

Work & Pray

September 1, 2013 ~ Ecclesiastes 11.1 – 8

Introduction

- ❖ Read Ecc 11.1-8
- ❖ There are 4 distinct concepts in these 8 verses
 1. vss 1 – 2 ~ “Take Wise but Diverse Risks”
 2. vss 3 – 4 ~ “Act Based on Knowledge despite Imperfect Timing” (DK **when**)
 3. vss 5 – 6 ~ “Act Based on Timing despite Incomplete Knowledge” (DK **how**)
 4. vss 7 – 8 ~ “Do Not Love The World or the Things in The World” (1 Jn 2.15)

1. Take Wise But Diverse Risks

v1a ~ “Cast your bread upon the waters”

- ❖ This is obviously a metaphor ~ we’re not to cast real bread into the water
 - ✧ But it’s difficult to know precisely how to explain it
 - ✧ But first let’s address overall intent:
 - ◇ Two popular interpretations are as 1) generosity, and as 2) investment
 - ◇ Both are possible but I choose investment for 3 reasons:
 1. If generosity in **vss 1 & 2**, it’s done for self-preservation (*using people*)
 2. But if investment, it’s done for wealth-preservation (*diversifying*)
 3. **vss 3 – 6** all relate to taking wise actions despite risks / unknowns
- ❖ Regardless of whether investment or generosity in mind we’re to “cast bread”
 - ✧ “What is this bread we’re to cast?”
 - ◇ Casting our bread can be taken as time and resources
 - So this applies equally well to generosity and investments (*time & \$\$\$*)

v1b ~ “for you will find it after many days”

- ❖ The word “it” obviously refers to the “bread”
 - ✧ But it’s also obvious this is not the same “bread” we’d cast
 - ✧ There was risk involved in casting the bread
 - ◇ Even popular culture has embraced this understanding of the phrase
 - ✧ Solomon is saying that in time risks will be rewarded
 - ◇ He expands upon the nature of the risks in the coming verses

Xition: Let’s see how verse 2 expands upon taking wise but diverse risks ..

v2a ~ “Give a serving to seven and also to eight”

- ❖ In the **ESV** “serving” is called “portion” / Portion a more general term
- ❖ And “evil” is also referred to as “disaster”
- ❖ Both help us see it as “diversifying risk” as opposed to “extending generosity”

v2b ~ “for you do not know what evil will be on the earth”

- ❖ The latter half of **Ecc** emphasizes man’s lack of knowledge
- ❖ The phrase “you do not know” occurs 4 times in the first 6 **verses**
 - ✧ This first occurrence refers to the future / diversify because of it

2. Act Based on Knowledge despite Imperfect Timing” (we don’t know WHEN)

v3a ~ “If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth”

- ❖ These two statements are so simple as to appear silly
- ❖ Yet the best and most helpful teaching appears simplistic / memorable
- ❖ **vss 3 & 4** address raining/reaping & windstorms/sowing
 - ✧ rain – wind – wind – rain / reap – sow – sow – reap
 - ✧ Farmer’s can’t reap when the ground is soaked with rain
 - ✧ They also can’t sow well if the wind blows away the seed
- ❖ Clouds are God’s vaporous water buckets / They fill up – then drain out

v3b ~ “if a tree falls to the south or .. north, in the place where .. falls, there it shall lie”

- ❖ The wind is implied to have knocked over the tree here
 - ✧ We can’t know exactly what the wind will accomplish
 - ✧ But we can anticipate the results / We can expect what comes after
 - ✧ Here we lose power due to trees taking down power lines

v4 ~ “He who observes the wind will not sow - he who regards the clouds will not reap”

- ❖ A farmer can’t wait for “perfect” conditions or he’ll wait too long
- ❖ Watching the wind prevents planting / Watching the clouds prevents harvesting
 - ✧ We must act / We do so based on the best info available
 - ✧ But this is also where dependence upon God is admitted
 - ✧ We WORK / But we also PRAY
 - ✧ We do the best we can then we cast it into the care of God

