

01-12-16a Ecclesiastes

We'll continue our worship this morning with our scripture reading. We have a double scripture reading I have occasionally done. We've paused and looked specifically at the birth of Jesus Christ at this time of the season, and we're not going to this year, but I do want to take note of the season that we celebrate by including in our scripture reading this morning the first portion of John chapter 1, because this is a wonderful encapsulation.

We have sung our Christmas hymns this morning that talk about the birth of Christ, His nativity, the visit of the shepherds, the visit later on of the wise men, but the great significance, even when we sang the doxology this morning where it says that all people that on earth do dwell should sing to the Lord with a cheerful voice. What is the basis of that joy? Well, we sang our Christmas song, God rest ye merry gentlemen, which means rest you, be comforted, and have a merry heart when you do, have joy, and it's tidings of comfort and joy, and those tidings are that there was a child born in Bethlehem. But John summarizes the significance of this so well in the first portion of John chapter 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all through him might believe.

He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light, which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world did not know him.

He came to his own, and his own did not receive him. But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John bore witness of him and cried out, saying, This was he of whom I said, He who comes after me is preferred before me, for he was before me. And of his fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him. John mentions several things in this passage that strike a chord with us in our study of Ecclesiastes.

He talks about light, the light shining in the darkness in verse 5. There is a light that is not the light of the sun passing overhead. It is the light of God's Word. Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

And of course, Jesus is the Word incarnate. He is the light. And that Word, in verse 14, became flesh and dwelt among us.

We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. That phrase, grace and truth, is repeated twice. Once there in verse 14 and again in verse 17.

And if you've ever wondered how we arrived at the name for our church, it's this passage, Grace and Truth Bible Church, because our focus on the study of the Word of God and seeking to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is to recognize God's grace and to seek to understand God's truth. But it's a wonderful reminder of the love of the Father in sending his Son on our behalf, the preexistent Son of God who created all things, who declared the Father to us because he is separated from us. Jesus Christ is the mediator that Job longed for and looked for when he faced the higher questions of life during his time of testing.

And you remember when we reviewed the book of Job, how Job longed for a mediator, how I wish that someone could span the gulf between God and myself. And Jesus is that mediator. He is the only begotten Son who declares the Father because none of us have seen or can see God at any time.

And speaking of Job, if you'll turn now back to Job chapter 28, this is the other portion of our scripture reading this morning. Our section of Ecclesiastes in chapter 7 has frequently alluded to wisdom and the value of wisdom, finding wisdom like silver in the shadow and its value beyond things material and beyond relationships. Job has something to say about wisdom in the midst of his consideration and his conversation with his companions during his great time of trial.

And he says in chapter 28, this is Job speaking, Surely there is a mine for silver and a place where gold is refined. Iron is taken from the earth and copper is smelted from ore. Man puts an end to darkness and searches every recess for ore in the darkness and the shadow of death.

He breaks open a shaft away from people in places forgotten by feet. They hang far away from men. They swing to and fro.

As for the earth, from it comes bread, but underneath it is turned up as by fire. Its stones are the source of sapphire, and it contains gold dust. That path no bird knows, nor has the falcon's eye seen it.

The proud lions have not trodden it, nor has the fierce lion passed over it. He puts his hand on the flint. He overturns the mountains at the roots.

He cuts out channels in the rocks, and his eye sees every precious thing. He dams up the streams from trickling. What is hidden he brings forth to light.

Now this first half of chapter 28 is talking about man with his skill and with his science, with his technology. There are treasures in the ground, and man is able by his ingenuity to seek out and lay hold of these treasures. You can see the similarity in language to what we studied in Ecclesiastes chapter 7, where in the shade is where you find the silver.

In the shade is where you find the wisdom. In the shadow, in the dark place, the place that's not necessarily revealed by the light of the sun. Shadows and shade are created by the shining of the sun.

But there is a place where silver resides. It's in the ground, and so there is a mine. A mine is the work of man's hands.

There's a place where gold is refined. Someone builds the furnace and builds the fire and has figured out how to use bellows and to heat the gold sufficiently so that it can be refined out of the ore. Iron is taken from the earth, and copper is smelted from ore.

You study ancient Near Eastern history, just as a side note here, and they think that Israel and the Exodus and all that took place in the middle bronze age, and that iron didn't come in until after the time of David and Saul, and that any mentions you see of iron must be later redactions or insertions into the text. Job is one of the older, if not oldest, books of the Old Testament. This, I think, was written possibly during the period of either the sojourn in Egypt or possibly during the time of the judges, but it's older than David and older than Solomon and older than Saul, and it talks here about the fact that iron is taken from the earth.

They already knew, and this tells you that there are some problems with the assumptions and with the dating in some cases of ancient Near Eastern history. Iron is taken from the earth. Copper is smelted from ore.

Man puts an end to darkness and searches every recess. He lights a torch and goes down into these caves and mines and holes in the ground. He searches for ore in the darkness and the shadow of death.

He risks his life. They had cave-ins probably even more frequently in the ancient world than they do now. They didn't have all the engineering principles and didn't have the hydraulic equipment and so on that we have, and so they would risk their lives to go after this treasure.

He breaks open a shaft away from people in places forgotten by feet. They hang far away from men. They swing to and fro.

They would find caverns and caves. You may have seen some of the archaeology that's been

done over in the area of the Dead Sea, scrolls, discoveries where the caves around Qumran and that area where some of these are shafts and where you have to rappel down or dangle by a rope. He's saying people are risking life and limb to get at this treasure, and they figured out the technology.

They figured out how to make ropes and how to let themselves up and down and to dig out the ore and to find it and to smelt it, refine it, all of these things. As for the earth, from it comes bread. It doesn't say from it comes wheat.

From it comes bread. Bread is a refined product. Bread is the product of man's work of planting, harvesting, threshing, grinding, baking, adding other ingredients.

A lot of wisdom and skill goes into that. The earth, from it comes bread, but underneath it is turned up as by fire. Its stones are the source of sapphires, and it contains gold dust.

That path no bird knows, nor has the falcon's eye seen it. None of the rest of the animals on the earth know how to produce bread. They don't know how to get precious metals out of the ground.

The lions, animal strength doesn't do it. But man, in verse 9, puts his hand on the flint. He overturns the mountains at the root.

Man has the secret of fire. Man knows even a large mountain. He can mine right down to the very heart of it.

He cuts out channels in the rock, and his eye sees every precious thing. He dams up the streams from trickling. What is hidden he brings forth to light.

This is talking about not just irrigation or channeling water, but also about sluicing. If you saw the treasure of the Sierra Madre, you remember that Humphrey Bogart at the beginning is down and out in a flop house, and he runs across an old gold prospector. They get together, he and a prospector and a third man, and they go way out in the mountains of Mexico.

This guy shows them how to divert water and make a sluice so that they can pan for gold on a large scale. And this is ancient technology. Man figured out how to do this, or was taught by the angels, possibly, way back.

So he dams up the streams, and what is hidden he brings forth to light. He can also redirect a riverbed, and then look in the riverbed where the water has done the work of channeling and cutting and find the gold and things in the bed. But now look at verse 12.

But where can wisdom be found? Where is the place of understanding? We have salt mines, we have gold mines, we have silver mines. Do we have wisdom mines? Man does not know its value, nor is it found in the land of the living. The deep says it is not in me, and the sea says it is not with me.

It cannot be purchased for gold, nor can silver be weighed for its price. It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire. Neither gold nor crystal can equal it, nor can it be exchanged for jewelry of fine gold.

No mention shall be made of coral or quartz, for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, nor can it be valued in pure gold. You notice that there are five verses here that talk about the value of wisdom.

He could have just said it is more valuable than gold and left it at that. But the expansiveness of this description is designed to emphasize the point. Why does Job here, under the inspiration ministry of God the Holy Spirit, take five verses and say there is nothing you can think of that is valuable that compares to wisdom? Well, it is making a very strong point.

Verse 20, from where then does wisdom come, and where is the place of understanding? It is hidden from the eyes of all living, and concealed from the birds of the air. Destruction and death say we have heard a report about it with our ears. God understands its way, and he knows its place.

For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees under the whole heavens to establish a weight for the wind and apportion the waters by measure. When he made a law for the rain and a path for the thunderbolt, then he saw wisdom and declared it. He prepared it, and indeed he searched it out.

And to man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. And to depart from evil is understanding." Well, that is a wonderful parallel and corollary to what we are studying in Ecclesiastes chapter 7, where we resume our study this morning. We have looked in great detail at the first 20 verses or so, and we have moved through the next few.

But if you review the content of chapter 7, you remember that the pursuits of life were reviewed. Do you want to spend all your time in the house of feasting? No, you don't. You want to find something that lasts.

Verse 11, Wisdom is good when it is permanent, when it is a permanent possession. And it is not just good for the future, it is also good in the present. It is profitable to those who see the sun.

And verse 12 is really different when you read it in Hebrew than it is as it is translated here. We saw that in the shadow is wisdom, and in the shadow is silver. It is in the dark place, the place that is not immediately apparent as you walk around under the sun.

You have to go seeking and searching, as Proverbs chapter 2 points out, to find it. The excellence of knowledge is, or it is excellent to know that wisdom gives life to those who have it. There is a life beyond this life.

There is a life that transcends biological life. There is a fruitfulness in God's plan. It is another synonym for partaking of eternal things.

It says consider the work of God. The same thing Job points out. God knows and is the source of wisdom.

God appoints things, both prosperity and adversity. And the experiences of life that we have are designed to make us aware of the fact that there are intangibles. There are higher and greater truths.

Solomon says, I have seen everything in the days of my vapor, my transient path through life, my little meteor streak through the sky. I have seen things that don't seem to make sense. I have seen the just man perishing in his righteousness.

I have seen the wicked man prolonging or lasting long in his wickedness. He says don't be overly wise, don't be overly wicked or overly foolish. What is he talking about here? Well, let's back up a step because this section of chapter 7 is basically, what are the distractions from wisdom? What is it that distracts us from the objective pursuit of wisdom, the objective pursuit of that which lasts? Well, if you go back to your fundamentals, you go back to the very basic things in view of life, if your eyes are not on God and his word, i.e. wisdom, where are your eyes? Where are the other places where your eyes can rest? In other words, what is the definition of subjectivity in the spiritual realm? To be subjective is to have your eyes on people, your eyes on self, or your eyes on things.

And isn't that really what Solomon is talking about here, what he has suggested as he looks at possessions, as he looks at things and circumstances and achievements, details of life, the labor in which he labored under the sun? These are projects, these are accomplishments, these are endeavors and task lists that he has accomplished. Well, this is eyes on things. Nothing wrong with accomplishing our tasks, but if it rises in priority to become our objective and our goal in life, if they are not the means to the end, if we have our eyes on God and on the wisdom and the word of God, then the things that we do are all going to be cast in that light, they are all going to be viewed from that perspective.

This is not just a thing to be done, this is a thing to be done in a way that is pleasing to God. This is a thing to be evaluated in the light of God's view, rather than just, I have this thing to do, I have done it. So this is eyes on things, and Solomon talks about that.

He also talks about eyes on people. I have looked around and seen other people. I have seen other people who seem to be righteous and things do not turn out well for them.

They are righteous and they seem to perish in their righteousness. I see fools and wicked people who seem to last long in their foolishness and wickedness. This is causing me to question whether my path is really wise or whether I am really pursuing the right things.

This is eyes on people, it is subjectivity. He is going to continue that theme of eyes on people when we come on down to verse 21 and 22. But he also has an appreciation for what happens when you get your eyes on yourself.

