

02-02-17a Ecclesiastes

Let's continue our worship this morning by turning for our scripture reading to Psalm 9. Psalm 9. Anytime I get to this section of the Psalms, the beginning section, I am always drawn to Psalm 8. It's one of the most fascinating Psalms where, when you get to verse 4, What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man, that you visit him? You have made him a little lower than the angels, and you have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of your hands. You have put all things under his feet, the sheep, the oxen, even the beasts of the field.

All of that kind of makes sense. And so you get to, you have put all things under his feet, and you have made him to have dominion. But then it says, the birds of the air and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the sea.

And you think, well now, in what way do we have dominion over the birds? You see the birds all lined up on the telephone wires. You see them flocking in the tops of the trees. And we basically have no dominion over the birds.

And what dominion do we have over the fish? We can net off small areas and keep the sharks out or something. But there is a prophetic element in Psalm 8 that is tied up in fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ. And of course, that's why this passage is quoted in the New.

But anyway, I've done a lot of detailed work on Psalm 8. And it's kind of like a strong gravitational force. So I'm going to try to ignore Psalm 8. I already have failed, but I'm going to try to ignore it and go to Psalm 9. Because in our study in Ecclesiastes, if you think of where we are in Solomon's argument, what has he been talking about in chapter 7 and chapter 8? He's been given this wisdom. He's tried out a lot of different things.

He's tried to navigate the best course through life. A course that will yield a profit at the end. Something tangible, something concrete, something that will last beyond the setting of the sun.

And having defined what that is, namely, pleasing God and the fear of the Lord, that silver that is found in the shade, the wisdom that's found in the shade, the wisdom that has the power to give life to its Lord or its owner, its master. He has gone on to talk about all of the things that deflect us and distract us. Because in order to lay hold of that wisdom, we have to lift our eyes out of the earthly.

We have to lift our eyes out of the ordinary. And it's virtually impossible for us to do. It is impossible for us to do in our own strength.

We cannot get our gaze beyond the immediate. And that's why in chapter 7, he talked about those different areas of subjectivity. We tend to get our eyes on self.

We tend to get our eyes on people. We tend to get our eyes on the opinions of people. We get our eyes on possessions and accomplishments and goals and things.

And he covered all the different areas of subjectivity where our mind becomes engaged in a story. Remember the soap operas? I don't know how much it happens anymore, but when I was a youth, my grandmother and a lot of her circle of acquaintances and women in her generation just got completely absorbed in the soaps. And *As the World Turns* and *All My Children* and these other things would just captivate.

I mean, they would never miss. You could imagine them being more faithful to watch that program than attending church or making a hair appointment or anything. I mean, it's just not to be missed.

This is engagement. This is being absorbed and concentrating on something. Think about the O.J. Simpson trial or the presidential election with the ballot counting in Florida and the attacks on Iraq a few years ago where people were tuning into CNN and watching with great captive interest exactly what was going on.

Well, this is sort of our regular pattern of behavior when it comes to who we know and what we do, where we live, our job, our tasks, our financial picture, our goals, our life. Solomon says you've got to pry your attention loose from these things and look beyond the setting of the sun. You've got to be objective and look at things from God's perspective rather than subjective and be caught up in the world and ensnared in it.

It's like the woman whose heart is snares and nets and whose hands are manacles. The allure, the promise, this usually false promise, this bite into the luscious apple that turns to ashes in the mouth of this world and its accomplishments and its satisfactions. Solomon says, look, I've tried all of these things.

I've applied my heart. God gave me this wisdom. And I'm telling you, you've got to pry loose from subjectivity and become objective.

And he gave us those three broad categories in chapter 7. And then he sort of summed up. And we saw in 8.1, which is really the summary of chapter 7, that the wise heart is the one that causes the face to shine. Your outlook, your countenance is changed and transformed when you get this perspective because you are no longer a victim of your circumstances.

You are no longer a captive to the things that enslave and ensnare human beings and cause them to end up with an empty hand, with vapor, with the impermanent and the transient. That's how he started this book. So now in chapter 8 of Ecclesiastes, we're seeing the basis.

What is it that you use to focus your mind on these eternal things? Well, he reminds him of the covenant promise of God. It's the promise that God made to David. It's the promise that were

made, all of the promises that were made to the fathers, going all the way back to Adam and Eve in the garden and continuing through Abraham and through Moses and down to Solomon's father David in 2 Samuel chapter 7. The promise of perpetuity of a Davidic heir on the throne of Israel and the attendant blessing and prosperity of the nation if the king is faithful, if he leads the people to be faithful.

And when Solomon dedicates the temple, we saw that in Kings. The prayer that he prays and the renewal of those covenant, those contractual terms that God made defines the national life of Israel and by extension the individual lives of the people within it. So it is critically important for them to remember who they are and why they're here and to live their lives in that light.

They can't be allured, they can't be distracted by short-term transient and impermanent objectives. They've got to have their eye on the prize and this is in the Old Testament perspective. Well, what is it that causes us to stumble? He's already defined those three areas of subjectivity.

Now in chapter 8, he's saying you've got to remember the terms of the contract. You have to remember the promises that God has made and the purposes that he is going to fulfill. And the king is foremost.

If the king has got to keep this in mind, if he's the point of the spear, so to speak, he's up at the top, he's most visible to man and to God. If this applies to him, then a fortiori it applies to everyone else that's beneath him and under his reign. So in verse 5, we saw Solomon say, the one keeping the contractual command does not know an evil matter.

The time and the judgment, the wise heart knows. You've got to remember the time. Et, E-T is the word.

Same one we had in Ecclesiastes chapter 3 verse 1. Well, our scripture reading this morning anticipates where we're going because one of the great distractions is to think that there's no result. I'm trying to do this. I'm thinking ahead.

I'm trying to live in a way that pleases God and I just don't see it panning out. I don't see the payoff here. You say you're supposed to live to please God.

You say keep the covenant promise. You say that the wise will have a shining face and a bright outlook, but I just don't see it panning out. I look around in the world and I don't see where there's an advantage.

Well, this is where we're going this morning because isn't this the logical next step? If someone says don't be worried about pleasing people, don't be worried about accomplishments, don't be worried about possessions, don't be worried about yourself, don't be trying to make yourself righteous for its own sake, don't be preoccupied with your spiritual navel examining and that kind

of thing. Well then, where's the payoff? If I'm going to say, okay, I'm going to ignore all of these things, then what is this yitrone I'm supposed to have in my hand? What is this profit I'm going to end up with at the end? If it's not the esteem of people, if it's not the acquisition of property and possessions, if it's not accomplishment and fame, and if it's not personal self-satisfaction with how righteous and wise I've become, then what is it? That's where he's going. Well, let's look at Psalm 9. This has a fascinating superscription.

It's always tricky when you're jumping back and forth between Hebrew and English in the Psalms because the superscription you see there where it says, To the chief musician, to the tune of death of the son, a psalm of David, that's verse 1 in the Hebrew text. So when somebody makes a reference to any of these psalms that have a superscription, you have to look and say, well, are they talking about the English verse or the Hebrew verse because they're always off by one. In the Hebrew text, English verse 1 is the Hebrew verse 2. So verse 1 of Psalm 9 says, To the chief musician, to death of the son, and if you have your New King James there, you can look down at note 3 where it says, Hebrew, mut labbein.

Remember ben, like ben her, means son or son of. Mut is the word for death. Mawet and mut are from that word group.

And so mut labbein is death of the son. And this says, we get the idea that this is the tune that David either wrote or at least associated with these words. But the title is there for a reason.

There's another tune that he uses two or three times called The Lilies. And you'll see that one referred to here and there. And David had favorite tunes that he would write words, and he, I'm sure, wrote these tunes as well.

It would be great, maybe in the kingdom we'll get to hear some of these tunes. Maybe David will give a little concert and we can all go down there. Instead of going to a Gaither concert, we'll go to a Dawid Ben Yassi concert.

We'll get to hear David play his compositions and we'll have the capacity to understand Hebrew in its original and it'll just be great. But this is to that tune. But it's significant.

