HOW DO I MAKE THE MOST OF MY TIME?
Ecclesiastes 3.1-15

We are continuing a series on the Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Scriptures (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and parts of the Psalms). Contrary to modern understandings, wisdom has a divine origin, not a human one. As we read wisdom literature, we can easily get the mistaken impression that wisdom involves the memorization and application of certain texts. The fact is, wisdom is not just common sense based upon experience, it is a result of a relationship with God.

13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. Ecclesiastes 12.13-14

The writer of Ecclesiastes believed that his book was an argument that came to a close in 12.13-14. Therefore, we are able to fairly conclude, that each of the four sections, (1.2-2.26; 3.1-5.20; 6.1-8.15; 8.16-12.14), added something to the progress of that argument. The best way to then understand where the author is headed is to look at the conclusion of each section. If we can understand the conclusion, we might then be able to follow with greater certainty the steps leading up to it.

18 Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him – for this is his lot. Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy – this is a gift of God. Ecclesiastes 5.18-20

In our study of Ecclesiastes, it is helpful to see the word translated “meaningless” (NIV) in a possible different light.

"Meaningless! Meaningless!"

says the Teacher.

"Utterly meaningless!

Everything is meaningless.” Ecclesiastes 1.2

The Teacher throughout Ecclesiastes asks the same question (with slightly different emphasis):

What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun? Ecclesiastes 1.3; 2.22; 3.9, 22; 5.16-17

In Ecclesiastes 3, Solomon gives five keys to making the most out of our time when things are out of our control. How do we manage the unmanageable, the irritations, the inconveniences, the illnesses, the delays, when things just cause your schedule to fly out of control?

1. Accept That God Has a Purpose in Both the Good and Bad Times of My Life.

1 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:
2 a time to be born and a time to die,
3 a time to plant and a time to uproot,
4 a time to weep and a time to laugh,
5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
6 a time to search and a time to give up,
7 a time to keep and a time to throw away,
8 a time to love and a time to hate,
9 a time to war and a time for peace.
10 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Ecclesiastes 3.1-8, 11
2. Affirm My Faith in God in the Times When the Road is Marked With Suffering.

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. Ecclesiastes 3.11

8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 2 Corinthians 1.8-9

I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him. Ecclesiastes 3.14

3. Apply the Present Time to Doing What is Right.

12 I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. 13 That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil – this is the gift of God. Ecclesiastes 3.12-13

Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap. Ecclesiastes 11.4

Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. Proverbs 3.27

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2.10

4. Appreciate All My Time as a Gift from God.

12 I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. 13 That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil – this is the gift of God. Ecclesiastes 3.12-13

However many years a man may live, let him enjoy them all. Ecclesiastes 11.8a

11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4.11-13

5. Anticipate Giving an Account of My Time to God.

14 I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him.

15 Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before; and God will call the past to account. Ecclesiastes 3.14-15

I thought in my heart, “God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed.” Ecclesiastes 3.17

So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Romans 14.12

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Ephesians 5.15-16