

01-11-18b Ecclesiastes

We resume our study now in Ecclesiastes chapter 7. This is the Sunday in November preceding Thanksgiving. And I often turn the radio on early on Sunday morning and listen to the programs. The radio is always set to the classical station, but on Sunday they have a series of, a rather eclectic series of radio broadcasts, everything from Christian Science to the United Methodist to Wilshire Baptist.

But I noticed a pattern in what I heard this morning because everybody's kind of thinking about Thanksgiving, but I think they like the last part of that compound word. There was quite a bit said about giving this morning. And there was one, I think at Wilshire Baptist, the guy was really... It's one of the strongest sermons on tithing I've ever heard.

And he was just really banging on the heads of the congregation about how it was incumbent to give and to use the resources that God had provided and that it wasn't fair for 25% of the congregation to be financing 75% of what went on at the church. Then he went off and something else came on and then the fellow at the United Methodist Church was... And this wasn't the main point of his sermon, but he was talking about Zacchaeus, the wee little man up in the sycamore tree and the Lord comes by and says, I must go to your house today. And of course Zacchaeus responds to the Lord Jesus and he says, If I've defrauded anyone, I will restore it fourfold and I will give half of what I have to the poor.

Well, of course, giving half of what you have to the poor, this launched a series of observations. And it struck me that there is a lot said about giving as a good work in the church today. And of course, the tacit assumption that is made is that giving to our church is giving to God.

Some kind of way we got that equivalence in that, well, when you put money in our offering plate, you have given it to God. And this to me seems to be a bold assumption to make, but it is made freely. And I guess if you have a steeple, then anything that's given to you is given to God.

But it reminded me because I was working, I was refreshing my mind on the points of this lesson this morning that just like we saw in Luke on Friday night where Jesus points out that as we grow spiritually and as we grow in our knowledge and understanding of God's plan, we find that our challenge is not so much to distinguish between sin and good or between evil and good. Our challenge is to distinguish between things that don't have an evil component or don't really have a sin component. It's a matter of setting priorities.

It's a matter of what we pursue because it is the better thing. You have a table full of good things. Which one is the better thing? Which one is the best thing? And if you prioritize something improperly, this would be sort of a silly example.

You think about triage. They have practice drills where emergency response units will go and they have people that have all kinds of latex rubber injuries that they put on them. And here's

somebody with a broken rib and a sucking chest wound.

And here's someone with a broken leg. And here's someone with abrasions. Here's someone with third-degree burns.

And they have makeup artists come out and make them all up. Then they send in the medical technicians and the ENT people to come in and they see this. Supposedly there's been an airplane crash on the runway and there's all these bodies scattered around and people moaning and groaning.

They have to try to go in and prioritize. They have to do triage and figure out what do we do first. Everybody needs help.

It's not wrong to help a person that's injured, but if you do them in the wrong order, it can become wrong. Here's somebody that's got a broken arm. Here's someone that has got a sucking chest wound.

Which one should you do first? Someone with arterial bleeding needs to be taken care of before someone that simply has a fracture. Some things can wait because they don't have the same priority. And if you do them incorrectly and let the person drown in their own blood or choke or they don't have their airway clear and they lose their life because you were busy trying to put a splint on a broken arm, you've taken what started out being a good thing, helping someone with a broken arm, and it has become an evil thing.

It has become bad because it was out of sequence. It was in the wrong priority. This is the challenge for us as believers.

If we simply say, well, what I'm doing is okay because there's no sin in it. The Bible does not prohibit this activity. This is legitimate.

The Bible even says I should do this. I should honor my father and mother. But that's the point that we saw Friday night in Luke where Jesus says, if you're going to be a follower of me, that priority has to make all of your other priorities, all of your other loyalties that are traditionally thought of as being highest and greatest look like hate.

What does Jesus say when he says, unless you hate your father and mother, you can't be my disciple? Well, this is when you're stacking priorities. As soon as you put I want to follow the Lord Jesus Christ into that list, it pushes everything else so far to the bottom that it pushes it into the red. What started out being love by comparison is going to look like hate.

