

02-05-12a Ecclesiastes

As we continue our worship this morning, let's take just a moment to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and seek the ministry of God's Holy Spirit, particularly as it pertains to understanding and seeing the applicability of God's Word to our own lives and our own daily walk before God. We should not only be seeking God's Spirit and His effect in our soul when we study the Word of God. It is one of the many ministries that God grants to us in His grace through His Spirit, but it is only one of many.

And it is a good practice, it's a good thing to remember to seek the activity and the beneficial influence of God's Spirit in our soul when we undertake anything. Just before we engage in conversation, just before we have a meal in fellowship, just before we embark on a task of any sort, we sometimes think, well, I really need to pray and ask for God the Holy Spirit to be with me while I'm studying God's Word. But if you think about it, all of the activities of our life are to be done heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men.

And we sometimes wonder why we fail when we get into social circumstances or into certain kinds of pressure. We engage in a task and we wind up getting impatient. We dive into traffic and wind up having all kinds of mental attitude sins, different situations and different people with whom we come in contact, different environments in which we become immersed.

If we would stop and do the same thing we do before Bible class of taking a moment to clear the decks, to remember who we are and why we're here and what the ultimate purpose is in everything that we do. It's not just the accomplishment of a task. It's not just checking something off the to-do list.

It is to operate in a way that reflects the glory of God, that lays hold of His grace by faith and that lays claim to His righteousness so that we will be a workman that does not need to be ashamed as we rightly divide the Word of Truth. That rightly divide word, I really like it in Greek because it's a difficult word. The lexicographers have struggled with it.

It's not a frequently used word in Greek at all. And the nearest they can come to rendering it in English is to lay a straight course, which speaks of a bricklayer who has a job to do. He has a wall to build, but it is the building of the wall.

Anybody can mix some mortar and get a stack of bricks and start piling the stuff up. But I marvel. I was looking at a giant building that was all made of brick.

It was many stories high, 20, 30 stories high, and it was brick all the way up. And I thought the care with which a brick wall that high would have to be built so that it doesn't lean outward, it doesn't lean inward. It's perfectly in balance.

It's perfectly plumb and square all the way up. It doesn't start well and then start leaning. It

doesn't have a faulty wavering at the bottom and then try to go straight.

It starts at the foundation and each course of bricks is perfectly straight. It's straight in the horizontal and it's straight in the vertical. And if you diverge, if you have any kind of flaw anywhere in the wall, it weakens the entire wall.

It can weaken the entire building. And in the same way, it says that a workman who does not need to be ashamed, when it says rightly dividing the word of truth, that word is the word that means to lay a straight course. And we have to have the Word of God.

We have to have the bricks and mortar. And under the ministry of God's Spirit, it has to be plumb and square. We have to lay each brick.

We have to build our wall. The edifice in our soul has to be plumb and square, rightly dividing the word of truth. And that's what we hope to do this morning.

Not only so that we have an accurate understanding, but so that as God the Holy Spirit ministers to us and enables us to live by God's power in all of the other hours of the day, we do it in a way that is pleasing in God's sight. It's just like a beautiful finished building. Its symmetry and its beauty lie in the perfection of its dimensions and its proportions and its plumb and squareness.

So let's take a moment as we begin the study of God's Word this morning by going to the Lord in prayer and seeking His blessing as we study together. Father, we thank you for the provision that you have made for us, knowing that we are weak and helpless when it comes to accomplishing your purpose and your plan. You have enabled us.

You have empowered us. You have provided us with your Word and with your Spirit. We pray that as we seek to feed our souls and be nourished up on the spiritual manna that we find before us, that God the Holy Spirit will take these things and minister them to our hearts, that we will have our minds transformed and renewed, that our understanding and our perspective on this life will be enhanced and be such that as we go through the inevitable chores and tasks and requirements and responsibilities that we have before us, that we will accomplish them in a way that transcends the mundane and transcends the earthly and the earthbound and will be the means of laying up for ourselves treasure in heaven and the opportunity and the privilege of reflecting your glory both now and in the age to come.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. For our scripture reading this morning, in the light of our study in Ecclesiastes chapter 11, we return to a psalm that we have looked at before, Psalm 78.

Psalm 78 is a lengthy psalm. I think the last time we looked at it, we read the whole thing. I'm going to just read a portion of it this morning because we have a lot to cover in chapter 11.

