

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

June 19, 2022

Revisiting Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes 1

Prayer: *Father, we just want to again thank you and praise you for the freedom that we enjoy even today, Lord, I just am praising you for the fact that we can gather without any fear. Every time I think of my brothers and sisters around the world that are gathering, some of them fearing for their life, for their limb, for their freedom, for any possibility that could happen and yet they still gather to offer praise and worship to you and we thank you, Lord, that we still can. And so we do and we again thank you for the gift of your word. We again pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit as we open up your word. We pray that you would come here, accompany us and again make it of permanent value. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well it's the start of our summer season and each summer for the last few years, actually for many, many years I've done what I call a revisit series; that is I go back to a series that I've done years before and I kind of re-work it and re-present it because there's lots of worthwhile stuff that's just buried in the past.

I've done Joseph revisited, I've done the Sermon on the Mount revisited, the parables of Jesus revisited. This morning I'm going to be starting a revisit of the wisdom of Solomon, and actually it's a re-revisit because the very first time we did a study of Ecclesiastes was in 2005. I revisited it in 2011. It's now eleven years later, I'm revisiting it in 2022. So we're going to be spending the summer revisiting the book of Ecclesiastes.

Now Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon, a very, very wise man. In fact he was the wisest man who ever lived. Solomon was the son of David and Bathsheba who became king over Israel after David's death. 1 Kings 2 tells us that early in his reign King Solomon had a dream, and in that dream God appeared to Solomon and asked what shall I give you? Well instead of wealth or fame or power, Solomon asked for wisdom. *1 Kings 3:10 says: It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. And God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days.*

Well soon after that dream came the famous case of the prostitutes and the dead child. There were two prostitutes who lived in the same house who suffered the death of one of their infants, and they were disputing about who's child had actually died and both claimed the living child. They came before Solomon. And Solomon had one of his soldiers come up. In order to solve the dispute, he said to the soldier, take your sword and divide the child in two and give half to each person. And then he observed the response of the women. One woman said, fine, if I can't have him, nobody can have him. The other woman said, no, preserve the child and give him to her, and Solomon instantly knew who the real mother was. Solomon was wise. That's why a lot of wise decisions are now called Solomonic decisions. He was so wise that people came from thousands of miles away to test his wisdom, and they came away stunned by it. *1 Kings 4 says: And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all other men.* But he was not wise enough. After all of his successes, a leader who brought prosperity and peace to his nation for over forty years, after he had completed the job of building the temple that God himself would dwell in, Solomon began to fall.

1 Kings 11 says: Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. He had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods. And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded.

Solomon was a great starter but he was a lousy finisher. But at

some point he came back to his senses and Ecclesiastes represents the chronicle of the time spent away from God applying the very best of human wisdom to the task of squeezing the very most out of what a human life could be. J. Vernon Magee says in Proverbs: We saw the wisdom of Solomon; here we shall see the foolishness of Solomon. Ecclesiastes is the dramatic autobiography of his life when he was away from God. Dr. Magee goes on to say: God showed Job, a righteous man, that he was a sinner in God's sight. In Ecclesiastes God showed Solomon, the wisest man, that he was a fool in God's sight.

So Ecclesiastes is truly a unique book because it takes us into the mind of Solomon at a time of great rebellion in his life. Because of that we have to be very careful to look at the book in its totality. I mean, this is a book of the Bible that atheists and pagans love to quote from because it draws from Solomon's heart when he was estranged from his God. So you can find statements in Ecclesiastes that will contradict the rest of scripture because it is presenting to us the most brilliant of human minds operating outside the wisdom of God. And that's why it's crucial to recognize and understand the perspective that this book is written from.