If it comes to a genuine choice between those two things, now a lot of people make a false choice. We talked about that as well. There are people who wind up sacrificing their marriage or having their children grow up like weeds because they say, well, I'm in the ministry.

I'm busy with my urban downtown rescue mission or I'm down here ministering to the sick and afflicted or I'm over here in Borneo preaching the gospel to the savages and that's why my marriage fell apart. I was gone 18 out of the last 20 years, never saw my wife and she ran off with another guy. But that's just a sacrifice I made for the Lord because the work of the gospel is more important than my marriage.

That's wrong. God never calls someone to any form of ministry that is going to erode and break down and unravel things that he has made as a part of the divine institutions that govern human life, marriage, family, the nation, that are never going to come in conflict and people make a false distinction. But there is a time when we have to choose.

Jesus did say that when he came, it doesn't bring peace, it brings a sword and it can divide families. But don't divide out of a misunderstanding. There are times when we're divided, but it's because we do understand, because we are having to choose.

We are having to observe a priority and let things in this life go. So it is important for us when we think about what Solomon is bringing to our attention here as he calls us to examine the greater and deeper truths of life, that what we pursue must be something that yields eternal fruit. It has to be something that produces a throne, an advantage, a profit, something left over at the setting of the sun.

If it doesn't, even though it's good, even though it's justifiable, even though it's reasonable and you can justify it in many different ways, if it has superseded a greater priority, which is seeking that which lasts, that which is good, that is beautiful, then we have taken a good thing and we have made it a bad thing. We see this all over the Word of God. You remember Paul talking to the people in the first generations of the church who were mixed in with people that still observed the law and thought that meat offered to idols, meat that had been laid in front of a rock for an hour or so, was not to be eaten, that it was sacrilege to take food that had been a part of a pagan worship ceremony and put it on your table and serve it to your family and your guests.

Other people said, hey, they laid it in front of a rock for an hour. It's a meaningless rock. I don't see any legitimacy in the pagan things, but it's good bargain meat.

I can be a good steward of my resources here and get meat at two-thirds the price or half the price. Who cares if it's laid in front of a rock? I don't assign any weight to... Well, you can make a case either way, but let's say that you understand rightly that it doesn't change the meat to have briefly laid in front of some carved image if by partaking of that you cause a weaker brother to stumble. You've taken what started out being legitimate and right and made it into something that is wrong.

So our life as believers is a life of thinking, of analysis, of examining who we are and what we do in the light of God's Word and in the light of the priorities that God's Word teaches us we should

observe. And if we ignore the fact that there are priorities in this life, we are going to misprioritize. We're going to wind up when the sun sets watching the vapor flee into the wind.

We will arrive in the kingdom of God empty-handed. We will not be reflecting His glory. We will not be the good and faithful servant.

We will be outside the banquet hall. Why? Not because we engaged in a life of crime or because we became racketeers and that we embezzled and we cheated and skinflinted and did this and the other. It's because we prioritized things that were considered good, that we thought were good, that we pronounced to be good, that had no sin and no evil component to them per se, and concentrated on that and missed the higher priority.

God actively seeks what we pursue. That's what He looks at. What are you after? What is your goal? And this, of course, is the great component of the triad of Christian virtues, faith, hope, and love.

Hope is that aspect of our Christian life that embodies looking ahead. What is the impact of what I am doing right now in terms of God's kingdom, in terms of eternal weight of glory? So in chapter 8, we've already seen the statements of Solomon having to do with where you end up rather than how you begin. You can stand tall at the beginning, but did you have the long and enduring spirit that carried you through to the end? Paul tells us time and again, you have need of patience.

It is those who persevere who will inherit the promises. Don't be deflected by a troubled spirit. Don't let anger rest in your bosom.

Don't look over your shoulder and say, why were the old days better than these? Wisdom doesn't look in that direction. We've arrived now at verse 11. This is my translation.

Wisdom is good with permanent possession. The word here in verse 11 that is translated inheritance in the New King James is nachala. N-A-C-H-A-L-A.

