

The Way of Wisdom (Ecclesiastes 8) 3 May '15

I'd like us this morning to turn our attention to Ecclesiastes Chapter 8. Ecclesiastes is found right in the middle of your Bible. You put it down on your lap, you open it up, it's likely that you will open to Ecclesiastes. So we are looking at chapter 8 this morning. It will be great if you could have it open and refer to it as we go along the verses here.

Now, this week I read about this man. You say, "Who is he?" Well, he is an Australian and his name is Andrew Chan. Andrew Chan is now notorious, infamous now for being one of the leaders in a drug smuggling ring, now known as the Bali Nine. This week, he and together with 7 other people, were sentenced to death and executed on Wednesday morning.

Andrew Chan, before he died, in 2013, he wrote a letter called "Dear Me", a letter that is intended to warn young people about the dangers of drugs. And there in this letter, he said: "Dear Me, when you are older you will be in a Bali prison and you will be executed. This happened to you because you thought taking drugs was cool. Your drug taking made you think that it was OK to import drugs and make money from this. Your family and friends are heart broken and your life will be ended by a firing squad..." He began, and later on, he wrote these words: "My life is a perfect example of an absolute waste. That does not have to be for you."

Andrew Chan would be the first to admit that he lived foolishly. He will be the first to say: "I ruined my life. I wasted my life." But he is not alone because I believe, many other people today are living ruined lives, not necessarily to drugs, but to temptations and sins and disobedience.

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You see, the Bible tells us this world is crying out to us, to lure us away from God. The book of Proverbs personifies folly to be like a woman. She's found from the top of the town to everywhere along the streets, crying out with a loud voice: "Come, stolen water is sweet! Come, lie with me!" But she does not tell you that her ways are the ways of death. Folly cries out to you to depart from wisdom. Folly cries out to you to depart from God. But she does not tell you that her ways, though pleasurable for a season, leads you to ruin and pain and sorrow, and broken lives and broken families.

And that's why today, we need to hear the voice of wisdom. Ecclesiastes is the voice of wisdom. Now this wisdom obviously does not come from the world, because this

world cries out to you in folly. This wisdom has to come from above. So Solomon in Ecclesiastes is saying, in order to have life under the sun meaningful and rich and significant, you've got to hear from the Lord from above. Wisdom, true wisdom in this life, comes only from God. That's why Solomon writes in Proverbs:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

(Proverbs 9:10 ESV)

True wisdom comes from God alone. That's where we join in, in Ecclesiastes chapter 8. It begins in verse 1, saying:

A man's wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed.

(Ecclesiastes 8:1 ESV)

I'm sorry I'm a Chinese, so I have a lot of Chinese proverbs. Pardon me if I add it here again. When I read this verse, I think of a Chinese proverb 容光焕发 “Rong2 Guang1 Huan4 Fa1” (which means face glowing; looking radiant). Wah, very bright, very cheery, very positive! And I read of a man's wisdom making his face to shine. You know we live in a world where people are very tired and weary, and broken and depressed. But when a man knows the way of wisdom, his face is shining, is bright, is glorious; it speaks of a deep joy and peace in a topsy-turvy world. But at the very same time, when I read this verse, I think about Numbers 6:25, where this is a common benediction in many churches, where it says:

the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

(Numbers 6:25 ESV)

There's even a song, a tune to this. So when I see Ecclesiastes 8 and how a man's wisdom makes his face shine, it reminds me of how the glory of God is with the man who has the wisdom from God. The man who walks in wisdom is doing what a man of God would do or God Himself would do. So it's a tremendously positive and encouraging passage of Scripture here to hear the voice of wisdom in a world that is seeking to drown us with a voice of folly.

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So Ecclesiastes 8—the way of wisdom—how would it look like if you are really walking in the way of wisdom? Let me ask you a simple question this morning: If you could choose one word to describe a wise man, one word, what would it be? One

word to describe a wise man. Some of us may choose smart, intelligent, creative, resourceful; some of us may say old and elderly. These are some words you would have. But can I suggest to you the one word that describes wisdom today or a wise man is obedience? You say, "What a strange word to choose." But look at what Scripture has to say. A wise man, what characterizes him is obedience. I did not invent this; Jesus is the one who tells us.

