

Information & Application

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[0 : 00] A little could for a short while this morning, we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read.

The book of Ecclesiastes and chapter 10. Ecclesiastes chapter 10. I want us to walk through this chapter, but if we just take as our text the words of verses 5 and 6.

Ecclesiastes chapter 10 and verse 5. There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were an error proceeding from the ruler.

Folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place. I want to begin this morning by asking the question, what makes for a good sermon?

What makes for a good sermon? You've all listened to sermons before. Some of you have been coming to church and listening to sermons for the past 40 or 50 years.

[1 : 07] And some of you still haven't responded to what you've been listening to for the past 40 or 50 years. But what makes for a good sermon? What makes a sermon worth listening to?

What makes a good sermon worth paying attention to? Of course, a good sermon will always be about Jesus Christ, where the sermon is Christ-centered and Christ-focused.

But when I was in college, we were always taught that every good sermon should contain two things. Information and application. Every good sermon should contain information and application.

Every good sermon should contain information that stimulates the mind and enlivens the imagination and warms the heart. But in order for it to be a good sermon, it must not only contain information, it must also contain application.

The sermon must be applicable to our lives and context. The sermon must stir us up and challenge us to respond to what we are hearing by being obedient to God's word and desiring to live our lives in that way.

[2 : 22] So what makes for a good sermon? Information and application. And I say this not because I think my sermons are good sermons. I say it because the sermons of the greatest preacher who ever lived, he used this method of information and application.

One of the great features of Jesus' ministry was that his sermons and his parables, they had this wonderful ability to make all, he had this wonderful ability to make all his sermons applicable to his hearer.

As you know, when Jesus preached, he was able to take ordinary, everyday objects and incorporate them into his sermons and into his parables. And this was because Jesus had this unique ability to capture our attention and captivate our imagination through his vivid sermon illustrations.

There are so many of them. For example, the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the parable of the sower, the wise and the foolish builders, the good shepherd, the lost sheep, the true vine, the mustard seed.

Jesus used ordinary, everyday objects in his sermons and made them memorable. And he made them applicable to us because they contained both information and application.

[3 : 45] Now the reason I'm asking what makes for a good sermon is because over the past few months we've been considering the book of Ecclesiastes. And as we've said before, the book of Ecclesiastes is a sermon by King Solomon.

The title Ecclesiastes, it means the preacher. So Solomon, he is the preacher. And Ecclesiastes is the preacher's sermon. And Solomon's sermon is all about the vanity of living your life without God.

Solomon opened his sermon to his congregation with the statement, Vanity of vanities, says the preacher. Vanity of vanities. All is vanity.

And from his opening statement, Solomon proceeded to preach about the vanity of living your life in a foolish way. Because in his sermon, Solomon affirms that he has looked at life from every possible angle.

And he says that we need to look at life and love life and live our lives with an eternal perspective. Because he says if we're not living our life with an eternal perspective, then we're wasting our life.

[4 : 58] And Solomon's plea to us throughout his whole sermon is don't waste your life. Don't waste your life living for yourself and living for the pleasures of this world.

Because he says what's of the utmost importance and what's of eternal value is our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. And in his sermon, Solomon, he has given to us lots of information.

He's told us all about life under the sun. Solomon says to us again and again that there's nothing new under the sun. But having presented to us lots of information, the good preacher that Solomon is, he now wants to present to us lots of application.

And in this chapter, in chapter 10, Solomon applies all that he has said to those who are in the hearing. And today, we are those who are in the hearing of Solomon's sermon.

And so we have to listen up and pay attention to the teaching of Solomon's sermon. Because in this chapter, in chapter 10, Solomon addresses four areas in our lives which need to be governed by wisdom.

[6 : 18] Four areas in our lives which need to be governed by wisdom. And these four areas are reputation, respect, repercussions, and redemption.

So we look first of all at reputation.

Reputation. Look at verse 1. Solomon says, And so in these opening verses of this chapter that's full of application, Solomon addresses our reputation.

And he asks us, How are you perceived by others? What is your character like? What is your conduct like? What is your conversation like?

Because Solomon says that these things, they define you. These are the things that people perceive of you and see in your character, your conduct, and your conversation.