Do not be overly righteous, do not be overly wicked, do not be foolish. What is he talking about? Do you obsess with your own self? Am I being righteous? How am I viewed? How am I evaluated? What is my reputation? You can actually take a good thing, which is being righteous, and you can make it a bad thing by obsessing on it, by constantly having in your mind not what is God's evaluation of this action or of my thinking, but am I perceived to be righteous? Do I feel righteous? Am I comfortable with myself? This guy, the bald-headed guy, I never can remember his name, that is on every year when they have the PBS drive for funds, their pledge drive, this guy comes back on. What is his name? Yes, Dave Dyer.

Dr. Dave Dyer. Triple D. A few years ago he appeared on the scene and every year he has come back. He introduced himself and he said, you know, I've got two statues on my desk.

I've got Emerson on one side and I've got Thoreau on the other side. He presents himself as a modern day philosopher and purveyor of wisdom. One of the things that he goes on about, and if you can hold the flame under the palm of your hand, like G. Gordon Liddy for a while and watch this, it is fascinating because you see that there are people who have the same religious zeal toward various philosophies and religions as the healthy believer has for God and for his word.

We are built to have a zeal. We are built to function in the spiritual. That's the way our soul is designed.

We were created in the image of God. The problem is if we reject the wisdom of God, if we reject the knowledge of God, if we reject God and his plan, then that engine is still running. It's still trying to function, but it's going to have to latch onto a false object and it inevitably leads to subjectivity.

You can analyze any of these philosophies and listen to the purveyors and the speakers and the leaders and they always lead you. Watch Oprah if you can stand it. Oprah is a big eastern mystic.

She's big on yoga. She's big on meditation. She's big on visualization.

She brings in all of these people who bring in these substitutes for that which is eternal, that which is substantial, that which partakes of God. That is the genuine chakma. That's the genuine wisdom.

It's like people who have a healthy appetite. Appetite is supposed to lead us to eat healthy foods, but you can fill up on junk food. You can fill up on things that are unhealthy for you because your appetite is going to function.

If your chooser is malfunctioning, then you're just going to eat the wrong things. Well, in the same way, you've got Dr. Dave Dyer, you've got Dr. Phil on Oprah, and you've got a lot of these other folks who inevitably just watch it, analyze it, look at it in the light of God's Word. What does it do? It turns eyes on self.

It turns, am I happy with myself? Dr. Phil says, you already know the answer to what's the matter with your marriage. Dave Dyer says, oh, well, Susie Orman, the financial woman. Have you ever noticed that so many of these different things, weight loss, financial management, philosophy, and relationship management, all of these present themselves as a lifestyle.

It just knocked me right out of my chair. I was watching, because this is telethon season, and there are good programs on PBS, but if you leave the station on, you get all kinds of flotsam and jetsam. Well, Susie Orman, she's a wonderful, knowledgeable person on finances, and she can tell you all about Roth IRAs and mutual funds and no load this, but she's not content to just give you financial advice.

Listen to her spiel. She says, it's a lifestyle. Money management is a lifestyle.

If you want to be successful in life, money management is the key. It's the key to happiness. It's the key to success.

It's the key to security, and people, she has audience things where they come out unrehearsed. She has no idea. They haven't been pre-screened.

People stand up and ask questions about money, and she answers them, and people will say, well, I can't decide. I have a lot of stock in this. I've got 85% of my portfolio in this one company, and I can't figure out whether I should diversify or not.

She says, she says, you know, the best financial advisor that you can get is you. You already know the answer to your financial questions, and she says, what do you want to do? What pleases you? What makes you comfortable? What makes you happy? You already know. You wouldn't be asking the question about diversifying your stock if you weren't troubled about having it all in one company.

Well, she says, listen to yourself. Make yourself happy with your money, and it's a lifestyle. Get one of her books.

There's a lot of great financial advice in there, but watch the context and the setting. She's wrapped it in lifestyle. Dr. Dave does the same thing.

Dr. Phil does the same thing. Half of the speakers that you hear on Oprah, if they're not telling you some three Kleenex story about their overcoming some great tragedy, they're telling you how to live your life and how to feel good about yourself, or it's a story about somebody who has come

to feel good about themselves. Well, this is what Solomon is talking about here.

