them away, He is back to talking about the children of men. You carry them away like a flood.

They are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which grows up. In the morning it flourishes and grows up.

In the evening it is cut down and withers. And you have the connection of the rising and the setting of the sun with the rising of the grass in a day and the withering by the end of that same day. And He says, we have been consumed by your anger and by your wrath we are terrified.

You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins, in the light of your countenance. What is it that shows us our problem, that shows us the nature of sin and the destruction that comes along with it? It is the light of God's countenance. Those who deny God, who refuse to spend time looking at God as unbelievers and believers who don't meditate on the Word of God, that is the means that God uses to reveal Himself.

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path over and over again in the Old Testament and the New. God and His Word are compared to light. Walk in the light as He is in the light.

And that is where fellowship and companionship and two-way communication with God is. The light of God's countenance is what reveals secret sins. We may not know what is the matter.

We just know that there is something wrong. How do we find out what is wrong? We go to where the light is and the light shines in the dark place and shows us what is the matter. Our secret sins are revealed in the light of God's countenance.

All our days have passed away in your wrath. We finish our years like a sigh. Moses is talking about the general state of man here.

He is saying that left to itself, this is what happens. Unless God's grace is allowed to intervene, it is just like a sigh. What is a sigh? You just go, it is just like vapor.

It is another way of saying it is temporary like vapor. And we finish our years like a sigh. Seventy or eighty years we may live, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow.

Their boast, their praise. We are going to see this word boast this morning as well. It is soon cut off and we fly away.

It is like a bubble on the wind. Girls are outside with the soap deal and the little plastic ring. You blow a bubble, it gets caught in the wind and it is either carried away or it pops one or the other, but it is just that temporary.

Who knows the power of your anger? For as is the fear of you, so is your wrath. And this is sort of an inversely proportional relationship. To the degree that we fear God, we are spared from His wrath.

To the degree that there is no fear of God, His wrath is going to be present. So to the extent that you know the power of God's anger and you respect and understand the righteousness and the justice of God, that is going to engender holy fear. And this is not cowering trepidation.

This is respect and understanding. I was talking to a good friend of mine last night, yesterday afternoon, about the passages in the Bible that we have seen that warn us about what can happen to believers who are apathetic or indifferent or who misunderstand God's plan and purpose. So many of those have been explained away and ascribed to the unbelievers.

Romans chapter 2, that is unbelievers, or that is a hypothetical, or this weeping and gnashing of teeth, the outer darkness, that is unbelievers. These who are outside, the dogs and the murderers and those who love and practice a lie in Revelation 20 and 22, that is unbelievers. Those are the people bobbing around like corpses in the lake of fire.

And we explain away and dismiss as not applying to us the rebuke and the warning passages of Scripture. And what a fatal mistake that is for the church as we exist today. And so Moses says, we need to understand the power of God's wrath.

God's wrath will fall on His own. Judgment begins with the house of God. The axe is laid at the root of the tree.

That is the tree of Israel that God planted. That is God's own particular tree. When John the Baptist said the axe is laid at the root of the tree, that is the tree of Israel.

He says you need to start bearing fruit in keeping with repentance, in keeping with change of mind. John the Baptist faced his generation with the coming destruction, the chopping down of the tree, the winnowing of the wheat and the blowing away of the chaff, the burning of the chaff, the burning of the unproductive branches. As is the fear of you, so is your wrath.

And what should we take away from this? Should we just cower in abject fear and become reformed theology types who just are waiting for the other shoe to drop and I just don't want God to hammer me and this kind of thing? No, the conclusion we should draw is teach us to number our days. What does it mean to number your days? Suppose that I suddenly was overcome by the Spirit and had the prophetic ability to tell you the day of your death. I say, fill in your name.

An unexpected calamity is going to overtake you and the day of your death is next year on April the 1st. You're going to die on April Fool's Day next year. It's a certitude, it's an absolute fact that that's all the time you've got left is from now until April the 1st.

