

Daily Bible Study

“Mind How You Worship, Christian”

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

June 2 – June 8, 2013

MONDAY –As we continue our study we turn to our text, **Ecclesiastes 5:1-7** and find some very practical and important counsel regarding the worship of God. I can remember when my children were younger hearing “Thomas the tank Engine” say, “Mind how you go Percy” to one of his fellow locomotives. In this text, among other things, we are taught to “Mind how we come” and “Mind how we go” concerning worship. The Preacher here counsels us on how to approach God. It is better, when coming to worship, to remember the majestic greatness of God rather than merely rush in with your little “contribution”, your skewed view of God and yourself, and show up as though you are the center of attention. Instead, we will learn we are to come humbly, prepared, and wait quietly as we listen to God speak to us from Sacred Scripture and minister to us through the Sacraments. People worship selfishly; they want music that suits them, sermons that suit them, and liturgy that suits them; they miss the point. Solomon has already said that the only satisfaction in life comes from accepting God’s gifts and plan for you regardless of how you “feel” about it and even when you can’t understand it. The Christian life is to be marked by submission and acceptance, not by making demands on God. Indeed, the true Christian must fear God and continually draw near to Him to listen, learn, and submit to His will. **Ecclesiastes 5:1-7**: “*Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few. For a dream comes through much activity, And a fool’s voice is known by his many words. When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed—Better not to vow than to vow and not pay. Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands? For in the multitude of dreams and many words there is also vanity. But fear God.*”

Suggestion for Prayer: God, teach me this week from Sacred Scripture. Help me understand how to approach You in worship and throughout every day You bless me with. Save me from my selfishness and give me a humble, submissive heart to Your will.

TUESDAY – **Ecclesiastes 5:1**: “*Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil.*” The first thing we will see is that our approach to God requires “**Preparation**”. How many of us take time to prepare for Lord’s Day worship? Sadly, and to the loss of many a Christian worshiper,

Sunday morning can be the most hectic, crazy, hurried time of the week. So many practical things are involved; our families need to get ready for church, preparations must be made for the service and those attending, some people may need rides and need to be picked up, and so on. The minister is not exempt as we even see in Scripture this is his time to work even though the Lord’s Day is a day of rest (**Matthew 12:5** “*Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?*”). Finally, we breathe a big sigh and “start” worship. Solomon gives a couple principles in this verse that prepare us inwardly for worship, however hectic the outward preparations. First we see that we are to recognize the One we worship and His holiness; *Walk prudently when you go to the house of God...* We see this illustrated in God’s words to Moses from **Exodus 3:5**, “*Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.*” In many parts of the world, the minister is required to remove his shoes before he enters the pulpit. This is also why we see the pulpit of the preached Word of God set apart to draw our attention to the high and holy nature of God and His Word. Throughout Scripture we find that everything involved in worship was to “be holy”; the day (**Exodus 16:23; 20:8, 11**), the place (**Exodus 26:33–34**), the offering (**Leviticus 6:25–27**), the priests (**Leviticus 21:7**) and the worshippers (**2 Chronicles 20:21**). How far we have fallen. Jesus kept this theme up in the New Testament when He cleansed the Temple, the “House of Prayer” (**Matthew 21:12–17**). We also see the warning concerning holiness when we approach the Table to eat The Lord’s Supper. As God’s people, we are warned of participating in public worship while holding on to our unconfessed sin. This is to tempt God and ask for His rebuke and judgment (**Isaiah 1:10–20**). To be Holy before God involves reverence toward Him recognizing His purity, being *set apart for God* both at salvation and through confession of sin and continual repentance. We are then called to *draw near to hear...* which recognizes the authority of God and His Word over us. Thomas Watson said, “Many come to the Word only to feast their ears; they like the melody of the voice, the mellifluous sweetness of the expression, the newness of the notion (Acts 17:21). This is to love the garnishing of the dish more than the food; this is to desire to be pleased rather than edified. Like a woman that paints her face, but neglects her health.” We need to diligently and seriously listen to God as He speaks through his Word. Many people worship God with *the sacrifice of fools* and later at lunch discuss the way the message was delivered and pass their judgment on the service, the hymns, prayers and preaching. The criticism should have been to their dull and selfish hearts at breakfast before coming to worship. Then they would have been *walking prudently and drawing near to hear.*

Suggestion for Prayer: Holy God, forgive me for coming to worship You with such a poor view of You, Your purity and Majesty and of my unworthiness. Help me to listen to Your Word.

