

Prayer List

Gene
Veda
Wallace
Sheila
Judy
Rose

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 10:00 a.m.
Assembly 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Elders:

Brad Behrens - bradbehrens@pinolechurchofchrist.com
Michael Odom - MichaelOdom@pinolechurchofchrist.com
Ernie Sprinkel - preacher@pinolechurchofchrist.com

This Week's Question:

What brave soldier in David's army went into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Pisgah - Numbers 22:24

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Living Thankfully and Joyfully

Paul Earnhart

In Ecclesiastes Solomon describes and sums up his pilgrimage in search of the highest good, the one thing which was worth everything else. With almost unlimited resources he probed everything "under the sun" which might hold the secret. Wealth and beauty, wisdom and skill, pleasure and women, all, one by one, left him as empty as when he began. They were, he said, consummately meaningless (Ecclesiastes 1:2, 17; 12:8). The preacher urges us to quit grasping for the wind. He wants us to learn on his tuition and face the reality that those with so much less are not likely to obtain a different result than he did with so much more (2:25). Solomon turns the search heavenward, above the sun, and says conclusively throughout that it is in God alone that all this meaninglessness can become meaningful and all the crooked things be made straight. "It will be well with those who fear God," he said, "he who fears God will escape them all" (8:12; 7:18). So his answer to the question of the ultimate good is simple: "Fear God and keep His commandments for this is man's all" (12:13). Our

emptiness at last is a God-shaped emptiness which none but He can fill. It is good to learn this early in life and that is the reason Solomon seems to be pitching his message especially to the young (11:9–12:1).

But students of Ecclesiastes need to be cautioned. As the source of the supreme good things under the sun may be as useless as feeding on the wind but they are not without value. Solomon is neither stoic nor cynic. He does not urge us to disdain all material goods and pleasures or to walk quickly through life with our teeth gritted. Once we have our hearts fixed on God and His will as the transcendent good we are in a position to receive gratefully and enjoy fully all the good things of the earth that come to us. They are, said Solomon, “the the gifts of God” (3:13). Because they are not assured in this uncertain life (9:11) we need to take joy in them as they come, thanking God for His goodness and trusting him for the rest.

Too many Christians rush through life without savoring God’s good gifts. Just life itself and the sun upon our faces is a thing to be treasured (11:7). The wonder and the beauty of the physical universe which testifies so powerfully of the great Creator should never become ordinary—the sounds and the sights which He created to give us delight should find fulfillment in us. They are not God but they speak of Him (Ps. 19:1).

Solomon enjoins us to find delight in daily food. “Eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart,” he said (9:7). How much sweetness there is in the simplest fare when we think of the One who gave it. Early

Christians did just that. They “ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart” (Acts 2:46) because they knew that it was God who fills “our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17)

We should especially treasure human relationships and take time to nurture and taste the happiness of them. “Live joyfully with the wife whom you love,” the Preacher urges (9:9) and how much we need to treasure the happy delights of family life while God blesses us with them—husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters. God has been so good.

Of course all these blessings find their meaning in an understanding of the supreme greatness of our relationship with the One who has given them all, and who has taken men and women in their folly and sin (7:20, 29) and allowed us to know His will (12:13) and come into His presence (5:1). We can know so much joy in things under the sun because we know the One who is above the sun. They are to be used. He is to be worshipped and obeyed.

My mother has told me of one of our relatives who when being called to get out of bed in the morning said that he would just like to stay a little longer and “feel the bed.” I am afraid that some of us are going through life here with our teeth set tight. Maybe it wouldn’t hurt us if we took a little more time to “feel the bed” as we live “under the sun.” We might become far more thankful and joyful than we have been.