[7 : 39] And so Solomon asks, What do people see that you're like? What do people think of you? What's your reputation before other people?

Now Solomon, he doesn't want to know whether you're rich or poor. Or you're popular or lonely. Whether you're big or small, fat or thin, male or female. No, what Solomon wants to know is, Are you wise or foolish?

Are you wise or foolish? That's the reputation Solomon is talking about. That's the character, conduct, and conversation Solomon is referring to. Where he's asking us, Are you wise or are you foolish?

Do you live your life walking in wisdom and looking at life with an eternal perspective? Do you live your life knowing that you're in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ?

Do you live your life knowing that having Jesus Christ as your Savior is of eternal value? Do you live and walk in wisdom? Or he says, Do you live for the moment?

[8 : 47] Do you live for the pleasures of this world? Do you live for the praise of others? And do you live for the things that will never really satisfy? Are you wise? Or are you foolish?

What's your reputation like? Or to use Solomon's language, What fragrance do you possess? That's really what Solomon wants to know.

What fragrance does your reputation give off? And you know, it's such a vivid illustration because with that question, Solomon brings us, as it were, into a perfume shop.

And he's telling us there are lots and lots of perfume bottles there in this perfume shop. And I'm sure we've all seen them before. And I'm sure the ladies here, they all love their perfumes. And the men, they love their aftershaves.

And I'm sure you've stood in those aisles with all those bottles of perfumes and aftershaves. And some of you, I'm sure you've tested them to see what scent is nice. To see what aroma and what fragrance they give off.

[9 : 53] And you try so many of them. Because you want to give off a nice fragrance. Or if you're buying a gift for someone, you want them to smell nice. And that's where Solomon brings us in verse 1.

He brings us into the perfume shop with all these bottles of perfume. But for Solomon, there are only two types of fragrance. There are only two types of aroma.

There are only two types of bottle on offer in the perfume shop. Because Solomon says that there is only the fragrance of wisdom or the fragrance of folly. And you know, the Apostle Paul, he reminds us that the fragrance of wisdom, it's a fragrance.

Or as the AV puts it, it's a savour of life unto life. But the fragrance of folly, it's a savour of death unto death.

And you know, it's such a vivid illustration. Because here's Solomon. And he wants us to apply all that we've heard in his sermon. And he takes us into the perfume shop. And he asks us, which one are you?

[11 : 01] Which one are you? What is your reputation like? What is your character and conduct and conversation like? What fragrance do you wear? What aroma do you give off?

Is it a fragrance of wisdom and Christ-likeness? Or is it a fragrance of folly and worldliness? Is it a fragrance of life unto life?

Or a fragrance of death unto death? But you know, Solomon's question here, it's so solemn. Because he says that it doesn't take much for a fragrance of wisdom.

To become a fragrance of folly. In fact, he describes it as something as small as a dead fly. He says in verse 1, Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a stench.

So a little folly outweighs wisdom and honour. And Solomon's point is that it doesn't take much to ruin a Christian's reputation. It doesn't take much to see the collapse of a Christian's witness by their character or their conduct or their conversation.

[12 : 13] And Solomon warns us that something as small as a dead fly in the ointment of the Christian's life, it's enough for their life and reputation to give off a stench.

And it's such a vivid and illustrative warning that as Christians, he says, we have to walk in wisdom. We have to be separate from the world. We have to guard our Christian witness.

We have to ensure that the fragrance we give off to others, we have to ensure that it bears the aroma of Christ. Because one little dead fly from the world can bring a stench of death into our life and reputation.

Now, of course, the church doesn't profess to be perfect. It doesn't proclaim to be a museum of good people. No, the church, it's a hospital for the broken. But it's a hospital that has Jesus Christ as the great physician.

And this Jesus, he mends broken people and he heals broken lives and he restores the broken world. And because of his work of salvation and his power to change lives, we are to live in obedience to his word.

[13 : 26] And when we do that, when we live in obedience to Christ and his word, it produces in us a sweet smelling aroma that shows the world that we have been with Jesus.

And you know, that's what Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth. They were living like the world. And he reminded them, we are the aroma of Christ.

We are the aroma of Christ. And Paul said that the aroma of Christ in the life of the Christian, it's to be recognized by those who are Christians.