3. Act Based on Timing despite Incomplete Knowledge” (we don’t know HOW)

Xition: Let’s go on to the 3rd section c/incomplete knowledge

v5a ~ “As you do not know what is the way of the wind” ~ 2nd occurrence

- ❖ There is debate over the meaning of this phrase
 - ✧ NKJV reflects traditional rendering – “the way of the wind or how the bones ..”
 - ✧ ESV is another – “the way the spirit comes to the bones ..”
 - ✧ ESV seems to provide more consistent meaning

v5b ~ “or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child”

- ❖ Both renderings emphasize man’s limited knowledge
 - ✧ Whether just human development or wind behavior included
- ❖ There is much that man doesn’t know / Some that man will never know

v5c ~ “So you do not know the works of God who makes everything” ~ 3rd occurrence

- ❖ God made everything / Many animals have gone extinct
 - ✧ !!!: New mammal “olinguito” – raccoon with teddy bear face (*Ecuador/Columbia*)
 - ◇ One traveled to 5 zoos from 1967 to 1976 in failed mating attempts
 - ◇ They assumed it was an “olingo” / an entirely different species
- ❖ God has allowed man to make many discoveries / Yet we understand very little
 - ✧ Genetic variation had always been done through “natural” means
 - ✧ Yet now we’re doing more and more through scientific experimentation
 - ✧ Much good has already come / But bad things will likely come as well

v6a ~ “In the morning sow your seed”

- ❖ We’ve just been reminded that we do not / cannot know everything
- ❖ We’re now told to sow our seed in the morning
 - ✧ We’re to take action despite our limited knowledge
 - ✧ Phrase describing the inability to act on imperfect / incomplete info
 - ✧ !!!: “Analysis Paralysis” ~ We must act in a timely way ..

v6b ~ “and in the evening do not withhold your hand”

- ❖ Morning and evening allude to cycles God has created
 - ✧ daily, weekly, seasonal (*seedtime & harvest*), annual, 7 years, 50 years
 - ✧ We may wait too long to harvest veggies ~ lazy, larger
 - ◇ But they may go bad / Though much larger, they can become bitter

v6c ~ “For you do not know which will prosper, either .. or whether both ..”

- ❖ God rewards action / “You can only steer a moving ship”

Xition: Let’s go on to the last set of 2 verses (7 & 8) ..

4. Do Not Love The World or the Things in The World (1 Jn 2.15)

v7 ~ “**Truly the light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun**”

- ❖ Here I picture a prisoner coming out of a dark dungeon after many years ..
 - ✧ God made us to enjoy His creation / By “**made**” I mean “**by design**”
 - ✧ Mankind and creation fit together like “**puzzle**” pieces
 - ✧ We were made for this world / This world was made for us ..
- ❖ **Gen 1.31** ~ “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.”
 - ✧ We’d just read how the plants were to satisfy man and all animals
 - ✧ **Pro 10.22** ~ “The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow to it.”
 - ✧ God blessed us with life and this world

v8a ~ “**But if a man lives many years and rejoices in them all**”

- ❖ God made us to enjoy the light of the sun
 - ✧ It is not only a privilege but a responsibility for us to do so ..
 - ✧ Our taking pleasure in this world (i.e., “**enjoying life**”) pleases God
- ❖ We’re not to be “**fussy moralists clucking our tongues**” at modern society

v8b ~ “**yet let him remember the days of darkness .. All that is coming is vanity**”

- ❖ God made us to enjoy the light of the sun
 - ✧ Yet each night He takes the sun away from us / To show us that He can ..
 - ✧ He reminds us that all gifts come directly from His hand
 - ✧ He can lavish them upon us / Or withhold them from us .. at His pleasure
- ❖ Next time we’ll expound upon the coming “days of darkness”
 - ✧ But for now ..

- God intends for us to “**live life**” .. To do so we must “**take risks**” .. Do so wisely ..
- We must act despite “**imperfect timing**” and “**incomplete knowledge**” ..
- Appreciate the Giver of gifts .. not just the gifts themselves ..

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,

And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

To God our Savior, who alone is wise,

Be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.

Amen *pause* Go in peace . . .