

“WHISPER A PRAYER”

Based on Ecclesiastes 12:1-8, 13-14

*A Favourite of
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Some of you remember the “Dirty Thirties.” The dust, the crops that withered and died, the occasional invasion of insects that squashed what appeared to be a generous field of grain. No cash, no jobs, little hope for a future for a time. Even the “*Grasshopper dragged itself along.*” (v5)

Some of you know of those who lived by “*The silver chord*” (v6) and had it broken by the crash of 1982, or more recently, in 2007. Careers disappeared, leveraged stock became useless, families shattered, and for some who lived only for their work, a precipice.

Some of us know of churches whose “*Songs have gone faint*” (v4), whose passion for their church in their community has faded, or the practical obstacles of changing church attendance and increasing expenses have caused them to become afraid of the future, and “*Desire is no longer stirred.*” (v5)

All of us know the reality of aging, of “*Strong men who stoop*” (v3) and those watching have “*Eyes that are dim.*” There are limits to this earthly life.

They are not easy to adjust to, or always accept.

Our writer was blunt in his thoughts today. The images are harsh, and compelling, and before he was finished, he had hit a raw nerve to all his listeners, ancient and contemporary. There is a heaviness to this reading: hints of frustration towards an ancient people who would not change their ways. A tinge of fear of what might come next should the people continue down this path. A desire to shake everyone out of their complacency.

*“Meaningless! Meaningless!”
says the Teacher.
“Everything is meaningless!”
(v8)*

“Meaningless?” you might say. “How can this be meaningless? What you have said is hurtful and shocking! This is my life you are talking about. Are you suggesting that my struggles in life are meaningless?”

“No,” the writer might have countered. “But when these things come about because of your own vanity, then it is meaningless. When you become complacent, and are willing to settle for a life that is unsatisfactory, it is meaningless. When you are

willing to be moved and shaped by a difficult world and not settle your feet into the foundations of your faith firmly, then it is meaningless!”

The writer was persistent. He was insistent. And he pestered them incessantly. But he did not abandon them. He shook them from their complacency, and then when he had their attention he spoke again:

*Now all has been heard;
here is the conclusion of the
matter: Fear God and keep his
commandments, for this is the
duty of all mankind.
For God will bring every deed
into judgment,
including every hidden thing,
whether it is good or evil.
(v13,14)*

“Friends,” the writer might have said, “Here is the better answer. Respect and revere God. Follow His ways. But let’s be clear about this. He knows you. He knows your life. He knows ‘your comings and your goings.’ He knows your motivations and intentions, whether they are holy or not. The things you hide from the world: He already knows. Do not get caught up with the disappointments and distractions of the world and believe that they are the reason to live. Let God be the reason

you live, and each day will become meaningful, instead of meaningless.”

Dare I say, there is much of the world these days that disappoints and distracts us. It's easy to get caught up on something in the news, or a family disagreement or the busyness of nothingness. Sometimes, too little on our mind designs imaginary issues and fear that serves only to distract us from the beauty of the day. White noise.

We live in a world of much 'white noise'. Small issues suddenly are urgent, larger issues, needful of attention, go unnoticed in the flurry of activity. Few have time to listen to the small victories. But God

notices. And He is just as persistent as the writer of Ecclesiastes. He is just as insistent that we stop listening to the white noise of our world, and start listening to His whispers. He is just as incessant, in reminding us that He and only He is the final judge on what a 'successful life' looks like. He will take into account the deeds, the duty, and the dilemmas of hidden secrets. He and He alone will have the final say.

Which brings me to prayer. How do we stop allowing the white noise of our world to take away from Godly whispers? We begin by praying. Out loud, at our bedside, while contemplating our devotions,

even in the kitchen preparing the evening meal. We pray. We pray for the things we think we can be a part of accomplishing change or success. We pray for the things that our completely out of our hands. We pray for the things we do not understand. And we pray for the people and situations we do not know. Because somebody out there loves them and is worried about them.

In the end, white noise is meaningless.

Godly noise, prayer, is meaningful.

Let's devote ourselves to meaningful work for our God. Amen.