

EXPOSE THE NAKED TRUTH

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ October 4, 2015



⁸ If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. ⁹ The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields. ¹⁰ Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless. ¹¹ As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owners except to feast their eyes on them? ¹² The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep. ¹³ I have seen a grievous evil under the sun:

wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners, ¹⁴ or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when they have children there is nothing left for them to inherit. ¹⁵ Everyone comes naked from their mother's womb, and as everyone comes, so they depart. They take nothing from their toil that they can carry in their hands. ¹⁶ This too is a grievous evil: As everyone comes, so they depart, and what do they gain, since they toil for the wind? ¹⁷ All their days they eat in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger. ¹⁸ This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them—for this is their lot. ¹⁹ Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God. ²⁰ They seldom reflect on the days of their life, because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart.

(Ecclesiastes 5:8-20)

This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

The gathering was unlike anything that had ever been seen in Israel. To be fair, much about this king was unlike anything anyone had ever seen in the world. He ruled with strength and discipline, the borders of Israel expanded even beyond the reaches of his father. The economy was booming, everything was good in the land of Israel. But now this great king had gathered the “who’s who” of Israel and even dignitaries from the surrounding nations. He supplied a feast beyond measure, sparing no expense (as was his custom). And after the dining had commenced, he stood up to give an address. In the 40 minutes that followed, he shared from the wisdom of his experiences the meaning and meaninglessness of life.

Maybe you could guess who this king I’m talking about was. It was King Solomon of Israel, the son of King David. The same Solomon to whom God granted wisdom when he was just a little boy. And for most of his life Solomon displayed this wisdom in his reign. The scene just described may or may not have actually happened, but the words that he spoke definitely were recorded. They were recorded for us in the book of Ecclesiastes. The word Ecclesiastes is actually taken from

the Greek meaning “teacher.” And throughout the entire book, the teacher empties his knowledge, breaking down the meaning of life. Stripping it down from the complexities that cloth it, simplifying it down to its basic and core purpose. He EXPOSED THE NAKED TRUTH of life.

1. Earthly treasure cannot satisfy
2. Heavenly treasure always does
3. ...Even now

(1)

Nakedness is one of those things that we really don’t like to talk about. It started with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden as they tried to hide their nakedness from a holy God. Shame of nakedness even affects us today. It’s the reason why we cover ourselves with clothes - whether it’s at the mall or at the beach. But just like people don’t like to be exposed as physically naked, people don’t like to be exposed in other ways as well. So it’s with more than just clothes that we cover up our nakedness with layers upon layers.

People give the impression that all is right with the world. Yea, there may be shootings taking place, but overall we’re mostly good people. People put on a happy face, they put on makeup, they put on a good persona, all the while hiding what they’re ashamed of underneath. I’ll be honest with you, it can be difficult for me to discern what’s underneath others. It takes me a long time of knowing someone before I could get the faintest idea that something specific may be bothering them. But what is difficult for me to discern, was not so difficult for Solomon to discern. He EXPOSED THE NAKED TRUTH OF LIFE, the NAKED TRUTH that deep down, all people have problems, all people have issues, all people are hurting.

Some of the ways that Solomon describes this hurt may not seem like they’re all that hurtful. But over the course of 13 verses in Ecclesiastes 5, Solomon peels back layer after layer of what people cling to. He gets down to the root of the matter, because it is only after people realize the root of the problem, they can find the real solution. In this section of Ecclesiastes, Solomon focuses on earthly wealth, something we spoke about last week. Let’s take our discussion of earthly wealth a little further this week, and see what the wisest man in the world had to say about it.

He starts off with these words, **“whoever loves money never has enough, whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income.”** And how true this is. The more we have, the more we want. He then goes on to say, **“but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep.”** Haven’t we seen this too? People think they will be satisfied when they get all of their heart’s desires. But once they have those desires, what does their thinking automatically shift too? How to keep those possessions. They take out insurance, they hire guards, but all of this doesn’t bring them peace, it only brings them more worry.

And then the greatest tragedy of all, as Solomon describes it is this, **“Everyone comes naked from their mother’s womb, and as everyone comes, so they depart. They take nothing from their toil that they can carry in their hands.”** It was said that Alexander the Great, the

ruler of the Greeks specifically commanded upon his death that his hands be left unwrapped, so that when he was taken to his tomb people could see his hands empty. Despite all of his greatness and wealth in this life, in death he was on the same level as a lowly pauper. This is what Solomon realized as he came to the end of his life. All of this stuff he had accumulated he couldn't take with him after death. **"This too is a grievous evil"** he said.

And even though there may be those who choose not to think about these tragedies, that does not mean they don't exist. That does not mean that people act any differently than Solomon describes. The pursuit of happiness is something that is not only typical of Americans, but it is typical of all human beings. Unfortunately, in the pursuit of happiness, there are many who are not happy. They think the problem is they don't have enough wealth, they haven't done enough of what makes them happy. But that's not it at all.