And you get the pattern. It is a repetitive... This is the tolling bell of the history of Israel. The

psalmist here, this is a contemplation of Asaph.

And it is the story of God's discipline and restoration. Discipline and restoration in the national career of Israel. And you know the old adage, those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

These things, the story and all of the glories as well as the shame and chagrin that are a part of the history of the nation of Israel, have been recorded and set down in God's Word for our instruction, the New Testament tells us. All these things were written for our instruction. The culmination of the ages has come upon us.

We are at the critical point in human history and in God's plan to exploit the victory of Jesus Christ on the cross. And these things are a reminder. And when we return to them again and again and remind ourselves of how possible it is, indeed how likely it is, that we will fail through our own inattention to duty and inattention to opportunity, these words remind us of the cycle of how God has dealt with His people in times past and how He will deal with us.

So the exhortation with which this psalm begins is just as pertinent for us as it was 3,000 years ago when these words were first inscribed. Give ear, O my people, to my law. Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

I will open my mouth in a parable. I will utter dark sayings of old which we have heard and known and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generations to come the praises of the Lord and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.

For He established a testimony, a witness in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments and may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright and whose spirit was not faithful to God. The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. They did not keep the covenant of God.

They refused to walk in His law and forgot His works and His wonders that He had shown them. Marvelous things He did in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zion. He divided the sea and caused them to pass through, and He made the waters stand up like a heap.

In the daytime also He led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. He split the rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink in abundance, like the depths. He also brought streams out of the rock and caused waters to run down like rivers.

But they sinned even more against Him by rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness. And

they tested God in their heart by asking for the food of their fancy. Yes, they spoke against God.

They said, Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? Behold, He struck the rock so that the waters gushed out and the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide meat for His people? Therefore the Lord heard this and was furious. So a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel because they did not believe in God and did not trust in His deliverance, in His salvation.

Yet He had commanded the clouds above and opened the doors of heaven, had rained down manna on them to eat, and given them of the bread of heaven. Men ate angels' food. He sent them food to the full.

He caused an east wind to blow in the heavens, and by His power He brought in the south wind. He also rained meat on them like the dust, feathered fowl like the sand of the seas, and He let them fall in the midst of their camp all around their dwellings. So they ate and were well filled, for He gave them their own desire.

Kind of reminds you of the last part of Romans chapter 1, doesn't it? When God turns men over to the desires of their heart. They were not deprived of their craving, but while their food was still in their mouths, the wrath of God came against them and slew the stoutest of them and struck down the choice men of Israel. In spite of this, they still sinned and did not believe in His wondrous works.

Therefore their days He consumed in Hevel, in futility, in vapor, and their years in fear. When He slew them, then they sought Him, and they returned and sought earnestly for God. Then they remembered that God was their rock and the Most High God their Redeemer.

Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouth and they lied to Him with their tongue, for their heart was not steadfast with Him, nor were they faithful in His covenant. But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity and did not destroy them. Yes, many a time He turned His anger away and did not stir up all of His wrath, for He remembered that they were but flesh, a breath that passes away and does not come again.

How often they provoked Him in the wilderness and grieved Him in the desert. Yes, again and again they tempted God and limited the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember His power, the day when He redeemed them from the enemy, when He worked His signs in Egypt and His wonders in the field of Zoan, turned their rivers into blood and their streams that they could not drink.

He sent swarms of flies among them which devoured them, and frogs which destroyed them. He also gave their crops to the caterpillar and their labor to the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamore trees with frost.

He also gave up their cattle to the hail and their flocks to fiery lightning. He cast on them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, indignation, and trouble by sending angels of destruction among them. He made a path for His anger.

He did not spare their soul from death, but gave their life over to the plague and destroyed all the firstborn in Egypt, the first of their strength in the tents of Ham. But He made His own people go forth like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And He led them on safely so that they did not fear, and the sea overwhelmed their enemies.

And He brought them to His holy border, this mountain which His right hand had acquired. He also drove out the nations before them, allotted them an inheritance by survey, and made the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents. Yet they tested and provoked the Most High God and did not keep His testimonies, but turned back and acted unfaithfully like their fathers.

