

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH- Red Bud, Illinois
Adult Bible Class: Lessons for a Life of Labor in the Lord

Chapter One:

Verse 1: "Teacher/Preacher" Hebrew- Qoholeth "one who calls/addresses an assembly" (our title from Greek)

"son of David"- He had many but only one to be king was Solomon; could be less direct, grandson, etc.

Verse 2: Negative theme: "meaningless/vanity" translates the Hebrew hebel "mere breath" (see James 4:14)

Verses 3-4: Human effort appears to be without benefit/purpose; "labor/toil"; "under the sun" here on earth; a life of labor is restless/cyclical/endsless; our chores never seem to get done; "what goes around, comes around"

Verses 5-7: creation displays endless cycle (sun rising/setting; wind blowing back forth; water falls/evaporates)

Verses 8-9: lives display endless cycle (eye/ear want something new; worship service?); history repeats itself

Verses 10-11: those of a long life know there is nothing new, just warmed over old stuff; no memory of men

Verses 12-15: "wisdom" is how to use _____ (Solomon?); "chasing after the wind" (can't catch)

Verses 16-18: "ruled over Jerusalem before me" (only David had done so); "wisdom"- see 1 Kings 3:4-15

Why does "much sorrow and more grief" come with wisdom and knowledge? (oh to be blissfully ignorant!)

Chapter Two:

Verses 1-3:

What four things does Solomon use to "test" himself? _____

What was the result of "pleasure"? _____ **How does Solomon describe laughter?** _____

With what was Solomon's mind "guiding" him? _____ (human or divine?)

How does Solomon describe our lives "under heaven"? _____

Verses 4-9: Solomon is known for his building projects and wealth (thanks to the work and taxes of his people)

What are the great projects Solomon undertook?: "I built _____ and planted _____";

I made _____ and _____ and planted _____; I made _____

to water...trees; I bought _____; I owned _____ and _____"; I amassed

_____ and _____; I acquired _____ and a _____ (only time in Bible; 300 of them)

How does Solomon describe himself in verse 9? "_____ by far than _____ in Jerusalem"

Did his "wisdom" really stay with him? _____

Verses 10-11:

Describe Solomon's lifestyle in verse 10? _____ **If you could have anything, what would it be?**

What was the result for Solomon in verse 11? "_____ ; nothing was _____"

Verses 12-16: *Death is the great equalizer!*

What now will Solomon consider? _____, _____, and _____

What image does Solomon use to describe wisdom's superiority to folly? _____ and _____

But ultimately, what happens to both the wise and the fool? "the same _____ overtakes them"

If both the fool and the wise both will die and be forgotten, why bother trying to be wise, just live as a fool.

Verses 17-23:

Realizing this, what is Solomon's attitude toward life, work and things? _____

Why does he hate the things he toiled for "under the sun" in verse 18? _____

(Does anyone have a T-shirt that reads, "I am spending my children's inheritance"? See **Psalm 49:16-20.**)

Why is it especially meaningless to leave your stuff to “one who comes after” you? _____

We can't take the things of this world with us (no armored cars in funeral processions) and those who get what we had did not work for it, and thus probably won't appreciate the value of it (even “smart” heirs spend it fast)

What is the answer to Solomon's question in verse 22? _____ (notice the vocabulary “toil, labors”)

While the days are work of “pain and grief” why can't such a person rest at night? _____

Verses 24-26:

While driving ambition for the things of this world gets us nowhere that is eternally important, there is good news for our lives in this world. That is “to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work.” (1 Thess. 4:11-12)

What is the difference that makes work satisfying? “this is from the _____ of _____”

Solomon points out the distinction between pleasure pursued as a goal in life and the pleasure that is accepted from God's hand as a natural consequence of His creation. This pleasure comes when it is not sought for in itself. Our knowledge of God, revealed to us by the Holy Spirit, gives us true wisdom, knowledge and happiness which puts life in this world in its proper, godly perspective. Life without God, however, turns this life into a meaningless process of “gathering and storing” stuff just to give it over “to one who pleases God.”

Chapter Three: “What Is Time?”

Verses 1-8: **How do you define the word “time”?** _____

Time can be a point at which an event begins or ends. Time can be a span (“season” zimon) from beginning to end. Time can be the point of opportunity (“proper” aeth). Time can be a possession or commodity that we have or don't have enough of. Time can be a set of numbers which describe at what point of the day it is.