Nachala is from a verb nachal, which originally meant to flow down. It is used of canyons and of mountain streams, several places in the Scripture. It came to mean that which you receive as a permanent possession.

It flows down from your ancestors. It's a part of your tribal birthright, your clan birthright, your family birthright. Many people could buy and sell property, but the unique thing about nachala is this is property that you receive as a birthright.

It's not acquired by purchase. It's not acquired by default. It's acquired because it is a birthright.

It is a permanent possession, and it came to be used of that which you gain that you cannot lose. The Hebrew here says, Tovah hachma im nachala. Almost all of the words end in A-H.

Tovah hachma. Tovah is the feminine of the noun tov, which means good. Tovah hachma.

Hachma is the word for wisdom, C-H-A-K-M-A-H. Then im is the preposition that means with, and nachala is the word we've just discussed. It means permanent possession.

Wisdom is good with permanent possession. The second half of the verse says, Ve-yeter le-roeh ha-shemesh. You have the conjunction wau, which means and.

It's a very versatile word, but here it means and. Then we have yoter. Yoter is from yatar, which is the verb that we get the noun yitron from.

Yitron comes from yatar, as does this word, yoter. The O-E-N fix here tells us that this started life as a participle. O-E, this is like putting I-N-G on a word in English.

So it has the idea, when it says advantage or profit, that this is an ongoing thing. It's like it is being an advantage. It is advantaging.

It is profiting, if you get the participle idea into the noun. Wisdom that is associated with permanent inheritance. This is not wisdom that helps you do your job well, or wisdom that helps you not get taken in a financial deal.

This is wisdom with permanent possession, wisdom that leads to securing eternal things in this context. It's profiting those. Then we have roeh.

Once again, you have the O-E-N fix here for raah, which is the verb to see. And this is, it is profiting those who are seeing. Those who are seeing HaShemesh, the sun.

Remember Beth Shemesh is a town in Israel. Beth Shemesh, house of the sun. You know, there is a house in Israel they call the rising sun.

Well, Beth Shemesh, that's the one. Lat roeh HaShemesh. Beth Shemesh, it is profiting those who are seeing the sun.

Now this is an interesting statement for two reasons. First of all, it tells us that there are different kinds of wisdom. There is Chakmah, and we've already seen this in the preceding context.

There's different kinds of Chakmah. There's different kinds of wisdom. But this is wisdom that produces an inheritance.

This is wisdom associated with a permanent possession. Something that is the antithesis of HaVel. It's not vapor.

It does remain in your hand after the setting of the sun. And it is profiting. Remember the question at the beginning, what profit is there to a man under the sun? Well, here is the profit.

Wisdom with an inheritance is profiting those who are seeing the sun. So the second great thing about this is that we say, well, pie in the sky, by and by, I'm laboring and wearing a hair shirt and trudging on in this life. I am a poor wayfaring stranger traveling through this world of woe.

I'm all plagued around with sickness, death, and just waiting for that fair land to which I go. And it's all gloom and doom. Solomon says, no.

The great thing about this inheritance, this possession that you gain through wisdom, is it benefits you now as well. It is going to give you a tangible advantage, a tangible profit that you hold in your hand as you are seeing the sun. He could have said this many different ways.

He could have constructed the grammar many different ways. But he uses these two sort of participial forms in a row. He says it is profiting those who are seeing the sun.

You can leverage the eternal weight of glory that you're building up into the present. It's not just pie in the sky. It's not just blessing by and by.

It benefits now. And it's a genuine benefit. It's one that you seize and lay hold of and then you carry with you.

It's a permanent possession. You gain it and you can't lose it. Well, why is this? He says in verse 12, wisdom is protection just as money is protection.

But the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors. That's how it reads in the New American Standard. Let me read the New King James here.

It says, Wisdom is a defense as money is a defense. But the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it. But you'll notice there's quite a few italicized words there.