They were turned aside like a deceitful bow, for they provoked Him to anger with their high places and moved Him to jealousy with their carved images. When God heard this, He was furious and greatly abhorred Israel." And as you go forward through the rest of this psalm, you see once again, when God disciplines unto death, when God shows them their mortality, they turn and are blessed and are cared for and are brought to the place of blessing and the place of opportunity, the place of inheritance. But no sooner are they there than they forget and are turned aside.

And this cycle repeats itself in the nation of Israel. And it is not until captivity and death come in that the national heart of Israel turns and God can restore them and bring them back, bring them to the land, bring them back to the land, rebuild the fallen walls, and then the cycle begins to repeat itself. It seems as though the times of prosperity when death is not imminent and captivity is not imminent, that we as human beings and as the people of God are prone to forget the issue.

Well, this is especially pertinent in our study of Ecclesiastes and the truths that Solomon is bringing forward as Kohelet, as the one who assembles the people to give this important message, because he reminds us again and again of the fact that the sun is going to set. Why wait for God to bring disastrous death across the borders in the person of a conquering king, an invader, the armies of Babylon or the armies of Assyria, the armies of Egypt? Why do we have to be brought to the point of imminent death when we should be able to remember that all of our lives are brief? The setting of the sun is imminent for all of us. Teach us to number our days, he says, so that we treat each one of them as a treasure and as an opportunity, and use that as the chastening and as the correction and rebuke and instruction so that we do not fall away in apathy, we don't get distracted with our own desires.

We begin to set goals. We have things that we want. God provides us the water, and now we want a better menu.

We don't want manna, we want meat. We don't want what God has provided, we want something

more. And we begin to look beyond fulfilling the will of God to fulfilling our own will.

Fill in the blank with your name. I often ask myself, is this the plan of God or is this the plan of Sam? Is this the will of God or is this the will of Sam? As I consider alternatives and things that seem appealing that I want to justify and rationalize to myself, I think, well, who am I really living for here? Whose desire am I trying to fulfill? And we have to ask ourselves that question. Israel, failing to ask and answer that question, falls in the wilderness, falls short of the glory of God, falls short of the inheritance, falls short of the fulfillment of promise.

How many Old Testament saints are going to be outside the city, outside the kingdom, watching while many come from the north, east, south, and west and sit down with those who do inherit, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? There's no reason. We still have time. We still have opportunity.

We are still under the sun. The day is still with us. The sun is still shining.

And in the time that remains to us, why further it away? Why get distracted? All we have to do is look. It's so apparent in the history of Israel, and yet it's so easy for us to forget in the history that we write each and every day to get caught up in the immediate. How could you be an Israelite that saw the Nile turn to blood, that saw the Red Sea part, that saw the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud? How could you get so myopic and so short-sighted as to miss how do we get obsessed with the immediate and the present and lose sight of who we are and why we're here? Well, the Bible pictures it for us.

We sang that hymn, I was sinking deep in sin, far from to rise no more, and that reference back to Peter's sinking in the water. It's a very vivid picture, and it helps to illustrate and to drive home a truth that if it wasn't for the love of God, if it wasn't for the power of God, we would not be saved. It's love, the love of God that lifted us from a hopeless condition, but how easy it is for us to forget.

And so God gives us these graphic images, these graphic pictures, and that's what we're going to see in Ecclesiastes chapter 11 this morning. It is a reminder, it is a call. That's why this book is called Kohelet.

Kohel is the verb that means to assemble, to assemble the people and say, look, I've got a message for you. How many times, if you ever work in a company and they have meetings, I've had to have meetings down where I work, and I keep thinking all during the meeting, you know, you multiply the time in this meeting times the number of people and figure out the man hours that are not being employed for the production of the product or the implementation of the plan or whatever it is you're doing. When you have a meeting, I mean, you have to have meetings and you have to plan, but it always reminds me to try to keep meetings short because you better have a pretty important reason for calling a meeting and passing out good information to meet and just kick around ideas and brainstorm and tell stories and reminisce and some of the things that

happen in meetings is such a waste of time.

Count the heads and count the hours and multiply that. That's, you know, that could be a week's worth of time. If you have 40 people in a meeting and you spend an hour doing nothing, you've wasted a work week for one whole person.

You might as well just send them off on vacation. And Solomon understands this. He's one of the wisest men that ever lived and he knows if he's going to assemble the people, he's going to tell them something important.

