

You Are Here, pt.12 – Eccl. 9-10

1. There is an odd little story that closes out chapter 9 of Ecclesiastes. The Teacher tells of a small city with only a few people in it that finds itself under siege by a great and mighty king. Inside the city was a poor but wise man who saves the city by his wisdom. The Teacher then says “but nobody remembered that poor man.” He saved the city by his wisdom but we don’t know how, when, where... Like I said, it is a very odd story. It is very likely that this story was so very well known in the Teacher’s time that he felt no need to remind people of the details!
2. But his point is made in his wrap-up here: Eccl. 9:17,18. Remember our reference a few weeks ago to the “still small voice” that Elijah heard in the cave. God wasn’t in the drama and fear and wind, fire and storm. God was in the quiet voice. Truth doesn’t need to shout.
3. Chapters 10 and 11 are right back into the Proverb style of writing: a verse or two on one thought and then a jump into another thought. Let’s hit some of the high points and process these vignettes, these little, discrete pearls of wisdom, by using one overriding thought: pay attention. Learn by seeing, hearing, and thinking. (our face is an information intake device, not, primarily, a device for the dissemination of information. As we have two ears, two eyes, and a nose feeding into two sinuses but only one mouth, perhaps we should be taking IN information much, more than we are talking) The Teacher even addresses this in this chapter: **Eccl. 10:12-14**. (be careful – stay in your lane, and stay humble)
4. **Eccl. 10:1-7**. If you keep your eyes and ears, you are going to see things that look and feel wrong. You may even come under attacks that have no basis in reality. Your response: speak and act calmly for “calmness can lay great offenses to rest.” The way of Jesus isn’t the shouting, angry way of the mob.
5. **Eccl. 10:8,9**. Jesus put this another way: **Matthew 7:1,2**. Be careful before you lay a trap for someone. Be careful before you speak a judgment against someone (“they should pay for that!). The Teacher comes back to this here: **Eccl. 10:20**.

6. When I work with people training to become nursing home administrators, I stress on them the need to create the environment you want waiting for you. Create the world you want so that, even if you don't have it now, it will be there for your children and their children.
7. The Teacher wants us to stay busy and productive. Repeatedly, in chapters 10 and 11, he comes back to that theme. Here are highlights: (Eccl. 10:15, 18. Eccl. 11:3,4).
8. Be content with mystery. The Teacher has been searching for wisdom and meaning for some time now, but he has come to a realization that we all need to have: Eccl. 11:5. This is very similar to Proverbs 30:18,19. Now look here: John 3:5-10. There are things we just can't understand. We must rely on faith in the speaker.
9. Atheists rear up at this and say that we just accept things on faith. That isn't true as we also require some evidence, as we do. If you are challenged on this point, please remind them that everything they know about history, about the might empires of the past, about the existence of nations, about the motion of stars around a black hole, about the makeup of the elements such as silver, lead, argon, about the workings of jet engines or quantum mechanics – ALL of these are only known to atheists via faith in the ones who told them about it. Let's not pretend otherwise.
10. There is room in our lives and in our faith for mystery. And there is a great danger in certainty. If you know it all...you don't know it at all. Arrogance is a sin. It is perfectly fine to say that you don't know. When someone attacks God for doing this or that or for NOT doing this or that, don't leap to His defense unless you truly have a good answer. It is fine to say you don't know.
11. Eccl. 11:1,2,6. Stay busy. Take Sabbath. Do what you can do instead of mourning what others are doing or what they are not doing. Just do you. Share freely, work hard, and remember the beauty of time and light and love. Eccl. 11:7. Be the light for someone who is struggling to find light. Be the light for we are the reflection of the Light of God.