And literally in Hebrew here, it says, you have the word for, which is ki, K-I, then betzel, which is B apostrophe T-S-E-L, ki betzel hachakma. So in, and the B that's prefixed before the apostrophe there, that's the preposition in, by, or with. The letter bait serves that function.

So either in, by, or with, whatever tzet is, T-S-E-L, hachakma. Betzel, you have the same construction right after hachakma, you have betzel again, ha-kasef, K-A-S-E-P-H. So it says for in tzet, hachakma.

That's where the wisdom is. In tzet, whatever tzet is, you have ha-kasef. Kasef is the Hebrew word for silver.

You often find it in combination with the word for gold. So, and tzet is interesting in its own right because tzet, its root meaning is shadow. That's what tzet is.

The tzet hamawet is the shadow of death over in Psalm 23. It doesn't say in the valley of the

protection of death, does it? Or in the valley of the defense of death. It's shadow.

Tzel means shadow or shade. It comes to connote, in some contexts, protection. You will dwell under the shadow of his wings.

But when you have that connotation, you always have the thing that is casting the shade. I am in the shadow of the rock. I am in the shadow of his wings.

But whenever you have a shadow, it means there's something there casting that shadow. If you're in the shadow of something strong, it means you're abiding in the shadow of the Almighty. He is overshadowing you.

He's protecting you. His strength is your shield and your fortress and that sort of thing. Well, we don't have that here, but they just said, well, it's tzel and it says silver.

So, well, it's good to have silver. It protects you. So, wisdom is like money.

It protects you. This is all read into the verse, in my mind, without sufficient justification. What it literally says is, because the way they translate this, they say for wisdom is a defense as money is a defense.

But you see the word *as is* in italics because there's no Hebrew word here that makes a comparison. What it literally says, and I gave you the Hebrew here, for in shade, hakakma, in shade, the wisdom. In shade or in shadow, hakasef, the silver.

Well, before we even go to the second half of the verse, what's he talking about here? What's our context? What was the last phrase of the previous verse? Wisdom with a permanent associated with that leads to, that is combined with permanent possession is being profitable to those who are seeing the sun. Where do you get shade? Where do you get a shadow? You've got to have a source of light, usually a point source of light. If you're going to cast a sharp shadow, you've got to have a point source of light.

When you go to a photographer's studio and they don't want shadows on your face, they put lights all over the place. But here, if you have shade and you have a shadow, you've got one source of light. What would that be in this context? It's the sun.

The sun shines, and because you have the sun shining, you have the shadow. You don't have shadows at night unless the moon is really bright. And the first word in verse 12 says for or because.

So why is it that wisdom associated with permanent possession is being profitable to those who are seeing the sun? Well, because when you're seeing the sun, what else do you see? You see shadows. We see by contrast. If you completely flood something with light, you can't see anything.

Did you ever overexpose your pictures? You get too much light, and if they give them to you anyway, like they do at Walmart, if the thing is just white, you can barely distinguish anything. You were too close with the flash, and all you see is two red holes where their eyes were and everything else is white. Too much light.

You need contrast. You need the light and the darkness to give things to three-dimensional artists know this. When Janelle does a picture, by the way, I saw a card taped up that has the three kids sitting at the table.

And I thought, well, the style of that looks familiar. I looked closely, and the person who was a Buckner employee, they didn't even know, but I saw J.K. Rainey down in the lower right of it. It was one of Janelle's cards.

But to make something look realistic and to make it look three-dimensional, and that's one of the things that's striking about that particular picture if you've seen it, is the interplay of light and shadow. You need shadow to bring out the definition. Well, the other thing about sunlight, what do they say, what do women who are in the upper classes, you think a few hundred years ago, back in Shakespeare's day and in the Elizabethan age and the Victorian era even, what was the mark of beauty? Just the opposite of now.

People absolutely did not want a tan. They carried parasols. They wore bonnets.

And don't let the sun strike my face. The paler the better. They used to take small doses of arsenic to make them pale because being pale was a sign of nobility.

I'm not out there in the fields. I'm not out there getting sunburned and getting all wrinkled up like a prune. People knew what the sunlight does to your skin.