He's not wasting his time and he's not saying, oh, back when I was backslidden and I was a reprobate and back when I was thinking human viewpoint, this is what I thought. This is the common explanation for a lot of what's said in this book and we have seen through our study of the first 10 chapters here that that is manifestly not the case. Every phrase, every word, every verse, every portion of this book is a call to remember how brief life is and how important it is to come away having been given, like the parable of the talents, God has given us gifts.

He has invested in us with time and with abilities and with opportunities, with situations, with personal interrelationships. We might be parents. We might be children.

We are employers or employees and that is a talent. It is a coin. It's gold from God in this life.

You look at our clock up here and on the glass in front of the pendulum, it says, time is money. I love that clock. My folks gave it to us when we got married and I love it.

It's got a little 1930 something, 50 cent piece in it, walking liberty and it reminds me of something every time I look at it because time is money. That's sort of a human perspective. In business, time is money.

Don't waste it. But from a spiritual perspective, time is money. Time is an investment that God has made in us.

It's gold that He has handed to us and that's why He says, redeeming the time because the days are evil. If you just let a day run its course, the result is going to be ra-a. It's going to be evil.

We have to rescue the day in the same way that we have been rescued. We have to be redeeming the time because the days are evil. How do we redeem the time? We still have the task to perform.

We can't just sit around thinking holy thoughts and quoting scripture to each other. We have to clean houses and do jobs and drive back and forth and buy groceries and cook meals and do the laundry. It is in the doing of those things that we redeem the time, that the power in which we do them, the reason for which we do them, the attitude with which we do them is all important and it's so easy to miss.

We can become short-sighted just like the Israelites. It's not just going to the promised land. It's how you get there.

It is the country that you travel and the things that you learn along the way and the reliance upon God and the faith that you develop and exercise and build up in the course of that journey that makes getting to the destination worthwhile because when you get there, you will have the capacity to appreciate and the capacity to be thankful for and the capacity to exploit the new opportunities that come. They often present the land of milk and honey as heaven. In pulpits and things, people say, Oh, we're going over Jordan.

We're going over home and we're going to live in the land of milk and honey. But if you think about God's gift of the land to Israel, once they got there, that was a whole new, fresh set of opportunities because there are all kinds of ites that live in the land that need to be driven out. There are new challenges.

There are new victories to be won and the journey that gets them there prepares them and teaches them reliance upon God, faith in God, the purpose and plan of God so that when they arrive across the Jordan, even as they begin to take hold of their inheritance and have their vines and their fig trees, they also have new battles to fight and new victories to win. And people that think, Well, I'm just going to struggle along in this life and then I'm going to go to heaven and walk the streets of gold and play a harp have no concept of the fact that there will be new challenges. There will be new opportunities to exercise the faith that we develop here.

The faith and the victories that we win in this life are not just for this life. Any more than the victories and the challenges that Israel faced in the wilderness were just happenstances along the way until they arrived in Canaan land. That was preparation.

They could not have gone in. That second generation who watched their fathers drop in the wilderness, they could not have gone in and marched in faith around Jericho. They could not have learned the lessons of A.I. They could not have gone on to drive out the enemies.

They couldn't have watched Caleb go marching up the mountain to drive out some of the hardest and most difficult enemies in his old age if they had not learned the lessons of that 40 years of wandering. Even so, we have that same challenge. I want to give you... I'll ask Janelle if you could pass these out.

This is a translation that we will work from for Ecclesiastes chapter 11. I'm not trying to say that everybody else that ever translated it screwed up, but for our purposes, I think this is in its wooden literalness and its awkward phrasing, it best reflects what's actually there in the Hebrew and it will best help us understand the message of what Solomon is trying to say in Ecclesiastes chapter 11. We'll read this first of all and then we'll parse it out.

He begins, Send out your bread upon the face of the waters, for in many days you will discover it.

Give a portion to seven and also to eight, for you do not know what will be evil upon the earth. Or what evil will be upon the earth.

But I'm trying to preserve the word order there. If the clouds are filled with rain upon the earth, they will pour forth. And if a tree will fall in the south or if in the north, from the place which the tree will fall, there it will be.

The one observing the wind will not sow and the one watching the clouds will not reap. According as there is not for you a knowing or you will not know what the way of the wind will be, like the bones in the womb of the full woman or the pregnant woman, so you will not know the work of God who makes everything. In the morning, sow your seed and until the evening do not cause your hand to rest, for there is not for you a knowing which of these will be suitable, this or that, or whether the both of them as one will be good.