Solomon the wisest man who ever was was also one of the most

powerful and wealthy men who ever lived, and because of that he had access to a life that less than one one-hundredth of one percent of any other human will ever have. God allowed him to have every single thing that a human being apart from God could ever want to have. And Solomon gives us a firsthand account of just how unsatisfying it was to have every single thing this world could offer you, from pleasure to wine and folly to amusement to sex to work itself, and finally Solomon takes us to the failure of wisdom itself. I mean there really was nobody in the world more suited for this task than Solomon.

You see, the world roughly divides itself along one major access. We call it "the haves" and "the have nots." And whether it's wealth or power or looks or athletic ability or popularity, there's always going to be those who have and those who have not. And at any given moment the majority is always going to be with the have nots because most people are not brilliant and wealthy and powerful. I mean the reason we all know Donald Trump, Tom Cruise or Michael Jordan is because they're extremely rare. They're among the haves. We're among the have nots. Solomon was the greatest of the haves to have ever lived. You know, Trump and Cruise and Jordan, they all had slices of what the haves have. Solomon had the whole pie. There was absolutely nothing that human experience could give you that he didn't have, and he was absolutely

miserable.

One of the reasons that God raised up Solomon was to give us an eye witness account of what the haves see in their world, because much of our world is spent pursuing the dreams that the haves have. I mean folks think, you know, if I could only get there. If only I had what they have, then I'd have the good life, then I'd be happy. Well that's the lie that powers are advertising, our merchandising, it powers our economy. I mean, the reason why capitalism works is not because it's good in and of itself, it works because it accurately understands that we are fallen, self-oriented and self-centered and capitalism's driving forces enlightened self-interest. As Gordon Gekko said in the movie *Wall Street*, greed is good, if capitalism is for real. You see our system makes us want and want creates demand, demand fuels supply and it powers the whole system. Don't get me wrong, I still think it's the best system on earth because it understands the true scope of human nature. It also gives opportunity where most other systems never will. You know, someone with a good work ethic and a dream can start from scratch and be wildly successful and that can be a good thing. But as an end in itself, it will leave you just like it left Solomon: disillusioned and depressed.

You see, worldly success can't change the fundamental purpose for

which we were created, and that is to bear the image of God. And what it can do is present itself to us as the ultimate carrot on a stick that serves to keep driving us towards a reward we're never going to be able to enjoy. I mean the American dream has reduced us to mere consumers and has presented to us a world divided into haves and have nots where the have nots long for what the haves possess. And from Barbie Dolls to SUVs, our economy fuels that longing. And the problem is the only ones who really know that that longing can never be satisfied is the haves. And guess what, they're not talking. I mean they've worked their way from have not to have and now they're envied, now their success is coveted so you don't think that they're going to tell us how empty and bankrupt that success is. Chances are most of the haves don't even realize that they're miserable. You see, the culture of haves versus have nots holds out having as the ultimate goal. And when we have nots get a taste of having and then we sense that it doesn't satisfy, we just double down on our efforts to have more. I mean we think at some point that that new toy, that new car, that new house, that new something is finally going to put us over the top and at least we can enjoy what we worked so hard for. That's a carrot on a stick. And it's always right out in front of us and it's always just, just out of reach. And God tells us in no uncertain terms it's the source of most of our conflict. He says in *James 4: What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this,*

that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

So we desire, we covet, we fight, we quarrel for what? For that which cannot satisfy. God says: *Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?* Like I said, the only ones who really know how little worldly success satisfies are the ones who have, and as I said they're not talking. But Solomon is talking and he's speaking to us as the ultimate have. He's speaking as someone who's been there, done that covers everything. He's speaking as someone who has had more wisdom, power and wealth than anyone else who's ever lived. But it's not just a dissatisfied consumer. He's someone who is determined to discover why it is that everything we thought would satisfy us ends up falling short.