Why is time so important? _____

How much time do you have in a day? _____ **How much time do you feel like you have?** _____

Who is in control of this time? _____

Verses 1-8 are 14 pairs of poetic opposites that cover the whole range of our human activity with its positives and negatives, a scheme of things that are not of our choosing or making, yet we are subjected to them. Everything happens at the appointed time which has been (or God has) determined for it. This contrasts with God's eternity. “Kill” in verse three is a word for legal executions or the slaughter of animals (not 5th comm..).

Wikipedia- “Turn, Turn, Turn” is a song written by [Pete Seeger](#) in the late 1950s. The lyrics, except for the title, which is repeated throughout the song, and the final two lines, are adapted word-for-word from the English version of the first eight verses of the third chapter of the biblical [Book of Ecclesiastes](#). The song was originally released in 1962 as "To Everything There Is a Season" on folk group [the Limelites'](#) [RCA](#) album *Folk Matinee* and then some months later on Seeger's own *The Bitter and the Sweet*. The song became an international hit in late 1965 when it was adapted by the American [folk rock](#) group [the Byrds](#). The single entered the record chart at number 80 on October 23, 1965, before reaching number one on the [Billboard Hot 100](#) chart on December 4, 1965. The lyrics are taken almost verbatim from the book of Ecclesiastes, as found in the [King James Version](#) (1611) of the [Bible](#) ([Ecclesiastes 3:1-8](#)), though the sequence of the words was rearranged for the song. The “peace” part of the song was especially meaningful for its time as our nation was entering deeper into what became the Vietnam War. It is the oldest lyrics ever for a #1 popular song.

Verses 9-15: **What is the author's answer to the question in v. 9?** _____ **Our answer?** _____

What are God's two “negatives” in verses 9 & 10? _____ (ESV “business”)

What are God's two “positives” in verse 11? _____

Life is more than just what is temporal, physical and material. We are more than the victim of accidents of time and circumstance. Broken by sin, we cannot fathom all that God does. We are to fear Him in faith rather than try to be like Him in ability.

What are the gifts of God in verse 13? _____ ”find _____ in _____” (v. 9)

Philippians 4:11-13 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹²I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Verse 14 has three parts: a) eternity (“endure forever”); b) completion (“nothing added/taken from”); and c) 1st commandment worship (“men will revere Him”). Verse 15: God is the only constant in a changing world.

Verses 16-22: **What is the problem in v. 16? _____ (not fair!) Solution in verse 17? _____**

What would God’s test of us be in verse 18? _____

How are humans similar to animals? _____ What “same place” do both return? _____

Psalms 104:29-30 When You hide Your face, they are terrified; when You take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When You send Your Spirit, they are created, and You renew the face of the earth.

Verse 21 is the view of the skeptic who wants to have proof that there is an eternal life beyond this existence.

Verse 22- What ultimately is all that we can do, because it is our “lot”? “to _____ his _____”

Chapter Four:

Verses 1-3: **What problem does Solomon now identify as taking place “under the sun”? _____**

There are those in a community who make the lives of their fellow citizens so bad that death is better than life.

What made this problem worse for “the oppressed”? “they have no _____” (cf. John 14:16, 26)

Thus, who is better off than them? _____ Who is better off even “than both”? _____

Why so? “who has not _____ the _____ that is _____ under the sun.”

Job 3:11, 16 “Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?...Or why was I not hidden in the ground like a stillborn child, like an infant who never saw the light of day?”

Jeremiah 20:14, 18 “Cursed be the day I was born! May the day my mother bore me not be blessed!...Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?”

Verses 4-6: **Can we ever “keep up with the Joneses”? _____ What is our problem here? _____**

What is the problem with “the fool”? _____ (literally “eats his own flesh”; twiddles his thumbs)

The “fool” is the subject of many of Solomon’s proverbs. This is the person who has no sense for right living.

What does “tranquility” mean?” _____ (“a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush”)

Two extremes and then the right way: working too much in an effort to get ahead of the other guy (v. 4); not working at all and getting nowhere in life (v. 5); and God-pleasing moderation, being at peace with what God has given to us by the right amount of work that we do (v. 6).

Philippians 4:11, 12 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content, whatever the circumstances....I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation.

1 Timothy 6:6-8 But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

Hebrews 13:5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.

Verses 7-8: **What is this man’s first problem? _____ Is there anything worse than that?**

Since he is all alone and has no heir, what does he question about his life? _____

(“All work and no play makes Jack a _____ boy”; in this case, it also makes him an unhappy man.)

Verses 9-12: Now Solomon recounts situations in life where two working together are better than one all alone.

Verse 9- _____; Verse 10- _____; Verse 11- _____; Verse 12- _____

This passage makes for a great text for a wedding sermon. In what other settings can we find companionship?