Why is this title here, Death of the Son? From our perspective, it foreshadows some things because if it were not for the death of the son, none of our life would have any meaning or purpose. Death of the son, for David, could have been the death of his firstborn with Bathsheba. But it implies some things.

There is a sacrifice. There is a sad occasion. Death of the son is probably in a minor key.

I can't imagine it being a little happy polka tune. Death of the son is probably a slow and minor key tune. What does that do when you hear something like that? It's sort of like, what child is this? It's contemplative.

It slows down. You think about the cost. You think about what it takes for these things to be true.

David says, I will praise you, O Lord, with my whole heart. I will tell of all your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in you.

I will sing praise to your name, O Most High. I find this fascinating because you would think, here is a how great thou art kind of a thing. How great thou art is in a major key.

It's a pleasant and uplifting tune. It's not mournful. So how can you take these words and put them to a mournful tune? I think it's important to note that there are times when we are in a melancholy situation.

Maybe we've lost a dear loved one. We're not depressed. We're not those who grieve with no hope.

But you can be suffering. You can be oppressed. You can be under the gun, so to speak.

You can have pressure on your soul and not be happy and jolly. And yet you can still recognize the truth of the greatness of God, the provision of God, the love of God. And it is that that gives us the quiet peace and hope, even in the face of that which causes us to be thinking in a minor key.

Minor doesn't mean despair. And this is the reality of life. There are many times when we're just not that keen on how things are going.

We suffer a loss. So I think this is quite fascinating that this death of the son, which I am sure was a minor key tune, has these words of constancy and of faith in God, even in the midst of whatever trial is at hand. I will praise you, O Lord, with my whole heart.

I will tell of all your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in you. What an odd juxtaposition.

I will be glad and rejoice in you. I'm not glad and rejoicing in this situation. I'm not glad and rejoicing in this loss, the death of the son.

But in you, I will. That's something that never changes. When I think of the Lord, when I think of His grace and His faithfulness, that never makes me sad.

And what is the way to put a flotation device on a sinking soul? Look at the Lord. Think about the Lord. When you devote your whole heart to concentrating on Him and thinking about Him and His marvelous works, there is a gladness and there is a joy that transcends any earthly circumstance.

I will sing praise to your name, O Most High. When my enemies turn back, they shall fall and perish at your presence. David says, you know, I've got some enemies in the periphery here.

They're breaking through my lines. But when they turn back, they're going to fall and perish at

your presence. God is greater than the enemies or any situation the enemies can produce.

For you have maintained my right and my cause. You sat on the throne judging in righteousness. Remember, we've seen Mishpat two or three times here in Ecclesiastes chapter 8. There's a time and a judgment.

Mishpat, same word here. You sat on the throne judging in righteousness. You have rebuked the nations.

You have destroyed the wicked. You have blotted out their name forever and ever. Now think about this.

Has God yet destroyed the wicked? Has He yet blotted out the name of these nations and these wicked ones? David is transporting himself to the future, isn't he? The wicked have not yet been blotted out. They've not yet been destroyed. But in David's mind, he says, you know, from the divine perspective, from the eternal perspective, it's as good as done.

O enemy, destructions are finished forever. And you have destroyed cities, even their memory has perished. But the Lord shall endure forever.

He has prepared His throne for Mishpat, for judgment. He shall judge the world in righteousness. And He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness.

The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And those who know your name will put their trust in you. For you, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.

Sing praises to the Lord who dwells in Zion. Declare His deeds among the people. When He avenges blood, He remembers them.

He does not forget the cry of the humble. Have mercy on me, O Lord. Consider my trouble from those who hate me.

Now, again, I ask you, if He says, Lord, I'm having trouble from these who hate me, how does that jive with verse 5? You've destroyed the wicked and blotted out their name forever. This is His hope. This is His confident expectation, isn't it? That God is going to rectify this at some future point.

But it hasn't happened yet. He says, look, I'm at the gates of death. Have mercy on me, O Lord.

Consider my trouble from those who hate me. You who lift me up from the gates of death, so that I may tell of all your praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion. I will rejoice in your salvation, in your deliverance.