Sweet is the light and it is good for the eyes to see the sun. For if man will live many years, in all of them let him rejoice and let him remember the days of darkness for they will be many. All that is coming is vapor.

Rejoice, vigorous man, in your youth and cause your heart to be good in the days of your vigor and advance in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes and know that upon all these things God will cause you to come into judgment. And remove vexation from your heart and put away evil from your flesh for youth and darkness are vapor. So you look that over and you say, I'm not sure that this is a help.

If anything, it seems to have made it more difficult to figure out what on earth Solomon is saying and that's good because that means I still have a job. If I could just translate this and hand it to you, you wouldn't need anybody to exposit and expound and you could just read and I would have something else to do on Sunday mornings. Well, let's begin at the beginning.

You'll remember the context here because, again, there were not chapter divisions in the original or verse divisions and you know that at the end of chapter 10, Solomon was talking about the importance of circumspection, the importance of keeping your own counsel as you go through life. He says, beginning at verse 17, Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son... Actually, verse 16, Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child and your princes feast in the morning. Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles and your princes feast at the proper time for strength and not for drunkenness.

Because of laziness, the building decays and through idleness of hands the house leaks or the roof sags, the rafters sag. A feast is made for laughter and wine makes merry but money answers everything. And you'll remember when we went through this in detail that the gist or the thrust of this is people are going to take one event or one situation and they're going to interpret it in the light of their own preconceptions, in the light of their own, how they choose to interpret.

Something can happen and someone is going to construe it some way, somebody else is going to construe it another way. We had a movie where it was the beginning of Robinson Crusoe. We watched a really excellent, if you haven't seen the movie version of Robinson Crusoe that has old James Bond in it, Pierce Brosnan.

That's a good one. We watched it last weekend and it was very worthwhile. But it tells you, most people remember that he's on the island with a coconut shell on his head but they don't remember what happened to get him on the ship in the first place.

And so at the beginning there's this story where he's been childhood sweethearts all the way up into adulthood with a girl and something happens and she becomes betrothed to his good friend and they are to be wed. He doesn't have the means of marrying her. Her father, I think, has given her to this guy because he's well off and Crusoe is not.

Something happens and they end up in a fight and the movie opens. I don't remember exactly it's been so long since I read the book but the movie opens with them out on a field having sort of a duel. I don't know how it got started but they're having this sword fight and Robinson Crusoe is pleading with this guy.

He's saying, I'm your friend. I don't want to hurt you. He's doing all the defensive stuff.

He's not going after the guy. He's just trying to defend him. He's saying, look, we were friends once.

Can't we get past this? Can't we do something other than one of us die here? And the guy is just enraged because he knows that the woman he wants to marry is really in love with Robinson Crusoe. So they're fighting and Robinson is pleading with him and he won't listen and the guy is starting to get pretty dangerous and finally Robinson says, I'll give you one last chance. Please, let's stop this.

The guy says no and he's hacking and slashing with his sword. And so Robinson Crusoe hacks and starts hacking and slashing back and gets more aggressive because he's actually a better swordsman and he gashes the guy's face and gets him down on the ground and has the point of his sword at his throat and he says, we've got to end this. Let's get this over with.

And then he turns the guy loose and he's walking away. Well, the guy, there are people standing around. The seconds are there and now the man's been humiliated and he's been defeated and he should be dead by right.

There's supposed to be a duel to the death. Robinson Crusoe let him go. Robinson Crusoe's walking away.

You know how it is. It always happens in the movie. The guy gets angry and he rushes up and he

pursues and he's going to hack him from behind.

So Robinson Crusoe turns around in a defensive posture and the guy impales himself on his sword and is killed. Well, the brothers cry, Murderer! And they're about to kill him and Robinson Crusoe, the second, has to pull a pistol and hold him at bay and Robinson escapes on his horse and he has to jump a ship and get out of the country because these brothers are trying to be the avenger of blood. My whole point here is, how do you think this story is going to be told when it comes back to the ears of the family? Well, Robinson Crusoe loved this girl and couldn't bear for this guy to marry her so he killed him.

That's how it's going to be construed and it's based on fact. Were they childhood sweethearts? Does he love her more than life itself? Does he not want the friend to marry her? Does he want to marry her himself? Yes. Was that, and did he in fact kill the guy? Yes, he did.