What accounts for the number “three” at the end of verse 12? _____

Verses 13-16: This may be autobiographical. Solomon may be looking into the mirror, figuratively speaking. He also speaks prophetically of Jeroboam I, one of Solomon’s workers who exiled himself to Egypt in the king’s later years only to return and lead the ten northern tribes in rebellion against Solomon’s son Rehoboam. On the other hand, there is the example of the patriarch Joseph, who did the very thing that Solomon describes and saved Egypt from starvation, only to be forgotten by later generations (Exodus 1:6-8).

Who is the most popular player on a bad football team? _____ (He is all potential, but has not had to prove himself yet. The fans have hope that he will be better than the one on the field.)

Closing Prayer: Dear God and Father, thank You for Your infinite goodness and love toward us. You keep us in Your word, in faith, and in prayer. By this we are humbled and do not depend on our own wisdom, but glory alone in Your power, for when we are weak, You are strong. In Jesus’ name, Amen. *Lutheran Study Bible, page 1055*

Chapter Five:

Verse 1: These words are etched into the sidewalk in front of Trinity Lutheran Church in Hoffman.

What is the “sacrifice of fools” when it comes to worship? _____ (opposite of “listen”)

Proverbs 21:3 To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

Verses 2-3: **What can “many words” reveal about the speaker?** _____ (“brevity is the soul of wit”)

The length of a sermon or a prayer is not in itself an indication of its quality, faithfulness or effectiveness.

“As much worry results in disturbed dreams which do nothing to solve the problem, so nothing is gained by listening to the senseless chattering of a fool.” *Concordia Self-Study Commentary, page 428*

Matthew 6:7-8 (Jesus said) “And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like the pagans, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father in heaven knows what you need before you ask Him.” (Proverbs 10:8, 10 “a chattering fool comes to ruin.”)

Verses 4-7: **What vows do we make to God?** _____

The promises that we make to God should not be made frivolously and they should be kept by us.

Deuteronomy 23:21-23 “If you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay fulfilling it, for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and you will be guilty of sin. ²² But if you refrain from vowing, you will not be guilty of sin. ²³ You shall be careful to do what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth.”

Proverbs 20:25 It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider his vows.

Who today is our “(temple) messenger”? _____ (“called and ordained servant of Christ”)

As with verse 3, so also verse 7 may be a known proverb, used to illustrate the previous verses.

Verses 8-9: Illinois did not invent government corruption (though we may have perfected it ;). In every society there are many who have their hands in the till. Those who are supposed to be helped by the people’s generosity go without what they need because someone in charge is lining his own pockets. We should not be shocked and lose faith in God’s ultimate management of the world when we learn of corrupt officials on all levels of human government and bureaucracy.

Verses 10-12: Wealth, like salt water, does not satisfy. The more one has of it, the more one wants of it. “After I won the lottery I found I had friends and relatives I never knew about, all who wanted my money.” “How much is enough, Mr. Rockefeller?” “Just a little more than what I have.”

1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Why can the laborer sleep while the rich man has “no sleep”? _____

Verses 13-17: **How can “hoarded” wealth be harmful?** _____

Through what misfortunes can wealth be lost? _____

There are no armored cars in funeral processions. We can’t take things of this world into the world to come.

Job 1:21 Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. (Death is the great equalizer.)

“Eats in darkness” is either literal (too cheap to turn on the lights) or figurative (sinfulness or bitterness)

Verses 18-20: This is the positive theme for the book. When we enjoy what we do, we will never “work” a day in our lives. We find our enjoyment in the things that God has given to us—food, possessions, work.

This keeps us from spending our lives in worry. “God lets him occupy his time with thoughts and activities designed to put joy in his heart.” *Concordia Self-Study Commentary*, page 429

Chapter Six:

Verses 1-2: This section continues the thought Solomon began at the end of chapter five that wealth has its limitations in our quest for happiness.

What is the “another evil” that weighs heavily on men? _____

What is the best way to “enjoy” the wealth, possessions and honor God gives us? _____

Who does get to “enjoy them instead”? _____

What is Solomon’s view of God here? _____

Verses 3-6: **What two blessings does Solomon list in verse 3?** _____

What two negatives though will cancel out those blessings? _____

What is the importance of a “proper burial”? _____

Why is a “stillborn child” better off than this person? “it has more _____ than does that _____”

The stillborn child has no name and no attributes attached to that name. While there are no positives attached to this person, there are no negatives either.

What is the answer to the question of verse 6? _____ (Sheol, the place of the dead)

Do you enjoy what you have? _____ Do you enjoy it more now that you did 20 years ago? _____

Verses 7-9: **How important is food for our lives?** _____

“The way to a man’s heart is through his _____.” “People vote on issues that affect their _____.”

A basic concern of humanity is for our own physical needs. “What’s in it for me?” determines our behavior.

Philippians 3:19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.

“A bird in the hand is worth _____ in the bush.” It is better to be content and make use of what we do already have than to wander in the ways of wanting more (covetous desire).

Verses 10-12: **Whom does Solomon mean in verse 10? (“one who is stronger”)** _____

While the pastor may have his own way to introduce the sermon, the congregation may want to respond with the words of verse 11 (“keep it short and simple”). Many words in search of a thought are not an example of wisdom but may actually reveal the opposite. God is in control long before we come on the scene. No amount of words with God will change that. Think of Job and his friends.

What words describe Solomon’s attitude towards life in verse 12? _____

What is the answer to Solomon’s questions in verse 12? _____

Acts 17:27-28 (Paul on Mars Hill in Athens) “God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being.”

Closing Prayer: O God of all comfort, by Your Word and Holy Spirit grant us a firm, glad and grateful faith, that by it we may overcome every trial and at length hear the Word of Your dear Son: “Take heart, I have overcome the world.” Amen.

Chapter Seven: This is the longest chapter in Ecclesiastes. In form it is very much like Solomon’s two-line sayings in the book of Proverbs. In a world where people say that everything is good for someone at sometime, the author here says that there are some things which are better than other things.

Verses 1-3: A good name (reputation) is secured only when one completes life satisfactorily. That is why the day of death is better than the day of birth. Memento mori- “remember to die.” The fool thinks that he can escape the death that comes upon all people. Sorrow and sadness is better as a reminder of our mortality.

Verses 4-6: There is a contrast between the wise and the fool in how they view life. The wise are more serious and somber (“house of mourning, rebuke”) while fools are all about pleasure, parties and laughter. But the laughter of fools is as short-lived as thorns burning in a campfire.

Verses 7-9: Greed turns the wise into fools. Just think how many otherwise sensible people have gotten into politics, business, sports, etc. and had their heads turned by large amounts of money so that they did wrong things against their better judgment. We need more patience and less anger. “Count to _____ before you react to something that makes you mad.”

James 1:19-20 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

Verses 10-12: Were the “good old days” really all that good? (in some ways yes, and in some other ways no). It is wisdom to accept what God gives us. “Those who see the sun” is a way of referring to the living. Wisdom and wealth are best when they are used together but one is better off when wise than when wealthy.

Verses 13-14: Life does not always make sense to us at the time. We are short-sighted. God, however, sees the whole of our lives from beginning to end. Days that are good and days that are bad are both times given to us by God. Either way, what today is does not tell us what tomorrow will bring (“past performance does not guarantee future results”).

Job 2:10 He replied, “You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” In all of this, Job did not sin in what he said.

Verses 15-18: Righteousness does not insure a long life and wickedness does not necessarily mean a quick death. **Who is the “overrighteous”?** _____ **Who is the “overwise”?** _____

The “overwicked” are those who indulge their sinful natures in rebellion against God’s holy will for them. The best way in this life is the middle path, the avoidance of extremes, moderation in all things reasonable, the “golden mean” (Aristotle, 4th century BC Greek philosopher).

Verses 19-20: One head is better than ten if the one is wise and the ten are not. Ten rulers in a city was the Greek form of government. None of us are perfect, thus we have no business telling God how to do His job.

Verses 21-22: Everyone is a critic. We cannot let others comments build us up too much or drag us down. Hearing others say negative things about us hurts. We must realize that we say negative things about others.

Verses 23-25: Wisdom is a gift of God that He has to give (Romans 11:33-36). Solomon pairs “wisdom” with the “scheme of things.” **What might this mean?** _____

What words does Solomon pair off with “wickedness” _____ and “folly” _____?

Verse 26: Is Solomon revealing his own life experience here? With 700 wives and 300 mistresses, he would have had plenty of experience with women, some of whom would have been deceitful.

What words describe why this woman is “more bitter than death”? _____

Proverbs also warns about the “adulteress” whose ways lead to the grave (2:16-19; 5:3-6; 7:24-27).

Verses 27-29: Solomon paints a very bleak picture of humanity (men and women) in sinful rebellion against our Creator who first made us “upright” but now we have gone off on our own in search of “many schemes.”

