We Need One Another
“It is not good that man should be alone”
Ecclesiastes 4

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Scripture Reader and Reading: Jacob Noveske – Ecclesiastes 3.18–22
Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Phil Joseph – No Suggestions

Prelude:

I. After God created Adam, God said,

18 “It is not good that man should be alone…”
– Gen 2.18

A. Therefore, God created this wonderful thing we call marriage.
B. Because of that we are all here today.

II. It is not good for Christians to be alone.

A. Therefore, God created this wonderful thing we call the church.
B. Every one of us has benefited from Christians who have gone before us.

III. Some think they do not need others.

A. They see no need for the church especially,
B. believing they can worship God alone.

IV. However, the Spirit through Solomon showed us that we need one another.

A. Let me show you four areas of life that show we need one another, and
B. let us learn to work with one another in a spirit of cooperation.

Persuasion:

I. Ecclesiastes 4.1–3 Oppression

1 Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun:

And look! The tears of the oppressed,
But they have no comforter—
On the side of their oppressors there is power,
But they have no comforter.
2 Therefore I praised the dead who were already dead,
More than the living who are still alive.
3 Yet, better than both is he who has never existed,
Who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

– Ecclesiastes 4.1–3

A. Solomon makes us look at the tears of the oppressed.
   1. What do we see?
   2. They have no comforter.

B. He makes us look at the oppressors.
   1. What do we see?
   2. They have power.
      a) They have power to oppress,
      b) which means they also have power to comfort, but
         (1) they do not give it.
         (2) The tears of the oppressed do not touch the powerful oppressors.

C. This great injustice made Solomon conclude
   1. that the dead are praiseworthy.
   2. They do not anguish over the oppressed and their lack of comforters.
      a) Sometimes death can be better than living.
      b) The living witness the horrors of injustice.
         (1) The dead have left those things behind.
         (2) Yet, still the dead saw those things while alive.

D. Therefore, Solomon said the one who never lived has it even better.
   1. That person never saw the evil that we see.
   2. Job said many of the same things.
      a) The devil oppressed Job horribly,
b) making him wish
   (1) that he had never been born, or
   (2) that he had died at birth, or
   (3) that he had died in the midst of his misery.

E. However, let every Christian cherish the truth of Second Corinthians 1.

   3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

   – 2 Corinthians 1.3–4

II. Ecclesiastes 4.4–6 Toil

   4 Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.

   5 The fool folds his hands
   And consumes his own flesh.
   6 Better a handful with quietness
   Than both hands full, together with toil and grasping for the wind.

   – Ecclesiastes 4.4–6

A. For all the work you do and every skill you acquire,

   1. someone will envy you.
   2. Someone will oppress you.
   3. Someone will criticize you,
      a) not because they have a legitimate complaint, but
      b) they envy what you can do.
         (1) Therefore, they seek to tear you down
         (2) to make themselves look better.
(a) You can be honest and not hurt anyone,
(b) nevertheless, someone will envy you.

B. That is vanity and grasping for the wind.

1. You are not the problem.

2. Moreover, your critic does not truly elevate himself, but
   a) lowers himself in the eyes of those who listen to him.
   b) He does not improve
      (1) his work,
      (2) his skills, and
      (3) his projects
         (a) by envying you.
         (b) Therefore, do not let it get you down.

C. The critic does not get out and improve what he can do.

1. No, he sits back, believing that if he was in your position

2. he could do a much better job.
   a) He folds his hands and accomplishes nothing.
      (1) His bitter envy consumes his own body.
      (2) He does not live a happy and contented life.
   b) Wishing that he was you or someone better than you
      (1) only leads to his own poverty of soul.
      (2) If you fight such a person you are attempting to grasp the wind.

D. Learn that it is better

1. to have a handful with quietness

2. than two hands full with endless toil and activity.
   a) The latter only leads to grasping for the wind.
   b) Do not knock yourself out trying to keep others from envying you.
(1) Just do your job and be happy.

(2) Let the critic’s bitterness tear him up.

III. Ecclesiastes 4.7–12 Companionship

7 Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun:

8 There is one alone, without companion:
   He has neither son nor brother.
   Yet there is no end to all his labors,
   Nor is his eye satisfied with riches.
   But he never asks,
   “For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good?”
   This also is vanity and a grave misfortune.