Even now they say, stay out of the sun. It gives you premature wrinkling. Have you seen these sun bunnies in Southern California that want to get out there and get a tan every year? They get to be about 30 years old and they look like they're about 55.

Their skin has just turned to leather. And if they don't do something about it, they just start looking like that bog man we were talking about on the break where their skin is just leather-like. And they've very prematurely aged.

The sun can have a destructive effect. You can go over to Job where he talks about a slave who's been working and he wants to find the shade. He says, just like a servant wants to find the shade.

He's been out there toiling in the hot sun. What do you do? Well, you want to get out of the sun. I was trying to work on the pool project out here and I dug that great big 18 x 36 foot hole in the ground out there.

And the sun was really beating down here in June and July and the early part of August. And I had to come in sometimes because the sun was just too hot. And when the soles melted off of my tennis shoes out there, I felt like I was sliding around on goo.

And I looked down and the glue had melted on my shoes and my soles were coming off. And I thought, well, you know, this is probably a sign I should come in. It's too hot.

So when the sun is beating down on you, what does the sun represent here in Ecclesiastes? The rising and the setting of the sun. This is the passing of time, right? The passing of time. Remember Psalm 89 we read in the first lesson this morning? Lord, remember my life is short.

Time is passing. The sand has fallen through the hourglass. So are the days of our lives.

And we break down, especially in this age of photography and videos and home movies and things. You can see the passage of time. You look at pictures of yourself just a few years ago and you look now.

You look at pictures of your loved ones and you just see we're wilting in the sun of the passage of time. We're like the grass withers and the flower fades. And we all do.

It's just a part of the effect of the fall. So wouldn't it be great to find shade? Shade is the place of shelter from the effects of the sun. Why is wisdom with permanent possession profitable to those who see the sun? Because they find the shade.

They find the place of refuge from the effects of the sun. You beat the system. You find your way out of the goldfish bowl.

You lay hold of something that's outside the limits of this evil answer that God has given to the sons of men. In shade is wisdom. In shade is silver.

Silver, when you find it not in combination with gold, it often means money or wealth. But again, it has the idea of permanent wealth, wealth that you hang on to. And when you look at the comparison with the previous verse, what are the two things that we saw mentioned in the previous verse? We saw chakma and we saw nakhalah.

We saw wisdom and we saw this permanent possession. In this verse we have wisdom and we have silver, which parallels permanent possession. Finding the shade, finding a way to be shielded from the effects of the sun, that's where the wisdom is.

That's where the nakhalah is, the silver. It's not wood, hay and stubble. It's not temporary.

It's not consumables. It's permanent. Silver retains its value.

So literally, without adding any italicized words, verse 12 says, for in shade, chakma, in shade, the wisdom, in shade, the silver. That's where the value is. If you're seeing the sun and you're

wise and you're going to lay hold of a permanent possession, you're going to find the shade.

The second half of the verse says, and we've got another wow here, which means and, and then we have yitron. Once again, Solomon is answering the question that the first part of the book asks. And profit, advantage, yitar literally means to be left over, to be left when you subtract out your costs.

This is the profit. This is the advantage. And profit, then we have actually two nouns in a row here.

We have da'at, which is the word for knowledge, and we have for a third time, chakma. So we have three nouns in a row, yitron, da'at, chakma. Profit, knowledge, the wisdom.

And the question is, how do these nouns relate to one another? We don't have prepositions. We don't have connecting words here. We don't have infixes to tell us the relationship between these nouns.

My translation of this is, in the shade is wisdom. In the shade is silver. And profit is knowing wisdom gives life to her owner.

Profit, yitron, where is the profit under the sun? Profit is knowing that wisdom gives life to her owner. Remember Jonah outside Nineveh after God relented and did not destroy the city? And Gordon, he wanted that shade to get under. Without the shade, he said, you know, my life is just not worth living.

You can die in the desert without shade. Wisdom gives life to her owner. Wisdom finds the shade.

