

An American's Joy vs. A Christian's Joy

Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:26

Seeing Life as Gain—The American Dream (1:12-2:23)

The Teacher's Plan of Action (1:12-18)

Pleasures/Hedonism (2:1-11)

Wisdom/Intellect (2:12-16)

Work/Possessions (2:17-23)

“Most people, if they have really learned to look into their own hearts, would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world. There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they never quite keep their promise. The longings which arise in us when we first fall in love, or first think of some foreign country, or first take up some subject that excites us, are longings which no marriage, no travel, no learning, can really satisfy. I am not now speaking of what would be ordinarily called unsuccessful marriages, or holidays, or learned careers. I am speaking of the best possible ones. There was something we have grasped at, in that first moment of longing, which just fades away in the reality. I think everyone knows what I mean. The wife may be a good wife, and the hotels and scenery may have been excellent, and chemistry may be a very interesting job: but something has evaded us.”

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, pp. 120

“[M]any people in the modern world who take the name ‘Christian’ are in many respects indistinguishable (aside from a few personal rules that make them eccentric) from their non-Christian counterparts, for they have largely bought into the secular dream. While talking a good Christian talk, they are in fact pursuing with all their might precisely the same goals as everyone else. They are looking for happiness and fulfillment in his life (albeit with an insurance policy for the next life in their pocket); they are looking to make their mark (or for their children to do so); they are looking to manipulate the world so as to achieve their own personal and family goals.” Iain Provan, *NIVAC: Ecclesiastes/Song of Songs*, p. 63.

Seeing Life as Gift—The Christian's Vision of Life (2:24-26)

“The message of Ecclesiastes isn't that earthly joys are worthless, but that they are not ultimate. When we recognize that no earthly goods are ultimate, we can stop treating them like they are. When we own the fact that death will take everything from us, and take us from everything, we're free to enjoy life's flickering goods for what they are. God richly provides us with everything to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17). The problem, ultimately, isn't your marriage or career or money, but the weight of expectation and longing you invest in them. Only the new creation is solid enough to bear the full weight of all our yearning. Only the unobstructed sight of the imperishable God is enough to secure our unending happiness.”

Bobby Jamieson, “Life is not 'Meaningless' in Ecclesiastes” (The Gospel Coalition)

[Crosses]

Questions to Consider as You Respond to the Word of God Preached

1. What do the lives of people you know reveal about what they think will make them happy? How would someone answer that question about you based on what you talk about and do? What do you daydream about?
2. How would you describe where or how “true joy” is found to a friend?
3. What are some ways that pleasure, work, possessions, relationships, etc... pull you away from God? What are some ways you can use these things in fruitful and God-glorifying ways? (See the Yellow Sheet)

Questions to Ask a Friend After the Worship Service (while maintaining social distancing!)

1. How did God's Word encourage, challenge or speak to you today?
2. How can I pray for you this week?

Next Week: Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 (e-mail the elders any questions you may have about our sermons)