So what spin is someone going to put on that situation? Well, you know why he killed him. He just used an excuse and killed him and that isn't really how it happened at all. It wasn't what he wanted to do but that's how it's going to be construed.

There's so many things in our lives where people are going to misconstrue your motives. They're going to look at us and how we live and why we do what we do and they're going to take facts that you can't dispute and they're going to weave it into a conclusion that is completely false and you just have to get over it. You can't, Robinson Crusoe could have talked to himself blue in the face.

He would never convince those brothers that he didn't kill their brother because he wanted to marry the fair whoever she was. You just are not going to be able and here you have a king. He's young and somebody's going to look at him and say, you all, your curse would be your, your woe to your land because your king is just a boy and look at here, your princes are eating in the morning.

They're feasting in the morning. That's a sign of dissipation. That's a sign that they've been reveling all night and now they're eating in the morning.

I can take you to Proverbs where it talks about in ancient Near East eating in the morning was thought to be a sign of dissolution and drunkenness and revelry. So he says, he's giving this as an example. He's saying, you know, you've got to be circumspect.

Try not to have your good be spoken of as evil but when it happens just prepare yourself and don't go into some big self-defense mode. Here's an example. Woe to you land because your king is a child and your princes are feasting in the morning.

Your tsarine, your tsars, your princes. Then, but somebody else can look at that and say, no, the land is blessed because this young king is a son of nobles. He's been trained, he's young and

he's going to last a long time and he's been trained from infancy for this role.

He's grown up in an environment where this is known that he's going to be the king and from childhood he's learned all of the arts and skills and his father and the previous princes and statesmen have inculcated him. He is a son of nobles and these princes who are eating in the morning, they're not eating in the morning because of drunkenness. They're doing it because of strength.

You go to the web sometimes and look up breakfast and go to the Wheaties people and all the people that say that breakfast is the most important meal of the day because that's what gives you the strength and the sharpness of mind to get through the day. Of course, there are those of us who can't look food in the face in the morning and it's just our loss. I would probably be better off if I could eat breakfast.

I just can't. It just is an impossible thing to contemplate when I first get up in the morning to try to stare at food and actually eat it. I can eat later on when I get hungry but I'm not hungry in the morning.

But it would be good. All the health people, all the doctors and everybody say you've got to break your fast. You've been fasting if you ate at 6 o'clock the previous evening then you've gone without food if you're up at 6 in the morning for 12 solid hours half a day with, that's right, isn't it 12 hours? Yeah.

With no food. So you've got to break your fast. And if you wait another 6 hours until lunchtime you've gone 18 hours 3 quarters of the day with no nourishment whatsoever.

They say that's bad for you and it probably is. Well, these princes are breaking their fast in the morning for strength and not for drunkenness. So there's an example of looking at the same situation in two different lights.

It's actually a good situation because this young king is the son of nobles and these princes are wise to feast in the morning and prepare themselves for a busy day. They're working princes they're not lazy gluttonous princes. Then he gives another example in verse 18.

Somebody's going to look at your house and they're going to say well, it's, your roof is leaking and your rafters are sagging because you're lazy and your hands are idle. When in fact, you know, here's these people they're sitting down and they're eating and drinking in their house and look at their house. Their rafters are sagging and there's holes in the walls and things, the wind is blowing through and they're just in there making merry.

They're having a time of fellowship and good humor over their meal and their house is not fixed up. What's on the outside? What's on the inside? The outward appearance, people look at the house. What's going on inside? There's feasting for laughter and wine for making merry and what

the people looking at the outside don't know is these people don't have to be out there climbing on the roof and patching it and they don't have to be carpentering and building scaffolding to fix the sides of their houses because they have got silver, kasaf.

The same word that we saw earlier that which is found in the shade, in the shadow, like wisdom. It's not visible. It's not out there to be easily seen.

And people are going to look at the outside and say, you know what, your house is a wreck and you're just in there laughing and feasting and making merry and what they don't know, they can't see the silver. People didn't wear transparent money bags, did they? People didn't carry around their wealth in a wheelbarrow for all to see. You can't see what people are doing at the table inside their house and you can't see the fact that they have silver and that when there becomes a genuine situation of need to patch the roof, they'll hire a guy.

