



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

05 – So I Hated Life

Announcements:

2/21 @7:30 -

Prayer

2/22 @6:30 -

Grace Group

2/25 @8:30 -

Sunday School

2/25 @6:00 -

Family Night

SMALL GROUP

ICE BREAKER: Is there a particular book (besides the Bible) that holds a special place in your life?

READ: Ecclesiastes 2:12-17

In my humble estimation, one of the best children's books ever written is "Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No-Good, Very Bad Day". One of the things that makes this book so great is that it takes an honest look at the day of Alexander. It is terrible! One of the themes throughout the book is Alexander saying that he is going to move to Australia. Because in his mind, he wouldn't have such awful days there. But the way the book ends is a fresh bit of truth. Alexander's mom tells him that some days are just like this, even in Australia. In other words, the message of the book is that some days are really bad, and there is no avoiding that - no matter where we move and what we do! This is a good (if sometimes difficult) lesson for kids and part of why that is such a good book. Well, Solomon gives us a bit of similarly hard truth in this passage, and not one that we might expect to read in Scripture. Verse 17: "So I hated life!" And it is this phrase that I would like to look at today.

In all honesty, if we take just this verse out of the context of Ecclesiastes, and out of the context of what Solomon is doing, we might be tempted to think: "you can't say that!" Every breath of every day is a gift from God. Every second we are given by him is one that we should "rejoice and be glad in!" Is it ever right to look around and say: "I hate life"? The short answer is, obviously yes, because Solomon (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) did say it! But we can get a little better answer than that. It is OK here because he is looking at life from the perspective of the brokenness of life. He is, in immediate context, looking at death, and therefore the brokenness that comes into the world as a result of sin. And here, more than anywhere else, I think we can say thoughts like this. In our house we use a slightly different thought to communicate a similar thought: "The world is broken." Usually I say this in response to some news headline that Desiree is reading, or some tragic facebook post that she reads to me. When we see how messed up this world is, it is often a natural thought to say: This world is broken, So I hated life here under the sun!

DISCUSS: In what ways can it be OK to have (and communicate) this sort of thought? In what ways should we be very (very) careful? How can we find the right balance?

But Solomon was not the only Bible character to struggle with thoughts of the brokenness of this world and how this can cause us to set our sights (and importantly our affections) on things that are not of this world. We looked at one of those texts last week, as Paul compared this life and its "light momentary afflictions" with the beauty and splendor of the glory of heaven (see 2 Corinthians 4:16-18). But there is one more place we can look to get this same thought.

READ: Philippians 1:18-23

This, in the end, is how we find the right balance to the question that we just asked. Paul is honest. Which would you prefer: To live now or to die and go to heaven? He says plainly: "My desire is to depart". And yet he knows the full purpose of his life. It is not for pleasure (because as Solomon noted last week: that can't be the purpose) it is not for gain, or what Paul wants, rather the purpose is to live for the glory and advancement of the Kingdom of Christ. How can we get out of the "so I hated life" rut? To understand "That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ." (Heidelberg Catechism Question 1).

DISCUSS: How can we foster this mindset? How can we balance the pleasures of this life with the pain of this life in light of the work of Christ?