Wisdom finds that which beats the deleterious, destructive effects of the sun. The life-taking effects of the sun, if you will. For the idea of shadow connoting protection, you can look at Psalm 91.1, which we memorized not long ago.

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress. Being in the shade is to be sheltered from something.

You can look at Psalm 17, verse 8. Keep me as the apple of your eye, David prays. Hide me under the shadow of your wings. Hide me from the wicked who oppress me, from my deadly enemies who surround me.

You see this in Isaiah, chapter 49, verse 2. The speaker there says, listen, O coastlands, at the beginning of Isaiah 49. Listen to me. Take heed, you people from afar.

The Lord has called me from the womb, from the matrix of my mother. He has made mention of

my name. He has made my mouth like a sharp sword.

In the shadow of his hand, he has hidden me and made me a polished shaft. In his quiver, he has hidden me. It speaks of service in a divine commission.

God doesn't just shelter us because we need shelter. He shelters us for a purpose. He shelters us for a reason.

Verse 3 of Isaiah 49 goes on to say, He said to me, You are my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. And the ironic thing about this is that it is when we find ourselves in the shade that the glory is revealed. You would think, well, if you're going to look for glory and you're going to look for brightness and shining, you would look out in the sun.

But silver is shiny, and it's used as a term for shiny things. There's a place in the Psalms where it talks about a dove that has silvered wings and a golden tail. It says you're going to shine like this dove with silver wings and a golden tail because the silver turns out to be in the shade.

You look at the sun and you say, well, this is where things are bright. This is where things are shiny. And we look at this life and we prioritize things that look shiny and look glorious under the sun.

But Solomon says, you know what? The real silver, the thing that genuinely shines and has permanent value, is in the shade. It's in the place you would not expect it. It's when you go into the shade and get sheltered from the sun that you find that which is of lasting value.

And it's another way of picturing and illustrating how important it is for us to look beyond the sunshine of this life, beyond the obvious things of this life, and look for the hidden things of God. Look for the priorities that are not immediately obvious and not immediately visible in terms of their benefit or their reward in this life, but they are pleasing in God's sight. When He looks at us and sees what we pursue, He's pleased.

He is glorified. We shine brightest in the shadow of the Almighty. Oddly enough.

Verse 13 goes on to say, Look at the work of God. Who is able to straighten that which He has made crooked? Consider here, literally it's the same verb we just saw. Ra'ah, those who are seeing the sun.

He says, you're looking at the sun. Look at the work of God. Who is able to straighten that which He has made crooked? Once again, it harks back to chapter 1. What is crooked cannot be made straight.

Now we find out that it's God that caused it to be crooked. Crooked is a fascinating word. One of these days we might take a look at it.

This is not perversion. God does not pervert. God does not cause people to sin.

God did not make our nature crooked. But God made the world crooked. You remember that song, there was a crooked man who walked a crooked mile.

He found a crooked sixpence on a crooked stall. He had a crooked cat and all the rest of it. Everything in his world was crooked.

Well, because of the fall, because of sin, that's why these limitations exist. God brings us up short. He shows us the transience of life.

You can go to Job 8.3. God does not pervert justice. Psalm 146, verse 9. The Lord watches over strangers. He relieves the fatherless and the widow.

But the way of the wicked, in the New King James it says the way of the wicked, he turns upside down. But it's our same word here. The way of the wicked, he makes crooked.

He puts obstacles in their path. God has put obstacles in our path so that by the distress of our face, our heart will be made good. If we recognize the obstacle of impermanence, if we recognize the obstacle of Havel in this life, we will start looking for the wisdom accompanying permanent possession.

We'll start looking for the shade in which we find that wisdom, the shade in which we find the silver that lasts. Look around. God has made things crooked for a reason and you can't straighten it out.

If you busy yourself with trying to straighten what is crooked in this life, this is what people pronounce to be good. They say, look at my altruistic efforts. Look at the foundation that I started.