They've got the silver to answer that problem. They don't need to be up there slaving and toiling trying to fix the appearances of their house so other people will look at it and admire it. So there's a situation of people laughing and enjoying their food and their wine in the house and they have silver to fix any problem but there are people on the outside saying, oh, their rafters are sagging and their house is leaking, throwing stones.

Two different views of the same situation. How is it going to be construed? Solomon says, you cannot afford to bend to the whims of people that are misconstruing your thoughts and your motives and don't you do it either. Do not curse the king even in your thought.

Do not curse the rich even in your bedroom for a bird of the air may carry your voice and a lord of wings may tell the matter. Grant to others the same respect you would like for yourself and you will. If you want to live your life as unto the lord, well pleasing to him in every way and that means that some people are going to be displeased with the appearances of it. It's going to look from the outside as though you are Robinson Crusoe and you've murdered a man in cold blood for love.

Well, don't draw that judgment on others if you don't want others and you don't appreciate it being drawn on you. This is the golden rule in its Old Testament form. Live and let live.

We have a full plate. We have every necessity. We have every need for trying to get the plank out of our own eye without worrying about the speck that is in someone else's.

And so grant to others. Don't be guilty of the very thing that you resent when others do it to you. If you don't want people looking at you and judging you on appearances, then don't fall into that trap yourself.

Don't curse the king. Don't curse the rich. Don't assume that everybody that's living differently than you is in error.

Don't say, I'm a doctrinal giant. I'm a spiritually mature super grace believer and all these people

in denominational churches are backslidden, hopeless, helpless, useless. God's Spirit doesn't even bother to visit.

Jesus is not in the midst of those two or three or two or three thousand that are gathered together. Don't do it. Don't curse the rich.

Don't curse the king. Why? You don't know. All you see is the appearance.

And I promise you, even in places where we would never attend, even in churches where we would not be comfortable going, God is at work. God does not, God cannot wait for us to perfect our understanding and perfect our knowledge and perfect our application of the Word of God. If He did, they would just have a three-person meal up in Heaven.

The Father, the Son, and the Spirit would gather around a table and eat with each other and none of them would ever come down to Earth and do anything because we're never going to figure everything out. We're never going to get it right. There will always be areas where we are just as screwed up as the next believer.

We want to grow. We want to improve. We want to enhance our understanding, but we have areas in our lives where we have great need of improvement and it may not be as visible as someone over there sitting in a pew or looking at a baptistry or raising their hands in the air or all of the things that we look at and think, you know, they just don't really understand.

God is not waiting for them to get everything figured out just like He's thanked the Lord. He's not waiting for us to get everything figured out before He comes and works. Where there are groups of believers, where there is an individual believer, God is at work.

Don't forget it. Don't think, well, God is at work in me because I study His Word a lot. God is at work in every single believer.

Do not dismiss. Do not lightly impugn the life of other believers or groups of believers. Do not get on a high horse.

Do not decide that because somebody's got a denominational name in front of their church that God just doesn't even visit. He just walks right on by because He doesn't. Grant them the same respect that you hope they grant us.

You know, people think we're pretty weird. We meet in homes. We don't have a steeple.

Don't have a baptistry. Don't have a pew. Don't have a parking lot.

Don't have what many would consider to be the essential elements of traditional worship. But we hope that they would treat us as brothers in Christ and let us pursue the worship of God by the light of our own understanding. Well, should we not do the same for them? We can discern.

We can decide that we believe certain things are in accordance with Scripture and other things are not. But do not curse. There's a big difference between discerning and cursing just like there's a difference in discerning and judging.

And we need to treat each other with respect. Reminds me of the military service. You can have the worst excuse for a military officer in the world, and I've worked with some, that I don't see how they ever survived indoctrination and training.

But they did, and here they are. And I know them to be sloppy and ineffective and unwise and unjust in their treatment of their subordinates and foolish in many ways and costing the government and the taxpayers money. But anytime that officer walks by, he gets the salute that is due his rank because you are saluting the rank and not the individual.

Well, believers are in Christ and every believer and every group of believers carries a rank that is due respect because of Christ. It is respect for God and for the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to be very careful about looking down our nose at anyone.

Discernment is one thing. Cursing is another. Well, these are the injunctions and this is the background that leads up to what we're about to see in chapter 11.

We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to try to make some sense out of these strange statements that we've seen here in our text of Ecclesiastes 11. But let's pause here and take our break.