Like I said earlier, it is difficult for me to discern the specific hurt in people. But while I find it difficult to discern in other people, I can see it clearly in myself, if I'm honest enough to peel back the layers that I surround myself with that cover up my nakedness. Underneath this robe of a pastor stands another sinful human being, with a heart blackened by sin. Underneath this robe of a husband, stands another sinful man whose eyes and mind can wander after temptations of the flesh. Underneath this robe of a fiscally conservative person, stands a greedy miser who often thinks about getting more and giving less. Underneath this robe of a Christian, stands a sinner who takes more pleasure in financial ruin of others than in satisfaction with my own possessions.

This is what you find in me when you EXPOSE THE NAKED TRUTH. It is the NAKED TRUTH that as a person who lives in this world, I often search for satisfaction in the things of this world. I do that, in spite of knowing what I do as a believer. THE NAKED TRUTH can be cruel, because THE NAKED TRUTH doesn't disappear when you become a believer. Because the NAKED TRUTH is that we were born in sin and continue to sin throughout our lives, and there is nothing we can do, nothing we can possess that can avoid this NAKED TRUTH. This NAKED TRUTH makes us who we are and how we act.

(2)

What then is the solution to this NAKED TRUTH? Solomon doesn't make mention of it directly in this portion of Ecclesiastes, but he spoke about it in any number of places, and the Bible does too. The solution is not to try and fix this NAKED TRUTH of our sinfulness, the solution is not to try and make it better. The solution is to replace it, to replace it with another NAKED TRUTH.

That other NAKED TRUTH is Jesus. It is not the Jesus that is clothed with other peoples' ideas, that is diluted of his divinity or justice by false teachers. It is not the Jesus who comes to make life easy here on earth, or the Jesus that doesn't care how we act. When we strip off all these layers we find a Jesus who preached the pure gospel of God's grace. A gospel who took people as they were, but didn't leave them there. A gospel of "done for you" not "do it yourself." A gospel that required a truly innocent person to die, to satisfy the wrath of a holy God upon my

sins. A gospel that causes offense at its simplicity, but causes peace and binds up the broken-hearted.

When we EXPOSE THE NAKED TRUTH about Jesus paired side by side with the NAKED TRUTH about us, the words of 2 Corinthians 5 become clear. **“God made him who had no sin, to be sin for us, so that in him we might be the righteousness of God.”** This is the only treasure that satisfies. Because it is

the only thing that we can carry with us after this world. THE NAKED TRUTH is that heavenly treasure always satisfies. Jesus told his disciples before he left this world, **“My Father’s house are many rooms, if that were not true, would I have told you I am going there to prepare a place for you?”**

This is what we have to look forward to. This is what we can turn to when things in this world seem so out of order. This is what we can turn to, when we have once again fallen into temptation and sin. Because this NAKED TRUTH is never dependent upon how well he have responded, it is never dependent upon how faithful we have been. It is completely dependent on the promise of God

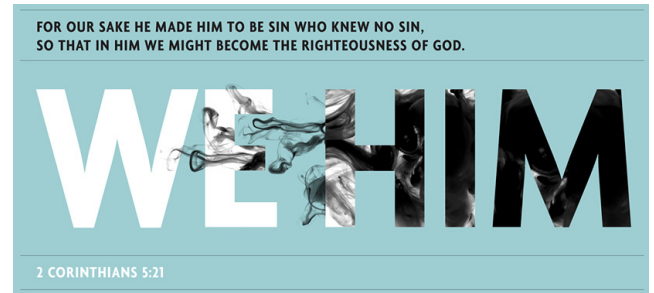
(3)

It is this NAKED TRUTH that is exposed in our lives as believers. Because heavenly treasure always satisfies...even now. We don’t have to wait until we are in heaven to enjoy ourselves. We can enjoy ourselves here, knowing our reservation is secure, our place is saved. It is this that Solomon focuses on at the end of Ecclesiastes 5:

“This is what I observed to be good: it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them.” Just like we learned last week, we can find contentment in what we do have, the days we are given, the work we do because God has given them all to us as a gift. **“When God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil - this is a gift of God.”** Even the ability to enjoy these gifts is a gift from God.

And we recognize our life and everything included with it as a gift of God, we can live a happy and satisfying life no matter what the circumstances, because it is God’s truth underneath that motivates us. And it motivates us to not only live a life that is pleasing to the one who created us, it motivates us to share this life with others. To share with them the lack of satisfaction that this life can bring, and the full satisfaction that a life with God can bring.

It’s really what we’re here for as Christians, isn’t it? If you really believe what you believe about God and his Son is true our path as believers is set, we have no other choice but to share this with others, just like Solomon did here in Ecclesiastes. We must never think a believer’s life is in any way a limitation from living. But a believer’s life is freedom from meaningless toil and chasing after the wind. May you EXPOSE THE NAKED TRUTH in yourself, so you can EXPOSE OTHERS TO THE NAKED TRUTH as well. Amen.



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