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock...

And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

(Matthew 7:24,26 ESV)

The difference between the wise man and the foolish man is not that they never hear and one hears. The difference is that both heard but one will do, and the other will not. The difference between the wise and the fool is that of obedience. You see, a wise man recognizes his own folly; a wise man recognizes that he is surrounded by foolish philosophies. So he would say, together with the writer in Proverbs 3: "Lean not unto your own understanding. Trust in the Lord with all your heart." And so he says, "I will obey."

The fool, however, says: "I'm smarter than God. His Words are not reliable. Yea, have God really said this?" So, the fool says: "I can take shortcuts, I will do my way and I'll prove that God's way is inferior to my way." So, a man who is intelligent and smart in himself may actually turn out to be the greatest fool, because he will not obey God's Word. So the way of wisdom is the way of obedience. Sounds paradoxical, but until you understand the depravity and the corruption in man and in this world, you will not see that true wisdom is following God's Word.

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Now, what does it look like then if we are to obey? What does it look like then if we are to walk in the way of wisdom? Solomon here, in Ecclesiastes 8, gives a specific example of someone who fears God and will obey God. He uses the example of submission to authority. He says in verse 2:

I say: Keep the king's command, because of God's oath to him.

(Ecclesiastes 8:2 ESV)

Solomon says a wise man will submit to authority, will submit to kings. A fool thinks that he can override authority; a wise man submits to authority. You see, submission to authority is God's will given in His Word; it is enshrined really in the Ten Commandments. In the fifth commandment, God says, "Honour your father and your mother." This lays down a foundational principle of submission to authority. It begins at home, but it doesn't end at home.

The rest of the Scripture tells us that we need to submit to our masters, submit to our government, submit to our leaders in the spiritual realm; submission to authority is God's will. A wise man says God ordains authority, God establishes rulers and the wise man say, I will not be "geh kiang" (literally means "fake smart" in the Hokkien dialect; used to describe a person who makes decisions quickly and rashly, and normally ends up bringing trouble). You know how the Hokkien say, right? (Pastor then uttered a Hokkien saying, which means it suffices to be smart, but just don't be "fake smart".) You submit yourself to authority even... even if sometimes, you may think you have made better choices than them. It's God's will. He says:

Be not hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand in an evil cause, for he (added by pastor: "that is the king") does whatever he pleases. For the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, "What are you doing?"
(Ecclesiastes 8:3-4 ESV)

So, he's calling for a submissive spirit, obedient heart to the king and to those in authority. Now there are many verses that followed that. I shared that in the first service; I choose not to share that in the second service. I just want you to get the main point. The main point here, verse 9... Sorry, verse 9 also tells us, however, submission to the king is not always an easy thing because deep in our hearts, we fear. We fear that when we submit, they bully us, they abuse us. And Solomon is a realist; he's a pragmatic guy as well. He understands the reality of life. He says:

All this I observed while applying my heart to all that is done under the sun, when man had power over man to his hurt.
(Ecclesiastes 8:9 ESV)

When I observe what is done under the sun, they are men, they are rulers who had power over others to his hurt. In other words, he may abuse, he's not always going to be a perfect ruler. Yet, Solomon says, knowing all these things, knowing that life is uncertain, knowing that you can't control things and that kings sometimes are terrible, they are not always perfect, we are reminded right in verse 2: You keep the

king's commandment, you obey. And the reason given in verse 12 is that you fear God.

I say: Keep the king's command, because of God's oath to him. (Ecc 8:2)
... yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him. (Ecc 8:12)

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So I'm trying to put all this together, because if you read Ecclesiastes 8 off the bat, it's not an easy chapter to appreciate. You got to have this thought that holds it together. So Solomon is saying here, the way of the wise recognizes who God is. He fears God and so he chooses to obey God even though it's very difficult to submit to human leaders, human authorities. He sees God and he obeys. That's one example of a God-fearing man—a man who obeys God's Word.