Well, this is what? October the 14th. Do you think that you would get a calendar after you had gotten over the shock and you realized that that's the day of your death and you'd look and you'd start measuring the weeks? I'd probably count up the weeks. I would try to think, now what do I need to do in the time that remains to me? I know exactly how much time I have left and there are things I need to take care of.

I need to make sure my family is provided for. I want to make sure that every day counts, that when I arrive before God that I'm as qualified as possible, that I've taken maximum advantage of God's grace. I would probably do a countdown.

This is like when I was a plebe and I couldn't wait for the year to end. They used to make us memorize the days until Thanksgiving, the days until Christmas Eve, the days until the second class ring dance, and the days until first class graduation. Because at first class all he could think about was, I'm going to graduate and get out of this place.

I'm going to be commissioned. I'm going to be an ensign or a second lieutenant. And any plebe walking around the yard, first he could go up to him and say, how many days until first class graduation? The guy would say, 78.

78 days until first class graduation. Number the days. You know exactly the time remaining.

And that's what Moses says here as a prayer to God. He says, teach us to number our days. Why? What's the purpose? So that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

They say you can't take it with you. There is one thing you take with you when you leave this life, and that is whatever wisdom you've accumulated in your heart. Whatever knowledge of God and the things of God, that survives.

So when God turns our face toward destruction, we often think about this when we attend a funeral or when we hear about a calamity or a tragedy that results in the death of someone. Well, teach us to number our days so that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Then he says in verse 14, satisfy us early with your mercy.

13, I didn't mean to skip it, but he says, return, O Lord, how long? Have compassion on your servants. Satisfy us early with your mercy so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. So you start out looking at death and at destruction and being sobered and numbering your days and recognizing that life is short and it's going to end.

And this starts us out with soberness, with sadness. And we look back in verse 10, even if you have 80 years of life, their boast is only labor and sorrow. And so you start out realizing that left to itself, life is going to yield only work and sorrow.

But then he says, satisfy us with your mercy so that we don't just look at life in terms of work and sorrow. Satisfy us with your mercy so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days you have afflicted us.

Now this seems like an oxymoron. Make us glad according to the days that you have afflicted us. Well, this is a life of affliction.

It starts out being a burden to go through life. We can find areas of affliction all over the place. And yet he says, make us glad according to the days you have afflicted us.

The years in which we have seen evil. Let your work appear to your servants. What converts affliction and evil? This is ra-ah.

This is calamity. This is misery. This is something that is unsatisfactory.

Remember we saw that in Ecclesiastes chapter 1. It is an evil answer that God has given the sons of men to be answered with. It's not moral evil. It doesn't mean as we look around and see crime and terrible things happening.

This is a synonym for affliction. It means that this is hardship. This is something that draws your face down, that furrows your brow.

Distress. Stress. That kind of thing.

The years in which we have seen that which does not tend to yield joy. This encapsulates for us... I've started to ask the question, but I'll just tell you the answer. When it says, make us glad according to the days you have afflicted us, the years in which we have seen evil, this is the idea that our gladness and our rejoicing and our satisfaction with God's mercy is independent of circumstances.

Happiness that is based on something external to the world, something that transcends the world. If our happiness and our peace is based on circumstances, we're going to be up in verse 10. The boast of the years and the days is only labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away.

But if we go through the process of recognizing God's justification in being angry with us and in judging us for sin, and yet seeing that along with that He has also offered mercy and we avail ourselves of that mercy, we seek to gain a heart of wisdom and lay hold of that which is permanent and that does transcend, then we will be made glad. And even though we're afflicted in the days, even though we see evil, we see unpleasant things in the years, we have gladness and we have rejoicing because our happiness does not depend on our circumstances. Our happiness depends on the grace of God.

Our happiness depends on the wisdom from God that we build up in our hearts. And we begin to live a transcendent life. Now this is quite a statement to make in the Old Testament age.

The Old Testament is all about hewing of wood and hauling of water for the sacrifices. The Jews got all wrapped up in the physical accomplishment of the will of God. But Moses at the outset told them you've got to look at the destruction of the works of this life and change your mind.

You've got to think about something that goes beyond this life. You can't get caught up in the details. You can't get caught up in the world.

