

"Look at your life through heaven's eyes": Ecclesiastes 3



In Ecclesiastes 3 the Teacher makes some hard observations and asks a pointed question.

- *“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven” v1*

He looks at the world, he sees that time marches on, the seasons go round, one age follows from another and there is nothing us-little-humans can do about it.

- *“What gain have the workers for their toil?” v9*

He asks what gain do workers get? Because he sees us-little-humans working hard for our possessions but, just like Jesus said about the rich fool who stored up possessions for himself and thought himself secure “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” (Luke 12: 13-21) - what’s the point if we have to leave it all behind?

- *“... in the place of justice, wickedness was there, and in the place of righteousness, wickedness was there as well.” v16*

And he sees that the world is unfair, in our courts, in our governments and in our churches wickedness is there. Anywhere with power, there is corruption, as Lord Acton observed “absolute power corrupts absolutely”, us-little-humans can’t help it.

These are his observations of the world, they are sobering, humbling and a bit depressing but we can’t say they are not true.

The problem, in a world that is trying not to think about God, is that we also don’t want to think about these observations either. We like to make plans; add holidays to our calendar a year in advance, and put off important tasks because we like to think we have all the time in the world. We like to think that our work has meaning, that building up savings makes us secure and that the results will endure or we can pass things along to the next generation. And we like to trust that those in power are trustworthy or at least not outright crooks, we believe in justice even though we know we can’t see it.

The problem in a world trying not to think about God is, as the teacher also observed “*He has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end*” v11. We want to think we have all the answers but though we have a sense of them we cannot know the big picture, we cannot see the timeless view only available through God’s eyes.

There is a song in the wonderful film the Prince of Egypt called Through Heaven's Eyes. (you can listen to it here <https://youtu.be/oG0a9WFkgzU>)

The first few lines are:

*A single thread in a tapestry
And though its colour brightly shines
Can never see its purpose
In the pattern of the grand design*

...

*So how can you see what your life is worth
Or where your value lies?
Oh, you can never see through the eyes of man
You must look at your life
Look at your life through heaven's eyes*

The problem in a world that is trying not to think about God, is that we are trying not to think about God! The Teacher in Ecclesiastes is helping us see that all the things he observed only make sense if you look through God’s eyes. He has set everything in its time; He gives the point to the workers and He is the ultimate justice in the world.

Our job is to be the single thread, to be placed where it is in the pattern, we can't see the purpose but God can. This chapter in Ecclesiastes is a very humbling passage. This passage reminds us of how small we are in the big cosmic picture, how little control we have over our own lives, and that we play only a small part in the grand drama of creation.

However, it is also freeing. When we understand that our job is only to play the small part and it isn't to be in control or understand the whole pattern; When we let go of the attempts at control and understand that without God we are just like animals and everything else is just vanity;- then we can start living!

The teacher's advice is *"That there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live" V12* and that it *"is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil" v 13.*

When we let God be God, we can start enjoying our work instead of worrying if it is good enough, or if we have enough; we can live our lives instead of trying to make them longer and we can appreciate the small things in life instead of trying to control the big picture.

We are made to live under God, to trust that he is in control though we don't often understand it. To live by faith not sight. It is the paradox of faith that the more we give up the more we gain. And, unlike the Teacher, we do have Jesus and his teachings to help us understand a little. Jesus gave us the point of this life — it is to live in relationship with this God who is in control, it is to love him and love our neighbours. We can do that wherever we are placed in the great tapestry.

*"Although the threads of my life have often seemed knotted,
I know, by faith, that on the other side of the embroidery there is a crown."
Corrie Ten Boom*

*Time never stands still
But our God is eternal
Yesterday, today and tomorrow
God is unchanging
Here and now, in this precious time
May we meet with God.*

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