A King like No Other

9.13.26

Message 8

Ecclesiastes 8:1–17 (CSB)

WISDOM, AUTHORITIES, AND INEQUITIES

8 Who is like the wise person, and who knows the interpretation of a matter? A person's wisdom brightens his face, and the sternness of his face is changed.

2 Keep the king's command because of your oath made before God. **3** Do not be in a hurry; leave his presence, and don't persist in a bad cause, since he will do whatever he wants. **4** For the king's word is authoritative, and who can say to him, "What are you doing?" **5** The one who keeps a command will not experience anything harmful, and a wise heart knows the right time and procedure. **6** For every activity there is a right time and procedure, even though a person's troubles are heavy on him. **7** Yet no one knows what will happen because who can tell him what will happen? **8** No one has authority over the wind to restrain it, and there is no authority over the day of death; no one is discharged during battle, and wickedness will not allow those who practice it to escape. **9** All this I have seen, applying my mind to all the work that is done under the sun, at a time when one person has authority over another to his harm.

10 In such circumstances, I saw the wicked buried. They came and went from the holy place, and they were praised in the city where they did those things. This too is futile. **11** Because the sentence against an evil act is not carried out quickly, the heart of people is filled with the desire to commit evil. **12** Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, I also know that it will go well with God-fearing people, for they are reverent before him. **13** However, it will not go well with the wicked, and they will not lengthen their days like a shadow, for they are not reverent before God.

14 There is a futility that is done on the earth: there are righteous people who get what the actions of the wicked deserve, and there are wicked people who get what the actions of the righteous deserve. I say that this too is futile. **15** So I commended enjoyment because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat, drink, and enjoy himself, for this will accompany him in his labor during the days of his life that God gives him under the sun.

16 When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the activity that is done on the earth (even though one's eyes do not close in sleep day or night), **17** I observed all the work of God and concluded that a person is unable to discover the work that is done under the sun. Even

though a person labors hard to explore it, he cannot find it; even if a wise person claims to know it, he is unable to discover it.

Who is in control?

A. If the goal of modern life is to gain control, we are all failures.

1. We want to be in control of our physical health, so we strive to eat right, work out, and go to the doctors.

2. We want to be in control of our financial futures, so we save, invest, and make decisions so that no matter what happens, we can financially be in control.

3. The older generations, more than the younger ones, would strive to be bosses, managers, city leaders, and people of authority so that no one could tell them what to do.

4. Spiritually, we do everything possible to ensure that we are close enough to God for his blessings but we aren't completely dependent upon Him.

B. There is a saying that says, "Pray as if everything depends on God, work as if everything depends on you."[1]

1. Saint Ignatius of Loyola gets the credit for that, but that isn't what he said, and it isn't what Scripture teaches.

2. What he said was: "You must have patience and not think that God our Lord requires what man cannot accomplish." He concludes with this: "There is no need to wear yourself out, but make a competent and sufficient effort, and leave the rest to him who can do all he pleases."

C. This advice sounds much more biblical and in line with the Preacher of Ecclesiastes.

1. Because what he has discovered after all the searching:

2. Not one of us is actually in control.

Are Earthly Kings in Control? Vs. 2-8

A. At first appearances, it appears earthly kings are in control.

[1] https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/work-as-if-everything-depends-on-god/

1. Not kings like Americans think, because our presidents are limited.

2. But true power, unrestricted by anything.

3. Much more like the leaders of Fascist or Communist nations like Putin, Kim Jong Un, or the previous generations of Stalin, Mao, or Pol Pot.

4. In Solomon's day, kings controlled the people in a way that it is hard for Americans to imagine.

B. These first verses stress the importance of citizens and subjects to not upset leaders.

2 Keep the king's command because of your oath made before God. **3** Do not be in a hurry; leave
his presence, and don't persist in a bad cause, since he will do whatever he wants. **4** For the
king's word is authoritative, and who can say to him, "What are you doing?" **5** The one who
keeps a command will not experience anything harmful, and a wise heart knows the right time
and procedure. **6** For every activity there is a right time and procedure, even though a person's
troubles are heavy on him.

1. This citizen or subject knows they must do everything right, and the king may still do whatever he wants.

2. There is a right way, a right time, and a right procedure for getting things done.

3. And we can do everything right, and it still won't work out.

C. If I were honest, I'm not sure this is comforting.

1. As an American, I like feeling like I am in control of my destiny.

2. That if I do good, I get good.

3. If I do wrong, I get wrong.

4. And that is not the way it is.

D. What would happen if we all took a moment and confessed, I am not the master of my own destiny?

1. That there is Someone bigger than us who is in control!

2. There is more happening than I can grasp or understand.

3. Though I have responsibility for every activity, and the timing and the procedure, I am not fully in control!

If I'm not in control, who is?

Earthly rulers aren't in control either.

Ecclesiastes 8:8 (CSB)

8 No one has authority over the wind to restrain it, and there is no authority over the day of death; no one is discharged during battle, and wickedness will not allow those who practice it to escape.

