

Not the way it's supposed to be

Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:26



Ecclesiastes:

Looks directly at the problem. Doesn't accept simplistic answers

The world is **not** the way it is supposed to be

Some people benefit from doing bad things

And other people suffer for it

Then everyone dies

Author: leader of the people of God

Audience: the people of God → not outsiders

Wisdom was a great value

Proverbs 3:1-2; 13-14

And yet...

Life is not just

Job: an exceptionally good and God-fearing man who suffered exceptionally

Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:26

1:12-15: God's world is not good like God

1:16-18: Greater understanding sees trouble more clearly

2:1-3: Try #1: pleasure

2:4-7: Try #2: success, productivity

2:8-9: Try #3: money, power, pleasure

2:10-11: Nothing brings lasting meaning in our world

2:12-14: Try #4: Wisdom over folly

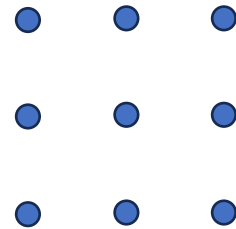
2:15-16: Even the wisest die and are forgotten

2:17-19: Even a great legacy can be destroyed after us

2:20-23: Turmoil ruins rest and living

2:24-26: Even temporary pleasure is at God's choice

Draw 4 straight lines the connect all 9 dots without lifting your pencil off the paper



Claim #1

Our world is badly broken

Decay, injustice, and death are not good, no matter what name we give them

Claim #2

No human effort can fix our broken world

Not wisdom nor pleasure nor money nor power nor success nor distraction, nor anything else can solve the problem of death

Yet we keep imagining that a little more ____ will make it significantly better

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ... 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." *Revelation 21:1,4*

Claim #3

Flourishing life can only be fully experienced in God's new world through Christ

Until then: the Holy Spirit is God's promise and our initial experience

"God has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." 2 Corinthians 5:5

The foretaste of this flourishing life today is only found through relationship with God

Two notes

God's job is not to make our lives good in this broken world

We can't find the right techniques or enough faith or enough wisdom to make life good in this broken world

Applications

Set our full hope on God's new world

"Anyone who loves their life [in this world] will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life [when Christ returns]." John 12:25

"Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming." 1 Peter 1:13

Pursue a relationship with Christ today

"What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ." Philippians 3:8

Idolatry: trying to address the human problem through anything or anyone instead of Christ

It always fails

It tears down our relationship with Christ

Pursue His ways here and now

"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:10

Remember the limitations

C.S. Lewis:

"I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; ...

I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same."

"We must keep alive in us the desire for our true country"

Only by working today with our full hope in God's new world can we work in freedom and glory

Reflection Questions for later today or this week...

1. Read again the definition of idolatry above. What people or strategies or things are you tempted to use to address the human problem other than Christ?
2. What does it mean "to keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death"? What deadens that desire? What does it look like to help each other keep that desire alive?
3. "Only by working today with our full hope in God's new world can we work in freedom and glory." What does that look like in practice? What helps us do that?

Conversation Starter

Is the world as good as it should be? If not, what is the root problem? What can be done about that root problem?