

FAITH SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

June 26th, 2011

All is Vanity (Empty)

Focal Passage: Ecclesiastes 12

Cross References: I Tim 4:12, Jn 17:17, II Tim 2:15

(Verses taken from the ESV)

Central Idea: This is a book that has special meaning to our culture today. We live in a materialistic society, and this helps us to see the emptiness of many earthly pursuits. It contains lessons for all, but especially for the young who have so much to lose should they make the wrong choices early in life.

Lesson Idea: Seeking God is a lifetime goal. If you seek God when you are young it will affect the rest of your life, you will not look back and regret the time spent learning more of who God is, or what His callings are. Take the time to properly know God, to properly seek God. Know who He is, and who you are in comparison, His plans and purposes are far greater than our own, or anything else we could plan!

Background: The preacher (King Solomon) wondered what many have asked: "What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?" (1:3). In other words, what value of purpose is there for living? What is the meaning of life? Having been blessed with great material resources and wisdom, the Preacher was able to explore all avenues in his search. He writes to share with us the results of his own investigation, and to offer observations and words of counsel gleaned from his search. The term Vanity is used 35 times in this book, it means "emptiness" or "futility".

Bible in a Year Readings

Mar 20-27, 2011

June 26: I King 15:25-16:34, II Chron 17

June 27: I King 17-19

June 28: I King 20-21

June 29: I King 22, II Chron 18

June 30: II Chron 19-23

July 1: Oba, Ps 82-83

July 2: II King 1-4

July 3: II King 5-8

Highlights of the Week:

I Kings 16: Ahab is made King

I Kings 17: Elijah raises the widow's son

I Kings 18: Elijah on Mount Carmel

I Kings 19: Elisha follows Elijah

I Kings 21: Ahab and Naboth's Vinyard

I Kings 22: Ahab's Death

II Chron 21: Jehoram's reign and Death

II Kings 2: Elijah taken to heaven on a chariot of fire

II Kings 4: Elisha and the Shunammite woman's son

Ecclesiastes 12:1-8
Remember the Creator in the days of your Youth:

¹Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, "I have no pleasure in them";
²before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain, ³in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed, ⁴and the doors on the street are shut—when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low—⁵they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets—⁶before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, ⁷and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. ⁸ Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.

DISCUSSION:

- When should we take pains to remember our Creator (I Tim 4:12)? Why should we do this?
- Do you think it is easier to serve God when you are young or when you are old? Why would that be?
- How did Solomon describe old age in verses 3-5? Look for all 13 illustrations he uses.
 - 1: _____
 - 2: _____
 - 3: _____
 - 4: _____
 - 5: _____
 - 6: _____
 - 7: _____
 - 8: _____
 - 9: _____
 - 10: _____
 - 11: _____
 - 12: _____
 - 13: _____
- What do these mean? How are they effects of old age?
- How is death depicted in Verse 5?
- How does Solomon describe death in verse 6 and 7? What significance do these metaphors hold?
- What occurs at death in verse 7? Does this apply to all who die? Read Luke 16:19-31. What is the destination of each man? What caused their destinations to be where they were?
- What did Solomon conclude as being meaningless or empty in verse 8?
- Why did he conclude that all is empty?

- Can an “empty” thing be made useful? How can we take something that is futile and make it have purpose and use?

Ecclesiastes 12:9-14 **Fear God and Keep His Commandments:**

⁹Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. ¹⁰ The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.

¹¹ The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. ¹² My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

¹³ The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

DISCUSSION:

- How did Solomon describe the teacher in Verse 9?
- What was the teacher searching for? What did he write?
- How do we determine what are words of truth? Jn 17:17.
- How did Solomon describe the words of the wise in verse 11? What significance is found in comparing the words of the wise to goads, or nails firmly fixed?
- What is the warning of verse 12? How do we apply this in contrast to II Tim 2:15?
- What is a person’s whole duty? What does that look like in your life? Can we instill this in others?
- What does it mean to fear God? Which of God’s commandments are easy to keep? Which ones are more difficult?
- Why does Solomon tell us to fear God and keep His commandments?

APPLICATION

- Reread verse 14 and take a moment to reflect, answer to yourself, is this an encouraging verse or an intimidating verse? Why? Does your faith in Jesus change the way you look at this verse? Should it?
- Using your own words, what does it mean to “remember your creator” and “Fear God”, and “Keep His Commandments”?
- What in your life could be considered “empty”? What will you do to change that?
- Will this chapter and study of this chapter impact your life in the coming weeks?