A Wise Fool
Ecclesiastes 2:9-11
Sermon Outline

1. The Mindset of a Wise Fool (vs. 10):

   1. Solomon’s unlimited resources enabled him to conduct a great experiment to search for meaning in life (2:1–11). He sought fulfillment in indulgence (2:1–3), achievements (2:4–6), possessions (2:7–8), and fame (2:9), but none of these brought meaning or satisfaction.¹¹

   1. Solomon was completely focused on using his power and wealth to acquire all he believed would bring him pleasure.
   2. Solomon was completely focused on not putting to the side anything that would bring him pleasure.
   3. All of Solomon’s inner most feelings were set to be satisfied.
   4. Solomon was going to do everything within his power to make himself happy on the inside and outside.
   5. Solomon completely set his desire towards spending all his time making himself extremely glad.
   6. Solomon’s desire to make himself completely happy was something he believed was allotted to him because of his hard work.

   1. This term “portion” (cheleq) recurs often (e.g. ver. 21; Ch. 3:22; 5:18, etc.; so Wisd. 2:9) in the sense of the result obtained by labour or conduct. And what a meagre and unsatisfying result it was which he gained! Contrast the apostle’s teaching, “All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vain-glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:16, 17).²²

   7. Solomon worked very hard to the point of exhaustion. He repeated the same process daily no matter how difficult it became.

2. The Temporary Results of a Wise Fool (vs. 9):

   1. Solomon’s actions put him in a completed state of wealth and riches. He acquired all any one person can desire to possess.
   2. Solomon’s completed actions was greater than any king who came before him in Jerusalem – probably referring to all Israel.

3. Solomon’s God blessed ability to judge the issues correctly led him to make the best decisions anyone can ever make.

4. God did not remove the wisdom He gave to Solomon even when Solomon used wisdom to function in this manner.

1. Voluptuousness (sensual gratification, enjoyment of luxury or pleasure) was not the end which he sought, but one of the means to obtain the end; and what he calls his wisdom is not pure Divine wisdom that comes from above, but an earthly prudence and self-restraint. (James 3:13-18)

1. **Wisdom Reconsidered Replaces Folly (vs. 11):**

1. Solomon fixed himself in a set position to turn his attention towards all that he did.

   1. It simply means that Qoheleth thought about what he had achieved and how he had managed to achieve it. As in the previous verse, where “eyes” and “heart” are words representing the whole person, so here “hands” also stands for the person.

1. Solomon carefully examined all his efforts.
2. Solomon examined all that he had the authority and power to develop from scratch.
3. Solomon’s tireless work became grievous.
4. Solomon toiled tirelessly with a lot of energy and deep commitment to complete what he had set his mind to accomplish.
5. Because of all the energy and tireless efforts of Solomon, his attention became totally fixated to his work.
6. Working everyday just to do more work became purposeless and meaningless.
7. Solomon wanted wealth so badly that he ended craving after more and more only to find out that he was grasping after nothing.
8. All Solomon acquired and all his hard work brought him no gains, advantage or long lasting benefits to his life.

1. There was nothing to be gained under the sun indicates that, despite there being some “reward” or “portion,” Qoheleth could find no lasting benefit here on earth in all those great achievements. We can render the statement as “No, a person cannot find lasting benefit here on earth.” It is important to use here the same word as was used to translate yithron in 1:3, so that the connection is made as clear as possible.

2. There was no profit to what he had done. It did not make his marriages better, children better, his relationship with God greater, and all his labor when to someone who can waste it in a day.

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“I thought to myself, "Look, I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge." 17 Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.” (Eccl 1:16-17; NIV)

“Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity. 20 Therefore I completely despairsed of all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun. When there is a man who has labored with wisdom, knowledge and skill, then he gives his legacy to one who has not labored with them. This too is vanity and a great evil. 22 For what does a man get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun? 23 Because all his days his task is painful and a grievous; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity. (Eccl 2:18-23; NASU)

“I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry between a man and his neighbor. This too is vanity and striving after wind.” (Eccl 4:4-5; NASU)