A. The writer declares that the king isn't in charge either.

1. No one has authority over the wind.

2. You can chase it, but can't restrain it.

3. No one has authority over the day of death.

B. One of the lies humanity keeps believing is the lie of absolute power.

1. It was the lie in the Garden of Eden.

2. Satan tempted Jesus with a form of it in the wilderness.

3. Nation after nation, and leader after leader, has bought into the lie that absolute power is possible and that he who has it can rule the world.

C. Solomon knew the temptation.

1. He had all the gold, all the glory, and all the girls.

2. He controlled people's lives with a word.

3. One word of his mouth, and people were killed, exalted, or made things happen.

4. But here at the end, he professes: No one has this kind of power.

D. Americans love strong leaders.

1. We love the ideal of what is called the "great man" theory of leadership.

2. If we have the right general, the right president, the right coach, the right CEO, then that man can rescue us.

3. We love superheroes: the dream that someone has the wisdom and power needed to rescue us.

4. One of the worst parts of being a mature adult is when we realize We've been trusting people who can't deliver what we needed them to deliver.

If no one is in control…

A. What do we do if no one is in control?

1. Listen to what Ecclesiastes says:

Ecclesiastes 8:14–17 (CSB)

14 There is a futility that is done on the earth: there are righteous people who get what the
actions of the wicked deserve, and there are wicked people who get what the actions of the
righteous deserve. I say that this too is futile. 15 So I commended enjoyment because there is
nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat, drink, and enjoy himself, for this will
accompany him in his labor during the days of his life that God gives him under the sun.
16 When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the activity that is done on the
earth (even though one's eyes do not close in sleep day or night), 17 I observed all the work of
God and concluded that a person is unable to discover the work that is done under the sun. Even
though a person labors hard to explore it, he cannot find it; even if a wise person claims to know
it, he is unable to discover it.

2. He's frustrated because life, under the sun, isn't fair.

3. Bad things happen to good people.

4. Good things happen to bad people.

5. So we might as well eat, drink, and be merry because none of it matters.

B. Solomon gets really close to a solution here.

1. I observed all the work of God…

2. He gets close with this, but stops short.

3. He concludes that a person is unable to discover the work that is done.

4. No matter how hard a person labors to explore it, he cannot find it.

C. This is where many of us live.

1. If we were honest, some of us would say:

2. I've tried the religion thing, and it didn't work.

3. I tried the science path, and it didn't answer all my questions.

4. I've tried all I know to do, and it all has fallen short.

5. Some of us are a lot like the writer of Ecclesiastes: we've searched the world and came up short.

D. If I'm not in charge…

1. If the governments aren't in charge.

2. If evolutionary and biological forces aren't in charge.

3. Who is in charge?

Jesus is…

A. Jesus is the King like no other.

1. He isn't fickle like earthly leaders.

2. He does have authority over the wind to restrain it vs 8

3. He does have authority over not only the day of death but death itself.

4. He provides escape when there seems to be none, a way out when we feel trapped.

B. Jesus is the King we can trust.

1. We can't trust the kings of this world.

2. They will do whatever they want.

3. But Jesus, the one who is really in charge, chooses to do good.

    a. It may not seem like it in the moment.

    b. It may feel like God is distant, removed, uncaring, and unavailable.

    c. Bad things, terrible things, do happen to the righteous.

4. But Jesus is the king we can trust.

C. Jesus is the King we can follow and model.

1. We are all building our lives around an image of something or someone.

2. Maybe you are building your life around what your parents looked like.

3. Maybe you are building your life around the opposite of how you were raised.

4. Maybe you are building your life around ideas, images, and goals that are leaving you feeling lost or empty.

5. You are trying but never achieving. Reaching and never grasping. Searching and never finding.

Time to Confess: You are not God.

A. Solomon shrugs his shoulders.

1. We say a little prayer and then work like there is no God who intervenes.

2. All the while God is inviting us to lay down burdens that aren't ours.

3. Listen to what Jesus invites us to do:

Matthew 11:28–30 (CSB)

28 "Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my
yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find
rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Matthew 18:2–4 (CSB)

2 He called a small child and had him stand among them. 3 "Truly I tell you," he said,
"unless you turn and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
4 Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child—this one is the greatest in the kingdom of
heaven.

B. First, we have to confess we are weary and burdened.

1. We have to confess that we need rest.

2. We have to confess that we are not the master of our own destiny, the hero of our own stories, or the kings and queens of our own little kingdom.

3. We have to confess that we are the children, small children, and we must come simply, meekly, and humbly to God.

C. The greatest in the kingdom are those who humble themselves and come to Christ.

1. What if God is calling you into a season of trusting Him like never before?

2. The world says work harder; Jesus says come rest.
3. The world says man up: Jesus says become a child.
4. The world says What's the point: Jesus says The Kingdom of heaven is at stake.

Prayer of Surrender