

# Week 17<sup>1</sup>

## Ecclesiastes - קהלת

### Kohelet – Teacher/Preacher

Ecclesiastes, interpreted to mean “the Preacher” or “the Teacher,” is in the Near Eastern tradition called “Wisdom Literature.” Other Wisdom Literature in the Bible includes Proverbs, Job, and Song of Songs (also called “Song of Solomon”). Based on the first verse of Ecclesiastes, “The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem,” this book has been attributed to King Solomon, David’s son. Many scholars believe the style and language suggests it was written much later, about 3rd century BCE.

I find it helpful to envision this book being written by a scientific king who is proposing hypotheses about the meaning of life and trying use observation to test his hypotheses. He even seems to talk to himself - sometimes the book is in first person, “I said...” and other times third person, “When you...” - first providing his observations, then reporting an interpretation for the listener. This struggle for meaning in life has a very modern - and very personal - feel.

**Sunday** Ecclesiastes 1<sup>2</sup> (spotlight verses 1:12-15)

**For Reflection:** *Have you ever experienced the feelings that “the Teacher” expresses that life is meaningless and that nothing you do matters? What gives you hope that God cares and your life meaning?*

**Lagniappe:** Matthew 27:46

**Monday** Ecclesiastes 2<sup>3</sup> (spotlight verses 2:24-26)

**For Reflection:** *Where in your life’s pursuits do you experience God’s gifts of satisfaction and happiness? How are you giving God pleasure?*

**Lagniappe:** Philippians 4:12-13

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<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to Harry Stone for providing this week’s AP! Taking on such a unique and challenging book merits not just my appreciation but also my respect. Ecclesiastes is oddly super critical today; it is one book of the Bible that speaks really effectively to a postmodern-culture that is constantly asking the same questions as the teacher of Ecclesiastes – What’ the point? When we transform secondary “goods” (money power work) into ultimate “goods” (saviors that provide for us) they let us down. There is no point.

<sup>2</sup> “The Teacher” begins with the hypothesis that he is testing - “one cannot find meaning in life.”

<sup>3</sup> “The Teacher” seeks meaning by experimenting with three alternatives: pursuing pleasure, seeking wisdom, and focusing on work; his observation was that God, and not the pursuit of these goals, provides satisfaction and happiness for those who please God.

- Tuesday** Ecclesiastes 3<sup>4</sup> (spotlight verses 3:11-13)  
**For Reflection:** How do you “do good while you live”? What difference does it make to you to live with faith because God “set eternity in the human heart”?  
**Lagniappe:** Hebrews 11:1
- Wednesday** Ecclesiastes 5 (spotlight verses 5:18-20)  
**For Reflection:** What insights do you gain about money, possessions, and wealth? What roles are ascribed to God (that might influence how you pray)?  
**Lagniappe:** 1 Timothy 6:6-10
- Thursday** Ecclesiastes 7<sup>5</sup> (spotlight verses 7:13-14)  
**For Reflection:** After six chapters of depressing observations, “the Teacher” in chapter 7 provides proverbs encouraging acceptance of the reality of struggles in life for everyone. Easy to say. Where do you find God in the apparent injustice and struggles in our time?  
**Lagniappe:** Romans 5:3-5
- Friday** Ecclesiastes 9 (spotlight verse 9:11)  
**For Reflection:** “The Teacher” observes a seemingly unfair and totally random world. How do you makes sense of God’s love for you and all people in a world where bad things happen to good people - and good things to bad people? What difference does it make to be able to thank and praise God in the difficult times?  
**Lagniappe:** Job 1:21
- Saturday** Ecclesiastes 12 (spotlight verses 12:13-14)  
**For Reflection:** Does conclusion of the search for meaning in life surprise you? How well does it match with Jesus’ teachings?  
**Lagniappe:** Matthew 22:37-40

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<sup>4</sup> “The Teacher” has endorsed “do good while they live” for a “better” life - that contradicts his hypothesis that life is “meaningless.” Nothing could be “better” if it was “meaningless.”

<sup>5</sup> In Romans 3:23, Paul connects Jesus with the problem that no one is righteous, noted in Ecclesiastes 7:20.