What comes to mind when you hear the word “schemes”? _____ (see Genesis 6:5)

Solomon criticizes women for not having wisdom, yet he chased after and collected quite a few of them!

Closing Prayer: Thank You, O God, that despite our inclination to folly and wickedness, You chose to reveal Your good and gracious will for us. The source of all wisdom is Your Son Jesus Christ. By sending Him to us, You showed us Your great love and forgiveness, giving us Your hope for now and eternity. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Chapter Eight:

Verse 1: Does one get wiser with age? _____ Does one get mean or mellow with age? _____

Verses 2-4: Our loyalty to God is the best foundation for our loyalty to the government who is God’s agent for good (Romans 13:1-7). It is said, “You have to hand it to the IRS; because if you don’t, they will come and take it from you,” and “You can’t fight _____.” The song goes, “I fight authority and authority always _____.” It is frustrating trying to deal with people who have absolute authority, or at least they think that they do. (British Lord Acton: “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”)

(examples? _____)

We may easily criticize Christians living under Hitler and Stalin for not doing more to hinder them, but we should feel sympathy for the helpless situation and realize that we have the benefit of hindsight and probably would not have done any better in resisting those dictators. We may have to put up with a dictatorial ruler until the proper time that he/she brings him/herself down. Why not “hurry to leave the king’s presence”? _____

I Timothy 2:1-2 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

Verses 5-8: **What are examples of when we will “come to no harm” and “will know the proper time and procedure” by obeying the king’s (government’s) command?** _____

What might cause the “misery” that “weighs heavily upon him”? _____

Horoscopes and fortune-tellers cannot tell us our future. Our life belongs to God so we should not shorten its length and we cannot increase its length. As one is “stuck” in war so also are the wicked “stuck” in the life they are living. *Romans 13:3b* Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you.

Verses 9-10: **How might we be hurt by “lording it over others”?** _____

NIV puts these two verses together in a paragraph. The ESV separates them into two different sections. The Hebrew text of verse 10 is obscure. That the wicked were buried indicates a basic honor. They received praise in the very city where they “lorded it over” others. This is something more that Solomon considers meaningless.

Verses 11-13: “Justice delayed is justice denied.” When you hear of an execution taking place now for a murder committed in the past, how long ago did that crime usually happen? _____ Why not commit a crime if the punishment won’t happen for decades. What do we think should happen to a “wicked man who commits a hundred crimes?” _____ “God-fearing men who are reverent before God”- This is faith language.

When will it “not go well with” the “wicked who do not fear God”? _____

Shadows lengthen as the sun goes down, but then what causes them to disappear? _____

Verses 14-15: The only person who lived a completely righteous life got what the most wicked deserved, Jesus and His death on the cross. **What do you think Solomon’s idea of “righteous men” is?** _____

We have heard verse 15 before. Solomon’s answer for enjoying life seems pretty simple: “_____, _____ and be _____.” This joy will spill over into a person’s _____. Who gives us our life? _____

Verses 16-17: **What results from a person’s labor in verse 16?** _____ **Why might this be?** _____

Even though politicians in their campaigns say they have all the answers, talking head commentators on television think they know the right solutions, and ivory tower university professors teach impressionable youth how things ought to be, the truly wise realize how much they do not know (e.g. Socrates). Only God can reveal to us what goes on “under the sun.”

Closing Prayer: Dear God, grant us patience as we see the temporary successes of the ungodly, while we struggle with difficulties and hardships. Also remind us of the final outcome You have prepared for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Chapter Nine:

“Contentment does not come with ownership, but with the realization that God owns all. Contentment is not centered in the accumulation of things or in outward circumstances. If it were, we could gain greater contentment by moving up the street or down the road a little way to a bigger house, or take another job. If we ‘have to have it,’ we are not content. If wanting more is what makes us content, we will never be content...One Christian said that the acquisition of a prized possession gave him two happy days—the day he bought it and the day he sold it.” (Waldo J. Werning, *Supply-Side Stewardship*, CPH, St. Louis, 1986, page 78)

Verses 1-12 of this chapter are a skeptic’s view of this life from a purely physical and earthly standpoint. It is as if we could take our Christian faith out of us and set it aside from us for awhile in order to look at life in this world from the position of an unbeliever who has no hope for anything beyond what we now see.

Verses 1-2: **Righteous and holy through Christ, we are in God's hands. Does this change our physical destiny that all humans share?** _____ Notice the six pairs of contrasts in verse 2 (secular and sacred)

To live as we should in God's sight, we must constantly be aware of the brevity and mortality of human life.

Psalm 49:10 For all can see that wise men die; the foolish and the senseless alike perish and leave their wealth to others.