The nations have sunk down in the pit which they made. In the net which they hid, their own foot is caught. The Lord is known by the judgment He executes.

The wicked is snared in the work of His own hands. Selah. You also have the word, hegion, or meditation there.

And you almost wonder if this is not the refrain. You know how in the hymnal we have the verses up above and then we have the refrain. And it will be great to get a fully restored hymnal from Israel and find out what some of these musical notations mean.

But preserved in the text here, it means pay particular attention to what follows. Because this is probably the part that was repeated. This would have been the chorus of the hymn.

Or the refrain. The wicked shall be turned into Sheol, and all the nations that forget God. For the needy shall not always be forgotten.

The expectation of the poor shall not perish forever. Arise, O Lord, do not let man prevail. Let the nations be judged in your sight.

Put them in fear, O Lord, that the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah. Let's return now to Ecclesiastes chapter 8, our translation of this.

And I begin the chapter in verse 2. I myself guard the mouth of the king for the sake of the contractual promise of God. Contractual promise there is the Hebrew word Shabuot. And this is the oath.

This is the statement of terms. God says, I am party of the first part. This is what I am obligating myself to in the contract.

And we reviewed that. We went to Kings 2 Samuel chapter 7 and reviewed what God has promised. Paraphrasing it, He says to the king, if you are faithful, if you do not depart from my laws and my statutes and my judgments, then you will not fail from the throne of Israel.

Your descendants will be here and I will bless the land for your sake. But if you depart, if you forget, if you ignore, I will bring down retribution on you and on the nation. So that is the contractual promise of God.

So Solomon says, look, the king is prominently mentioned in this contract. The king is foremost in these recently communicated statements from God. This is very recent.

It is within a few decades at most that everyone was at the dedication of the temple. They have heard Solomon repeatedly remind them of what God has said. It is a contractual promise.

Shabuot is used when there is a contract, when there is an agreement between two parties. So he says, I guard the mouth of the king. I guard what I say.

And of course the mouth of the king, the commandment of the king, is a figure of speech for his

entire method of rule because he rules by issuing orders. He says, I am careful in what I say, in what I promise, and how I deal with other nations, and how I operate as king. I guard my mouth because I am ever mindful of this contractual promise of God.

He says, do not hurry from his presence. He talks about the presence of God in the temple. He says, remain here and be with us so that we can come here and pray to you in that dedicatory prayer.

Do not hurry from his presence. Walk. Do not stand in an evil matter.

If you find yourself straying from the path, if you find yourself wrapped up and entangled in an evil matter, halak, go forth. Get away from it. Don't stand in it.

Don't remain in this evil word or evil matter. For everything which he purposes, God, everything which he purposes, he will do. And the word there for purpose is kapets.

Kapets. C-H-A-P-H-E-T-S. There's a noun and a verb.

This is the verb form. We go back to Ecclesiastes 3.1. To everything there is a season and there is a time, et, for every kapets, kapets. It's kind of a cross between a P and an F there in the middle of that word.

C-H-A-P-H-E-T-S. Kapets. And we saw that in the last words of David.

That's the desirable goal. That's the purpose. That's the objective.

The thing that you want accomplished. Everything that God purposes, he will do. And this is referring back to the covenant promise, the oath that God took.

He says there's positive and there's negative. We've talked about this in the New Testament. Remember, we are heirs according to promise.

And people just kind of let that last phrase float by. We are heirs according to promise. Well, the promise has positive statements and negative statements.

He who endures, we have need of faith and patience and endurance to inherit. If we fall away and are not renewed to repentance, we are like a field full of thorns and brambles that is fit only for burning and is near to a curse. It tells us in Hebrews chapter 6. That's all part of the promise.

The promise has positive clauses and negative clauses. Patty and I have worked many times on rental leases for people that are renting property. And we used to work in the property management field.

And you look at those leases, and the lease says the landlord agrees to do the following things. If the water heater bursts, the landlord will fix it. If there's improvements that need to be made,

repairs that need to be made, the landlord will do it.

