

LIFE OFTEN SEEMS INSANE (Ecclesiastes 3:16-4:16)

...When I was in college, a humorous movie came out in which Jack Nicholson, as an inmate, took over the asylum.

It was the day that the inmates ran the asylum. It often seems to be a picture of our world. Insanity abounds.

...Last time Solomon told us that God has a plan that includes all people and all events. This truth ought to provide us with great comfort. God's sovereignty is "a soft pillow" for a weary soul.

...Yet, if God is in control, how can I trust Him when much of our world borders insanity? How can the plan of God encompass all of this? It does seem to be a Humpty-Dumpty world...broken and upside down.

SIX OBSERVATIONS THAT COULD PREVENT YOU FROM BELIEVING THAT GOD REALLY HAS A SOVEREIGN PLAN.

...Solomon finds that "God has rigged life so that we have to trust Him even though it doesn't always make sense."

I. Injustice: Often Injustice Prevails Even In Places Where It Ought Not.(16-17)

- A. Solomon tells that even in the courts, often the wrong people win, and justice is perverted.
 - 1. At times, the innocent are wronged, and the guilty are cleared. Bad guys win...
 - 2. God has instituted human courts with judges as places where justice should be found.
- B. He tells us not to be dismayed, as there is coming a day when God will deal with all evil. (v17)
 - 1. Don't ask, "Why does God not punish evil?" Rather, "Why does He not punish it now?"
 - 2. All people will face God as Judge in the final judgment...He will correct it all then!

II. Death: It Appears As If Man Is No Different From The Animals. (vv.18-21)

- A. Solomon tells us that God is "testing us" so that we recognize our great need and quickly repent.
- B. It is true, man and beast do share some common things: Both are from the "dust," breathe the same air, and suffer the same fate...DEATH. This is humiliating!
 - ...If God has a beautiful plan, and men and women are special, why do we die like cattle?
 - ...In man's rebellion, he tries to think of himself as an animal. But he is far more.
- C. Without hearing God's revelation, man has no idea what happens after death.
- D. Solomon reiterates: "Do not let what you do not understand keep you from enjoying life." (22)

III. Oppression: Many Are Caused To Suffer By The Hands Of The Wicked.(4:1-3)

- A. A man may do all sorts of things to another to injure him, his property, and his good name.
 - ...One may misuse his position of authority to do abuse.(rulers, bosses, teachers, parents, etc)
 - ...The oppressors have the "power." (v.1) They prey upon the helpless...causing "tears."
- B. To make it worse, often there is no one to help. "no comforter." It all seems insane.
 - 1. At such times, death seems to be a better option than living. (v.2) "Hopeless!"
 - 2. Solomon intimates, that if you are alive, somebody is going to hurt you unjustly.

IV. Materialism: Most Seem Driven By Envy To Accumulate More And More Stuff.

- A. Solomon notes that envy and ambition seem to be the motive for man's activity. (v.4)
 - 1. This is the "rat race." It is trying to keep up with the Jones.
 - 2. Every success is greeted with envy instead of heart-felt praise.
- B. Why should anyone want to work so hard merely to be envied? Why not drop out? (v.5)
 - ...This is what the hippies did in the 60's. But laziness and idleness lead to "ruin."
 - ...Instead, Solomon recommends moderation. (v.6) Enjoy life with balance. Work hard, play hard.

V. Misplace Priorities: Things Are Valued Over People. (vv7-12)

- A. Solomon tells of a man who chose to work all the time to gain wealth, even though he had no one to share it with. He lived in his own world. He was alone. Isolated. Such a life is cold.
- B. Here is a guy who worked so hard, but he doesn't have any relationships. He has no buddy to share life with. (This is a picture of Ebenezer Scrooge) He gathers wealth, but his eyes are never satisfied. He is focusing more on things than people.
- C. Solomon tells us: Life is better met with two...providing assistance, comfort & defense. (vv9-12)
 - ..."Life is not about making a living, it is experiencing the delight of people." Friendships!!!

VI. Lack Of Loyalty: Fame Is A Passing Thing. Here Today, Gone Tomorrow.13-16

- A. How fickle people are. Today's hero is tomorrow's bum. This is true even for the king...
- B. There is no end to the people who will not be happy with you. Such is our world. Insanity?

LESSONS FOR OUR LIVES: