

Ecclesiastes 4.4-16 “The Corporate Climb over Competitor’s Corpses”

Qohelet Lamenting INJUSTICE in COURTS and COMMUNITY

v. 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.

TURNS to another FORM of EVIL in SOCIETY > ENVY

WORK is a GIFT from God > but All God’s Gifts can be DISTORTED by SIN
 PAINTS BOLD Declaration with BROAD BRUSH > ALL Toil & Skill = Envy

ENVY is Big DRIVER of the BUSINESS World > Cut-THROAT Competition
 CORPORATE Climb over the CORPSES of the COMPETITION

Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?

Proverbs 27.4

MOSES and JESUS both Taught > LOVE your NEIGHBOR

But Too Often we LUST After our Neighbor’s TOYS and TREASURES

SEE what Neighbor HAS and WORK Hard to Get Something Bigger & Better

Many things we ENVY People For – Life, Looks, Grades, Girl, Gold

A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot. Proverbs 14.30

10th COMMANDMENT - “You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.” Exodus 20.17

How can GOD’S People be GODLY in Money-GRUBBING GREEDY World?

Quotes 2 PROVERBS – one Promoting WORK – other Promoting REST

1. Competitors

a. Opt Out v. 5 The fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh.

Big JUMP from RAT RACE to GIVING UP on LIFE

IF your hands are FOLDED > You cannot WORK > Don't WANT to WORK

Moved to PORTLAND > Where YOUNG PEOPLE move to RETIRE

TOIL can be All-CONSUMING / IDLENESS is Self-CANNIBALIZING

Self-DESTRUCTIVE, Eating Flesh > Resources, Opportunities, Savings, Future

A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man. Proverbs 6.10,11

b. All In v. 6 two hands full of toil and a striving after wind.

Hands CUPPED to Hold as MUCH as POSSIBLE > BIGGER is BETTER!

Little Kid @ DOOR Halloween, Hands become BIG NET to Catch Lots Candy

Benz better than Beetle – iPhone better Oppo – Palace better than Pup-Tent

In ALL Languages WORLD sings – MORE, MORE, MORE, Get, Get, Get

PROBLEM > when HANDS Overflowing w/ CANDY – Can't REACH Out

Don't have FREE HAND to Reach Out for LIFE-LINE from GOD or MAN

NO Wonder little HORDER is NOT Happy > EXHAUSTED in Self-Absorption

Story of COMPULSIVE Money-Maker > too BUSY for Friends or Family

NO Human Relationships – “NO OTHER” lit. No SECOND = ALL ALONE

vs. 7,8 Again, I saw vanity under the sun: one 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.

Person Illustrates both Stories Before & After > Meaningless Toil & Loneliness
 Son / Brother > Most LIKELY to BENEFIT from their Toil thru Inheritance
 2 Factors to Behavior – Outside: Never Stops Working / Inside: Never Satisfied

NO NAMES given – Easy for Reader to Identify – “I know someone like that!”
 LONELY, Hard WORKING, No COMPANIONS, No Satisfaction w/ Earnings

v. 8 NO End to TOIL – Because EYES are Never SATISFIED

“Eye is the ORGAN of DESIRE” > Then he WAKES Up to FOOLISHNESS
 Futile – Insubstantial – All ALONE / NO SECOND - Toil & Striving after Wind

Too BUSY to Ask HIMSELF – WHY am I living this CRAZY LIFE?

Q. Identifies HIMSELF with this Person “For whom am I toiling...?”

ASKS a SAD Question ‘who am I doing this for?’ – Never HEARS Answer

Film *American Beauty* - MOM has talk with her growing Daughter JANE

“You’re old enough now to learn the most important lesson in life. You cannot count on anyone except yourself...It’s sad but true, and the sooner you learn it the better”
 Carolyn to her daughter Jane, *American Beauty*

c. One-Handed Contentment – 3rd Option just ONE Handful

v. 6 Better is a handful of quietness > ‘tranquility’ – ‘peace of mind’

Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it.
 Proverbs 15.16

Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife.
 Proverbs 17.1

Most of WORLD Driven by ENVY > YOU don’t HAVE to Be

TEXT 3 Choices, probably MORE > Means we CAN & SHOULD make Choice
 Many CHOOSE Envy – Cut-Throat Competition – DO Anything to be FIRST
 Qohelet hopes we'll GO thru DOOR Number 3 > HAPPY with our HANDFUL