Verses 3-6: **What is that (unnamed) destiny that "overtakes all"?** _____ ("fair" or not)

What does Solomon say is in man's hearts? _____ and _____

Why is the living one better off than the dead? _____

Dogs were the most despised animals (scavengers) in the ancient Eastern world while the lion was regarded as the noblest of all creatures, "the king of the beasts." Yet a live dog is better than a dead lion.

What does Solomon say is the problem with the dead? They know _____; they have no _____; the memory of them is _____; their love, hate and jealousy have _____; never again will they have a part in what happens _____.

Verses 7-10: **How can this life be special when the destiny of death awaits us all?** _____

What "to do" list does Solomon give us for living life? "eat your food with _____"; drink your wine with a _____; be clothed in _____; anoint your head with _____; and enjoy life with your _____." But then, how does he describe life? _____

Proverbs 5:18 May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.

Who has gives us this life? _____ How does Solomon describe labor under the sun? _____

What is Solomon's reason for working "with all your might"? _____

Pleasures in life must be balanced by the need for and the reality of regular, necessary work. ("live a little")

John 9:4 "As long as it is day, we must do the works of Him who sent Me. Night is coming when no one can work."

Verses 11-12: Solomon points out the truth that the one most deserving of a reward does not always get it. You may be the most qualified for a promotion at work, but you are up against the boss' son. You might even get fired if that promoted son thinks you are too much of a threat to his new position. On the other hand, misfortunes often beset those who are most deserving of recognition for their successes.

What does Solomon mean by "his hour will come"? _____ or "evil times" (suddenness)

Verses 13-18: **Which is the least likely to guide political decisions in a nation, wisdom, wealth or power?**

An example of verse 15 is in 2 Samuel 20:14-22 where an unnamed woman negotiates with General Joab to give up to him a man named Sheba who had rebelled against David in order to spare her town.

Wisdom is necessary for the governing of people, but wealth and power are the things this world wants and respects. "One bad apple spoils the whole _____." (Adam and Eve)

Closing Prayer: We thank You, dear God, that we do not see death as the end of our lives. Your promises, fulfilled for us in Christ, give us the sure and certain hope of being with You forever. We also thank You, Lord, that we can look at the simple blessings in life as a source of true joy. We receive all such things as signs of Your love for us and Your mercy towards us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Chapter Ten:

It does make a difference how a person reacts to the circumstances which confront him or her. In this chapter, with sayings similar to the Book of Proverbs, the author points out the positive value in being wise.

Verses 1-3: Verse one picks up from the last verse of chapter nine. It does not take much folly to overwhelm wisdom and honor. In our public, political discourse the words “right” and “left” indicate opposite spectra of an issue or philosophy. Solomon here more likely is using the ancient world’s distinction between those who are right-handed (associated with skill, honesty and approval) as “wise” and those who are left-handed (associated with awkwardness, deception and disapproval) as a “fool”. This one does not keep his folly to himself but shows it to others when he is out in public (“along the road”).

Verse 4: **Who are the “rulers” in your life?** _____

How are we to react to their “anger”? “do not _____ your _____” (military image)

What should be our attitude to the errors of our rulers? _____ (count to ten; see 8:2-4)

Proverbs 15:1, 18 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger...A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.

Proverbs 16:14 A king’s wrath is a messenger of death, but a wise man will appease it.

Verses 5-7: When a new president is elected, he must pick many people for positions in the new administration. We hope that these people are the best ones for the job. However, what types of people often are chosen?

Verses 8-9: **What kinds of dangers do you face in your life?** _____

Solomon gives us four examples of the dangers faced by those who work with their hands (pit, snake, stones, logs). Stone walls were likely hiding places for snakes.

Verses 10-11: **How can we avoid having those dangers threaten us?** My high school football coach always said, “Proper preparation prevents poor performance.” (He added another “p” word that I won’t repeat here.)

Verses 12-15: **What usually happens when you speak without thinking about what you are saying?**

How can a person show folly by words? _____

A fool’s talk and work are so useless that he does not even know the most basic thing, like how to get to town.

Proverbs 10:14 Wise men store up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool invites ruin.

Proverbs 14:3 A fool’s talk brings a rod to his back, but the lips of the wise protect them.

Proverbs 18:7 A fool’s mouth is his undoing, and his lips are a snare to his soul.

Verses 16-17: **How does a country suffer when its leaders are untrained and negligent?** _____

Solomon is experienced in dealing with royalty who have been bred and raised to occupy their regal position.

