

Title: Vain Wisdom and True Wisdom  
Text: Ecclesiastes 1: 1-12  
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Our subject is Vain Wisdom and True Wisdom. Solomon sets forth what God taught him in verse 2. Be sure you get this.

**Ecclesiastes 1: 2: Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.**

“All” is a mighty inclusive word. It means all. Some try to qualify what Solomon meant. They call him pessimistic, fanatical, and rash.

God gave Solomon wisdom and knowledge, along with riches, wealth and honor like no king before or after (2 Chr 1: 12). The Lord Jesus spoke of how the Queen of Sheba came to hear of Solomon’s wisdom. But God taught Solomon by painful experience true Wisdom. God the Holy Spirit used Solomon to write this truth from God. A greater than Solomon—Christ Jesus—the Preacher, Priest and King of God is declaring this and we do well to take heed: **vanity of vanities; all is vanity.**

**Ecclesiastes 1: 3: What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?**

After all a man’s labor, in seeking, getting wisdom, getting riches, even gaining the whole world...what is a man profited? (Matthew 16: 26).

Eve was deceived that she would *be as gods* by taking that which seemed *good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise*. Satan continues to deceive by promising you that the “wise thing”, “the practical thing” is not to heed what God says, but Satan’s beguiling is to make you think it is wise to seek that thing which to your eye appears “good for food and pleasant to your eye, that is, devilish wisdom! It has been the way of man since sin entered this world.

**Ecclesiastes 1: 4: One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever**

Man is full of continual change. One generation passes away and another generation takes its place. There is only one thing about us that does not change—*we are always changing*. Why would we lean to the understanding of one so fickle and prone to change and decay?

**Ecclesiastes 1: 4:....but the earth abideth for ever.**

But look past the earth to God who made it.

Psalm 104: 5: *Who* laid the foundations of the earth, *that* it should not be removed for ever.

The word “for ever” is a comparative term—in comparison, to you and I—we pass, the earth remains. But even when the earth is no more, God who made the earth shall remain the same.

Psalm 102:26: They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:

**Ecclesiastes 1: 5: The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. 6: The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. 7: All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea *is* not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again....8: All things *are* full of labour;**

The “all things” that are the vain things is you and I—sinners who *at our best state are altogether vanity*. As surely as the sun and winds labor on their course, so one generation after the next, continues on our same course of laboring to seek wisdom in the things which are made rather than in God who made them.

We are full of labor yet like the sun and wind our course never changes, after all our searching, here we are at our best state **v8:...man cannot utter**. We have not the wisdom to speak about what tomorrow holds, to utter a promise or explain anything that God is doing in this earth.

James 4: 14: Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

We are like the rivers running into the sea.

**Ecclesiastes 1: 7: All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea *is* not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again...v8:...the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.**

It is our natural, fleshly way to be slaves to the natural, the carnal, the transient—*the eye and the ear*. Yet, as the rivers run into the sea and the sea is not full, so man is never satisfied by his own searching.

We spend our lives seeking wisdom, seeking the will of God, in what we can see and hear, the natural. We look to the earth, the sun, the wind, the waters rather than heeding the word of God, the wisdom of Christ our Wisdom

**Ecclesiastes 1: 9: The thing that hath been, it *is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is that* which shall be done: and *there is no new thing* under the sun. 10: Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this *is* new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.**

Sadly, each new generation thinks they are smarter than the last. We think we have acquired some new wisdom by our searching. We think:

- “I will not make the same mistakes Solomon made”
- “I will not make the same mistakes Elimelech made”
- “I won’t make the mistakes mom and dad made.”

So it is that the newest generation proves there is nothing new under the sun.

An example in other areas of wisdom. The latest discoveries in science, technology, political science—we brag about discovering some new thing—are they really new?

**Ecclesiastes 1: 10: Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this *is* new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.**

Why do we think there is anything are new?

**Ecclesiastes 1: 11: There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.**

The current generation fails to remember the former things and the next generation will do the same. The problem lies in us. We are vanity. The memories of men fail so that we don't retain understanding from one generation to the next. Man is full of defects in passing things along from one generation to the next.

