

The Great Contradiction and Failure. 6:1-12

by W.J. Erdman

The Preacher's search for the Good ultimately leads him to a realization of human weakness and the futility of human labor and desire.

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 2:11, Ecclesiastes 3:11, Ecclesiastes 6:2, Ecclesiastes 6:12, Ecclesiastes 12:8

Topics: "Vanity Of Wealth", "Futility Of Life"

Description

In this sermon by W.J. Erdman, the Preacher reflects on the futility and emptiness of pursuing worldly riches, honor, and pleasures, ultimately finding them to be vanity and a chasing after the wind. Despite seeking fulfillment in material success and longevity, he concludes that true satisfaction cannot be found in earthly pursuits alone. The Preacher acknowledges the limitations of human wisdom and the insatiable nature of human desires, leading to a sense of hopelessness and despair in the face of life's mysteries and uncertainties.

Transcript

What now follows would confirm this; for out of this serene, self-satisfied mood, from this supposedly final answer as to the Good he is startled by a sore and common evil among men, which, he says, he has often seen; and this contradiction confounds his Conclusion; even this: there are rich and honorable men, from whom God has withheld the power of enjoyment, and they go dyspeptics all their days. Where, now, is "the Good?" And "the Good" the Preacher would commend to all men? "This is vanity, and it is an evil disease."

Having begun his descent from the high and sunny slopes of a life of natural piety and social enjoyment, he, at sight of still another most vexatious "vanity and striving after wind," sinks at last into the deepest melancholy; even this -- to be rich and honored and blessed with a hundred sons and live two thousand years! and yet have the "soul not filled with good," even "the good" he fondly once claimed he had found, and more than all, have at last no pompous funeral and monumental marble, why! it is better never to have been.

From such extravagant mouthings and extraordinary fancies he subsides into disconnected mutterings of former sayings, how "all go to one place;" how "all labor of man is for his mouth and yet the appetite is not filled;" how "the wise has no advantage over the fool;" and how the poor man with something to eat in sight, the result of honest labor, is better off than the ever-discontented, unsatisfied rich man, whose "desire" is wandering to the ends of the earth in vain for something new and better, always seeking an

ever-receding good; wherefore " all is vanity and a striving after wind."

And then the Preacher, glancing back over all the way by which he has come, height and depth, sums up all these experiences under the sun to be truly those of the natural man, of the race of Adam: " Whatsoever hath been, the name thereof was given long ago; and it is known that it is Adam; " but in view of the unalterable fateful purpose of God, he adds, it is an Adam, weak, ignorant and wholly unable to cope with Him that is mightier than man. He confesses now to an utter nonplus and failure of natural wisdom; he knows not what is " the good " for man -- this unwise weakling --, in all the days of his shadow-life of numberless vanities. Before the mystery and riddle of existence, he is dumb, and sits on the ground clothed in the ashes and sackcloth of hopeless melancholy.

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