Let your work appear to your servants. Instead of concentrating on our work, Moses prays to God to reveal his work. Because it's like it says in the New Testament, God is at work in you to will and to do his good purpose.

When we see the revelation of God's work, that is the basis of our joy. That is the basis of our rejoicing. Look at what God is doing.

Look at what God is giving me by way of mercy, by way of grace. That's what he said in verse 14. Satisfy us, fill us up early.

Let's not wait until we get to the end of life and we waste all the years in sorrow and labor. Let's learn it early and use our days to see the work of God. Let your work appear to your servants.

Let your glory appear to their children. Why does he say the work is going to appear to the servants and the glory is going to appear to the children? Well, the children come after, right? We see the work of God. The children see the glory of God.

When the work of God is evident, when it's present in our lives, it is going to reflect the glory of God later. We understand this truth when we go on into the Millennial Kingdom. We've talked so many times where Paul says in Romans 8, this momentary light affliction is not worthy to be compared with the glory that is about to be revealed in the sons of God.

The work of God in us is going to reveal the glory of God to subsequent generations. We are the children who look back at the glory of God revealed in the life of Moses and of Daniel and of Joseph and of David and of Jonathan and the great heroes of the Old Testament and the apostles in the New Testament. We look at the glory of God that's revealed in Paul.

And John and Peter and all the other... Stephen and the great ones in the New Testament. Let your work appear to your servants. When we as God's servants can see and lay hold of the work of God, that is what is going to reveal the glory of God to subsequent generations.

Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us. Remember we've seen good that is beautiful, tov that is yafei in Hebrew. That's good that is beautiful.

It's transcendent good. It's good that lasts beyond the setting of the sun, beyond the withering of the grass, beyond the fading of the flower. What is it that's going to reflect the glory of God to subsequent generations? It's the beauty of the Lord our God.

And Moses prays, let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us. Let us be characterized by that beauty. And establish the work of our hands.

This is not work that's going to perish. It's not work that's going to be destroyed. God, the work of God, can establish our work.

The things that we do in this life can be characterized by good that is beautiful, good that is transcendent, and good that is established beyond the end of this life. So we have in one psalm, one song in Israel that Moses wrote, an encapsulation of what Solomon goes into great detail to explain in Ecclesiastes. Well it's a great psalm.

We've just done a very superficial walkthrough there. But let's turn now to Ecclesiastes chapter 7 where I think you will see a similarity of theme and of subject matter as we look together at the first six verses here. A good name, it says in the New King James, is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth.

Better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men, and the living will take it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by a sad countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than for a man to hear the song of fools, for like the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool. This also is vapor. Well, that's probably enough for us to bite off and chew on for the present.

Let's begin again in chapter 7, verse 1. It says a good name is better than precious ointment. Well, we have the word tov that begins this passage, and it's used twice. It says, first of all, good is a name.

This says a good name is better than, but if you think about it, when they translate better than, that's the word tov, and a good name would also need to have tov in it, but there's only one instance of tov here. So it doesn't really say a good name is better. What it says is a name is better than good ointment.

The word that's translated precious there is our very same word, tov. To try to preserve that, a literal translation is a name is better than good ointment. This is shame.

They talk about the Shema, the Lord our God is one Lord, and that's sort of the doxology in Israel, and it talks about the name of God. Shame, S-H-E-M, is the word for name in Hebrew. And so it literally says tov shame, and that's the whole first phrase.

Better a name, or a name is better, if you want to render it into smoother English. But it's just two words. That first phrase is just two words, tov shame.

And it means, and when you have tov followed by a noun or a phrase, and then you have the preposition maim, which it means from, if it says basically good, fill in the blank, from, that's what we normally translate in English. Better this than whatever follows the maim. And that's the construction we have here.

So instead of saying a good name, if we say good name, then we have to say a good name from good ointment. A good name comes from good ointment, it doesn't make any sense. So what it literally says is tov shame.

A name is better than good ointment. And this is the word that means ointment, shamen. And there's a wordplay here, because you have shame, S-H-E-M, which is the word for name, and you have shamen, which is S-H-E-M-E-N, and that's the word for ointment.

