



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

17 – Man Does Not Know

Announcements:

5/15 @7:30 -

Prayer

5/16 @6:30 -

Grace Group

5/19 @8:30 -

Sunday School

5/19 @6:00 -

Family Night

5/26 -During Service

Baptism

ICE BREAKER: Have you ever gotten yourself into trouble by acting when you didn't know the whole story? What happened?

READ: Ecclesiastes 9:1

On Sunday, I mentioned that this was the end of the “really depressing” portions of Ecclesiastes. From here we will have wise words, encouragement and the end result of all of Solomon's contemplation which is (spoiler alert) that “God will bring every deed into judgment”. But with that being said, there are still some difficult things that we need to wrestle with in this portion of Ecclesiastes. In wrestling with the difficulties of life he says something that should really make us stop and think. After saying that the righteous and their deeds are in the hand of God he says something really puzzling: “Whether it is love or hate, man does not know”. It is this phrase that we will be diving into this morning.

First we have to ask: “Does this mean what I think it does?” Well, if you are thinking that Solomon is saying that life is hard, and often hard things happen and difficult things occur in the lives of the righteous. Furthermore, it is hard to tell sometimes if the things that God is sending your way are from love or from punishment/hate... then yes, this means exactly what you think it does! Before we explain away the difficulty, let's acknowledge this difficulty. Here we are taking a step even further than we did last week. Last week the question was “why do bad things happen to good people?” Here the question is much more personal. It is: when bad things are happening to *ME* how can I tell if this is God's love or hate? I would say that anyone who says that they have *never* thought something like this is probably lying. So first, let's just acknowledge this difficulty.

DISCUSS: Have you ever felt this way? What was happening? (Please note: we will have an answer here, and while we *feel* this way sometimes what we feel and reality are often far from the same thing! But here let's be honest about the feeling!)

So what can we say to these things? Is Solomon right here? More to the point, he says that man *does not* know, but is it true that man *can not* know? Here I would say that we can have two answers. One comes from realizing what Solomon is doing, and the other comes from knowing who Jesus is. Let's look at Solomon first.

So what *exactly* is Solomon doing here? What is his aim? Well let's remember the context: All of life under the sun is vanity. Then we discussed at length that God knows (and controls) the times. He is God and we are not. So let's apply that sort of wisdom to seeing that God holds us, and we do not know whether it is from love or hate. From our vain, limited point of view we might not know how to read and understand (or even cope with) all the things that come our way. But that sort of wisdom would be vanity! So instead, stop me if you have heard this before, we should trust that God loves us. We don't know the time, but there is a time for everything. So when we are facing the things that we do instead of feeling like you have to see and understand we can instead (broken record alert) trust God. he has said that he loves us, all things come from his hand. Sure, in the *moment* it is hard to know, but trust that God is good and gracious and loving and he will care for us!

DISCUSS: How does Solomon's call here for extreme reflection teach us even more to trust in God?

The second point is really the point of the whole Bible. Sure sometimes man does not know, but he *should*. The testimony of Scripture is clear. Does God do what he does out of love? “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16) Is it hard to know if God is operating out of love? “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32) This is the point of the Gospel! WE have no need to ever doubt the Love of God because it has been shown to us clearly and perfectly! That is the best answer that we can give to Solomon's longing here!

DISCUSS: In what other ways can we **know** that God is working for us out of love? How can we be sure to remember this in the difficult times?