What celebrity has not started some kind of foundation to fix a disease or to help some category of disenfranchised or disadvantaged people? Everybody has got some good work that they're engaged in. Solomon, he's not saying that it's wrong to do good things, but he says, you're not going to straighten out what God has made crooked. Don't busy yourself with something that you're pronouncing to be good and miss the greater good.

Don't do the wrong triage on the runway. Don't be fixing broken arms when you yourself have got the sucking chest wound. And it sums up in verse 14.

Verse 14, I'll read it to you from the New King James. In the day of prosperity, be joyful, but in the day of adversity, consider. Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other so that man can find out nothing that will come after him.

I don't know about you, but that just leaves me dazed and confused. I went through and retranslated this and here is my translation. And this is as literal as I can make it.

It's almost too literal. In the day of benefit, and this is the word tovah, the very same word that we saw up here when it said that wisdom is good with an inheritance. It said tovah hachakmah.

Well, this is tovah. In the day of benefit, in the day of tovah, be with good. And you have bah, which is with, and tov.

So in the day of tovah, be with tov. That's what it literally says. In the beneficial day, be in the good.

Be with the good. And in the day of calamity, can you guess what the word is for calamity? It's rah, with the evil ion. The evil answer that God gave the sons of men in chapter 1. In the day of rah-ah, look also at this.

And what do you think the word is for look? Consider. It's rah-ah, with the aleph. So we have a wordplay here.

In the day of tovah, be with tov. In the day of rah-ah, rah-ah at this. In the day of evil, look at this.

And then we have a really difficult Hebrew phrase. And we're not going to be able to cover it this morning. And if you look at your different English translations, you'll see this handled in a number of different ways.

Anytime you compare translations and see a wide difference, it's because there's trouble in the original text. And believe me, there is trouble here. But unlike some that I haven't really been able to puzzle out, this one does come clear.

And I'll just give you the fruit of that and maybe explain it next time. In the day of benefit, be with good. In the day of calamity, look also at this.

Corresponding to this, God works in a manner such that man will not find anything after it. Corresponding to this, God works in a manner such that man will not find anything after it. He says, look, when the day is beneficial, when the day is good, be with good.

When you're not facing obstacles, when you're not facing trial, when it's not a day of calamity, focus on the good. When it is a day of trial, when it is a day that makes your face in distress, look at this. Corresponding to this, corresponding to the day of calamity, God is working.

God is at work in the day of calamity in a manner such, and you can see the awkwardness even in English, that God is at work in the day of calamity in a manner such that man will not find anything after it. Corresponding to this, God works in a manner such that man will not find anything after it. What does this mean? What happens in the day of calamity? We think, well, this had to happen for a reason.

There has to be some good that will come of this. I went through this difficult time, I went through

this terrible catastrophe, but I learned this life lesson from it that is benefiting me now. Solomon says, that's not the point.

God works in the day of calamity such that you're not going to find anything after it. If you're looking for the good, if you're looking for the good that goes into eternity, you're not going to see it in the day of calamity. You're not going to find what you think you're going to find.

You find unbelievers who say, I'm a better person because I went through this terrible thing. I'm a better person because I had this disability happen to me or I lost my sight or I lost this or that or the other. God is at work in such a way that in the day of calamity you don't find anything after it if you're looking for the real good.

Well, as you can tell, that's something we're going to have to cover a little more. We've got plenty of scripture, we've got a whole series of points on exactly what God does as He is described in Ecclesiastes and it's something we'll have to save for next time. But if there's one thing that should be clear at this point, it is the difference between good that we pronounce to be good under the sun and good that is found in the shade.

The good of intrinsic value that survives the setting of the sun that doesn't depend on the glow of the sun for its glory. It's in the shade. It doesn't need the sun to shine.

It's silver. It lasts. It's a permanent possession.

That is what we should pursue. That is what God is actively seeking. And as we analyze our priorities and our activities, that should be the standard of measure.

Let's close in a word of prayer. Father, we thank You for the privilege of studying Your Word together. We thank You that You clarify for us the issues that define our lives as believers.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will make fruitful use of these truths in our souls in the days ahead. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.