



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion
13 – Wisdom and Folly

Announcements:

4/17 @7:30 -

Prayer

4/18 @6:30 -

Grace Group

4/21 @8:30 -

Sunday School

~~4/21 @6:00 -~~

~~Family Night~~

~~CANCELED~~

4/28 After Service

Annual

Conference

Report

READ: Ecclesiastes 7:1-12

ICE BREAKER: Which of the proverbs that we read here stood out to you?

This is our third poem that we have looked at in the book of Ecclesiastes, and this one is in many ways the most difficult, for two reasons. The first is that it feels more like a random collection of sayings that Solomon has tied together than a cohesive set of thoughts. The second difficulty comes, however, when you begin to realize the weight of all that Solomon is saying here. We are back to his difficult sayings like “the day of death is better than the day of mourning” and “sorrow is better than laughter.” And in these sayings we have to weigh out what it is exactly that he wants us to see. So today, while not tackling ALL of these things we will be wrestling with one particular proverb that requires a bit of extra thought. “The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of the fool is in the house of mirth” (Ecclesiastes 7:4)

Let’s look at the two halves of this proverb backwards, starting then with “the heart of the fool is in the house of mirth.” There are two ways that we could seek to get the meaning here that show us the two sides of this. The first question is: What is it about the house of mirth that makes it where fools would place their heart? To not try and dive too deep into the Hebrew words here, the word that we have as “mirth” basically means “sensory joy or sensory pleasure” (some other translations are pleasure or feasting). In other words this house is filled with temporary fleeting pleasures that are for the senses and not the souls. To ask the second question then: why is it foolish to place your heart there? The short answer is that these fleeting things are, well, fleeting, and can offer you no real value. You are throwing away your heart. Or as Jesus himself said: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:19-20).

DISCUSS: What is the balance between finding “enjoyment” like we talked about last week and not having your heart in the house of mirth? Why is this distinction important?

So we shouldn't seek temporary fleeting pleasures, that makes sense, but it seems that Solomon is maybe going too far. Does that mean that we *should* seek out the house of mourning? What exactly does he mean when he says this? Douglass O'Donnell's commentary is helpful here: “These are better because they help us focus on our character and reputation (see Verse 1). How does a funeral help with this task? At a birthday bash, frat party, wedding reception, or whatever other kind of party one might attend, people do not normally evaluate how well and wisely they have been living their lives.” In other words, the reason that the house of mourning is the place where the heart of the wise finds its residence is that wisdom sees that there is value for our souls there. Again we are in the same thought as the previous point, just the opposite. The house of mirth is for fools because it cannot lead us to lasting change and impact. The house of mourning, on the other hand, is a place where we are forced to make difficult decisions and face difficult truths and this often is for our good. This is why I always say that I would, as a pastor, much rather perform a funeral than a wedding. It is not that weddings are bad (in fact, it is the opposite, they are a precious gift from God and cause of much rejoicing). It is that funerals are *better* because this is where people are more open to the hope of the gospel as they face difficult truths in life.

DISCUSS: In what ways can we see that it is more wise to go to the house of mourning? How can we maintain balance in this thought (In other words, how can we avoid the trap of having no joy)?