Do not be overly righteous. Do not be overly wicked. Just do what feels good.

Find that place of comfort where you can look at yourself and be satisfied. This is eyes on self. This is subjectivity.

What can divert you from having that eternal good that is beautiful in your hand when the sun sets? Subjectivity. If your eyes can only be four places in this life, I promise you, no matter what you're doing, no matter what you're thinking about, no matter what you choose to consider, your eyes are going to be one of four places. It is either going to be eyes on God, or it's going to be one of these three.

Eyes on self, eyes on other people, eyes on things and circumstances. There's nowhere else for them to go. You have four alternatives, so you have a 25% chance as a believer of being right just by happenstance.

People turn to God in times of extremis. They turn to God in times of pressure. Wouldn't it be great if we could keep our eyes on God and on his word and walk in wisdom, walk the narrow road a greater and greater percentage of the time? Well, that's what this chapter is about.

If you don't want to get all tangled up in the details, what is Solomon saying? There is silver to be found, but it's not laying right out there on the surface. People who walk around under the sun are going to see the three obvious things. They're going to look at themselves.

They're going to look at other people. They're going to look on things, their accomplishments, their circumstances, their possessions. So Solomon says, after talking about 16 and 17, the eyes on self, are you going to obsess on being righteous? Are you going to get your eyes on yourself and on being upright in your own eyes? Well, the only reason I'm giving this money, or the only reason I'm helping this person, the only reason I'm engaging in this act of ministry, or handing this guy something out the car window, is I kind of feel bad.

I've done a few malfunctioned things, but I'll even the scales. I'll do some righteousness. I want my righteousness to be sufficient.

Solomon says, don't obsess on yourself. Don't be overly obsessed on your own righteousness. Don't be overly obsessed on your own wisdom.

There are people who make a religion out of the Word of God, who want to memorize the points, and want to have notebooks filled with notes, and want to have the answer to any question that comes up. It becomes an end in itself. Instead of being the means to understanding God, and being the means of having an accurate evaluation of life, it becomes an end in itself.

To be overly wise, it's like a pharisaical wisdom. Nobody can stump you. They bring up some

obscure passage of scripture, and you already know the answer.

You're prepared. The Calvinists are wonderful for this. Reformed theology is great for having an answer for every question.

Take them to Romans 9. They can explain it all to you. Take them to the most obscure dark passage. I form light and create evil.

They can tell you exactly what it means. They've got their theology all mapped out. Well, it's a dangerous thing to talk about answers, and to talk about wisdom, and to talk about righteousness, because people think, well, how can that be wrong? How can it be wrong to have the answers? It can be wrong to have the answers.

Have you ever had somebody be right, and it just made you sick that they were right? And when they told you the right thing, it just annoyed you? You can be right in your own eyes. You can be right, and yet you can be wrong, because you make an issue out of your rightness instead of using that knowledge the way it's supposed to be used. You can take any legitimate thing, and you can push it and make it wrong if you change its priority, if you get it out of sequence, out of context.

This is what Solomon is talking about, subjectivity. Consider the work of God. Don't be busy considering your own works.

Don't be busy considering your own self. You get there meditating on your spiritual navel. It's a healthy thing to meditate on God's Word, and to evaluate our life, but not to obsess.

That's not life. God does not say, Thou shalt meditate three hours a day. Thou shalt spend every spare waking moment with a furrow in your brow, wondering about yourself.

Is my righteousness sufficient? Have I avoided? We've got to relax. We've got to function. You remember, everybody probably has taken driver's training.

Remember when you're 15 years old, you get in driver's training, and when you get to be 15 and a half, you're going to get a permit, and somebody can ride with you in the front seat. And so when you first get behind the wheel of a car, I can remember, of course, I had done some driving of Jeeps and tractors and things, but I remember in driver's ed, the very first time I got behind the wheel of this shiny, undented car, and maneuvered it out of the school parking lot into traffic, and I was petrified that I was going to hit something or have a spasm and go off in the ditch. You know, the country roads out there where I grew up, we would drive on the highway to Claremore, and here's these big 18-wheelers going by.