And it's to be recognized by those who are not. We are the aroma of Christ. He says, And if we are the aroma of Christ, then we must walk in wisdom and live our lives with a fragrance of wisdom.

We have to guard our Christian witness. Because it doesn't take much for that fragrance to become a stench. And you know, Solomon saw this so clearly in the life of his own father.

[14 : 32] We often remember David's stench more than his fragrance. We remember David not as the man after God's own heart and the first true king of Israel.

But we often remember David as the man who committed adultery and lied and murdered. And this is why Solomon gives such a solemn warning here.

Because Solomon knows that folly comes from the heart. And that's what he says in verse 2. A wise man's heart inclines him to the right.

But a fool's heart to the left. Solomon says that the heart of a wise man is at his right hand. But the heart of a fool is at his left hand.

But who is the his? Whose hands is Solomon referring to? Whose right hand and whose left hand is Solomon speaking about?

[15 : 30] They're God's hands. He's talking about the hands of judgment. The hands of the king. A wise man's heart inclines him to the right hand.

But a fool's heart to the left hand. The right hand of a king. It was always the position of prominence and praise. But the left hand of the king.

It was always the position of destruction and damnation. And as I know what Jesus said it would be like at the day of judgment.

King Jesus will return and sit upon his throne of glory. And gather before him all the nations of the earth. And he will separate them. Separate people one from the other.

As a shepherd separates he says the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right hand. But the goats on his left. And King Jesus will say to the wise on his right hand.

[16 : 28] Come you blessed of my father. Inherit the kingdom. Prepared for you from before the foundation of the earth. And then Jesus will say to the fool on his left hand.

Depart from me you cursed. Into the everlasting fire. Prepared for the devil and his angels. But you know Solomon knows a fool when he sees one.

Because he says in verse 3 that the fool will take delight in his folly. Even when the fool walks on the road he says he lacks sense. And he says to everyone that he is a fool.

So how foolish is a fool? Solomon says that a fool is so foolish. That he will make a joke of his lost state.

The fool is so foolish. That he will make a joke of his lost state. The fool will pretend to others that his position out of Christ.

[17 : 29] Doesn't really bother him. The fool will hide the fact. That his soul is being challenged. Under the preaching of the gospel. The fool will cover up his true feelings.

So that no one will really know what's going on in his heart. But the reality is. Although the fool makes a joke of his lost state. He knows that it's no laughing matter.

To be found at the left hand of the king. On the day of judgment. And to be told depart from me. For I never knew you. My friend what is your reputation?

What is your character, conduct and conversation? What fragrance do you give off? Is it a fragrance of wisdom and Christ likeness? Or is it a fragrance of folly and worldliness?

Is it a fragrance of life unto life? Or a fragrance of death unto death? What is your reputation? And so Solomon as we continue.

[18 : 27] He's addressing areas in our life. Which need to be governed by wisdom. So the first is reputation. The second is respect. Respect. Look at verse 4.

He says if the anger of the ruler rises against you. Do not leave your place. For calmness will lay great offenses to rest. There is an evil that I have seen under the sun. As it were an error proceeding from the ruler.

Folly is set in many high places. And the rich sit in a low place. I have seen slaves on horses and princes. Walking on the ground like slaves. So in this sermon Solomon says that we not only need wisdom in order to live our lives.

He also says that we need wisdom in order to live our lives with others. And we need wisdom because when we encounter difficult situations that threaten our position or undermine us as a person.

He says we need to be careful as to how we react. And you know Solomon's advice here. It's wisdom at its best. Because he's teaching us one of the hardest lessons in life.

[19 : 38] He's teaching us to respect and love other people. And this teaching it applies to a family of marriage. Of friends or neighbours. Of work colleagues.

It applies to the people in church. This teaching applies to everyone. And it's relevant for every area in life. Because what Solomon says here.

It can be seen in every avenue of life. Solomon says in verse 4. If the anger of the ruler rises against you. Do not leave your place.

For calmness will lay great offences to rest. Now when Solomon says this. I don't believe that he's talking about respecting those in authority. Although that would be true.