And this is how he introduces the book. He says: *The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the*

place where it rises. The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; around and around goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us. There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after. I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted. I said in my heart, "I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge." And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind. For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

So what Solomon's doing here, he's describing four stages of discovery that he repeatedly goes through as he uses his wisdom to go beyond our common human experience. You see, he starts with delusion and the delusion leads to depression and depression leads to discernment and finally it leads to deliverance. And Solomon applies them to four different areas of human experience. He applies them to life itself, he applies them to pleasure and then to work and then to wisdom itself, and he finds that even wisdom fails to satisfy.

And so before we start I want to first at least define what we don't mean by the word "wisdom" because people get it very confused. Wisdom is not intelligence. And wisdom is not knowledge. You can have both of them and still lack wisdom. Now wisdom is simply the art of skillful living. It is knowing who I am particularly in relationship with God. There's an old saying that says you can't see the forest for the trees. It describes an inability to see the big picture which is the forest, and you can't see it when it's staring you right in the face, i.e. the trees. And spiritually speaking is the ability to see both the forest and the trees. And the big picture is that the forest is the kingdom of God. The little picture is that that life presents itself in a thousand different ways, that's the trees. Solomon got the wisdom of the big picture because in the end he understood everything in

relation to God, but that wisdom had come with a very high price tag. In Solomon it destroyed the delusion that the trees of Solomon's life itself had meaning on their own. Solomon's first discovery is that wisdom exposes that as a delusion and that knowledge is painful. As Solomon says, he says: *For with much wisdom is much sorrow; as knowledge increases, grief increases.* You see, Solomon, he learned that the trees in his life are just like the trees in our lives. I mean those trees are my job, my family, my home, my reputation, my stuff, and altogether they make up the delusion that getting, keeping and maintaining my stuff, whatever that stuff is, will somehow give my life meaning. It's a delusion that most of us live with every single day. I work at my job so I can support my family and maintain my home and my stuff. Why? So my kids can grow up to work at their jobs and support their families and their homes and their stuff. Why? It just goes on and on and on. You know what wisdom was telling Solomon, it was telling him that we delude ourselves into thinking we have meaning because we're occupied, because we're busy, and we're busy with good things. I mean wisdom told Solomon our busyness is a protection that hides us from the meaninglessness of life. He says: *What does a man gain for all his efforts that he labors at under the sun? A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever.* You see, wisdom for Solomon was this good news-bad news proposition. I mean the good news was that his

wisdom gave him eyes to see what nobody else could see. The bad news was that his wisdom gave him eyes to see what nobody else ever wanted to see in the first place, that life essentially was a delusion. And that by staying occupied, by staying busy, people could somehow avoid the essential meaninglessness of what it was that kept them occupied and busy. I mean we see a hamster on a treadmill and we find that we laugh at the pointlessness but make the treadmill big enough and complicated enough and we won't see that we're just like hamsters on a big treadmill. The wiser Solomon grew, the more he began to see it. But the more he saw through the delusion, the more depressed he became. *For with much wisdom is much sorrow; as knowledge increases, grief increases.*

I mean Solomon saw that the nature that gives us the delusion -- that nature itself gives us the delusion that its endless cycles are full of purpose. But for what? And worse yet he realizes that what we celebrate in nature is also essentially meaningless. He says: *The sun rises and the sun sets; panting, it returns to its place where it rises. Gusting to the south, turning to the north, turning, turning, goes the wind, and the wind returns in its cycles. All the streams flow to the sea, yet the sea is never full. The streams are flowing to the place, and they flow there again. All things are wearisome; man is unable to speak.*

You know, speaking of nature, Tim Keller, you know, he points out how Walt Disney's *The Lion King* sings so eloquently about the "circle of life". And he says -- quote -- "It's the circle of life, and it moves us all through despair and hope through faith and love till we find our place on the path unwinding in the circle, the circle of life."