Now, it's not easy, as I shared, to obey authorities. Because of the fall, we are anti-authority in our flesh—we like to be our own gods. That's why you see in society, you look at cartoons (Simpsons, whatever), it always portrays authority figures as dumbos. The society tells you rebel, complain and this is the spirit of the world, but that's not what God desires. We fear the loss of control, that's why it's never easy to submit.

However, looking at the Bible now, I want to show you that the teaching of submission to authority is consistent because of God, and not because of the worthiness of the authority figures. What I'm saying here is this: you submit to your employer, you submit to your government, you submit to your husband, you submit to one another not because they are superior to you in terms of their abilities, but God has placed them above you. And you submit to them because God did it. Let me prove it.

1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God...

3 ... Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,

4 for he is God's servant for your good...

5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

(Romans 13:1,3,4,5 ESV)

With regards to governing authorities (this is about the government), why is it that every person is subject to the governing authorities? Is it because our government always makes right choices? Is Singapore government perfect in all their ways? Obviously not. But you submit to the government because this authority is from God (Romans 13:1); you submit to them because they have been instituted by God (Romans 13:1), because these people serve God (Romans 13:4) and otherwise, you face the wrath of God (Romans 13:5).

The motivation to submit is not found in the worthiness of the person you submit to, but it's found in God who put you in that position. It's very simple. A God-fearing man who obeys God submits to authority. He sees God, you see. What about a wife?

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Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.
(Ephesians 5:22 ESV)

Some of you say, "My husband useless one. Every day, lazy. Every day, don't do this, don't do that. He useless one. Why should I submit to him?" Well, you submit to him not because he's more useful than you; you submit to him as to the Lord. He doesn't deserve it. Yes, but God does. And if you are a God-fearing woman, you will submit to your husband as to the Lord.

In church, we submit to one another. We don't lord over one another. We don't insist on our ways over one another. Why? Not because others are having better ideas than yourself, but you submit to one another out of reverence for Christ, the fear of God (Eph 5:20-21 below).

giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.
(Ephesians 5:20-21 ESV)

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."
(Ephesians 6:1-3 ESV)

At home, children, obey your parents. But my parents don't know how to instagram. That's not the point. My parents can't even answer my O-level mathematics question. That's not the point. My parents don't know better. That's not the point. You obey

your parents, even though they may be fuddy-duddy in your opinion. They may be outdated; you have a generation gap, whatever you want to call it. You obey them in the Lord. It is God's design and desire for you. He adds on, "This is right." (Eph 6:1). A rebellious child is rebelling not against only his parents but against God. So obey your parents in the Lord. We love to find excuses not to obey, but a God-fearing man says, "No excuse, I submit because God placed me there."

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Servants, some of you work for different companies and corporations, bosses and you say: "My boss is terrible. Don't want to listen to him." Well, you have no choice, you really have no choice. You serve them, obey them with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, Christ the Lord, from the Lord (Eph 6:5-8 below). The motivation, consistently throughout Scripture for submission, is not a human or the people above you, but because of God who placed them there. This is how I know if you are a God-fearing man. Masters, do the same thing to your servants. You don't threaten or abuse them, again because you know that there is a Master in heaven who placed you in that position (Eph 6:9 below).

Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. (Ephesians 6:5-8 ESV)

Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him. (Ephesians 6:9 ESV)

How about church? "Ah, pastor, blur one lah." And we get that a lot, isn't it? Well, the Bible says, obey your leaders.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. (Hebrews 13:17 ESV)

The "leaders" here in Hebrews 13 refers to the church leaders. And it's so important for us to grasp this as well because the leaders also are accountable to the Lord.

Now, all that said and done, reminds us of what Solomon is saying: Wisdom will lead someone to obey, because he fears the Lord (Ecc 8:2,12). The way of the wise is obedience. Specific application: to submission to authorities. Are you a wise man or woman today? You thought that you have rebelled against your parents, you argued against them, you won and you tell me you're very smart. According to the Bible, you are not wise. The way of wisdom is the way of obedience.

I like what Spurgeon says, and so I quote. It's a rather long... but he tells me the essence of obedience. Obedience is not having figured all the reasons then I choose to obey. Obedience is I obey even though I don't understand, and let me show to you what he says. Spurgeon says:

“It is my 1st public declaration that a thing which looks to be unreasonable and seems to be unprofitable, being commanded by God, is law to me (pastor added: “pardon the extra here”, as the phrase “is law” was reproduced twice on the powerpoint slide). If my Master had told me to pick up 6 stones and lay them in a row I would do it, without demanding of him, ‘What good will it do?’ ... (Pastor added: “This”) is no fit question for soldiers of Jesus. The very simplicity and apparent uselessness of the ordinance should make the believer say, ‘Therefore, I do it because it becomes the better test to me of my obedience to my Master.’

When you tell your servant to do something, and he cannot comprehend it, if he turns around and says, “Please, sir, (pastor added: “why?”) what for?” you are quite clear that he hardly understands the relation between master and servant. So when God tells me to do a thing, if I say, “What for?” I cannot have taken the place which Faith ought to occupy, which is that of simple obedience to whatever the Lord hath said.” (end of quote from Spurgeon)

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Today, people pick and choose. “Orh, this command sounds reasonable, I will obey. This commandment doesn't sound so reasonable. I don't understand why, so I will not obey.” You know what, this person has not learnt obedience. Obedience to God is unquestioning loyalty and follow-through.

Harry Truman says, “I wonder where the Israelites would be if Moses had taken a poll before they crossed the Red Sea.” God said, “Go through the Red Sea.” But Moses said, “Are you sure? I don't think so. Better ask Aaron, better ask Miriam, better ask my gang what will happen, what will happen to the Israelites. They would get nowhere.” It doesn't make sense for them to walk through the Red Sea, but that is

what God called them. And obedience says, "I will do it, even if I don't understand." You know, Joshua must be someone who must be wondering: "What in the world is happening when God told us to walk around Jericho for 7 days. What for?" But imagine if they had not walked. Imagine if Jesus had not gone to the cross. "What for?" He asked. Well, there will be no salvation today, isn't it?

The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

(Ecclesiastes 12:13 ESV)

"Fear God and keep his commandments." The way of the wise is a very simple way: Keep his commandments. Yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God (Ecc 8:12). It looks so contradictory, it looks so amazing that it doesn't make sense to me, but it will be well because his ways are always higher than our ways. This man would have built his house on the rock, but a man who disregards God's Word will build his life on the sand (Matthew 7:24,26). And so, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; when you obey, that's wisdom.

I ask you today: Are you living in submission to authorities He has set over your life? Are you obedient with regards to His will in faithfulness in marriage, in forgiveness from the heart, in a generosity to fellows around you? Or, do you live with that worldly philosophy that I need to grab from others, I need to steal from others, I need to have flings with many women in order for me to be really happy? Do I have to cheat and to lie in my business? Do you believe that philosophy? A wise man simply obeys.

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Solomon also tells us the way of the fool:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

(Proverbs 1:7 ESV)

Well, if the wise fears God, the fool despises the Word of God. He hears God's Word but he despises it. He says, "How rigid are Christians, how stick-in-the-mud are Christians. Oh, they cannot do this, they cannot do that. But I have a better life. I can do this, I can do that, the Christians can't. And let me prove to you that this life is a superior life." Now, he might have grown up in church, he might have been to

Sunday school, he might have heard the preaching of God's Word; but fundamentally, though he hears it, he despises it and he will not obey.

Now let's look at a specific example of submission to authority. The wise submits to authority, the fool refuses authority. In 2nd Peter, it says:

the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

(2 Peter 2:9-10 ESV)

The unrighteous are those who despise authority. They have no regard for authorities, not only in 2nd Peter, but a very interesting passage in Jude, This part is so interesting, but we have no time to look at it. When we come to Jude in the future, we might look at it. It says:

And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day....

Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.

(Jude 1:6,8 ESV)

“The angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling...” You say, “What is this all about?” Well, wait till the time we go to Jude, alright? And he says, in like manner, these people reject authority as well. Now, Jude here, if you look at the context, is specifically talking about false teachers. One mark about false teachers is that they rely on dreams—so telling and so appropriate in our day and age to be warned of. They defile the flesh; they end up with carnal sinful lives and they reject authority.

