

When Having Everything is Just Not Enough

Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:11

Introduction: What does it take to be Happy?

Theme: Since all his hard work is not producing any meaningful change to the societal ills, Solomon decides that he must simply learn to enjoy the fruit of his labor. Solomon now decides to be self-indulgent.

I. Solomon had to shoulder a great deal of responsibility as king over Israel.

1 Kings 3:7 (ESV) And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in.

1 Kings 3:8 (ESV) And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude.

1 Kings 3:9 (ESV) Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"

Ecclesiastes 1:12 (ESV) I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

A. Solomon started out by conscientiously seeking to fulfill all his responsibilities and to meet the needs of his people.

Ecclesiastes 1:13 (ESV) 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.

1. Solomon found this to be an unpleasant task.

Ecclesiastes 1:13 (ESV) 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.

Ecclesiastes 1:13 (NASB95) And I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven. It is a grievous task which God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with.

2. He came to see these responsibilities as a burden.

Ecclesiastes 1:13 (ESV) 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.

Eccl 1:13 (NASB) And I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven. It is a grievous task which God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with.

Eccl 1:13 (NIV) I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a heavy burden God has laid on men!

3. Solomon discovered that all of our attempts apart from God to faithfully exercise our responsibilities are futile in the end.

Ecclesiastes 1:14 (ESV) I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.

B. Why is the faithful exercise of our duties futile?

1. Because all the wrongs of this world can not be righted.

Ecclesiastes 1:15 (ESV) **What is crooked cannot be made straight**, and what is lacking cannot be counted.

All the injustices of life cannot be righted.

2. Because the needs that we see are greater than our resources to meet them.

Ecclesiastes 1:15 (ESV) What is crooked cannot be made straight, **and what is lacking cannot be counted**.

One cannot even begin to address all the needs that exist in this world. One cannot even count them, let alone meet them.

C. In all his great wisdom Solomon still does not possess the answers to life's problems.

Ecclesiastes 1:16 (ESV) 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.”

Ecclesiastes 1:17 (ESV) 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.**

D. The more wisdom that Solomon had, the more disillusioned he became.

1. There is a lot of sorrow associated with wisdom.

Ecclesiastes 1:18 (ESV) For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

The word vexation is disquietness, unrest, anxiety.

Eccl 1:18 (NIV) For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.

2. The more he increased in knowledge the more pain he experienced.

Ecclesiastes 1:18 (ESV) For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

The word for sorrow is mental pain, anguish. It was disheartening to ponder.

3. Application:

a. Sometimes, the more you know, the more you wish you didn't know. The old adage is that ignorance is bliss.

b. The more you want to help, the more you realize that there is nothing that you can do.

c. It is one thing to identify a problem.

d. It is still another to have empathy for that need.

e. It is heartbreaking to know that you can't "fix it."

- II. Since his labor is not producing any meaningful change to the societal ills, Solomon decides that he must simply learn to enjoy what life has to offer. Why make himself miserable over other people's problems? Solomon now decides to be self-indulgent.

Ecclesiastes 2:1 (ESV) I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; **enjoy yourself.**" But behold, this also was vanity.

- A. Solomon was now entering into an experiment.

Ecclesiastes 2:1 (ESV) I said in my heart, "Come now, **I will test you with pleasure**; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity.

Will the pursuit of pleasure bring meaning to his life's efforts?

Will this bring an end to his misery and pain?

- B. Solomon is going to enjoy himself.

1. The word translated enjoy appears 1,300 times in the Old Testament. It is most often translated as "see".

- a. Solomon wanted to "see" for himself or experience for himself pleasure.

Ecclesiastes 2:1 (ESV) I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity.

- b. Solomon at this point is still acting wisely.

Ecclesiastes 2:3 (ESV) I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

2. Solomon is still looking at life from a godly perspective - under the heaven.

Ecclesiastes 2:3 (ESV) I searched with my heart how to cheer my

body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

3. Solomon wants to ease his troubled mind by simply looking for that which will bring him pleasure.

- C. Solomon begins with looking for sensual or physical pleasure.

Ecclesiastes 2:3 (ESV) I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

Solomon wanted to do that which would make him feel good.

- D. Solomon also wanted to give himself to some frivolous pursuits. He wanted to do some things just for the fun of it. He was seeking to be carefree. He was hoping that it would result in a happier and more contented life.

Ecclesiastes 2:3 (ESV) I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

- E. Solomon sought to enjoy life by engaging in a number of different sensual pleasures.

1. Solomon sought pleasure through drinking.

Ecclesiastes 2:3 (ESV) I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

2. Solomon sought pleasure through building things for himself.

- a. Solomon built some magnificent houses.

Ecclesiastes 2:4 (ESV) I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself.

1 Kings 6:37 (ESV) In the fourth year the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid, in the month of Ziv.

1 Kings 6:38 (ESV) And in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished in all its parts, and according to all its specifications. He was seven years in building it.