9 Two are better than one,
   Because they have a good reward for their labor.

10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.
   But woe to him who is alone when he falls,
   For he has no one to help him up.

11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm;
   But how can one be warm alone?

12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him.
   And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

– Ecclesiastes 4.7–12

A. Solomon saw still another vanity under the sun.
   1. He had already seen
      a) the oppressed without a comforter,
      b) the skillful with an enemy, and now
      c) the loner with no friend.

B. A person
   1. without friend,
   2. without family he is building, and
   3. without a family from which he came.
      a) For whom does he live?
b) For whom does he do things?

C. He works and works, but
   1. he never has enough, because
   2. what he does cannot replace human relationships.
      a) Many of these people do not even consider why they work so hard,
      b) never enjoying the good things of life.

D. Solomon said such a life is vanity and a grave misfortune.

E. Whereas, there are four benefits to human relationships.
   1. Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labor.
      a) They accomplish so much more.
      b) Two working together can do more than two working alone.
   2. If one falls, his friend will lift him up.
      a) If someone falls alone,
      b) he has no one to help him.
         (1) There is a time for solitude, but
         (2) not a whole life of solitude.
            (a) Some Christians do not want fellowship with other Christians.
            (b) How can they fulfill passages that speak of relationships?
   3. One keeps the other warm.
      a) How can you keep warm alone?

      “The image is taken from man and wife, but applies universally to the warm sympathy derived from social ties.”
      
      – Fausset, p. 524

   4. With human relationships we are stronger.
      a) Others can overpower the loner.
b) Like a threefold cord, those with friends cannot be quickly broken.

IV. Ecclesiastes 4.13–16 Popularity

13 Better a poor and wise youth
   Than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more.
14 For he comes out of prison to be king,
   Although he was born poor in his kingdom.
15 I saw all the living who walk under the sun;
   They were with the second youth who stands in his place.
16 There was no end of all the people over whom he was made king;
   Yet those who come afterward will not rejoice in him.
   Surely this also is vanity and grasping for the wind.

– Ecclesiastes 4.13–16

A. What good is an old and foolish king who will not listen to admonishment?
   1. A youth in that kingdom who is poor
   2. but wise is better than the king.

B. The king started out young, poor, and foolish.
   1. However, his exaltation, his success, his popularity went to his head.
   2. He saw no more need to listen to instruction and correction.
      a) He became king with new and exciting promises of change.
      b) Then, he eventually became unpopular.

C. Another youth came along and the citizens sided with him.
   1. They liked his promises and his proposals for change.
   2. The people wanted to abandon the old king and go with the new guy.
      a) Guess what happened.
      b) After the second youth became king,
         (1) the generations that followed did not like him
         (2) just as the previous generation did not like the first king.
            (a) Does that sound familiar?
(b) People like one president.
   i) Later they do not like him anymore.
   ii) They want something new.
       (1) They get something new and
       (2) they do not like that guy either!

D. Israel became dissatisfied with the sons of Samuel and
   1. seeing Samuel grow old, they wanted a king.
   2. God gave them Saul.
      a) Israel rejoiced, but then
      b) they did not like him.
         (1) God gave them David.
         (2) Israel rejoiced, but later they sided with Absalom.
            a) God gave them Solomon.
            b) Israel rejoiced, but later most followed Jeroboam.
               i) God gave them Rehoboam.
               ii) Israel rejoiced, but then they went to Jeroboam.

3. How far back shall I go with America and her presidents?
4. How far back shall I go with elders, preachers, and others?

**Exhortation:**

I. **Listen, we need one another.**

   A. Political problems
      1. Solomon addressed those in **verses 13–16.**
      2. showing that we need one another.

   B. Personal problems
      1. According to **verses 7–12**
      2. show that we need one another.
C. Plodding problems
   1. We labor according to verses 4–6,
   2. showing that we need one another.

D. Persecuting problems
   1. Persecutors and critics torment us according to verses 1–3,
   2. showing that we need one another.

II. Let us not, therefore,
   A. tear one another down, but
   B. let us build one another up.

III. Sin and the devil tear us down.
   A. Let God salvage you
   B. through belief, repentance, baptism, and obedience in Jesus.