

May 30

Ecclesiastes 7, 10, 12

Several times in the passage that we read today, the theme of man's sinfulness is revisited. In the 20th verse of chapter 7, Solomon says, "There is not a righteous man on the earth. There is no one who does what is right and never sins." Not only is mankind totally depraved, but he is universally affected by sin. Every single human being has been touched by the curse of it.

At the end of the very same chapter, he says, "This only I have found: God made mankind upright, but men have gone in search of many schemes." God made us in His image, perfect and without sin, but in the words of another Old Testament prophet, "All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way." That is why the Lord had to lay on Him, Christ, "the iniquity of us all."

As we come to chapter 12, we begin to see what Solomon has been all about in this most pessimistic of biblical books. It all comes together there. Here is his conclusion. "Of the making of many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body." The end of the matter, when all has been heard, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil."

The only thing that gives life real meaning and real purpose, says Solomon, is the fact that God is there and that at the end, not in this life, but in the next, God is absolutely committed to justice. There will be a judgment; there will be justice. In light of this, the whole thrust of chapter 12 is, 'Look, young people, for this book was written for the instruction of the young person, "Remember your Creator now in the days of your youth." Don't wait until you are old, worn out and have cluttered and filled your life with mistakes and evils.

What I do now does have meaning because there is a judge. The Christian doctrine of judgment, the fact that at the end of our days there stands a God who is judge, does not take up huge portions of Scripture. If you were to delete from the Word of God every reference to it, and every passage that talks about it, you would not significantly decrease the number of pages in Scripture. But it is of immense importance, because it is that doctrine that provides us with meaning in life. It is that doctrine which gives us purpose for living, which assures us that there is a reason why we are called upon to live in the way we live, and why it makes a difference if we do. It gives hope for the righteous, reasons to believe that even though sometimes now we seem to get the short end of the stick, even though now it seems there are times when the wicked prosper and move ahead, that in reality the righteous will prosper and justice will be done. It is this doctrine of judgment that provides motivation for living holy lives, for without it our sin natures would probably overcome our desire and our knowledge that we ought to live in a different way.

The Book of Ecclesiastes says that is the sum of the matter. "Fear God and keep His commands," because we as human beings, made by Him, are fully accountable to Him.