The tenant has the following responsibilities. And if he fails, if he brings in all of his family and you have 12 people living in a two-bedroom house, if you damage the property, if you do this at an event, here are the remedies. We will take you to court.

We will evict you. We will send you a three-day notice or a 30-day notice or whatever. There are positive things.

These are the benefits that the landlord will give you if you're faithful and pay your rent on time. There are remedies, and there are negative actions that will take place if you fail. Same thing with God in the Old Testament and in the New.

There's such a tendency today. You look at the prosperity gospel types and the let's all get healed and let's all get prosperous. Let's plant the seed and let the windows of heaven open.

Only want to look at the positive statements. We are heirs according to the promise. The promise says there are conditions upon which we will inherit and there are conditions upon which we forfeit inheritance.

Solomon says the same thing. Keep these things in mind. He says, I do.

I guard the mouth of the king. Everything which God purposes, both positive and negative, He will do. Verse 4, In which the matter of the king is foremost.

Shilton. Shilton is used for something which is on top. It sometimes refers to someone who's a ruler, somebody that's on top of the situation.

He's got mastery over the people. He's got some form of authority that he can exercise. We talk about the head man or the top position in terms of authority.

That's what Shilton means. Well, here he says the matter of the king or the word of the king is uppermost. That's prominent in the covenant promise that God made.

And who's going to say to God, What are you doing? If he decides to discipline the king. If the king can't talk back to God, who else can? Because he's uppermost. He's the highest.

He's representing all Israel. So, verse 5, The one keeping the contractual command. And this is mitzvah.

M-I-T-S-V-A-H in verse 5. This is the party of the second part. The legal obligation. Mitzvah means keeping the terms of the contract.

It's the specifications, the rules, the specified action, the legally determined responsibility. The one keeping the mitzvah, the contractual command, does not know an evil matter. If you're

keeping that covenant, verse 2, then you're not going to get entangled in an evil matter.

You're not going to stand in it. You're going to walk. You're going to go forth from it.

And you're not going to know it. You're not going to be associated with it in any way. And the time and the judgment, the wise heart knows.

Have you ever found yourself getting entangled in something and you know it's not legitimate. It's not right. It's not a good thing to be in.

There's not really a good way to get out of it. And you think, you know, this is probably going to go unnoticed. These people that are doing this shady thing are probably not going to suffer any consequences.

I can probably just shut up and not rock the boat and not get in any serious trouble. This thing is being done in such a way, these people know they're going to get away with it. It's going to be okay.

Let's just, why not just turn a blind eye, just let it ride, just get on through and not worry about it. But Solomon says, you've got to separate yourself from an evil matter, from an evil conversation, from an evil word. Even if nobody else knows, even if it has no consequences in this life, you've got to separate it because the time and the judgment, the wise heart knows.

The wise heart knows that even if you don't see the hammer dropping on this evil matter, even if it looks like they're making a clean getaway, the wise heart knows there is a time and there is a judgment. And that language harks back to chapter 3, doesn't it? There is a time for every kafets. There is a season, there is a time to gather stones, there is a time to cast away stones, there is a time to sow and a time to reap, there is a time to give birth and a time to die.

There are different situations. There is a time when you ought to be doing one thing and there is another time when you ought to be doing the exact opposite. But the wise heart knows the time.

And from a spiritual point of view, if this is a time to be sowing and not a time to be gathering, and all these other people are saying, hey, instead of planting this seed, let's take it home. Nobody will be the wiser. There is plenty.

Let's take this seed that ought to be sowed and let's take it home and let's gather it and we can stock the larders. We can make bread for months out of this. Why sow the seed when we can just take it home? Well, there is a short-term game there.

You've got plenty of seed for the present, but what's going to happen when it's time to reap the crop for the following year and you haven't planted anything? There is a time to plant and you ought to be planting, whether anybody sees it or not. The wise heart knows the time and is not diverted from the time, isn't distracted from it, isn't talked out of it or persuaded or convinced

another way. And the wise heart knows that there is a judgment.