QUIETNESS is CONTRASTED with TOIL and STRIVING // Contentment
 Many 2-fisted CONSUMERS – but Sometime LESS is MORE > BALANCE
 Little GIRL quoted PSALM 23 “The Lord is my Shepherd, that’s all is want”

If make RIGHT Choice in WRONG World, Stand 4 JUSTICE, Fight Oppression
 NOT the Direction our TEXT takes > FOCUS being CONTENT w/ HANDFUL
 GOAL of Qohelet - Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and
 possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his
 toil—this is the gift of God. Ecclesiastes 5.19

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for
 he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Hebrews 13.5

We can work with quietness, with peace of mind, trusting that our Heavenly
 Father will provide us our food, drink, clothing, and housing. In a desert of
 wickedness – ruthless competition, a rat race, a dog-eat-dog world – we can
 experience an oasis of joy and tranquility when we don't follow the crowd in
 working to pile up possessions. Sidney Greidanus

2. Colleagues

vs. 13-15 Better was a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who no
 longer knew how to take advice. For he went from prison to the throne, though
 in his own kingdom he had been born poor. I saw all the living who move about
 under the sun, along with that youth who was to stand in the king's place. There
 was no end of all the people, all of whom he led.

COMPLICATED Story – Not always SURE who Writer is Talking About

Foolish Old King – Wise Young Man --- some even see a THIRD Character...?

GENERALLY in OT & many CULTURES – AGE is linked to WISDOM

But there are EXCEPTIONS – JOB: Young Man ELIHU corrected ELDERS

PERSON who DENIES God – No Matter their Age – is Called a FOOL

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

Proverbs 15.22

SADLY there are OLD People who are IMMATURE

HAPPILY there are YOUNG People who are VERY MATURE

MATURITY: BIG Enough on the INSIDE to control yourself on the OUTSIDE

FOOLISH King // is as ISOLATED as RICH MAN in First Story

Rich Man has NO SECOND – Aggressive Focused CHASED All Others Away

Foolish King NO SECOND – No Longer TAKE Advice – FIRED All Advisors

PRESIDENT FOR LIFE --- Only Problem – God, not him, Giver/Taker of LIFE

There IS a SECOND – WAITING in PRISON – He will be SUCCESSOR

From NOWHERE to Throne // DAVID? – PRISON to PALACE // JOSEPH?

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.”

Genesis 41.41

WISE Youth made a WISE KING > Spoken of with FLATTERING PRAISE

I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.

Psalm 119.99,100

OLD King would have NEVER called himself a COLLEAGUE

(largely equal in place and accountability)

when GOD is BIG BOSS, we are truly COLLEAGUES in CHRIST

“God subdued my mind and brought it to a teachable frame” John Calvin

v. 16 Yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

Even Young King’s Popularity SHORT LIVED

ONE Day This King – And Every King – Will BE FORGOTTEN

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. Exodus 1.8

OLD King may be PAST his Prime – Young King will Not live Forever Either
People FICKLE > thro PALMS before NEW KING – before they Crucify

DIFFICULT to know PRECISE Interpretation of Story > Moral Lesson Obvious
POLITICAL Power is MEANINGLESS – like CHASING after WIND

Life guided by Wisdom – Reaches Pinnacle of Human Achievement

Exalted and Adored by Many People > END is Useless, Chasing after WIND

BREVITY of our LEGACY – We will soon be FORGOTTEN

BREVITY of our LEGACY should keep us HUMBLE

“I have much to learn about life / ministry – God alone appoints His servants”

“he who is not busy bein’ born is busy dyin’”

Bob Dylan

Jesus Christ is ONLY King who Reigns FOREVER – Praise for ETERNITY

Man born in POVERTY & Obscurity exalted to Throne of Everlasting GLORY

...let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe Hebrews 12.28

3. Companions

THINKING about Lonely Miser > Advantages of COMPANIONSHIP

v. 9 Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.

When it comes to RICHES > MORE is Not Always BETTER

When it comes to RELATIONSHIPS > MORE is Always BETTER

TWO can share in the FRUITS of their WORK

One of God's great gifts in helping us deal with problems of oppression, poverty, loneliness, and injustice is the company of others. David Allan Hubbard

NOT just Talking @ MARRIAGE > Every Good Marriage proves this TRUE

God-Ordained REMEDY to INDIVIDUALISM > Community

Since WORKING Alone is FUTILE > We should COOPERATE with OTHERS

TODAY WISE Parent teaches BUDDY System to their Adventurous KIDS

a. Cliffs

v. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!