We are to respect those in authority. We're to pray for those who are in authority over us. Those who rule over us. Both locally and nationally. But what I believe Solomon is talking about here.

[20 : 38] Is those who seek to lord it over you. I'm sure we've all come across people. Either in our families. Or workplaces. Or in our community. Maybe even in the church.

And these people think that they're in charge. They think that they're the boss. They think that they're in control. And what they say goes. And they lord it over people. And that's a situation Solomon is referring to here.

Because when we encounter people. Who think that they're above us. And they can dictate everything to us. Our natural reaction is to get annoyed with them.

Frustrated with them. And even angry with them. And we say. Maybe not to them. But in our own heart. We say. Who do you think you are. Telling me what to do. Our natural reaction is that we want to retaliate.

We want to dig our heels in. And maybe even do the opposite of what they're saying. Just to make a point. And give them a taste of their own medicine. And we want to do that. Instead of showing respect.

[21 : 38] And humility. Derek Kidner. A well-known commentator. He writes in his commentary on this verse. He says. There is a keen observation behind the quiet advice of verse 4.

For what we are invited to notice. Is that rather absurd human phenomenon. The huff. Kidner says that Solomon is describing what it's like to go in a huff with someone.

And we all know what a huff is. And we all know what being in a huff is. Because a huff is usually the aftermath of a fallout. Or a disagreement. Or an argument with someone.

We all know what a huff is. We all know what causes a huff. And why someone ends up in a huff. But what Solomon warns us here. Is that sometimes a huff.

Can do more damage than good. Because the outcome of a huff. Or a fallout. Or a disagreement. It sometimes leads to silence. Where no one is talking.

[22 : 41] Then there's tension. Tension when you see the person. There's tension that then leads to resentment. And if differences aren't resolved. Both parties will drift.

Maybe they'll even go their separate ways. My friend. There's such a danger in how we deal with people. And how we react to people. And what Solomon is reminding us here. Is that we need to respect one another.

We need to love one another. We need humility and patience. To deal with one another. Because as Kidner went on to say about the huff. He says if we can recognize its symptoms.

We can prevent further damage. While it may feel magnificent he says. And liberating to resign to your post. Because of your principles. It's actually a fit of pride. And it's less impressive.

And more immature than it feels. Because he says to be submissive and respectful. It's not only the Christians duty. It's also their wisdom.

[23 : 42] And you know this is why Paul encouraged the Christians in Ephesus. He encouraged them again and again. To endeavor to keep the unity. And the peace within the church.

Paul said do not let the sun go down on your anger. And give no opportunity to the devil. Because my friend when it comes to arguments and huffs and divisions.

The devil thrives. And it's the apostle Peter. You know it's amazing how the Bible just all holds together. He points us. Peter points us to the example of Jesus.

Peter wrote. Christ suffered for you. Leaving you an example. So that you might follow in his steps. He says when he was reviled. He did not revile in return.

When he suffered. He did not threaten. But continued entrusting himself. To him who judges justly. And that's what Solomon is saying here.

[24 : 42] We're to respond in humility. We're to deal with people patiently. And we're to work away quietly. My friend Solomon is reminding us here. That we need to be wise.

In how we speak to people. And how we deal with people. Because if we don't watch our reputation. And if we don't show respect to others. Solomon then says.

There will be repercussions. That's what he mentions thirdly. So he's addressing areas in our life. Which need to be governed by wisdom. Reputation. Respect. And then repercussions.

Repercussions. Look at verse 8. Solomon says. He who digs a pit will fall into it. And a serpent will bite him. Who breaks through a wall. He who quarries stones is hurt by them.

And he who splits logs is endangered by them. If the iron is blunt. And one does not sharpen the edge. He must use more strength. But wisdom helps one to succeed. If the serpent bites before it is charmed.

[25 : 44] There is no advantage to the charmer. And so in this section that we come to. Solomon warns us that if we live like a fool. With a foolish reputation. And if we act like a fool.

By failing to respect other people. Then the outcome will be that our folly. Will have repercussions. But when Solomon talks about digging a pit. For someone else.

And then falling into it yourself. Or a serpent biting you. Because you try and break down. Someone else's defense system. Or he talks about the dangers of quarrying rocks.