Whether or not it has a consequence in time, whether or not justice is done now, there is a judgment that is coming and the wise heart knows this is faith in what is not seen. Right? The wise heart knows the time and the judgment. Then we get to verse 6. For to every purpose, every kafaiz, there is a time and a judgment because the evil of man increases greatly.

The New King James says something about the misery of man increases greatly. This is our old friend Ra, R-A with the evil ion. It can mean misery.

It can mean affliction. It can mean something unpleasant. It has a wide range of meanings.

And those meanings are determined by context. And when you're talking about judgment, we're not talking about misery. We don't say, well, everybody is real miserable.

Let's hold court. Let's get the judge in here. It's evil.

Evil gets judged. When judgment is in the context, then Ra is going to be talking about evil. Right? So, for every purpose, every kafaiz, every goal, even whether or not you actually fulfill it or not.

There are people that try to do a bad thing and they don't actually fulfill it. It doesn't get that far. Maybe somebody tries to arrange a hot date with their secretary and they're married or some secretary who's married gives in and says she'll have a hot date with somebody and she shouldn't.

And then maybe it doesn't happen. Maybe something intervenes. But there was still a purpose.

There was a thought process. There was a setting of a goal. And whether or not that goal is accomplished, that's a thought and intent of the heart.

And remember, Jesus talks about this in the New Testament. If you look at a woman to lust after her in your heart, it's all the same in terms of having committed a sin. People say, well, I've already lusted after her in my heart, so I might as well go ahead and carry it out because I might as well be hung for as cheap as a lamb.

That's not the rationale. The conclusion to draw is not well, once I've thought the thought, I might as well commit the action because I'm already guilty. The idea is bring your thought life under control so that not only do you not commit the act, but you don't become guilty of the thought either.

It's such a weird... People just try to find a license to sin. Well, I've already committed the thought in my heart. Teenagers do this.

I've heard it. I heard it in a well-known church where they were taught this principle and said, well,

I've already had the thought, so I might as well go ahead and... We've already lusted in our hearts, so let's go ahead and sleep together. It's just strange.

There is a time and a judgment because the evil of man increases greatly. That greatly can also mean upon him. And it's difficult to know based on how you take that last word in the verse.

It is as though the evil of man is stacking up upon him. And after having looked at this, if you look, I think, at a New American Standard, it says something about the evil of man increases upon him. Let me see what their English translation is here.

It says the misery of man increases greatly. The New American Standard says, though a man's trouble is heavy upon him. So they take the raw as trouble.

New King James takes it as misery. And I think it is probably upon him. But the idea is, here's a man going through life and he's committing evil after evil after evil and it's just piling up.

And you think, well, there's got to be a reckoning at some point and the wise heart knows that there is. Look at verse 7. Literally, if I gave you just a woodenly literal rendition, we have the word ein. Remember we saw eyn, which means there is not or there is no something.

In Spanish, it would be no I. No H-A-Y. But ein means there is no or there is not. There is not for him knowing what will be.

And knowing is upon us. There is no knowing what will be. The evil of a man.

Man is in the singular in verse 6, even though it's talking about mankind. So verse 7 says there is not for him, for man, knowing what will be. There is no knowing what will be for this man.

Which man? The man who has this evil piling up. For that which will be, who can tell it to him? So literally, for him, there is no knowing what will be. For concerning that which will be, who can tell it to him? Who can tell him what will be? Well, in the standard understanding of Ecclesiastes, a lot of times they come to this and they say, shall be.

There's just no telling. It's not what he's saying at all. He's talking about the man who's got this evil piling up.

And someone who has adopted a lifestyle of evil, who doesn't walk out of the evil matter, who doesn't, who hurries away from the presence of God every chance he gets, you can't lift his eyes to the hills from whence comes the help. You can't lift his eyes to the judgment. You can't lift his eyes beyond the setting of the sun and show him that there is a judgment beyond the grave.

He looks around and says, hey, everybody's doing it. It works out okay. These people are prospering.

These people that did this kind of shady thing, they're making out. They're making out like bandits. And why shouldn't I do this? Why shouldn't I take advantage? Why shouldn't I stand in this evil matter? Because everybody else is, and look, they're making out.

