

The Call to Wise Action!

Ecclesiastes 11:1-8

Intro: If we could think of Ecclesiastes as a sermon, then the preacher here in this final section does what all sermons should do, “Storm the will”. In many ways, the preacher has looked at life piece by piece, showing us the vanity of it all without God and encouraging us to a life of faith. Now at the end of the book we see him summarize and bring everything to its fitting conclusion. In this section, he says to all of us, “What are we going to do about our lives? What have we learned and how will we put into practice the life of faith? What attitudes shall govern the way we deal with life each day?” So just as our sermons have an invitation, so this is the invitation of “the preacher’s” sermon.

Each of the practical exhortations of this section, embody a spirit or attitude that is needed as we live life each day. Let’s look at the exhortations and the spirit they manifest.

Get busy doing what is right! (A life of faith!)

Take risks! Cast your bread upon the waters... (v. 1)

Some think the reference is philanthropy; others to commerce.

At a spiritual level, the exhortation urges the man of faith to approach life with a spirit of adventure (cast your bread) and with a spirit of hope (and you will find it).

Diversify! Divide your portion. (v. 2)

In economics we would call this “diversification”. Did you ever hear the old proverb? “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket?”

Even if we are brave enough to take a risk, we need to remember the need to not count too much on one effort! Consider all the possibilities!

Don’t try to anticipate the future! Avoid short-cuts!

Some things are so predictable we can count on them (v. 3).

Clouds full of water will bring rain.

A tree that falls won’t move to another place.

Yet in contrast, there are some things we cannot know. None of us has a crystal ball with which to see the future. So it is foolish to try to become experts in “timing”. Who knows what the future holds? Only God.

He who watches the wind will not sow (v. 4)

Who knows what the Lord will do? (v. 5)

Get to work doing what you know will work and leave the outcome with God!

Solomon’s advice is to stay busy doing what is right! Sow both in the morning and evening (v. 6). If both succeed, great! If not, then at least, there is something for the future.

Do what is right and trust God to provide the way!

These practical suggestions about good business have a deeper underlying spiritual application.

Sometimes people want to “play it safe”; do nothing that may risk disapproval by friends or possibility of failure. So fear paralyzes us into inactivity. We continue the same unhappy and unproductive life because we do not have enough faith to live!

Is this the way you want to live your life? Isn't there a better way? If you believe in God, then you are willing to take a risk with the hope that success will come. Be open to all possibilities. Don't try to second-guess God or take short cuts! Do all you can while you can! Live life to the full!

Rejoice; yet don't loose perspective!

If the first paragraph stresses the importance of diligence in view of life's uncertainty, then the second stresses the importance of approaching life with a realistic perspective!

Enjoy the great outdoors!

Did you ever here anybody say, “It's a great day to be alive! I can't wait to find me a good dark room to sit in all day!”

We love to spend time outdoors. Indeed it is “good to see the sun” (v. 7).

Solomon's point is that we should live life with enthusiasm and joy.

Yet we should remember that total satisfaction cannot found in this life alone. We need to remember that there will be “dark” days. And these anticipate the vanity to which we all are headed! Let's not lose our perspective. Life is not all fun and games! And life will not ultimately satisfy the needs of the inner person.

Conclusion: Solomon's final exhortations are intended to challenge us to take the wisdom he has given about life and apply it. He wants us to be risk takers, open to all possibilities, living with enthusiasm and joy each day. Yet he wants us also to understand that in the end life will never ultimately fill the hole in our soul that must be filled by God. Thus, we must always live with the fear of God, with dependence upon Him and with the judgment in mind.