Or splitting logs. When Solomon talks about all these things. He's not talking about karma. He's not talking about bad things happening to you. Because you're trying to do bad things to others.

No what Solomon is actually talking about. Is mocking God. He says the fool thinks that they can get away with doing wrong.

[26 : 43] Or causing upset. Or hurt to others. Without it having any repercussions for them. You know this is what Paul said to the Galatians. About the behavior of the false teachers.

Paul said to the Galatians. Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. For whatever one sows. He will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh.

Will from the flesh reap corruption. But the one who sows to the spirit. Will from the spirit. Reap eternal life. Therefore says Paul. Let us not grow weary of doing good.

For in due season. We will reap. If we do not give up. And what Paul was saying. And what Solomon is saying. Is that we need to be wise. And we need to think before we act.

We need to think of the consequences of our actions. Not only to others. But also to ourselves. We need to be wise. We need to walk in wisdom. By thinking before we act.

[27 : 46] But then Solomon also says. That we need to be wise. By thinking before we speak. He says in verse 12. The words of a wise man's mouth.

Win him favor. But the lips of a fool consume him. The beginning of the words of his mouth. Is foolishness. And the end of his talk. Is evil madness. A fool multiplies words.

Though no man knows what it is to be. And who can tell him. What it will be after him. The toil of a fool wearies him. For he does not know the way. To the city. You know we often say.

That actions speak louder than words. But Solomon says. We need wisdom with our actions. And without words. We need to be so careful. In the way that we treat people.

And the way we speak to people. And the Apostle James. In his letter. About Christian wisdom. James reminds us. That our tongue.

[28 : 44] It's hard to control. He calls it an unruly evil. Set on fire by hell. Because sometimes. We can say things. That are nasty and hurtful.

Things that are bitter. And cruel. Things that are malicious. And unkind. My friend. Foolish talk. Is led by a foolish tongue. And you know.

What's so sad about us. Now this is what James refers to. In his letter. That with our tongue. We are able to praise God.

And then punish people. Who are made. In the image of God. We are able to praise God. And punish people. And James says to us.

Brother. These things. Ought not to be. Friends. We need to be wise. We need to walk in wisdom. We need. To be like Jesus.

[29 : 40] We need to be like Jesus. We need to think. Before we act. And we need to think. Before we speak. But there's one more thing. That Solomon mentions. In this chapter of application.

Because as we said. Solomon is addressing. Four areas. In our lives. Which need to be governed. By wisdom. Four areas. Reputation. Respect. Repercussions.

And redemption. Redemption. Look at verse 16. Solomon says. Woe to you. O land. When your king is a child. And your princes feast.

In the morning. Happy are you. O land. When your king is the son. Of the nobility. And your princes feast. At the proper time. For strength. And not for drunkenness.

Through slot. The roof sinks in. And through indolence. The house leaks. Bread is made for laughter. And wine gladdens life. And money answers everything.

[30 : 37] Even in your thoughts. Do not curse the king. Nor in your bedroom. Curse the witch. For a bird of the air. Will carry your voice. But some winged creature.

Tell the matter. And so in these closing verses. Solomon re-emphasizes. The need to have wisdom. And the need to walk in wisdom. And he addresses various issues.

Of foolishness. Of folly. But in verse 19. Solomon reminds us. That the wisest thing. We could ever do. Is secure.

Our redemption. The wisest thing. We could ever do. Is secure. Our redemption. He says in verse 19. Bread is made for laughter. And wine gladdens life.

And money. Answers everything. And what Solomon gives to us. In that one verse. Is the perspective. Of the fool. Because the fool's perspective.

[31 : 36] Is short sighted. All that's on his mind. Or thereabouts. All that's on his mind. Is bread. Wine. And money.

His life is consumed. With work. Entertainment. And possessions. Bread. Wine. And money. And as Solomon has reminded us.

Again and again. Throughout his sermon. He says none of these things. None of them. Bring any lasting satisfaction. And you know. This is the point of Solomon's.

Entire sermon. Because as we said before. As we've listened. To Solomon's sermon. Solomon wants us to be asking. The question. Well what's the point to life? What's it all about?

If all things are vanity. What are we doing here? Where are we going? What's the point to life? And Solomon says. The fool.

