

Simple Living in a Complex World

Ecclesiastes 11: 1-6

It has often been said that the simple things of life are the most enjoyable. There is an abundance of truth in that line of thinking. Consider the beauty of flowers in spring, the enjoyment of a relaxing vacation, fireworks on the 4th of July, the splendor of colorful leaves in autumn, the joys of family and friends while celebrating the holidays; and we couldn't possibly fail to mention homemade biscuits, saw-mill gravy, and banana pudding. These are all simple things, in that they are not complex or complicated, and yet they bring joy to our lives.

In our modern society it seems as if we have lost our appreciation for the simple things due to the complexity of life. We live in an age dominated by technology and convenience. Now, I am not opposed to many of the advancements that have been made, but you will have to agree that life was much simpler 30 years ago. It may not have been easier, but it was certainly much simpler. I am convinced that it would benefit our modern generation to understand and regain some of that simplicity.

Our text today was penned by King Solomon, arguably the wisest man who ever lived. I find it interesting that he is not speaking of scientific formulas, economic strategies, or architectural plans, but the simple truths of life. Absolute truth never changes. What was true and relevant in Solomon's day remains in our day. These truths can be applied to all of life. I want to look at them primarily from a spiritual perspective. Let's consider: [Simple Living in a Complex World](#).

I. He Speaks of Participation (1a) – [Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.](#) We know that Solomon was heavily involved in the shipping industry. He was very successful and it brought him great profit. [1 Kings 10:22 – For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.](#) Solomon is not focused on lucrative profits here, but rather, the simple truth that success requires participation. If one is to reap he must first cast his bread upon the water.

- We often overlook or ignore the simple truths in life, but this is very profound. We will never achieve spiritual maturity or reap a harvest for the Lord if we are not participating in the work. Many today are equipped for success, but they lack the motivation and refuse to participate. There is much work to do, but who will answer the call?

II. He Speaks of Persistence (1b) – Notice that Solomon didn't promise immediate success. He reveals that usually the return will come [after many days](#). He knew that patience and persistence were essential to success.

- We talked about convenience earlier. We certainly live in an age of convenience. We have grown accustomed to instant gratification in almost every facet of life.

- You might disagree, but that has not worked to our advantage. Our convenience has created a generation that is impatient and lacking in persistence. Few are willing to press on if instant success is not achieved. We tend to believe that waiting constitutes failure.
- This is especially damaging in the work of the Lord. We need to develop an attitude of patience and continue on persistently. That is not to say that we need to expect failure, but that God's timing is not always consistent with what we desire.
- Fellowship faces obstacles. There is much work to be done. There are countless souls that need to be saved. This will not be accomplished overnight, but if we are willing to cast our bread upon the water, we will find it after many days!

III. He Speaks of Pity (2) – Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. This may well reflect the need for diversity in investing, which is sound wisdom, but there is also a spiritual application as well. Solomon was not selfish or narrow-minded with his generosity. He was sympathetic to the needs of many. He couldn't perceive every need, so he was generous to all.

- I think our generation needs to learn the benefit and blessing of sacrificial giving. We tend to support certain causes or help certain people, but I fear that we are lacking compassion as the Lord desires.
- This reveals that we must give until it hurts. We must learn to see all people as our Lord sees them. When we have given all that we think we can give, we must be willing to give some more. We cannot possibly know the hurt that people face. We must assume that every person we encounter was sent our way by the Lord. (That is not to say that we don't need wisdom in ministry. We will deal with that in a moment. However, we do need a heart of pity and compassion.)

IV. He Speaks of Perception (3a) – If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: This is so simple that many may not grasp its meaning. Solomon is simply advising that we be honest and face reality. When we see a storm clouding on the horizon, we need to plan for rain; when the clouds get full they empty themselves. We need to see things as they are and be honest about the situation that we are in.

- The agenda in America today is promote a state of denial. We look around and see the adversity we face, but no one wants to be honest and up-front about the severity of the situation.
- Our economy has been bad for several years, people are out of work, gas and food prices continue to escalate, and yet the economists say that things are getting better. The cloud looks full of rain to me! That's not being pessimistic; it is just being realistic.

- Things aren't much better in the church. We have been in a state of decline for years and yet there seems to be no interest in doing any better. We need to be realistic, address the needs, and get to work!

V. He Speaks of Preparation (3b) – and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be. That is so simple that a child can understand it and yet we live as if it were not so. The modern church has preached a universal acceptance without any accountability for sin. Many have gotten to the place that they are no longer willing to address the sins of humanity and their need for Christ. The church is spewing out a message of easy-believism, filling our congregations with people who have never been converted.

- Where the tree falls, it will lie. There is more to salvation than a handshake, filling out a card, baptism, and church membership. There must be a change within the heart. There must be repentance of sin and acceptance of Christ.
- We are doing a grave injustice if we fail to share the whole counsel of God. We need to preach Jesus crucified, buried, and risen as man's only hope. We are obligated to expose sin and point the lost to Christ!

VI. He Speaks of Prudence (4) – He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. Here Solomon speaks of fundamental truths regarding agriculture. A wise farmer will not sow seed when the wind is blowing. He will not set out to reap the harvest when it looks like rain. Those actions would be unprofitable.

- This deals with the wisdom in ministry that I spoke of. It also bears in mind our being realistic in our endeavors. We must be prudent in ministry. God has called us to be good stewards of His heritage. We need to ensure that we are investing our time, talents, and money in sound ministry.
- That does not ensure every seed that is planted will bear fruit, but we are obligated to make wise investments. We ought to focus our giving on things that are profitable in reaching souls. Every facet of ministry, within and without, ought to bring glory to the Lord. There is nothing wrong in programs and activities, but we need to honestly consider the benefit of every action.
- Mat.7:6 – Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. We must not get entangled with social causes that will end with no profit at the expense of ministry. Rather than majoring on opposing those who differ with us, seek to reach those who are receptive!

VII. He Speaks of Providence (5) – As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all. As wise as Solomon was, there were things about God that even he

couldn't comprehend. Solomon did not get bogged down with those things. He simply accepted them by faith.

- There is much about God that we cannot comprehend. It is unwise to dwell upon those things and let that hinder us from doing the things that we do understand and are responsible for.
- I certainly don't understand all there is about God. His ways and thoughts are so much higher than ours, but I don't let that dictate my relationship with Him or hinder my service to Him. I rejoice in what I do know, and by faith, believe the things I don't. We simply have to trust the Lord in all areas of life.
- The gospel message is too important to focus on the questions and issues that we will never be able to answer. We need to avoid careless and unprofitable arguments. Issues like where Cain got his wife will have no eternal effects on the souls of men.

VII. He Speaks of Potential (6) – In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good. This sums up the truths that Solomon has made up to this point. He is simply saying that we ought to do the things that we are equipped to do. We may never see the end result, and there is no way of knowing whether every seed we sow will bear fruit, but we must sow anyway. We must look at every situation as an opportunity to serve the Lord.

- God has blessed this congregation with an abundance of talent and varied spiritual gifts. We simply need to seize the opportunity and realize our potential. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. We are not working in our own power or ability, but in His. With Christ working in us and through us, what could we possibly not accomplish? Is there anything too hard for our God?

This has been an enlightening and challenging portion of Scripture. These are basic, simple truths that we all can understand. I believe that we just need to get back to the basics. If you belong to the Lord, there is a work for you to do and I know that God has given you the ability to be successful.

If there is a need in your life, Jesus is the answer. He has the power to save as well as to strengthen. Why not seek Him for that need?