

Ecclesiastes

Living in Light of the End

Don't Neglect or Destroy What Matters Most

Ecclesiastes 4:1-12

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / July 9, 2023

I. It's Painful to See What We Can Do to Each Other

Ecclesiastes 4:1 "Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them."

Our education and medical advances have not been able to stop the atrocities of wholesale massacres and oppression around the world. Every age and stage of our history is scarred with examples.

II. It's Harder to See What We Do to Ourselves

Ecclesiastes 4:4 "Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind."

At the heart of our sin condition is a desire to be noticed and to be the focus of attention. Piling up money and stuff is not the biggest reason for why we do what we do. It's how we think that money, stuff, or recognition makes us look compared to others.

You were never designed to create yourself or prove yourself. You were designed to give yourself to a good God through His Son, Jesus Christ, who says, "You are My beloved son or daughter and I love you!"

It's trying to prove yourself and be better than others that brutalizes your work and leads to emotional, physical, and spiritual exhaustion.

III. It's Tragic to See What Gets Crushed Along the Way

We have one of the saddest verses tucked down into our chapter today because it zooms in on the portrait of a man or woman who chases after the things of this world while ignoring people all around them.

Ecclesiastes 4:7-8 "Again, I saw vanity under the sun: ⁸one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, 'For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?' This also is vanity and an unhappy business."

"The happiest times in my life were when my relationships were going well - when I was in love with someone, and someone was loving me. But in my whole life, I haven't met the person I can sustain a relationship with yet. So, I'm discontented... [and] I have regrets."

When the interviewer reminded him that he was in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, he said:

"That's cold comfort at the end of the day. You can't go home with the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. You don't sleep with the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. You don't get hugged by the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame..."

~ Billy Joel, quoted in *The New York Times Magazine*, "The Stranger" by Chuck Klosterman, Sept. 15, 2002

In verses 9-12, Solomon piles up all of the perks of investing in relationships and people around you. He says you'll have:

A. The Benefit of Assistance

Ecclesiastes 4:10 "For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow..."

B. The Reward of Comfort

Ecclesiastes 4:11 "... if two lie together, they keep warm..."

C. The Security of Defense

Ecclesiastes 4:12 "And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him..."

You don't have to be famous to wreck the relationships around you. You just have to be careless and caught up in chasing after the things of this world.

Money, possessions, and properties are not your biggest assets in life because relationships are crucial to navigating life successfully. God did not create us to thrive without being connected to Him and others in our life...but to have other people, you have to make time for other people.

IV. It's Life-Changing When You Finally Choose What Is Best

Ecclesiastes 4:6 "Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind."

The answer's not working day and night grabbing everything you can with both hands, and the answer's not folding your hands and doing nothing. It's a biblical middle ground of balance.

That Hebrew word for "quietness" is a word that means "rest," "peace of mind," and "calmness of soul." It describes a deep-seated sense of well-being that comes from knowing your place in the world and being content with who you are and what you have.

Hebrews 4:1-3 "Therefore, while the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. ²For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. ³For we who have believed enter that rest..."

The rest you're looking for can only be found in a person and His name is Jesus Christ.

See Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus gives us all one simple invitation and universal promise that will change your life forever:

Matthew 11:28 "Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."