So we have little alliterative statements in English like a stitch in time saves nine. Why don't they say a stitch in time saves seven? A stitch in time saves nine. You have the rhyming there, and that wordplay makes it a more memorable aphorism.

You put one stitch in when you need it, and it saves having to put in nine stitches later. Well, why do they say nine? Because it rhymes with time. A stitch in time saves nine.

Well, this is the same kind of a thing. In Hebrew, this says tov shame, m'shemen tov. So you've got tov at the beginning and the end.

So tov shame, m'shemen tov. And it's a little aphorism. It's a little rhyming wordplay sort of a thing.

So this has the effect of not making us dwell for a long time about, well, why ointment? Why not a good field or a good house or a good cow or a good wife or something like that? Why does it

choose ointment? Well, part of the reason is it makes this nice little tight aphorism that you can express in just four words. In English, it says a good name is better than precious ointment, but in Hebrew, it's just four words. Tov shame, m'shemem tov.

A name is better than good ointment. And what do we know about ointment or salve? Well, you put that on a wound and it helps it heal. It provides relief.

It provides benefit when you've got an injury, when you have a need of some sort. But it says a name is better than that. Why is this? Well, look at the parallel line that follows it.

It says, in the day of death than the day of one's birth. And this is yom ha'mut or ha'mawet. And then you have the maim, which means you're pulling the tov forward to say better the day of death than, and that's the maim.

And then the yom of... And then you have the word that... Yeled is the verb that means to give birth or to beget. And so the day of dying is better than the day of begetting or being begotten. The day of death is better than the day of birth.

Well, how are these two ideas related? How is a name better than ointment? And the day of death is better than the day of birth. There must be some relationship when we have these, what they call a dystic, a two-line piece of poetry. There's a relationship.

It's either a parallelism where two things are said to be the same or two things are contrasted. Sometimes the first line states a positive and the second line states a negative when you look through the Proverbs. And this is a proverbial sort of saying.

Well, what does this mean? Well, probably the quickest way to get to the meat of this is to take a look at Proverbs 22.1. Proverbs 22.1. Here we have a similar statement at the beginning. Proverbs 22.1. A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold. This is another parallel dystic or a synonymous dystic where the second line states a similar truth to the first line.

And it says a good name. And you'll notice here in the New King James, good is in italics. Well, it ought to be in italics in Ecclesiastes 7.1 as well, but they just didn't do it for whatever reason.

So if you remember that italics mean that the word that's supplied in the translation doesn't exist in the original. So if you mark that out, what does Proverbs 22.1 say? A name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold. So if these are synonymous, if these are two different ways of stating the same thing, we get some great illumination of what a name is from that second line.

A name is to be chosen rather than great riches. Loving favor is to be chosen rather than silver and gold. Silver and gold parallels riches, so loving favor must parallel a name.

Clear as mud, right? Well, in Proverbs 22, the word for choose here is bachar, B-A-C-H-A-R, and this is in the nifal, which is the passive, and it means the name is to be chosen rather than the name is choosing something. So a name is to be chosen, and then we have the name, which is compared to or rather than, and then it says, Osher Rav, and this is great riches. And then it says loving favor, and actually this is put at the end, and it says rather than silver and gold, chen tov, and it says loving favor here, but really they don't even translate the word tov.

You don't see the word good in that second line anywhere, do you? Loving favor is chen. That's the word for grace or unmerited favor, C-H-E-N. And so loving favor is one word, chen, but in the Hebrew there it has the word kesef, which is silver, and it has the word zahav, which is gold, and it says chen and then tov.

And this is a backwards way. Remember I told you that if you have the word tov and then something something and then the preposition maim, this means this is better than whatever follows the maim. Well, here the maim portion comes first.

You have the word for silver with a prefixed maim. You have the word for gold with a prefixed maim. Then you have chen, and then you have tov at the end.

So it's sort of a poetic reversal of our standard. If we wanted to, we could put the tov and the chen up at the beginning, and then they would have probably translated this better loving favor than silver and gold. But you'll notice, first of all, that the name is something that is to be chosen.