You know where your place really is in the path unwinding in the circle of life? It's this: You live, you die, you rot and something else rises from the fertilizer that you've now become, and this endlessly repeats itself. That's the circle of life. It's the same circle that Solomon sees with his wisdom as pathetic. The tag line from *The Lion King* is "Life's greatest adventure is finding your place of the circle of life." Are you kidding me? You're not serious. You can't be serious. You may be Simba the lion, you may be Pumbaa the warthog or you may be Betty Smith, just a simple housewife in Monsey, Indiana but guess what? Ultimately we all get to be fertilizer. And that's the great adventure of life. I mean that ultimate circle is the sorrow that wisdom forced Solomon to see.

Now you might say well, that's nature, I mean that's -- we're not nature, we're different. We have culture, we have families, we have legacies. Think so? Well let's go back to an exercise we've

done on a couple of occasions before. After all, it is Father's day, so I think this is an appropriate time to have that kind of an exercise. We're talking about whether or not we are different from nature, whether or not our legacy makes us something different. So let's talk about legacies. Let's talk about legacies particularly with regard to Father's day.

I want you to do a mental exercise for me, I want you to just think about something having to do with Father's day. Think about your great great great great grandfather. I want you to just picture, could be on your mother's side, could be on your father's side. Can you tell me his name? What did he look like? How many kids did he have? What were his dreams? What were his aspirations? Most of us, including me, we're stumped even at the idea of knowing his name. I mean we know he lived some time in the 1800s. We know that he's completely gone and almost completely forgotten. I guarantee you that he thought, he fought, he cared, he cried, he probably prayed for someone who had a hand in creating you and all of that care and all of that concern and all of the totality of that person is absolutely gone. He's found his place in the circle of life all right, he's fertilizer. I mean not only is he gone but it's only a matter of time before his fate is our fate, and it will also be the fate of us and our children. Solomon says: *There is no remembrance of those who came before; and of those who will come*

after there will also be no remembrance by those who follow them.

Is this getting a little depressing? Just a tad? Am I a little bit depressed? Well, truth be told I'm actually very happy person. Ask my friends, ask my family, I'm one of the happiest people I know. I mean I wake up every day just thrilled to be alive. My girls will tell you, I used to take particular delight on school mornings when we'd wake up early in the morning and they'd all be uniformly miserable and I'd see them first thing in the morning, what I'd say, "Good morning, ladies!" And they'd all turn at me and grunt. There's a reason why I'm a happy guy despite the fact that -- quote -- as Solomon says, "*with much wisdom is much sorrow.*" You see, I believe I've been given that wisdom but I don't have the sorrow, and there's a reason why. You see, Solomon saw the delusion of life and because he saw it so clearly and because he was so heavily invested in it, the delusion led to depression. But wisdom took Solomon farther than depression. It took him away from delusion through depression to discernment. Solomon saw the forest but he also saw the trees, and then he applied his wisdom and it changed everything. You see, I took Solomon's advice and it does change everything. And we're going to see that Solomon looks at life and pleasure and work and wisdom itself from the unique perspective, it's something that he calls "under the sun." And as we look at the whole book, in verse 9 he

says, *"There's nothing new under the sun."* Verse 14 says: *All work done under the sun is vanity and chasing the wind.* Chapter 2, verse 11 says: *All labor done under the sun has no profit.* Chapter 3, verse 16 says: *Justice under the sun is wickedness.* Chapter 5, verse 13 says: *Wealth earned under the sun is a severe evil.*

Over and over again Solomon speaks to being under the sun. So what does he mean by that? What he means is simply the natural world. "Under the sun" is just what it implies, it's life on this planet alone with no God, no spirit, no prayer, no connection to any other things other than the sun beating down on it. It's the life that most of us live. Solomon even draws a distinction between God's wisdom and wisdom under the sun. One is godly the other is earthly, natural. Solomon's wisdom gave him the ability to discern between two different ways to live your life. He said you can live your life out under the sun with your wits and your intelligence and your ambition. If you're really fortunate, you just might be able to make the jump from the have nots to the haves and only then will you begin to experience for yourself the delusion, the depression and the discernment that Solomon himself experienced in *Ecclesiastes 2:17*. This is what he says. He says: *Therefore, I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me. For everything is futile and a pursuit of the*

