Living with the End in Mind: Beware of Superficial Worship

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

February 16, 2020

The worship of money was a central feature of the preceding portion of Ecclesiastes. Now the Preacher is turning his attention to the worship of God.

Today we’ll learn that God wants us to beware of superficial worship by learning to listen more than we speak and doing what we’ve promised to do.

1. Worship God by Listening More than You Speak (1-3).
   1. Approach God with respect – “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God” (1a).
      1. We should “watch our step” when we enter God’s presence.
      2. God is to be the focal point of our worship, not the words of the worshipper.
      3. In corporate worship, it’s very easy to go through motions rather than worship from the heart.
   2. Prioritize listening to God more than speaking to God – “be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools” (1b).
      1. Our primary motivation for going to church ought what we want to hear from God rather than what we want to say to God or for God.
         1. We can be guilty of pouring out our hearts to God without ever listening for an answer.
            1. Psalm 46:10 “Be still and know that I am God.”
            2. Deuteronomy 6:4-5 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD…”
         2. We can be guilty of going through motions, thinking that God will be pleased by our verbosity.
            1. Matthew 6:7 “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.”
            2. Isaiah 29:13 “Wherefore the Lord saith, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:”
      2. When we worship without considering our evil actions, we offer God foolishness.
         1. We need to learn who God is and what He is like in order to worship Him acceptably; we do this by treasuring His Word and allowing His Word to guide our lives and our worship.
         2. Jesus often said, “He who hath ears, let him hear” (Matthew 11:15; 13:9, 43, John 8:47).
   3. Your words are telling on you (2-3).
      1. Our hasty words reveal that we care more about our earthly perspective than God’s perspective (2).
      2. A fool is someone who possesses no self-control; when we rattle on in heartless worship, we reveal our foolishness.
      3. We must learn to quiet our hearts before Him – “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).
      4. Worship should be a response to hearing from God.
2. Worship God by Doing What You Promised (4-7).
   1. Don’t make a vow that you have no intention of keeping (4-5).
      1. Temple vows were a common feature of Old Testament worship and involved promises to consecrate such things as sacrifices or money to God in return for granting a request in prayer.
         1. 1 Samuel 1:11 “And she (Hannah) vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life…”
         2. When God answered her request by giving her a son, Samuel, she gave him back to God to serve in the temple for the rest of his life.
      2. Many people try to make deals with God by promising something to God if He will answer their prayer, but when God answers their request, they break their promise.
         1. Psalm 66:13-14 “I will go into thy house with burn offerings: I will pay thee my vows, Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble.”
         2. John 4:23 “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”
   2. Don’t look for a way of getting out of your vow (6-7).
      1. We shouldn’t try to find a way to get out of the promise we’ve made to God (6).
         1. God expects us to keep the vows that we have made.
            1. Deuteronomy 23:21-23 “When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require if of thee; and it would be sin in thee. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth.”
         2. God chastens those who worship Him insincerely.
            1. Ananias and Sapphira promised God the entire proceeds from the sale of a piece of property, but when the time came to make the offering, they kept back a portion for themselves, breaking their vow (Acts 5).
            2. When we refuse to fulfill our obligations, God has a way of extracting what we owe with interest. The tragedy of this is that we miss out on God’s blessing.
      2. We should replace endless words with the fear of God (7).
         1. God wants so much more than our words; He wants our complete devotion.
         2. Deuteronomy 6:4-5 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”

Conclusion:

1. Do you listen to God more than you speak to Him?
2. Do you listen to God more than you “minister” for God?
3. Are you afraid of quieting your heart before God? If so, why?
4. Do you use shallow promises to cover for your bad behavior?
5. Are you making excuses for why you don’t need to fulfill a promise that you’ve made to God? Start listening to God’s Word to change your thinking, your values, and your actions.