Our gospel is as old as God. It not of truth that is new. Our gospel is of the everlasting covenant of grace. Christ entered Surety ship engagement to fulfill the law and justify his people from their sins by taking the form of a servant and obeying God unto the death of the cross. We have to be taught of God. We are dust.

Illustration in temporal wisdom: the things recorded of old were written on earthly stones which deteriorate and have to be discovered all over again. How long do we really think things will be preserved for generations to come on a computer file? But we are so sinful and full of pride—we have discovered something new! According to God's word there is nothing new under the sun, "we cannot say with certainty that anything we have discovered was not discovered before." John Gill.

Ecclesiastes 2: 16: For *there is* no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now *is* in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise *man?* as the fool.

From the least to the greatest, apart from the Spirit of God birthing us anew, all men perish in their sins the same.

**Ecclesiastes 1: 12: I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13: And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all *things* that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.**

First, this word "sore travail" means "wicked, sinful, labor"

Ecclesiastes 3: 11: He hath made every *thing* beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

God has benefited each generation with wisdom he has given men in natural discoveries—*he made every thing beautiful in his time. Also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.* God suffers many to foolishly waste their entire lives laboring in the pursuit of getting knowledge in things God has made, who never seek God who made those things.

**Ecclesiastes 1: 14: I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.**

Ecclesiastes 5: 16: this also *is* a sore evil, *that* in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?

Hosea 12:1: Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.

Yet, each new generation comes along imagining they can fix what is broken by searching and finding wisdom.

**Ecclesiastes 1: 15: *That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.***

Ecclesiastes 7: 13: Consider the work of God: for who can make *that* straight, which he hath made crooked?

The real deficiencies—the true want—is in our fallen nature. The deficiencies of the sinful heart cannot be numbered by man’s wisdom, much less straightened out by man’s wisdom.

**Ecclesiastes 1: 16: I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all *they* that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. 17: And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: [parables and science] I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. 18: For in much wisdom *is* much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.**

Knowledge apart from the grace and love of God working in the heart puffs up—makes a man arrogant, a know it all. It sets him up for competition from envious men. This is the sum of all human knowledge and wisdom obtained by men, instead of making men content and at peace, it is found to be vanity, and to cause vexation, trouble of mind, and to promote grief and sorrow.

## II. SEEK TRUE WISDOM

There is wisdom and knowledge opposite to this, which is not vanity but excellent. The more it is increased, the more joy and comfort it brings. Heed this, not as the word of a man but as the word of Christ Jesus Wisdom himself.

Matthew 12: 42: The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon *is* here.

In v13 the word “exercised”—also means “humbled”. Since man disobeyed God in taking of the tree of knowledge, part of the curse is that we are dependent upon God for true wisdom. Not many wise, not many noble are called and those who are called are taught true Wisdom of God.

1 Corinthians 1: 30: But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

Unless “of God is Christ made unto us Wisdom” a sinner will never be able to say, “Truth, Lord, I am vanity.”

Ephesians 3: 16: That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17: That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Until Christ be formed in the sinner so we “know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,” then all that we might obtain is vanity of vanities.

Christ is the Wisdom by whom the worlds were made. By whom God is just and justifier and sinners are made kings and princes with God, made truly noble and wise and rich and honor—in Christ alone.

Proverbs 8: 14: Counsel *is* mine, and sound wisdom: I *am* understanding; I have strength. 15: By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. 16: By me princes rule, and nobles, *even* all the judges of the earth. 17: I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. 18: Riches and honour *are* with me; *yea*, durable riches and righteousness. 19: My fruit *is* better than gold, *yea*, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.

### Labor for the true Bread

John 6: 27: Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed

Jeremiah 9: 23: Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: 24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD.

Hebrews 13: 8: Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Men want to be remembered and for a while one generation remembers but eventually we forget. “Who invented the wheel?”--“Who figured out how to start fire?”. Those are great and needful things for us but those are forgettable names. This is who God remembers.

Mark 14: 8: She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. 9 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, *this* also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

That is what God regards as worth preserving—believing God. God is pleased with those who come to him and trust his Wisdom to provide all our salvation. The other accomplishments men boast of are forgettable. Read Hebrews 11, God shows us a few whom God regards as worthy of remembrance. Why? They believed God.

Amen!