



SAFE HARBOR

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William E. Lang Jr., Director

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Words for Living

In starting this new year my thoughts are turned towards that portion of Scripture that speaks about what really matters in life.

1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

*2 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher,
vanity of vanities! All is vanity.*

*3 What does man gain by all the toil
at which he toils under the sun?*

*4 A generation goes, and a generation comes,
but the earth remains forever.*

*5 The sun rises, and the sun goes down,
and hastens to the place where it rises.*

*6 The wind blows to the south
and goes around to the north;
around and around goes the wind,
and on its circuits the wind returns.*

*7 All streams run to the sea,
but the sea is not full;
to the place where the streams flow,
there they flow again.*

*8 All things are full of weariness;
a man cannot utter it;
the eye is not satisfied with seeing,
nor the ear filled with hearing.*

*9 What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what will be done,
and there is nothing new under the sun.*

10 Is there a thing of which it is said,

*“See, this is new”?
It has been already
in the ages before us.
11 There is no remembrance of former things,
nor will there be any remembrance
of later things^{le} yet to be
among those who come after.*

These words comprise the opening thoughts of the Preacher and are attributed to King Solomon. Mostly likely these are the words of a man who is in his later years and is reflecting upon his life. The thoughts are given as a progression of realizing the things that really should matter in a person’s life. They are also didactic and meant to instruct others.

“Vanities of Vanities” begins the musings of the Preacher. A literal translation might read, “Vapor of Vapors” or an emptiness that is deep and longing for substance. It is clear that this reflection touches upon the mental state of a person who has had it all and yet has nothing. The futility of life has weighed heavily upon his observations as the Preacher ponders existence.

The writings are applicable to every generation of humanity. Even today the problem of existence touches lives leaving behind a residue of emptiness. It seems that futility and frustrations of daily living never seem to change. I am reminded of the wisdom found in the song, “Old Man River” perhaps a poor man’s commentary of the Preacher’s words. *“New things come and old things go but all things look the same to Joe. But Old Man River just keeps rolling along.”*

This is fatalism, full of despair and meaninglessness, too often seen in one’s life. It makes one tired and weary to struggle along without a presence or a mission in one’s life. Perhaps it is rooted in expectations either real or imagined or a continuation of the lie of Eden that “we could become as gods.” This makes a person’s life a quest of futility and hopelessness.

We live in a world where we are bombarded by the satanic messages of what is the “good life” filled with temptations to seek after the things of earth which can never satisfy nor make a person complete. The banishment from Eden has taken away the meaning of life and satisfaction that the human person so desperately craves. Our history then becomes one searching and failure as we seek satisfaction in the things that can never satisfy.

Solomon; king of Israel, possessor of untold wealth, wisdom and all that goes with these things which eventually decay and fade into hopelessness; has come face to face with his own dissatisfaction of life. In the words which follows he puts forth his thoughts on the emptiness of his life. Perhaps it would do one well to read this portion of Scripture throughout the year.

Some references that you can look up and read and see the end of the Preacher’s arguments would be, Eccl. 2:24-26; 3:1-8; 9-15; 5: 18-19; 9: 7-10; 11: 5-10; 12:13. And perhaps as parents you might do well to remember the words, also attributed to Solomon, *“Train up a child in the ways he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it”*.

The words of Jesus, ***“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you”***. Also look up John 4 where you find the discourse with the Samaritan woman. (See also Matt. 6:19-21; 2Tim. 2:22)

And so for this New Year I leave these thoughts with you that your lives will be full of the presence of God and in knowing him you might be complete through the intimate knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

INSIGHTS

In speaking with a lawyer (Luke 10:25-37), Jesus brings to light the true meaning of the commandment to love one’s neighbor by telling the story of the Samaritan. It is worth noting that the reference to simply to a Samaritan and lets the actions of this one speak for themselves. It is also a comparison between being religious and being loving to one’s fellow man.

The Priest and the Levite are classes of the persons charged with leading the nation in the worship of God as well as guiding the people in their lives. When they came upon the man they passed by on the side of the road. Their concern, as they saw this one who seemed near death, was to maintain ritual purity as to have contact with the dead would have made them unclean according to law. So, they were content to leave this one to his ultimate fate.

The Samaritan understood a different understanding of the commandments. (Keep in mind that the Samaritans were also descendants of the nation of Israel, Northern Kingdom and would have been familiar with the law. His ultimate concern was for the welfare of the man lying there and his healing. This action would be also in keeping with the Law of Moses.

In the parable Jesus points out the conflict, that we often find ourselves in as followers of Jesus, between a ritual purity and true love as God intended. The play, Les Misérables, has this conflict at its core in the persons of Valjean and Jaubert. In the last scene the song says, “To love another person is to see face of God”. Too often we forget that in reality we are as filthy creatures before our Creator who have been washed and cleansed by faith in our Redeemer. Our faith is not to be one of piously sitting in pews for an hour or so on a Sunday. Rather it is to bring the love of God to a world that is most unlovely.

POINTS TO PONDER

“As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself that they may also be sanctified in truth. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you Father are in me, and I in you, that they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” John 17:18-21

The task is before us. The hope is ours. In faith and love let us move towards the prize that awaits.

You can follow Cove Fellowship at www.billllangservices.com , email to **covefellowship@verizon.net** or on Face Book at **CoveFellowshipMinistries**.

My book of poetry, **Midnight Musings: Thoughts from a Restless Mind**, is available on Amazon and also Amazon Kindle. Your patronage and thoughts would be appreciated.