WEDNESDAY – **Ecclesiastes 5:2-3**: “*Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few. For a dream comes through much activity, And a fool’s voice is known by his*

many words.” We spoke yesterday of being prepared to worship and now we will begin to discuss some of the actual “Presentations” of our worship. We see right off Solomon goes for a big weakness with all of us; our tongues and interestingly we also are reminded of the connection to our hearts. *Do not be rash with your mouth... let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.* We are now instructed of the use of thoughtless words, and empty babbling in worship and prayer, another important element of divine worship. Pagan religions were and are noted for their lengthy incantations and mantras. Jesus warned of such things when He spoke in **Matthew 6:7-8**, “*But when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask him*”. It is not just the number of words but the substance; we are warned of *rashness* and *haste* in speaking to God; thoughtless utterance of religious sentiment without thought or purpose. Whether we worship in a liturgical formula or a “free, Spirit led” form of worship this danger is here and real. We need to think about and mean the words we say to God in worship. Solomon reminds us *God is in heaven, and you on earth*; there is distance between people and God. If we truly understood this difference and distance between a Holy God and defiled, self-centered sinners, we would be rendered speechless. Worship is a gracious action of God where He brings the worshipper to Himself through the merits of Jesus Christ the Great High Priest (**Hebrews 7:20–8:6**). The understanding of having a High Priest like this should elicit a tremendous response; it did so with John the Apostle who was “*in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day*”. He had a vision of Christ and he described his reaction with, “*I fell at his feet as dead*” (**Revelation 1:17**). The final part of these verses is telling us cares and anxieties in business or other life matters often give disturbed sleep and produce all kinds of sick fantasy’s and imaginations. Solomon says as surely as excess of business produces weird dreams, so excess of words, especially in addressing God, produces the voice of a fool and foolish speech.

Suggestion for Prayer: God, help me think about what I say in prayer & worship. May I truly mean the things I say. Save me from foolishness and the business that leads me from You.

THURSDAY – Ecclesiastes 5:4-5: “*When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed—Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.*” One of the Presentations of our worship involves promises or what Solomon here calls vows. Solomon also spoke to this point in **Proverbs 20:25**, “*It is a snare for a man to devote rashly something as holy, and afterward to reconsider his vows*”. Vows or promises were an integral part of the worship of God’s people throughout history. In the Old Testament worshippers committed themselves to some kind of action if God would grant their requests (**Genesis 28:20–22, 1 Samuel 1:11, Psalm 132:2–5**). The entire covenant relationship, and most importantly, God’s promises to us are brought before us time and time again as we meet with God in worship. I must be quick to remind us that God has promised to save us as His people and that Salvation comes from Him, is His desire, and He has the power to deliver and He

always fulfills His promises (**Ezekiel 36: 22-32**). We have seen these things for the last months on Wednesday evenings as we are studying God’s promises. For our part, we not to be casual in the promises we might make to Him. How sincere are we when we sing, “O Jesus, I have promised to serve thee to the end?” Beware, *Better not to vow than to vow and not pay*. Bottom line, God does not tell us here we must be always “making vows” to God but it does say *When you make a vow to God* we must keep them. An incredible and sad illustration of this is found with the story of Jephthah and his daughter (**Judges 11:29–40**). How many idle promises do we make to God “in the heat of the moment” or in the hype of a “spiritual atmosphere” when we are “feeling” something? How many of those vows have we fulfilled? Jesus also taught through the parable of the two sons that it was better to say nothing and then do the will of God than to make an idle promise that would remain unfulfilled (**Matthew 21:28–31**).

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, save me from making vows to You in emotional or other moments & then not fulfill them. You always deliver on Your promises & I thank & Praise You!

FRIDAY – Ecclesiastes 5:6-7: “*Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands? For in the multitude of dreams and many words there is also vanity. But fear God.*” Solomon now reminds and repeats the warning of **verse 2**. Now he adds an interesting point, *the messenger of God*. The identity of *the messenger* is not revealed in the passage although the Hebrew word can also be translated as “angel”. Regardless of whether it was an angel in view or the priest or minister in the Temple who collected the vows of God’s people for presentation to the priest the point is that you are not to just say, “I’m sorry, it was a mistake”, because you have vowed a vow to God not men. The New Testament tells us of the tragic story of Ananias and Sapphira who during a time when many of the early Christians were selling property and giving the proceeds to God’s work sold a possession of theirs but only gave part of the proceeds to the apostles and were deceiving them into believing they gave all, something other than the truth. Although the people and Apostles were deceived God could not be deceived and we know the consequences were deadly (**Acts 5:1–11**). Stories like this show us the incredible responsibility of being slow and thoughtful in making vows and promises to God that we cannot keep as well as being honest in them and not withholding from God what is rightfully His. Solomon summarizes with *For in the multitude of dreams and many words there is also vanity. But fear God*. People make empty vows because they live in a religious “dream world”. Christians and people in general think *words* are the same as *deeds*. Their worship is not serious, so their words are not dependable. They enjoy the “good feelings” that come when they make promises to God, but do themselves more harm than good because they like to “dream” about fulfilling their vows but never get around to doing it. This “make-believe” religion neither glorifies God nor does it build Christian character and growth.

Suggestion for Prayer: God, help me “go into Your house with burnt offerings; pay You my vows, which my lips have uttered and my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble” (Psalm 66).