

Foundation of the sermon

Purpose

The purpose of the sermon is to show the futility and temporary nature of this life without God.

Principle Idea:

Solomon in Ecclesiastes shows the nature of man in a world viewed from the perspective of "under the sun"

Type of Outline

Expository based on the book of Ecclesiastes

I. Introduction

Life is short. Because life is short it is a frustrating experience. Shakespeare in his play Macbeth shows us some insight into this frustration caused by the temporary nature of life. Macbeth and his wife are tragic characters whose ambition and sin have lead them to be king and queen in Scotland. Macbeth and his wife have killed Duncan the previous king, and have to live with the consequences. Lady Macbeth can not; as a result she takes her own life. In grief Macbeth states the following:

"She should have died hereafter,
There would have been time for such a word.
To-morrow and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out brief candle!
Life is but a walking shadow; A poor player
That frets and struts his hour upon the stage;
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

To Macbeth life is extremely short, a mere hour. In the broad picture it signifies nothing. It's meaningless. It's futile.

The modern folk singer Bob Dylan in his work "It's alright ma, I'm only bleeding says it this way:

Suicide remarks are torn
From the fool's gold mouth-piece
The hollow horn plays wasted words
Proved to warn,
That he that's not being born is busy dying.

Do you see the bleakness of life from that perspective. Only two events are important; birth and death. If you are not involved in birth, you are in the process of death.

God allowed and inspired a whole book in the Bible about this phenomena. He caused it to be written by the richest and wisest man of the Old Testament. We call it Ecclesiastes.

II. Body

A. Life is futile and meaningless

1. All things around us seem permanent but we are temporary Ch. 1:1-7
 - a) Use of words in the book:
 - (1) Phrase "under the sun": 27 times
 - (2) Phrase "vanity and vexation of spirit" 7 times
 - (3) Word "vanity" is used 27 times.
 - (4) Word "labour" is used 21 times.
 - (5) Word "evil" is used 18 times.
 - b) vanity as used here means emptiness -- something transitory and unsatisfactory.
2. All our labors are futile because those that follow us won't remember what we have done (1:8-11)
 - a) Note especially (11)
 - b) We are forgetful - we don't learn from our mistakes - we fail to learn from our ancestors.
3. The works of our hands are meaningless. All of them result in nothing. 2:1-11

- a) Solomon sought to “get”, “obtain”, to have pleasure, all of this lead to frustration. He tried work, wine, and song they failed him.
 - b) Pleasures of this world or temporary, and not completely satisfying.
- 4. The wise and foolish are the same and their words are not remembered. Therefore their lives are meaningless and futile. (2:12-17)
- 5. The Next generation may destroy your life’s work. Therefore your life is meaningless and frustrating. (2:18-19)
- B. Solomon’s conclusion based on his life “under the sun” is that life is meaningless.
 - 1. 1st conclusion: man should eat and drink and enjoy his labors. This comes from God. (2:20-26)
 - 2. 2nd conclusion: Everything in life has its proper time and place, and when it is done in order it has beauty, but man in this life cannot comprehend God’s ways. (3:1-14)
- C. This life “under the sun” is meaningless, but you should live properly because God will eventually reward good and evil. 3:15-12:12
 - 1. All men and beasts die. They are the same. So enjoy the life you have. (3:15-22)
 - 2. There is no justice under the sun. (4:1-16, 5:8-20)
 - 3. Be careful and honest in your dealings with God and man. (5:1-7)
 - 4. Rich or poor all die. (6:1-12)
 - 5. A series of proverbs about living the proper life. (7:1-29)
 - 6. All Good and Evil will receive that just reward or punishment, when this life is over. Therefore live righteously, and enjoy life. (8:1-9:18)
 - 7. Proverbs for living in this vain world. 10:1-12:12
- D. The preachers conclusion of the meaning of life. 12:13-14

III. Conclusion

Everything we do in this life will come to a halt. All of our life's work and all of our ways are futile and frustrating. We should live our lives, honestly and justly. While we may not see justice in our lives, God is the ultimate judge, and He will judge all our ways. Live life to its fullest. Live life abundantly. Live life with the recognition that it is temporary. But, also live life with the knowledge that God holds the future.

Title: Life Under the Sun