

GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

6 = Apart From Him...

Announcements:

2/28 @7:30 -

Prayer

2/29 @6:30 -

Grace Group

3/3 @8:30 -

Sunday School

3/3 @6:00 -

Family Night

PSALM 10

ICE BREAKER: What activities in life bring you the most joy?

READ: Ecclesiastes 2:24-26

As I loaded up the file that I keep all the past Gracepoints in to begin this one, I read through all the titles for the past few weeks. Needless to say it was not filled with the most positive and uplifting thoughts: “Unhappy Business”, “The Few Days of Our Lives” and “So I Hated Life...” were the last three entries... But here, in this passage, we have the beginnings of the positive and wonderful thoughts that underpin much of what Solomon is writing about in this book. While it is still couched in the thoughts of “vanity and striving after wind” we have the beautiful heart that we are called to get to: that all our meaning, and all our pleasure, and all the good things that we have all come from the hand of God. To say this in the reverse way: “Apart from God, who can eat or who can have enjoyment?” (verse 25) and this is the thought that we will be diving into today.

There are two ways that it is helpful to think through this thought. The first is that we get pleasure from the things that God gives to us. This is the surface level reading of what Solomon is saying here. Do you have food? Well you need to acknowledge that God is the one who gave that to you. Do you like the taste of that food? Then you need to give thanks to the God who gave you the food *and* the taste buds with which to taste the delicious food that he gave to you. Truly, there is really no place to stop once we begin down this line of thinking. We could say the same about the roof over your head, the health that you may be experiencing, the joy of the children that God gave to you, the laughter that he created you to experience, we could go on and on and on. In other words, we need to remember that all the things that we have and experience in this life are given to us by the sovereign king of heaven. He is in control of all things, that includes every good and perfect gift that he gives to you. While it is “vanity” to think that we can gain this sort of joy and fulfillment on our own (see what we talked about on Sunday), there is joy and peace knowing that the good God who loves us is in the business of giving good gifts to us! As the song says: “Count your many blessings, name them one by one. Count your many blessings, *see what God has done!*”

DISCUSS: In what ways do you sit back and think: God has given to me many good gifts? Why is it important to understand that these all come from the hand of God?

But there is another thought that is worth wrestling with here. And that is understanding that we are given joy and enjoyment not just *from* but also *IN* the things that God sends our way. Here we can understand the “peace that passes understanding” or the thoughts that “the joy of the Lord is my strength!” In other words. Yes, there are good gifts that it is often easy to see the joy and enjoyment, but through understanding that these things come from the hand of God we are also able to “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds” (James 1:2). Everyone can see the joy that comes from a wedding, (a gift that God gives to us), but knowing that God is using a marriage for our sanctification helps us to find joy in the “worse” parts of “for better or worse.” (still, sometimes difficultly, a gift that God gives us!) Everyone who has kids knows that they can be the greatest source of Joy in our lives, but when we see God at work in all things we can find joy in the times when they make us want to tear our hair out. This is the full view of how we find “enjoyment” from *all* the things that come from his hand.

DISCUSS: How have you been able to find joy in all things that God sends your way? Why is this part of the equation for enjoyment so important?