

The Weekly Word
November 27- December 3, 2017

Happy Thanksgiving week... May the Lord's blessings be with you. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, November 27: Ecclesiastes 3- How well am I using each season of life?...

I love the rhythm of the poem on time. Whenever I read it, the poem causes me to ponder time and life. The rhythms, the changes, and the seasons we all go through. Rich or poor, male or female, no matter what continent we live upon or what century we are from we, all humans, experience similar seasons and rhythms. With respect to time, life is quite universal. Different for each person to be sure but yet universal as well. Every person I have met can relate to this poem.

Time is gift.

I wonder how much time I use well and how much I squander. I also wonder if that matters, or is use of time another ebb and flow toggling back and forth between the two.

Then later in the chapter the writer profoundly realizes... *"God will bring into judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time to judge every deed"* (17).

This causes me to think, maybe I have wondered about the wrong aspect of time. Maybe the idea of squandering time is the wrong question. It seems the question should be how righteously, morally and God-honoring have I acted during each season I have been given? God will judge how I have lived... it would be wise for me to keep that in mind as I ebb and flow from season to season in my life.

Hmmm... something to think about today as I live.

Oh, Lord, you are the provider of the gift of time, of the ebb and flow of seasons. In each season help me to seek and find You and to live with and for You. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, November 28: Ecclesiastes 4- The oppressed have no comforter...

The first verse grabbed me as soon as I began reading. So immediate and tight was the grab that I had to force myself to continue reading the entire chapter. In doing so, I saw so much more. So many stopping and pondering points in today's chapter. And yet at the end I returned to the first words that grabbed me.

Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed— and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors— and they have no comforter (1).

I am sure the tenacious hold of these words is due in large part to the time of year. It has been a number of years now that my wife and a growing number of women in my church have participated in Dressement (www.dressement.org), where women where only dresses throughout the month of December. Dressement is a fundraising and awareness campaign for the plight of the 36 million people, mostly women and children, who are enslaved around the world. Women where dresses to show off the dignity of women and to produce conversations about the plight of

theses modern day slaves. Money raised is given to International Justice Mission (www.IJM.org) and other organizations who are working to end today's slavery horror.

Men are joining this cause, some wear bow ties, I have chosen to wear a vest –Vestember – every time I leave my home to show solidarity for this cause.

The writer's words struck me as I opened my Bible... *Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed— and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors— and they have no comforter.*

Oppression has been around as long as people... it goes back to Cain verse Abel. We are a cockeyed species, we human beings!

I just finished reading T.H. White's *Once and Future King*. This Arthurian Legend makes a point that we humans are the only animal species to war among ourselves. Oppression comes in many shapes and sizes.

Oppressed people have no comforter... the writer is correct and by God's grace I am hoping my small gesture wearing a vest will bring some comfort and possibly help raise awareness for the need of a comforter... maybe you can be a comforter too?

O God, help me grow a heart for the oppressed, down trodden, and looked passed. I can't eradicate sin—the source of our oppressing—only You Lord Jesus can do that. But I can be a human agent used by You to speak and help people who are oppressed. I pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

Wednesday, November 29: Ecclesiastes 5- A money pitfall...

So many good places to pause and ponder. For me chapter 5 was rich with wisdom from the Lord. It was verse 10 that drew me to write my ponderings.

Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless.

Money and riches can be an absorbing bedfellow. The more you have, the more you want. Paul writes in the NT, *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs* (1Timothy 6:10). This seems to repeat what the writer of Ecclesiastes is saying.

When money become our aim, it swallows us... we are never satisfied with what we have and this can easily lead to all kinds of evil.

How many news headlines boil down to a desire for more money? When prosecuting a case, the DA looks for motive and money is a most common motive!

The antidote I suspect is contentment, being content with what we have. As Paul says a few sentences before his love of money quote: *But godliness with contentment is great gain* (1Timothy 6:6).

So if you or I want to avoid love of money troubles... seeking contentment is our best corrective...

Lord, I pray for contentment and seeing the blessing in what You have provided rather than routinely seeking more, more, more... I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, November 30: Ecclesiastes 6- Searching for the elusive 'something more'...