They've compromised with the evil ones here and they're doing well. Who's going to show someone who has adopted evil what is to come? It doesn't mean that there's nobody in the human race who knows what is to come. What did we just see in the Psalms? What did we see in Psalm 9? And I could take you to 16 other passages that were already in existence in the Scriptures in Solomon's day that talk about the coming judgment.

There is a day coming when although it seems as though justice has not been wrought, has not been had by the oppressed and the poor, there is a day in which those enemies are going to be put to naught and recompense, vengeance is mine, I will repay, sayeth the Lord. So Solomon says, their evil is piling up and nobody can tell them, hey, you think you're making out now but there's a judgment coming, and they say, I just don't see that. You can't tell.

Nobody can tell us to look ahead. We have to decide to place faith in what God has said, the contractual promise of God where He promises justice, He promises recompense, He promises that we've been looking in Luke, Jesus promised to the disciples, if you've given up houses and lands and time with your family, you're going to have it restored a hundredfold in the kingdom. But there are others who couldn't see that, the Pharisees and the scribes, they're like the elder son in the parable of the prodigal, and they're right there amidst the abundance of the Father and they can't even see it.

Well, this is what Solomon says, who's going to tell him? There's no, for him, and this is a separate phrase in Hebrew that wouldn't have to be there unless it was there for evidence, to him, to the man engaged in this evil, there is no knowing what will be. And as far as this future judgment coming from God, who can tell it to him? He won't listen. His ears are closed.

His heart is hardened. He's not going to listen. So then in verse 8 it says, There is not a man of mastery in the Spirit to restrain the Spirit.

You look at the English here, it says no one has power over the Spirit to restrain the Spirit. You look at the New American Standard, it talks about the wind. It says no man has authority to restrain the wind with the wind.

What on earth does that mean? Well, we have our word Ruach, which sometimes means wind, but more often means Spirit, the Spirit of man, the breath of life, if you will. And the word here for authority is Shalit, which is related to Shilton, that we saw up in verse 4, where it said the matter of the king is foremost, it's uppermost. It is in the upper place.

Well, no one has the rulership or the authority or the mastery, the uppermost position, to restrain the Spirit. What's he saying? There's going to come a time when the Spirit's going to leave your

body. You're going to die.

And you can't stay in this realm where you're making out. The sun is going to set, in other words. And you're going to go forward.

It's appointed for man once to die. And after that, the judgment. Well, however prominent and however powerful a man becomes in this life, he doesn't get the mastery.

He doesn't get the uppermost, foremost position to where he can control the departure of his Spirit. It's still going to leave at some point. And when he does, he's going to be in the realm of judgment.

There is not a man of mastery in the Spirit to restrain the Spirit. And there is no one foremost in the day of death. And once again, you have Shilton.

Same word we had up in verse 4. The matter of the king is foremost. Well, there is no foremost. There's nobody who's uppermost and prominent in the day of death.

Death levels the playing field. Well, the second half of this, verse 8, we need to take a little time to look at. So we'll pause here and take our break.

But what's the idea? You cannot judge your progress by circumstances. You can't estimate the status of someone else in the spiritual realm by looking at their circumstances. Circumstances don't always pan out.

As we go forward in chapter 8, Solomon's going to make this explicit. He's going to say, stuff that ought to be happening to the wicked seems to be happening to the righteous, and vice versa. Everything hinges on how real the judgment of God after death is to us.

That is going to be the source of peace, of faith, of being able to rejoice in the day of trouble like we saw in Psalm 9. It all depends on how real that is to us. If our immediate circumstances are our reality, we are going to be trapped, and we're going to fail. That's Solomon's statement here.

Even in the Old Testament, he's got that figured out. Well, it's something worth meditating on as we look around and we're tempted to be discouraged. We're tempted to be disheartened when we see people getting over and not getting the justice we think they deserve.

We don't seem to be getting the blessing and the advantage that we think we ought to have. It all depends on how real the work of God at the judgment is to us. Let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to see some fascinating things in the second half of verse 8.