wind. I hated all my work that I labored at under the sun because I must leave it to the man who comes after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will take over all my work that I labored at skillfully under the sun. This too is futile. So I began to give myself over to despair concerning all my work that I had labored at under the sun. When there is a man whose work was done with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, and he must give his portion to a man who has not worked for it, this too is futile and a great wrong. For what does a man get with all his work and all his efforts that he labors at under the sun? For all his days are filled with grief, and his occupation is sorrowful; even at night, his mind does not rest. This too is futile.

Sound familiar? It doesn't have to be. You see by the end of Ecclesiastes we find Solomon choosing wisely, but before that Solomon made a host of bad decisions that we don't have to make. We can choose the final path that Solomon chose. I mean right now we can draw the same conclusions that Solomon did at the end of his book. I mean in the last paragraph of the last chapter of his sad tale of the meaninglessness of life, Solomon says: *The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.* In 2:24 he says: *There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of*

God, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

Solomon says without God who can work or eat or find enjoyment in God. Solomon found a fourth quality. He had rejected delusion, he had encountered depression, he had discovered discernment, and now by discovering God and his ways, he also embraced deliverance. His wisdom refused to allow him the delusion that most of us live by today, and that delusion says busyness is meaning. It's not. It wasn't for Solomon, it isn't for us. Without that delusion, depression was a real possibility because Solomon saw life as it really was, completely and utterly meaningless. Quote -- much wisdom is much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief, if that's all you have, but God gave Solomon discernment. He was able to see two pathways, one of despair and utter meaninglessness and one of deliverance summed up by two simple statements: *Fear God and obey his commandments.*

Let me just paraphrase here the words. These are the words of the wisest man who ever lived. Listen to what he says. He says, if you want the cure for an empty, meaningless life, aim your life at

God and his kingdom. *Fear God and obey his commandments.* God also says: *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* This is not just instructions for ministers, I mean, this applies to all of us. I mean just think about it for a second. You look at creation. God made fish to swim, he made birds to fly, and he made humans to -- to -- to what? He made us with a purpose. The purpose is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. What does that mean? Well, to glorify God is to manifest or display God's attributes, to display his character. We are billboards for God. We were made for display his attributes and character to the universe. That's why we're here. And when we ignore or forget that, we become fish out of water or birds with clipped wings, creatures who no longer are engaged in what they were designed for.

Now if you've ever seen one of those videos of bears wearing tutus riding bicycles or elephants dancing in a conga line, I mean you get the sense that something vaguely obscene, pathetic and miserable is occurring. It's twisting a creature so far from its nature just for our entertainment. Well we've twisted ourselves out of our natures, and not just for entertainment, we do it for work, for play, for worship, for a whole host of other activities that get disconnected from their original intent and purpose which is the glory and worship of God. Those animals are a picture of

misery, and so are we when we aim our lives at anything other than God and his kingdom. I mean you see either God designed this world or chance plus nothing did. And if you believe that God did you have to believe he designed us as well. Well, Solomon understood that.

Solomon for all his wisdom understood only a small fraction of the world that we now have revealed to us in scripture. I think back about Solomon, think about what he worshiped. He worshiped a holy righteous God who dwelt in a temple that Solomon himself had constructed. And that temple had an outer court, it had an inner court, it had a holy place, it had a holy of Holies. Once a year a high priest could bring blood sacrifices to atone for the people's sin. Separating the holy place from the rest of the temple was a curtain some thirty feet high and three-quarters of an inch thick. It represented the barrier between God and man because of sin. Matthew 27 tells us the moment Jesus died, an invisible hand ripped that curtain from top to bottom. That hand was God the Father. And what Solomon saw only in part we now see fully. Jesus' death had satisfied the wrath of God for our sin and rebellion and thus the need for that wall was eliminated. On the cross Jesus' perfect exchange -- his righteousness for my sin -- meant that justice could now be satisfied and mercy could flow. We could once again be who we were designed to be, the crown of creation made in the

image of God. That's our legacy, not the circle of life.