This chapter strikes me as a bit depressing. But then again it may be very real. How many people enjoy the life they have? How many people trudge through day after day with little or no enthusiasm for living?

Verse 9 provided my words of contemplation. *Better what the eye sees than the roving of the appetite. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.*

What I understand the writer to mean is that life is better content with what one can achieve rather than constantly chasing after things you will never have.

The lure of more can make me restless. I see a new this or that and I find I do not appreciate what I do have or realistically could have. This is obvious for me in my shop. My hobby is woodworking. There is something satisfying about creating things out of wood for me. As I thumb through magazines and watch ‘do-it-yourself’ videos on ‘youtube’ invariably a new tool pops up... ahhhh, just what I need. That thought hits me like a thunderbolt. I never knew this tool existed. I was getting along fine without it but now that I know it exists “I need it.”

It is scary. How much of my accumulated stuff is in this category. Isn’t this, in part, what the writer warns us about... *the roving of the appetite?*

I don’t want to be a miser who cannot appreciate and enjoy the life I have been graced to live, but neither do I want to be always searching for that elusive ‘something more.’

Oh, God, help me strike a balance to enjoy the life You have given while cultivating generosity and a caring soul for people I can help. Lord, continue to send Your Spirit, reminding me life is not about me but about living for You and serving others in Your name. I pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Friday, December 1: Ecclesiastes 7- Skimming the system...

This chapter reads like Proverbs, one wise ditty after another. It was good to soak in the whole of it, allowing various words speak and guide me. After soaking in the whole, I turned back to verse 7 for some deeper thought.

Extortion turns a wise person into a fool, and a bribe corrupts the heart.

I don’t think about extortion or bribery very much. I guess that is good. However, as I do this morning, I am realizing how often the news is filled with kickbacks, bribery and ‘special gifts’ given to politicians and decision makers.

A friend of mine who was in international business decades ago, told me how little business ever got done without a palm greased here and there. I have also heard stories of international adoptions that proceeded in large measure as additional ‘payments’ were made. So there is much more of bribery or extortion around than I’d like to admit.

Can it happen in my simple life? I probably shouldn’t be so naïve as to say ‘no’ or ‘never’.

Extortion and bribery undercuts truth and honesty. Anything that can steer the heart toward deceit is dangerous... dangerous to the soul is what I am pondering right now. Like a heart attack, deceit kills part of the heart muscle and renders it less functional and weaker.

Closer scrutiny of life is warranted as I consider the twin issues of extortion and bribery.

I wonder, is payment under the table any different... really? Isn’t it a way to skim, cheat or bypass the system? Hmm... the truth of this Proverb has tentacles into other areas of life.

Lord, help me to live honestly and above board in all my endeavors. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Saturday, December 2: Ecclesiastes 8- Honoring God in how I live is always the right way to live ...

I don’t live in a monarchy, but I kept coming back to verses 2&3. How do they apply to me? What wisdom and inspiration do they offer someone from a democracy in 2017?

So I pondered...

Obey the king's command, I say, because you took an oath before God. Do not be in a hurry to leave the king's presence. Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases.

As a citizen I have an implicit oath to my country, so I should obey the 'law of the land' and honor my oath before God. This, I believe, remains true. Now if a law of the land is opposed to God's law then and only then I should follow my conscience and obey God's law. As Peter says in Acts 5:29, *We must obey God rather than men.* In this situation, like Peter and John we will likely face institutional correction under the law of the land. In that case our suffering under the law is part of our obedience to the Lord.

The second thought-prompter comes from the last statement, *Do not stand up for a bad cause...*

I take this to mean, do not stand up for a dishonorable cause. This takes more thought. If I believe my governmental officials to be wrong I can 'dishonor' them by opposing them and calling them to honesty, truth and rightfulness. But as I listen to this verse I should do this in the most personally honorable way possible.

Life is so very different today than back when a king ruled supremely. But today or back then, honoring God in how I live, is always the right way to live. And this is a morsel I can chew on and contemplate...

Lord, I desire to honor YOU! Help me live well in Your eyes, no matter my earthly consequences. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, December 3, 2017, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@pcogonline.org.

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.