



Overview

Author: King Solomon

Date: c 931 BC (end of Solomon's reign)

Purpose: to reveal the vaporous nature of life without God; to instruct us to use what we have been given in thanksgiving to God; to encourage enjoyment of and contentment with present blessings.

Outline:

I. 1-2 Solomon's Quest for Wisdom

II. 3:1-12:8 Pearls of Wisdom

- A. The Blessings of a Good King (10:16-20)
- B. Seizing Opportunities (11:1-6)

III. 12:9-14 Postscript

(Adapted from James Bollhagen. *Ecclesiastes*. Concordia Commentary. St. Louis: CPH, 2011)

This Bible Study is brought to you by Issues, Etc. Listen on demand at www.issuesetc.org.

Issues, Etc.



Christ-Centered Cross-Focused Talk Radio
www.issuesetc.org

Around the Word Bible Study

Trinity, 2015

Contentment Ecclesiastes 10:16-11:6

Opening: Psalm 104

¹Bless the LORD, | O my soul!*
O LORD my God, you are | very great!

You are clothed with splendor and | majesty,*

**²covering yourself with light as with a garment,
stretching out the heavens | like a tent.**

³He lays the beams of his chambers on the | waters;*
he makes the clouds his chariot;

he rides on the wings | of the wind;

**⁴he makes his mes- | sengers winds,*
his ministers a | flaming fire.**

⁵He set the earth on its foun- | dations,*
so that it should nev- | er be moved.

**⁶You covered it with the deep as with a | garment;*
the waters stood above the | mountains.**

⁷At your re- | buke they fled;*

at the sound of your thunder they | took to flight.

**⁸The mountains rose, the valleys | sank down*
to the place that you appoint- | ed for them.**

⁹You set a boundary that they | may not pass,*
so that they might not again cov- | er the earth.

**¹⁰You make springs gush forth in the | valleys;*
they flow be- | tween the hills;**

¹¹they give drink to every beast | of the field;*
the wild donkeys | quench their thirst.

**¹²Beside them the birds of the | heavens dwell;*
they sing among the | branches.**

¹³From your lofty abode you water the | mountains;*
the earth is satisfied with the fruit | of your work.

**¹⁴You cause the grass to grow for the livestock
and plants for man to | cultivate,***

that he may bring forth food from the earth

¹⁵and wine to gladden the | heart of man,

oil to make his | face shine*

and bread to strengthen | man's heart.

**¹⁶The trees of the LORD are watered a- | bun-
dantly,***

the cedars of Lebanon that he | planted.

¹⁷In them the birds | build their nests;*

the stork has her home in the | fir trees.

**¹⁸The high mountains are for the | wild goats;*
the rocks are a refuge for the rock | badgers.**

¹⁹He made the moon to mark the | seasons;*
the sun knows its time for | setting.

**²⁰You make darkness, and | it is night,*
when all the beasts of the forest | creep about.**

²¹The young lions roar | for their prey,*

seeking their | food from God.

**²²When the sun rises, they | steal away*
and lie down | in their dens.**

²³Man goes out | to his work*

and to his labor until the | evening.

²⁴O LORD, how manifold are your works!

**In wisdom have you | made them all;*
the earth is full of your | creatures.**

²⁵Here is the sea, | great and wide,*

which teems with creatures innumerable,
living things both | small and great.

²⁶There | go the ships,*

and Leviathan, which you formed to | play in it.

²⁷These all | look to you,*

to give them their food in due | season.

**²⁸When you give it to them, they gath- | er it up;*
when you open your hand, they are filled with |
good things.**

²⁹When you hide your face, they | are dismayed;*
when you take away their breath, they die
and return | to their dust.

**³⁰When you send forth your Spirit, they are
cre- | ated,***

and you renew the face | of the ground.

³¹May the glory of the LORD endure for- | ever;*
may the LORD rejoice | in his works,

**³²who looks on the earth and it | trembles,*
who touches the mountains | and they smoke!**

³³I will sing to the LORD as long | as I live;*

I will sing praise to my God while I have | being.

**³⁴May my meditation be pleas- | ing to him,*
for I rejoice | in the LORD.**

³⁵Let sinners be consumed from the earth,
and let the wicked | be no more!*

Bless the LORD, O my soul! |

Praise the LORD!

Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*

and to the Holy | Spirit;

as it was in the be- | ginning,*

is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

Read Ecclesiastes 10:16-11:6

10:16-18: Land of woe/land of happiness

What two basic types of rulers are described in these verses, and how does their behavior impact the land? What happens when simple problems are neglected? See verse 18. How do Ecclesiastes 4:5 and Proverbs 19:15 graphically portray the consequences of laziness?

Luther: "And your princes feast at the proper time; that is, they do not give their own appetites preference over the business and cares of the realm, they do not seek their own advantage," (AE 15:166).

How does St. Paul say we should conduct ourselves with respect to others in Philippians 2:4? Why should we act in this way? See Philippians 2:5-13.

Luther: "It is, I say, the height of wisdom to know this, that the kingdom of the world is very wicked and cannot be set straight," (AE 15:169).

Augustine relates the contrasting lands in these verses to the kingdoms of God & Satan: "The princes of the Devil's city "eat in the morning", that is, before the proper time—in the sense that, being overeager to attain perfect happiness at once in the society of this present world, they are unwilling to await the only true happiness which will come in due time in the world to come. But the princes of the City of Christ await in patience the time of a blessedness which is sure to be theirs," (*The City of God* as cited in Bollhagen, *Ecclesiastes*, 375).

10:19: Bread, wine & money

How does what Solomon says here correspond to Ecclesiastes 2:24; 3:13; 5:18–20; 8:15; and 9:7? What warning about money are we given in Hebrews 13:5? What do Acts 2:44–45 and 1 Corinthians 16:1–6 teach about the place of money?

10:20: "Do not curse the king"

Luther: "Why, then, do you want to curse those who, if they are good men, are troubled with so many cares and such great labors for the sake of your peace? But if they are evil and stupid men, their wickedness is and brings enough evil upon them. Therefore you should rather feel sorry for them," (AE 15:170).

What does St. Paul say we should do for the authorities? See 1 Timothy 2:1–2. What if they are wicked? See Romans 12:17–13:8. See also Colossians 4:6.

Why is it dangerous to curse the king? See Proverbs 16:14–15. How does our Lord's warning in Matthew 10:26–27 apply to Solomon's teaching in Ecclesiastes 10:20?

11:1: "Cast your bread upon the waters"

What will happen to bread if you put it in water?

Luther: "[give] simply and generously, even though your kindness seems to you to perish and your bread seems to sink into the water," (AE 11:171).

What promise does God make in this verse to those who heed its instruction? What instruction does our Lord give in Luke 14:12–14? Compare also Proverbs 19:17, Luke 6:38, and 2 Corinthians 9:7.

11:2: "Give a portion to seven, or even to eight"

For what reason does Solomon instruct generosity in this verse? Compare Ecclesiastes 2:18–19; Luke 12:15–21; Luke 16:1–9.

11:3: "If a tree falls"

Luther: "That is, you do not know how long you will be alive and will possess things. Just as a tree, when it is chopped down, whether it falls to the south or to the north, will remain there; so just as death strikes you, regardless of the place or situation, so you will remain. If the Lord

Bible Study

Contentment Ecclesiastes 10:16–11:6

finds you in the south, that is, fertile and rich in good works, good. But if He finds you in the north, that is, not abounding in good works, too bad for you. As you are found, so you will be judged and so you will receive," (AE 15:172).

How does our Lord's teaching on watchfulness relate to this? See Matthew 24:36–25:13.

Notice the cause/effect pattern in Ecclesiastes 11:3. How does 2 Samuel 12:7–14 affirm that sin, even when it is forgiven, may still have temporal consequences?

11:6: "Withhold not your hand"

Recall what Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 3:11 (compare Romans 11:33–34), knowing that the times and seasons (Ecclesiastes 3:1–10) are all determined by God. Why, according to Ecclesiastes 11:6, can it be problematic to wait until the perfect time to take action? See also Proverbs 22:13. What might end up happening instead, according to Ecclesiastes 11:4? How does this teaching apply to what our Lord says in Matthew 9:37–38?

Faith does not result in a generous spirit only during times of abundance. Luther says, "I would be happy to give," people say, "If I could see that I shall not be in need." You are willing to give only from that which you do not need... he who does not believe the Lord does not do anything good. He who overlooks the Word, overlooks the work as well," (AE 15:173). Compare James 2:17–26, Mark 12:41–44, and Galatians 6:10.

Luther: "You do the sowing and do what you should, but commit your works and their outcome to God Do good to all men, do not observe the winds, and do not be concerned

with the outcome. Thus one should do his job and should not look for gratitude. If the world does not thank you, God will thank you; and if they both do, so much the better! But if dangers come, be prepared to accept them," (AE 15:174).

How does this correspond to our Lord's teaching in Matthew 6:1–4 and our Lord's own activity in Matthew 13:1–23? How should the world's gratitude (or lack thereof) factor into our generosity?

Closing: Evening and Morning (LSB, 726)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR Rev. Eric Andersen (rev.ena40@gmail.com) is pastor of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Summit, IL and Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hodgkins, IL. He is also the Associate Editor of Brothers of John the Steadfast, co-host of Steadfast Throwdown, Bible Study Editor for Around the Word, and teaches theology at Wittenberg Academy.