I mean many folks don't begin to understand, the circle of life, that's not a triumph, that's a curse. We were never intended to revel in the fact that we're supposedly accidental blobs of devolved proteins whose grand destiny is to become fertilizer for some other creatures. That's not only a lie but it's a lie that we embrace with abandon, and it makes us crazy. You got here by accident, you end up as fertilizer. But while you're here, understand something, you're incredibly significant. Are you kidding? I've got to tell you, somebody somewhere is laughing at us. No wonder so many feel their lives are meaningless. Jesus Christ is what gives life meaning. He's given me a life of stunning significance. He's made me a son or a daughter of the King, an heir to heaven itself. He gave me the greatest gift I could ever receive. Because of that gift I know who I am, I know where I'm going, I know why I'm here. And I have the incredible privilege of telling you folks all about that gift. And you know what? You have that privilege as well, because all of us are here to share that good news. Aiming your life at God and his kingdom is not fanatical, it's not weird, in fact in this world it's the only normal there is.

See, this world only works if you're willing to live in the

delusion that Solomon discovered. You know some folks delude themselves with hard stuff, like sex, drugs and rock and roll and others delude themselves with soft stuff, like work, shopping, TV, but it's all the same result. It's the same delusion that busyness is meaning. It's not.

The Gospel of John says: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* Well the Greek term for "word" in that passage is the word "logos." It is defined as "that which gives meaning to." It's the word for which we derive our English word "logic." John's gospel tells us the logos, the logic, that which gives meaning to the word, that word took on flesh and lived among us. That was Jesus Christ. And you know what that tells me? That tells me that meaning and logic, true meaning and true logic are found only in its source and the source is Jesus Christ. Without him we're just prisoners of the circle of life.

I mean that we now celebrate what is truly a curse is proof enough for me that somewhere the enemy of our souls is laughing at us. He's laughing because he's so deluded us that we celebrate his curse as our blessing. He's also laughing that the gospel itself is laughed at. I mean the good news that Jesus Christ has defeated death by taking our place on the cross, that good news tells us our destiny is to rule and reign with Christ forever. That's a whole

lot better than becoming fertilizer. I mean the world may think the gospel is laughable but Solomon makes it clear that this present world is in the midst of a very cruel joke. I mean Solomon said it: *"With much wisdom is much sorrow."* As Christians we don't participate in the delusion that runs this world. For Solomon the shattering of that delusion led to depression but the depression led to discernment and the discernment led to deliverance by the grace of God and God alone.

For many of us the shattering of the delusion of this life, it's still no laughing matter. See, many of us still double down in an effort to avoid the depression, but right there is where Solomon's words make all the difference. Right there is where we decide whether life really is about fearing God and obeying his commandments or chasing after the wind. The decision to stop playing the world's game of delusion can lead to depression if you are too heavily invested in this life or it can lead to a discernment that Solomon had in the end, and that wisdom which comes only from God can lead to deliverance. Solomon discovered that life is no laughing matter because admitting to the delusion is painful. He says: *Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.* Better a sad face than a sad heart, but because of Christ alone, someday we will all be laughing. And he who laughs last laughs best. Let's pray.

Father, I just, I thank you for Solomon, I thank you that you've given us the ultimate have, a person who's been there and done that for everything this world could ever offer to anyone, and yet how miserable was he. And I thank you that you give us a book that unloads and defines the misery and breaks it down into all of its component parts so that we have the benefit and blessing of seeing how that works and understanding how that works. Give us the ability as we open up the book of Ecclesiastes, Lord, to fully grasp the depth of the gift you've given us, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.