Back then, portions of 66 were still two lane, and there was oncoming traffic just inches away, rushing by, and the combined, you know, I knew physics and 120 miles an hour. And so when you're driving, you obsess on everything. You're thinking about every maneuver of the wheel.

You're thinking about how hard your foot's pushing on the gas. You're thinking about your blinkers, and you're just hyper about everything. Well, when's the last time any of us were hyper about driving? I mean, I've gone clear to work and back and never given driving a thought.

I change lanes. I stop at lights. I maneuver in and out and take exits and make turns, and my mind is running on a lesson or something, thinking about some Hebrew word, and I realize that minutes have gone by, and I haven't given a conscious thought to driving at all.

What a contrast from when I first got behind the wheel, and I was consciously, vitally aware of every single movement and every single thing. Well, it's not healthy to be that hyper when you're driving. You're supposed to learn your way out of that.

You're not supposed to be paralyzed with fear and hyper-cautious. You can cause wrecks by being too cautious, especially in Dallas. So, this is what he's talking about.

Eyes on self is an unhealthy preoccupation with self. It's not to say we should never examine ourselves, that we should never look at ourselves in the light of God's Word. I think that's clear.

Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten rulers of the city. Wisdom gives you the ability to function. It will guide you better than having ten advisors.

You don't need Dr. Dave. You don't need Dr. Phil. You don't need Susie Orman.

You don't need Oprah. You don't need all of the other advice mongers. If you have the wisdom from God, it's better than a crew of ten advisors who are qualified to run a city, walking around behind you, guiding your steps.

It's better. Don't obsess on your accomplishments or your possessions. Don't obsess on how other people are doing.

Look at verse 20. There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin. You're worried about this wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness or about the righteous who perishes? Don't make a big issue out of the relative righteousness or the relative wickedness of other people.

Should we note it? Should we perceive it? Should we act accordingly? Yes, but don't obsess. Don't run your mind on it. There's nobody that's perfect.

There's nobody who does good and does not sin. And because of that, don't take to heart everything that people say. Sometimes when they speak, they're going to be in sin.

They're going to be in error. So don't take it to heart. This is subjectivity.

Oh, somebody made a comment about my appearance or somebody made a comment about the

appearance of my house or somebody said something about that comment. I think they were saying something about my child or about my spouse or about my family or about my beliefs in the Bible or something they said. Have you ever had somebody make a remark and you don't really know how to take it or you tend to want to take it in a bad way and it just puts a big black cloud over the sun and you walk around in darkness the whole rest of the day.

You think, well, why did they say that? And I wonder what they meant by that. I'm not guilty of whatever it is they were implying with that statement. Solomon says don't take to heart everything people say lest you hear your servant cursing you.

Well, why is it the servant cursing you? Well, because this is someone for whom you are responsible. This is not someone making a critique on the outside. This is someone who knows everything that goes on.

This is someone who's intimately acquainted with your doings. You can push aside the comments of your neighbor or the guy down the street and say, well, he just doesn't know. But when your servant curses you, the servant sees all and knows all.

The servant lives right there in the house. And if the servant is cursing you, he's pretty well got all the facts. Plus, what business does he have? He's beneath you.

He's supposed to be abjectly loyal and obedient and not be rendering criticism. So it's doubly troubling. He says you might hear your servant cursing you.

And it says many times you in your own heart know that you have cursed others. I've got to get my other, get my Sam Hall version up in front of me here. Because the translation of this literally from Hebrew, when it says the, this is, you know, thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

And so I've got to put my Bible on my feet here so I can still see it and see my digital version as well. But it says many times also in your own heart you have known that you have cursed others. What does that mean? Well, you're not supposed to curse others.