Qohelet thinking of DANGEROUS Travel – DARK Nights, Bandits, Storms

No Smartphones – Flashlights – Security > Not ONE Dockless Bike Anywhere

Land dotted w/ Ravines, Cliffs, Tar Pits: Dangerous by Day, Impossible at Night

Jesus told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?
Luke 6.39

FALLING ALONE at NIGHT might be the LAST THING you DO

HELP you if you FALL into a PIT or SLIDE into a CREVICE

We WILL Fall Down – whether PUSHED or just TRIP Over our OWN FEET!

b. Cold

v. 11 Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone?

Middle Eastern TRAVELER Spent NIGHT on JOURNEY

Like JACOB whose PILLOW was STONE on STARRY Night

Not CARRY Sleeping Bag or Blanket – Only WARMTH was CLOAK

How much better LIE Back-to-Back with Traveling Companion – Share Cloaks

PRAYER & Encouragement BROTHER or SISTER gives us God's WARMTH

c. Clobbered

v. 12 And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him

PROTECTION from ATTACKER > SAFETY in NUMBERS

Once LEFT Safety of TOWN/CITY – PREY of Robbers, Thieves, Bandits

We Need PARTNERS in all LIFE and MINISTRY > Guide, Protect, Fan Flame

All 3 Illustrations > Advantage of a "SECOND" > PREVAIL with a PARTNER

Same TRUTH spoken in PARADISE of God

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Genesis 2.18

People who don't GO to Church will FIND their COMMUNITY Somewhere

BARS – CHAT Rooms – SPORTS Teams – PODCASTS – Local Organizations

People COMPLAIN there are Too Many QUARRELS & FIGHTS in Church

SADLY often TRUE – Churches have PROBLEMS because have PEOPLE -Me

Early 1900's Newspaper posed the question, 'What's Wrong with the World?' the Catholic thinker G. K. Chesterton reputedly wrote a brief letter in response:

Dear Sirs:

'What's Wrong with the World?'

I am.

Sincerely Yours, G. K. Chesterton

WORST fights in Community – Soccer Fans, Parents at Little League, Gov't

People UNDER the SUN Exhibit all kinds of FOLLY

GOD created us for COMPANIONSHIP

NOT Everyone will get MARRIED - but NOBODY is Meant to be ALONE

And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

Acts 2.44,45

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Philippians 2.1-4

Married Couples – Business Partners – Co-Pilots – Plurality Elders & Deacons

Basketball Stars ONLY win Championships with their WHOLE TEAM

BUSINESS will only SUCCEED with Cooperation of their Employees

CHURCH will only MOVE Forward with UNITY and WORK of its Members

And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. Mark 6.7

POLICE Commissioner GORDON wondered how bring Criminal to Justice
BATMAN steps Forward with HOPE in the DARKNESS

“Now we are two!” Batman to Commissioner Gordon

We might NOT live in GOTHAM City, but we Face GRAVE Dangers in World
For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes
and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. 1 John 2.16

ALONE you are in DANGER > Cliffs, Cold, get Clobbered

TWO Together BETTER than Each of them INDIVIDUALLY

Builds to CLIMAX – Two is Good, Two is Good, Two is Good > Three Great!

v. 12 —a threefold cord is not quickly broken > Ancient Near Eastern Proverb

If ONE is BAD, and TWO is GOOD, how much BETTER is THREE!

GOSPEL Arithmetic > 2 turn to 3 > Strength for WORK & WARFARE – Son?

When READ Bible passage Most Important Question

What is ORIGINAL Author saying to Original AUDIENCE?

In this passage NAME God is not even MENTIONED!

But Remember Bible TEXT 2 Authors: PRIMARY Author God the Holy Spirit

SPIRIT sent to Glorify Jesus > Reading OT or NT > Lead us to Jesus

PROMISE – PICTURE – EXAMPLE – FULFILLMENT

Spurgeon “All roads lead to London” // All Scripture leads to JESUS

Jesus is TRUE Friend, BEST Friend, FOREVER Friend > Gave His Life for Us

FRIEND who is CLOSER than a BROTHER

Friend of SINNERS > Pays PENALTY of our Sin – gives us PEACE with GOD

RISEN from Dead – RULING over World – BUILDING Eternal KINGDOM

Calling us to Be His Friends – Labor in His Kingdom – Endures FOREVER

Jesus wraps us in the arms of his love to warm us again. When we fall down, he picks us up, reminding us that our sins really are forgiven and that by the power of the Holy Spirit he can help us stand. When we are in desperate danger, fighting against the very powers of Hell, Jesus defends and rescues us – not just by his death, but also by the power of his eternal life. Philip Ryken

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