

Boxing Day VVSS, Dec 26th, 09:30 - 11:00
"Proverbs of Qohelet"

Based on Ecclesiastes 4:13 - 5:12; Proverbs 1:1-7, 10:1-8 and Gibson chapter 5.

Ice breaker: What is the first ordinary English proverb that comes to mind ?

If you are short on proverbs try the Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs – all 740 pages of it.

Note the proverb that Gibson quotes to introduce chapter 5:

“Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt”

The structure of a Biblical proverb

Read Proverbs 10: 1 – 8

Notice the format:

Statement

– BUT –

Opposing statement

This format continues largely in the same vein to end of chapter 15. It's in Hebrew poetic format: thought followed by an “opposite” amplification of that thought used to emphasise the first thought. Our “English” proverbs are different from Hebrew proverbs. In English there may be just one thought such as “A stitch in time saves nine”. Or there may be contradictory pairs which are not written together, but spoken by two voices in conversation: “Look before you leap” vs “He who hesitates is last”. The Hebrew promotes one wise principle in two ways conjoined by “but”. The English contradictory pairs promote discussion (or worse).

Reading Ecclesiastes 5 – backwards: Chapter 5: 10-12, 8-9, 1-7 (arguably the most important bit)

Vs 10-12

Straightforward proverbs, with largely obvious wisdom statements

The overeating of the rich will keep them awake at night

Anyone guilty of this on Christmas Day???

Vs 8 – 9

How actively concerned should we be about injustice? Is Qohelet just shrugging his shoulders and saying “well, that’s the way it is”?

Discussion

Vs 1-5

Gibson writes about listening to God in the Temple in relation to sacrifice.

Regarding ourselves, where “Church” is (to a certain extent) the Christian equivalent of “Temple”, how do we go about listening to God? What does this entail? What might the result(s) be?

Where does “listening to God occur? In private? In a Church worship service? In a discussion group like this? Somewhere else? Share your experiences.

How can we possibly listen to God when there is so much noise and so many things are happening in church? “God, please shut everyone else up so I can hear you clearly!”

Whilst I have right to listen to God in Church, I also have the responsibility to help others hear God speaking to them in ways that work for them but I may not feel comfortable with.

Gibson writes about two types of people: the chatterers and those who don’t know what to say (p.88-89). Which are you? How do you relate to the others?

Gibson (p.89): “God doesn’t seem to be saying anything it’s all very well, me being silent, but what about when God seems silent?” Why is this so? How do I cope with it? What can I do about it?