You remember what Jesus said in the New Testament, if you say to your brother, raka and thou fool, and the various levels of punishment that come from cursing your brother. So to know in your heart that you've cursed others, what does that mean? You know that you've been out of line, that you've made faulty judgments, that you've said things that should not have been said, that you've caused somebody else to spiral out of control by your observations or your criticisms or your snide remark or whatever it was. And he said, you know, just remember, you know that you've made comments that, that you shouldn't have made and that weren't valid and that caused somebody else to, to have a troubled spirit.

Well, now here's somebody else doing that same thing. So don't assign it more weight than you

should. You should not ignore every critical remark that's ever made, but by the same token, you should not be obsessing.

Verse 22, also many times, you know, in your heart that also you yourself, the you in there is, is mentioned three different times. You know, in your heart that also you yourself have cursed others. Take it with a grain of salt, allow for the failures of others.

There's no man in the earth who is righteous, always does good and never sins. So have a balanced perspective about people, about things and about yourself. That is the path to objectivity.

That is the path that avoids subjectivity. All of these things can be kept in perspective. If you your eyes on wisdom.

Now, Solomon says in verse 23, all of this, I tried with wisdom. He says, I tested this out. This word in Hebrew is great because it has a very close resemblance to the word try in English.

We say, oh, she's a very trying child. You know, she tests the limits of my patience. See, I'm saying she, because this is the politically correct thing.

You know, you don't just always say he when you're referring in the general. Now you're supposed to say she half the time. So she is a very trying child.

And the word try. And even when you say, well, I'm going to try that. And we say, I'm going to attempt it.

Do you notice the relationship between attempt and tempt? And I'm going to try something. I'm going to test and see if I can do it. Well, that same locus of meaning is found in this word that is translated here in verse 23, to try.

It can mean to test or to put something to the test. It can also mean to attempt or to essay something. And Solomon is saying, I have checked this all out with wisdom.

I have made the attempt to do all of these things. I've tried to be objective and not subjective. I have tried to avoid letting the comments of people throw me off stride.

I have tried to avoid looking around at other people and letting their circumstances and the fact that they might be righteous and they seem to do badly, or they might be wicked and they seem to do well. I've tried with wisdom to avoid having that happen to me. All of this.

I have tried with wisdom. I said I would be wise, but it was far from me. This is an amazing statement for Solomon to make, because here's the thing.

Let's say that you were here at class this morning or you hear this on tape and you say, okay, that objectivity, that sounds like a really good thing. I don't want to spiral into subjectivity. I'm

going to keep my eyes off of self.

I'm going to keep my eyes off of people. I'm going to keep my eyes off of things in an obsessive way. I'm going to have that balanced approach.

I'm going to walk in wisdom. Solomon says, hey, I tried it and it was far from me. It is not enough to want to walk wisely.

It is not enough to want to be objective. This is the problem with Dr. Dave and Dr. Phil and Dr. Susie and all these other people. They can tell you all these wonderful things.

You can be swept away on a magic carpet of tranquility listening to Dr. Dave. He has a soothing presentation. He doesn't wave his arms.

He just kind of walks slowly back and forth and he speaks in a very conversational tone and talks about Emerson and Thoreau and Walden Pond and his experiences in the past. And he can just lull you and you think, oh, you know, that's the path I want, the path of tranquility, the path of peace, the path of knowledge, the wisdom of the ages boiled down into a nice video that I can get for a donation of \$99 to KERA. And that's all fine until you turn off the TV and get up and start living your life.

And you've got screaming kids and you've got bills to be paid. You've got people running into your car and totaling it. You've got all kinds of things happening.

And well, you know, where's Dr. Dave walking around with his tranquil attitude with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune? Solomon says, you know, I was king in Jerusalem and I tried out this stuff with wisdom. But, you know, people kept running into my throne room with problems. I kept having to chop babies in half and things.

I mean, it just doesn't work as good as it sounds. So how do you accomplish this? Well, guess what? We're gonna have to pause and take our break. But when we come back, we're going to continue on in chapter seven and see what Solomon has to say about his attempt, his try at walking in wisdom.