You choose to have a good name. You don't just inherit a good name. You don't stumble upon a good name.

It doesn't fall upon you from the sky. You choose the name. So when you think about Ecclesiastes, where it says a name is better than precious ointment, this is something that is obtainable.

It's something choosable. Proverbs 22.1 tells us, choose a name rather than choosing great riches. You can choose to pursue riches.

You can make yourself rich. You see these cardboard signs on the telephone poles, stay at home and earn \$10,000 a month. You're going to do telephone marketing or something.

If you choose to, if you want to go through the odium that some of these stay-at-home jobs offer, you can in fact make a lot of money. I would be so miserable that it wouldn't be worth it having to attack people on the phone and bring opprobrium and disgrace and hatred upon myself by invading and invagling and persuading and yakking on the phone day and night, day and night. If you want to do that, and you're willing to stoop to that level, you can make a lot of money in telephone marketing.

They're not lying when they say you can make up to that amount. There are people who do. And these are the people that you hang up on every night.

These people with a foreign accent that say, what's the interest rate on your home and all that. You can do that. Well, you can choose to pursue riches or you can choose to pursue a name.

Well, what is the name? Well, it's parallel here with Ch'in, which is loving favor. It's grace. So who knows this name? Your name is your identity.

And he says having an identity, your name is your security. Your name is your password, so to speak. We have names and passwords in the computer world now.

So what is it that gives you loving favor? Remember in the story of Esther, there was great fear because she decided she needed to go see the king about Haman and his plot to destroy the Jews. And if you go without an appointment, you could be killed. The king had the option of executing the queen if she showed up without an appointment.

And if he didn't extend the scepter and indicate his favor to her, it's off with her head. She's dead. And she had to put her life on the line to go make an appeal on behalf of her people.

Well, a servant comes into the king's room and says, excuse me, O king, Ahasuerus, Xerxes, Esther is outside. And she comes. Well, is he going to extend favor or not? Well, he does.

He extends the scepter. Why? If it had been Vashti, we know what happened to Vashti, but when Esther came in, he extends the scepter. Why? It's Esther.

Esther means star, the shining star in the sky. In his eyes, she gets favor because of who she is. It's his queen.

It's Esther. And that name is the basis that she's known. Her name is known, and her name is on the good guy list in the king's mind.

Well, what does it mean to have a name that's better than riches? What have we been studying in Luke? If you are known by God, that's the key. Who is it that's going to be granted admittance through the narrow door into the feasting place, into the wedding feast? It's those who are known by God. Jesus looks out on these others who come up and say, Lord, Lord, in your name, did we not do this, that, and the other? Did you not teach in our streets? We ate and drank in your presence.

He looks out and he says, I don't know you, where you are from. Your name means nothing to me. You say, oh, I'm the great so-and-so.

I was a prominent Pharisee. I don't know you. I don't know you.

I don't know where you're from. Judah Ben-Hur. Remember the Ben-Hur movie? What was his name? Ben-Hur.

That's where he's from. He's from Hur. Hur is his father.

Ben means son of. Judah, son of Hur. Your name told who you were and where you were from.

Jesus looks out and says, I don't know you, where you are from. You have no name with me. So a name, a name that is recognized, a name that brings the response of divine grace and favor in the experiential sense is more valuable than riches.

It's more valuable than silver and gold because the name is the basis of chen. Your name is the basis of grace. Israelites got this confused.

They said, well, because we are Ben-Abraham, because we are sons of Abraham, we're going to get divine favor. Well, it's not Abraham's name that's going to bring about the chen. Your own name has to be established before God.

And not all Israel is Israel. And not all the sons of Abraham receive grace. It's in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

So what kind of name do we have before God? Does God know our name in this sense? This is what's being spoken of in Proverbs 22.1. This is what's being spoken of in Ecclesiastes 7.1. We're going to pause and take our break. When we come back, we're going to investigate how this good name, or this name, it doesn't even say good, it's just how is this name established? How is this name obtained that brings the response of grace and favor from God? Let's pause here and take our break.