

Speaker: Pastor Buster Brown

Today's Message: Stumbling into Despair or Living with Hope.

Today's Text: Ecclesiastes 3:16-4:3

I. In the Place of Justice.

"Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness. I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work." Ecclesiastes 3:16-17

In the place of justice there was evil, and instead of righteousness at work, there was wickedness.

Ecclesiastes 3:17 = Bleak Resignation, as compared to Romans 12:19-21, which says, *"Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."*

II. Oppression and Despair.

"Again, I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them. And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive. But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun." Ecclesiastes 4:1-3

"Many die too late, and a few die too early. The doctrine still sounds strange, "Die at the right time." Friedrich Nietzsche, Live Dangerously

III. No Hope.

"I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts. For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth? So, I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot. Who can bring him to see what will be after him?" Ecclesiastes 3:18-22

- Man has no advantage over the beast (all is smoke and mist).
- Both beast and man go to the same place.
- “Who knows?”

IV. Despair or Man Made in the Image of God?

- 1) What does it mean to be an image-bearer? The nature of our being, relational abilities, cultural mandate (Genesis 1:26-28.)
- 2) How thoroughly has sin impeded or marred the glory of image-bearers? Substantial but not total.
- 3) Can the ‘image’ be restored?
- 4) What is the significance for today? All people are worthy of respect and Christian love because they are made in the image of God.

“Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or to be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo, or mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that country and to help others to do the same.” C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

Westminster Confession, Chapter 33 - Of the Last Judgment

Section 1. *God hath appointed a day, wherein He will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ,(1) to whom all power and judgement is given of the Father.(2) In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged,(3) but likewise all persons that have lived upon earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.(4)*

(1) Ac 17:31 (2) Jn 5:22,27 (3) 1Co 6:3; Jude 6; 2Pe 2:4 (4) 2Co 5:10; Ecc 12:14; Ro 2:16; Ro 14:10,12; Mt 12:36,37

Section 2. *The end of God's appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of His mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of His justice, in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fulness of joy and refreshing, which shall come from the presence of the Lord; but the wicked who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.(1)*

(1) Mt 25:31 to the end; Ro 2:5,6; Ro 9:22,23; Mt 25:21; Ac 3:19; 2 Th 1:7-10

Section 3. *As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin; and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity:(1) so will He have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be prepared to say, Come Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen.(2)*

(1) 2Pe 3:11,14; 2Co 5:10,11; 2Th 1:5-7; Lk 21:7,28; Ro 8:23-25 (2) Mt 24:36,42,43,44; Mk 13:35-37; Lk 12:35,36; Rev 22:20

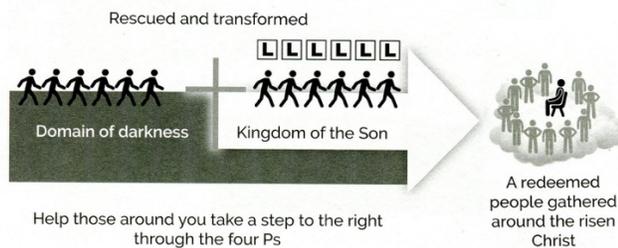
LIFE UNDER THE SUN

- Despair
- No Hope (“Who knows?”)
- Non-existence is better than li
- Darkened in understanding
- Alienated from the life of God (Ephesians 4:18)

LIFE OF PURPOSE

- Proverbs 4:18-19
- Matthew 6:33
- I Thessalonians 5:5-9 *“For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ...”*

A disciple is a forgiven sinner who is learning Christ in repentance and faith.



QUESTIONS

- 1) Why is there a bleak resignation in Ecclesiastes 3:17 and 22?
- 2) What is the difference between living “under the sun” as compared to a Biblical worldview?
- 3) Why is a life of despair preferable to an epicurean lifestyle, which pursues pleasure in a socially acceptable fashion?
- 4) What do you think of Friedrich Nietzsche’s assessment of Christ, who said:

“Would that he had remained in the wilderness and far from the good and the just! Perhaps he would have learned to live and love the earth and laughter, too. He died too early; he himself would have recanted his teaching had he reached my age. Noble enough was he to recant. But he was not yet mature.”