

Ecclesiastes 7:14-29 Discussion Questions

Outline of Pastor Mike's Sermon

Introduction

- Prayer for Sharefest projects
 - Jeremiah 29.7
 - Prayer points
 - Sheridan Elementary School
 - Pray for wisdom, strength and encouragement for Principal Antonio Amparan and his staff.
 - Pray for the local church in that community would be gifted with opportunities to mentor and disciple because of the goodwill that has been created through events like Sharefest.
 - Billy Mitchell Elementary School
 - Pray for wisdom, strength and encouragement for Principal Courtney Gillette and her staff, particularly as she has been leading through a year of transition as the interim principal.
 - Van Deene Avenue Elementary
 - Pray for wisdom, strength and encouragement for Principal Jennifer Cheng and her staff.
 - Jane Addams Middle School
 - Pray for wisdom, strength and encouragement for Principal Dennis Perry and his staff.
 - Pray for their efforts to increase their support for the emotional and physical wellness of their students.
 - Pray for opportunities for them to expand the ways they are able to interact with the parent community.
 - OT Group Home
 - Pray for those who lead the young men in the home- that they might be examples of godliness and maturity.
 - Pray for the young men in the home that this newly renovated residence would be a place of peace and safety.
- Recapping last week's message
 - Answering the question about "what is good for man?"
 - The Preacher begins to point to wisdom as the answer
 - The Difficult Dwelling Place of Wisdom
 - The Preacher points to the uncomfortable, unlikely places where wisdom can be found

- This week the Preacher steps more deeply into the search of wisdom and righteousness
- Table of Contents
 - The Safety of Moderation (v.14-22)
 - The Unsatisfying Search for Wisdom (v.23-29)

The Safety of Moderation (v.14-22)

- v. 14 serves as an introduction- life under the sun exists within the boundaries of joy and adversity. What is the best way to navigate these proverbial borders of existence?
 - Life under the sun- the limited perspective of humanity unable to see the fullness of all God sees and knows
- v. 15 opposes commonly accepted Biblical and cultural ideals about the benefits of wisdom and righteousness
 - Shapes the rest of the thought process of the section- if there is no clear benefit to wisdom/righteousness or clear penalty to wickedness/folly then why try.
- v.16- do not be overly righteous or overly wise
- v.17 do not be overly wicked or foolish
 - No qualification for folly- there is no acceptable level of folly
- v. 18- summary of the moderate position
- v.19-22- True righteousness cannot be found

The Unsatisfying Search for Wisdom (v.23-29)

- v.26-28- misogyny or metaphor?
 - It seems like a strange logical leap to go from searching for wisdom to searching for companionship- Craig Bartholomew
 - Proverbs 5.1-6 describes folly as a deceptive woman
 - Proverbs, chapters 1-9 personifies Wisdom as a lady worth pursuing
 - Proverbs 1.20-21
 - Proverbs 4.5-9

Implications

- **Romans 11.33-12.2**

Discussion Questions

Read Ecclesiastes 7:14-29

1. Confronted by the reality that often the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper, the preacher advocates a life of moderation where you avoid extreme righteousness and wickedness, and instead do a little of both. In all reality, many of us adopt the same line of thinking at various points in our lives and with regard to various areas of our lives.

a. Where are you tempted to most to fall into this pattern of thinking and behavior?

b. If righteousness and wisdom don't guarantee a blessed life, then are they still worth pursuing exclusively? Or is it better to be more moderate, not being too righteous or too wicked? Why or why not?

2. In the second half of the passage, the Preacher bemoans the fact that wisdom is so hard to find "under the sun."

a. In Proverbs we find that lady wisdom readily makes herself available to all who would seek her. If that is true then why does the Preacher have such a hard time finding her?

b. If God has made his wisdom known through Jesus Christ, why are we still tempted to seek out wisdom (e.g. "the best way to live") by relying upon our own reason and experience?

c. Where have you seen the struggle between trusting in Jesus' way versus figuring your own way in your own life? Where are you tempted to be more impressed by your own wisdom than God's?

d. What has God taught you about yourself, life, and him through this struggle?

3. When we compare Romans 11:33-36 with this passage, we find two very different responses to the same situation. When the Preacher considers the enigmatic and mysterious nature of life it leads him to despair. When Paul looks at the same thing it leads him to worship.

a. Why the difference?

b. How does Romans 12:1-2 teach us to get to where Paul is, i.e., one who worships instead of despairing?