[32 : 30] The fool lives their life. For bread. Wine. And money. The fool lives their life. For work. Entertainment. And possessions. The fool says. That's all we need in life.

If we have our health. We have everything. And if we have bread. Wine. And money. We have everything. But Solomon responds. To all of that. And he says. Vanity.

Of vanities. Says the preacher. Vanity. Of vanities. All is vanity. And what he's trying to tell us. And remind us. Is that the person.

Who looks at life. And loves life. And lives their life. With an eternal perspective. Not short sighted. But with an eternal perspective.

Solomon says. That person. That person. That person can see. That what's of the utmost importance. And what's of eternal value. Is their relationship with God.

[33 : 24] Through Jesus Christ. That's what's important. He says. And you know. I love what the Puritan. Matthew Henry says. About this verse.

He says. Though bread is for laughter. And wine makes merry. And money is a necessary support. In life. He says.

They answer nothing. For the soul. They will not procure. The pardon of sin. The favor of God. Or the peace of conscience.

Because he says. The soul. Is not redeemed. By corruptible things. Such as. Bread. Wine. And money. The soul. Is only redeemed.

By the precious blood. Of Christ. The precious blood. Of Christ. Christ. Christ. And so.

[34 : 24] What makes for a good sermon? Every good sermon. Should contain information. And application. And in his sermon.

Solomon has given us. Lots of information. But in this chapter. He has presented. To us. Lots of application. Solomon has. Applied.

His sermon. To those. Who are in the hearing. I just hope. That. As those. Who are in the hearing. Of Solomon's.

Sermon. I hope. That we've listened. I hope. That we've paid attention. To the teaching. Of his sermon. Because in this chapter.

Solomon. Has addressed. Four areas. In our lives. Which need to be governed. By wisdom. Our reputation. What is our reputation? What fragrance. Do we give off?

[35 : 17] Respect. We have to show love. And respect. The repercussions. How do we sow? And redemption. Redemption. And for you.

My unconverted friend. Here today. The wisest thing. You could ever do. Is secure. Your redemption.

Today. By committing. Your life. To Jesus Christ. The wisest thing. You could ever do. Is secure.

Redemption. Today. May the Lord. Bless these thoughts. To us. Let us pray. Oh Lord.

Our gracious God. We give thanks. For thy word. Thy word. That is. So applicable. To our lives. And a word. That speaks. Into every situation. We thank the Lord.

[36 : 13] That it's a living word. Lord. And that it's active. And we pray Lord. That it would shape us. That it would mold us. That it would challenge us. That it would equip us. That it would make us more and more like Jesus.

And that we might leave this place. Transformed. Lord. Lord. Lord. Help us. Help us. Help us. Help us. Help us. Help us. To present our bodies. As living sacrifices. Holy and acceptable unto thee.

Continue with us. Lord. We ask thee. Bless this day to us. The Lord's day. We give thanks for it. And we pray that we might rest. Rest in it. And wait patiently upon thee.

Go before us then. We pray. For we ask it in Jesus name. And for his sake. Amen. I'm going to bring our service to a conclusion.

By singing the words of Psalm 118. Psalm 118. Just notice I didn't put in the verses properly.

[37 : 13] Sorry presenter. Psalm 118. It's from verse 19. Down to the verse mark 25. You're not going from verse 19 to 2. Psalm 118.

Page 399. Singing from verse 19. Down to the verse mark 25. O set ye open unto me. The gates of righteousness. Then will I enter into them.

And I the Lord will bless. And down to. Verses 24 and 25. This is the day. God made. In it will joy triumphantly. Save now I pray thee. Lord I pray.

Send now prosperity. These blessings. And rise to God's praise. Ovation. O Bose. Lord.

Arrow. To orchestra. InEST. Righteousness.

[38 : 13] Then will I enter into there, I'll die, the Lord will rest.

This is the gate of God by you, the trust shall end away.

Be with thy praise for the meest, and not my safety be.

The stone is made at cornerstone, which will death in its past.

This is the duty of the Lord, and wondrous sin arise.

[39 : 49] This is the day caught within it, will joy triumphantly.

Send thy life, pray thee, Lord thy grace.

Send thy prosperity. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.