1 Kings 7:1 (ESV) Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished his entire house.

1 Kings 7:8 (ESV) His own house where he was to dwell, in the other court back of the hall, was of like workmanship. Solomon also made a house like this hall for Pharaoh's daughter whom he had taken in marriage.

1 Kings 7:9 (ESV) All these were made of costly stones, cut according to measure, sawed with saws, back and front, even from the foundation to the coping, and from the outside to the great court.

1 Kings 7:10 (ESV) The foundation was of costly stones, huge stones, stones of eight and ten cubits.

1 Kings 7:11 (ESV) And above were costly stones, cut according to measurement, and cedar.

1 Kings 7:12 (ESV) The great court had three courses of cut stone all around, and a course of cedar beams; so had the inner court of the house of the LORD and the vestibule of the house.

- b. Solomon had tremendous vineyards.

Ecclesiastes 2:4 (ESV) I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself.

- c. Solomon had garden and parks to enjoy

Ecclesiastes 2:5 (ESV) I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

- d. Solomon had groves and trees and irrigated them all.

Ecclesiastes 2:5 (ESV) I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

Ecclesiastes 2:6 (ESV) I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.

- e. All of this was extremely self-indulgent. It was not for the public good or benefit of others.

Ecclesiastes 2:4 (ESV) I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards **for myself**.

Ecclesiastes 2:5 (ESV) **I made myself** gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

Ecclesiastes 2:6 (ESV) **I made myself pools** from which to water the forest of growing trees.

- 3. Solomon sought pleasure through adding additional servants to provide for his wants.

Ecclesiastes 2:7 (ESV) **I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house**. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.

- 4. Solomon acquired great wealth through his livestock.

Ecclesiastes 2:7 (ESV) I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. **I had also great possessions of herds and flocks**, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.

- a. Solomon was not only keeping up with the Jones'.

- b. Solomon was surpassing the Jones'.

Ecclesiastes 2:7 (ESV) I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, **more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem**.

- 5. Solomon sought pleasure by becoming a collector and accumulating things and wealth.

Ecclesiastes 2:8 (ESV) I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man.

Ecccl 2:8 (NASB) Also, I **collected** for myself silver and gold, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and

female singers and the pleasures of men-- many concubines.

1 Kings 10:21 (ESV) All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. None were of silver; silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon.

1 Kings 10:22 (ESV) For the king had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.

1 Kings 10:23 (ESV) Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom.

6. Solomon sought pleasure through entertainment.

Ecclesiastes 2:8 (ESV) I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. **I got singers, both men and women**, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man.

7. Solomon sought pleasure through sexual promiscuity.

Ecclesiastes 2:8 (ESV) I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, **and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man.**

1 Kings 11:3 (ESV) He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart.

- a. Concubines were wives that had no legal status.
- b. Their children would have no claim for the throne.
- c. Thus they were marriages not for power but rather for sexual pleasure.

8. Solomon sought pleasure in becoming superior in every way to everyone else.

Ecclesiastes 2:9 (ESV) **So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem.** Also my wisdom remained with me.

Ecc1 2:9 (NASB) Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me.

9. Solomon sought pleasure in becoming totally self-indulgent and hedonistic.

Ecclesiastes 2:10 (ESV) **And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure,** for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil.

10. Solomon took pleasure in being proud of all that he accomplished.

Ecclesiastes 2:10 (ESV) And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, **for my heart found pleasure in all my toil,** and this was my reward for all my toil.

11. Solomon thought that all these things that he enjoyed were supremely deserved.

Ecclesiastes 2:10 (ESV) And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, **and this was my reward for all my toil.**

12. However none of these things made Solomon truly happy. In the end, he was no happier than when he started on this binge.

Ecclesiastes 2:11 (ESV) Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, **and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.**

- F. Simply seeking to enjoy life is futile as well.

Ecclesiastes 2:1 (ESV) I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." **But behold, this also was vanity.**

Ecclesiastes 2:2 (ESV) I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"

Ecc1 2:2 (NASB) I said of laughter, "It is madness," and of pleasure, "**What does it accomplish?**"

III. Conclusion:

- A. Life is difficult with all of its responsibilities.
- B. One can easily get to the point of frustration and just want to feed one's duties and obligations and simply enjoy life.
 - 1. That desire can be manifest in a great range of applications.
 - 2. It can be as simple as longing for retirement so that one can finally be free to enjoy life.
 - 3. Or it can be as problematic as wanting to leave one's spouse and family in order to fulfill one's own needs and desires as a means of obtaining happiness.
- C. The self-indulgent life is not all that it is cracked up to be.
- D. Solomon went to the excesses in seeking pleasure in life.
- E. Solomon had more resources to enjoy pleasure than we will ever have.
- F. He had it all in the minds of some.
- G. However, none of that brought Solomon satisfaction and joy.
- H. What do we think will bring us happiness?
 - 1. Is it our work?
 - 2. Is it our accomplishments?
 - 3. Is it our "toys?"
 - 4. Or is it something else?