Why is feasting (partying) in the morning a bad practice? _____ (“5 o’clock somewhere”)

Verses 18-20: **Why does an owner’s laziness affect his house adversely?** _____

Is verse 19 a description of the indulgent, selfish life or is it encouragement for us to enjoy what sustains life?

What does it mean for the “walls to have ears”? _____

In our electronic and digital age, there is little to no privacy left. Everything we say and do may be recorded, even in our own homes (Alexa? Siri?). We are to be careful what we say because our words can end up in the wrong ears.

Closing Prayer: Lord, as we ask for Your wisdom to carry us through life, teach us also to be patient with foolish people. Keep us mindful of the outcome You have prepared for us in Your Son’s death and resurrection.

Chapter Eleven:

Verse 1: “Nothing ventured, nothing gained” **What does this mean to us?** _____

This verse refers to business ventures carried out by overseas trade. It was risky at that time to send cargo by ship (bad weather, piracy, poor navigation; think of issues with oil spills today). But in order to make money then business men had to ship their products by sea.

Verse 2: “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket” **What does this mean to us?** _____

Modern day examples include having diversity in financial investments and spreading out charitable giving. We should share our generosity with others. This will realize a greater profit in our own personal satisfaction and in that it will be repaid to us by others in our own time of need.

Verses 3-4: What will happen if you wait for the weather to be perfect for farming or gardening? _____

One drawback I see in big time farming is that they leave themselves no wiggle room for unusual weather. The outcome of our ventures may depend on circumstances beyond our control. We can always find a reason (read “excuse”) for putting something off until a “better” time. But we are “to strike while the _____ is _____.”

Verses 5-6: Do you understand the workings of a car? _____ If not, do you still drive one? _____

Do you understand the complexities of computers and the internet? _____ If not, do you still use it? _____

Can you explain medically the human reproductive system? _____ If not, did this keep you from having children? _____ Whatever we do will succeed in some way. The only failure is in doing nothing at all. Verse 6 ends on an uncharacteristically positive note from an author who has been mostly negative.

Verses 7-8: Solomon uses a simple and common image in the Bible, the difference between light and dark (see John 1, Jesus in John 8:12 “I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” and the First Letter of John). Light is a theme for this season of Epiphany. We like the light of the sun. It provides health (vitamin D) warmth, vision, growth, safety and an overall more positive outlook on life (not SAD).

Do you enjoy life? _____ **Why?** _____ **How?** _____

Indulging in the physical pleasures of our sinful nature is not enjoying life, but desperately trying to find meaning in this life and to forget the ultimate end of this life. Our sensual sins seldom satisfy and never save us.

While we are to enjoy this life, what does Solomon tells us to remember? “the _____ of _____”

He describes those days with two adjectives that begin with the letter “m”: _____ & _____

Verses 9-10: “Youth is wasted on the young.” **What does this mean to us?** _____

“If I had known that I would live this long, I would have taken better care of myself.” **Explain.**

Some suggest that our “retirement” years be between age 22 & 35 and then we should work for 40 years. Why?

How does Solomon temper his advice to “free-wheeling” youth? “_____ will bring you to _____.”

The first two parts of v. 10 don’t seem to match up with the third where youth and vigor are “_____”

What is your advice to young people about life? _____

Closing Prayer: Lord, Your promises abide for us. Teach us to face life cheerfully and fearlessly as we place all things into Your hands. Amen.

Chapter Twelve: (The chapter division obscures the connection between the end of 11 and the beginning of 12.)

Verse 1: The word “remember” in the Bible is a grace word when God is the subject and a faith word when humans are the ones remembering. **What are we to remember in our “youth” and why?** _____

What is the “solution” for youth? _____ How does Solomon describe those “days”? _____
What will we say about life when those days of trouble add up to years? “I find no _____ in them.”
It may be more difficult to have joy in life as one grows older (aches, pains and losses) and nearer to death.

Verses 2-7: “The Preacher gives us powerful and vivid image of old age and approaching death to rouse us from complacency or resignation due to troubles. We are to address the matter early in life, while we are able, so that failure does not sneak up on us.” (Lutheran Study Bible, page 1063) “Skillful poet that he is, the Teacher tells the sad story of bodily deterioration and the dulling of the senses by using an array of graphic figures of speech describing a household which has fallen on evil days.” (Concordia Self-Study Commentary, page 433)

What about aging do each of these allegorical, picture phrases describe?

