IS THERE MORE TO LIFE THAN LIFE  
Ecclesiastes 7.1-6

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

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 merest of breaths,”  
Says the Teacher.  
“The merest of breaths!  
Everything is a breath.”  
Job 7.7; Psalm 39.4-6, 11; 144.4; Proverbs 31.30

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.

Although a wicked person who commits a hundred crimes may live a long time, I know that it will go better with those who fear God, who are reverent before him.  
Ecclesiastes 8.12

So I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun.  
Ecclesiastes 8.14

God has commended enjoyment as one of his most excellent gifts to the men and women who choose to fear him. God really intends that men and women come into a proper enjoyment of the good material gifts placed in the world by him, and that the gifts should be a source of constant satisfaction when the things and the users are properly related to the Giver himself.

We live in an escapist culture, that is, the modern attempt to embrace reality to the extent that it is convenient for us to do so. Often when things don’t go as we wish, we enter into a world of fantasy creating a false reality. The object is to shut out the pain of the everyday world. Against such escapism, whether inside or outside the church, Qohelet should help us set our face, even as we empathize with and grieve over the brokenness of our world. Biblical faith is not escapist. It does not advocate the evacuation of the mind in the face of unpleasant facts. One of those unpleasant facts is the reality of death. Even in the best of times, reality dictates a limited exercise and function of our abilities. The limitation is that sober reality – DEATH. It is the future end of each one of us. So we, with the writer of Ecclesiastes, have “come” to the house of mourning again. It is here that we take to heart the message.

1 A good name is better than fine perfume,  
and the day of death better than the day of birth.

2 It is better to go to a house of mourning  
than to go to a house of feasting,  
for death is the destiny of everyone;  
the living should take this to heart.

4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning,  
but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.  
Ecclesiastes 7.1-4
Since “death is the destiny of everyone,” how should we “take this to heart”? The primary question is: “What happens when a person dies?”

Strangely, the Bible tells us little about heaven and the nature of life after death. Much is often stated in negative terms – “no tears, no pain, no sorrow, no sighing.” Life after death will be very much unlike our present life on earth. God, in his mercy, in fact condescends to use some images to attract us and to woo us to the unimaginable delights which are now beyond our power to appreciate or comprehend.

The Bible’s teaching on eternal life focuses on four great core truths:

We Will Be in the Presence of God.

You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. Psalm 16.11

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” Revelation 21.3-4; Leviticus 26.9-13; Isaiah 25.8

In Some Fashion We Will Be Like Christ.

1 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3.1-3; Romans 8.28-30

There Will Be an Integrity of Body and Soul.

42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

50 I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

55 “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” 1 Corinthians 15.1-58; Isaiah 25.8; Hosea 13.14

One Final Truth:

The fact of the matter is that life with Christ, like Christ, in a body perfectly suited for us is not for everyone.

8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might… 2 Thessalonians 1.5-9; John 3.16

One Final Takeaway:

All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. 1 John 3.1

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. 1 Corinthians 15.58