Verse 2: “before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark” _____
“and the clouds return after the rain” _____

Verse 3: “the keepers of the house tremble” _____
“the strong men stoop” _____
“the grinders cease because they are few” _____
“those looking through the windows grow dim” _____

Verse 4: “the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades” _____
“men rise up at the sound of birds” _____
“all their songs grow faint” _____

Verse 5: “when men are afraid of heights” _____
“and of dangers in the streets” _____
“when the almond tree blossoms” _____
“the grasshopper drags himself along” _____
“and desire is no longer stirred” _____

After all of this aging, what happens in the second half of verse 5? _____ and _____

Amos 5:16 The Lord God Almighty says: “There will be wailing in all the streets and cries of anguish in every public square. The farmers will be summoned to weep and the mourners to wail.”

Verses 6-8: Two pairs of irreparable partners in value (silver cord/golden bowl) and labor (pitcher at the spring/wheel at the well) are an image of this life that passes away, but it better not have ended without first remembering “Him.” All life belongs to God. It comes from Him and is terminated when He determines.

What is left to go where? “_____ returns to the _____ and the _____ returns to _____”

Verse 7 has given us the hope of life after death, but verse 8 returns to the negative theme of this writing, *Genesis 3:19* “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you shall return.”

Psalms 90:3a You turn men back to dust, saying, “Return to dust, O sons of men.”

Psalms 103:14 For He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust.

Psalms 104:29 When You hide Your face, they are terrified; when You take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.

Verses 9-10: What is easier to understand, the language of a lawyer, a doctor or a grade-school teacher? God speaks His words to us in language that we can understand. This author, the “Teacher” (3rd person), inspired by the Holy Spirit, used words of everyday speech and common proverbs to reveal divine truths.

Verses 11-12: **What is a goad?** _____ (the message of the two men in white in Acts 1:11)
Acts 26:14b (Jesus) “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”
How are God’s words like nails for our lives? _____

“One Shepherd”- *Psalm 23:1* The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want.

Psalm 28:9 Save Your people and bless Your inheritance; be their shepherd and carry them forever.

Psalm 80:1 Hear us, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock;

Isaiah 40:11 He tends His flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in His arms

Ezekiel 34:12ff. (The Sovereign Lord says) “As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after My sheep...”

Micah 7:14 Shepherd Your people with Your staff, the flock of Your inheritance.

John 10:11 (Jesus said) “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

“anything in addition to them”- *Revelation 22:18* “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.”

“Much study wears the body”- Can someone be “too smart” for God? _____ The ivory tower university intelligentsia like to think that they are too enlightened, too well-educated and too intelligent to believe and trust in a Supreme Being, that such silly faith is only for the commoners, the great unwashed, the crass mass of the lower class who cling to a belief in God just to get them through their dull and hopeless life. These are the professors whose views and teaching often cost our young people their Christian faith when they leave home and family, community and congregation, and go off to get a college or university education and become immersed in secular humanistic education.

“my son”- Either a personal note from Solomon to his own son (Rehoboam?) or this reflects the commonly close relationship similar to father and son that can develop between a teacher and a student.

Verses 13-14: The search for something which could fill our longing for happiness and meaning in life has been completed. Everything “under the sun” has been found lacking. Solomon sums up this book with faith language. Our enjoyment of life as God’s gift to us, however, does not excuse us from obedience to His will and does not exempt us from His ultimate judgment. We trust in Jesus Christ (living under the Son) as our Savior from sin, our Mediator with the Father and our Defender from punishment.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Concluding the Matter (from *Lutheran Church Charities*)

Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. Ecclesiastes 12:13

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon talks about all the things in life he tried and found to be disappointing: the intellectual pursuit of knowledge, the physical pursuit of pleasure, and the material pursuit of wealth. In the last chapter of Ecclesiastes he bottom-lines it: ‘*Everything is meaningless*’ (v. 8). In other words: ‘Been there, done that – and it’s just the “same ol’, same ol’”.’ Now, penning his last divinely-inspired thoughts, he wraps up his life’s message with these words: ‘*Here is the conclusion of the matter.*’ This is big stuff! Solomon is about to give us his bottom-line evaluation of a life well-lived. What is it? ‘*Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment*’ (vv. 13-14). The words ‘fear God’ simply mean to reverence, love, and serve Him, and live your life according to the precepts laid down in His Word. Author John Mason writes: ‘*Is more money,*

*a higher position, or more influence your goal? These are not goals; they are the by-product of true goals... Seek not success, but truth, and you will find both. Work to become, not acquire. Measure wealth by the things you have which you would not exchange for money.' When you wake each morning, pray this simple prayer **Prayer:** 'Lord, above all else help me to spend this day loving You and carrying out Your will. In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen.'*