So, the wicked, the fools reject authority—as a corresponding contrast with those who are wise—and the thing about them is when they despise God's Word, their heart is “fully set to do evil” (Ecc 8:11 below). They... no holds barred. I mean, it's all out for evil because they just disregard the Word of God. And it looks like for a moment of time, they are doing well because Solomon says I observe this: They are wicked, they are all out to do evil, but it looks quite good you know, because “a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life” (Ecc 8:12).

Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil.

Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life
(Ecclesiastes 8:11,12 ESV)

It can be that good things happen to bad people and bad things can happen to good people. So for a period of time, the evil, the sinner, the fool, the wicked man actually looks quite well off. In fact, in verse 10, Solomon says:

Then I saw the wicked buried. They used to go in and out of the holy place and were praised in the city where they had done such things. This also is vanity.
(Ecclesiastes 8:10 ESV)

“I saw the wicked buried.” Now, this guy is a wicked guy, but at his death, he doesn't get what he really deserves because “they used to go in and out of the holy place”, they used to come in and of church, religious institutions and even when they die, they were “praised in the city”. People thought they were good maybe because they had lots of money, they gave to this, they gave to that and they had some kind of a recognition from town. So this actually wicked guy looks religious, looks pious; justice never quite crept up or caught up with him. When he dies, people even praise him. Solomon says this is vanity.

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I think of a man who comes to church. He attends regularly, he might even be baptized. He gives money here and there. He looks religious but he's actually a wicked man. He despises God's Word, he will not... he may agree when you preach but he never does, he never follows God's Word. He lives in sin, he has a double life and people don't know. He has women here, there and everywhere. He bears grudges, he steals, he lies, he cheats in his business. And when he dies, nobody knows and we all celebrate this man's life. Solomon says this guy looks good and nobody knows. In fact, he goes on to lament the vanity of this world where justice doesn't quite catch up:

There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.
(Ecclesiastes 8:14 ESV)

So good people suffer bad things and bad people enjoy good things. So he says, this is what I see. But then he catches himself almost when he says:

Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him.

But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.

(Ecclesiastes 8:12-13 ESV)

Even though the sinner can do evil a hundred times, prolong his life, yet, yet I know (I may not feel it, I may not see it), but I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him. But I know it will not be well with the wicked. I know that justice will prevail one day. I know that his sin will find him out.

I say to some of you in kindness. I don't say this in pride, I hope. I'm not saying this because I'm better than you; I'm a fellow sinner. But if you today come to church week in, week out and yet you know in your heart, you're sinning against the Lord, you despise Him not intellectually but practically with your life, I say to you: "You reap what you sow." It may be that you have never really known the Lord Jesus Christ. You think you have, you assume you have; but by your continuous sinful living, at the end of the day before God's judgment, it may be revealed that you never believed Him in the first place. And you can be sure when a man dies, there would be a judgment, an absolutely transparent judgment; and you stand with no excuse, you reap what you sow.

My friends, maybe your argument is: "But you see, I've been living this life and nothing bad ever happens to me. So, it's fine, isn't it? There's no God, isn't it?" Well, why does God wait so long to judge? It's not because He's lazy, not because He forgot, but the Bible tells us that:

Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

(Romans 2:4 ESV)

He does not judge us immediately out of His kindness and forbearance and patience. Why? So that by his kindness, you may be led to repentance. But if you stubbornly hold off, then:

because of your hard and impenitent heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous (added by pastor: "absolutely righteous")

judgment will be revealed.

He will render to each one according to his works:

(Romans 2:5-6 ESV)

What am I trying to say here? Am I saying that you should get right and be a good person, and give to charity and somehow earn merits, and earn favour with God? No, absolutely not, because the Bible is clear about that: No man can do any good work to atone for his sin.

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But what I'm saying here is that, maybe if you're sinning, you're living a lifestyle of sin, you are shocked and you're reminded of the reality of judgment that God will bring every deed, whether secret or not, into light.

The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

(Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 ESV)

And maybe then, as you see the reality of this judgment, you will repent of your sin and believe in Jesus Christ. You will be forced to say: "Lord, I need mercy. I can't save myself, but I see that You gave Your Son to die for me." You say: "That's it? Repent and believe in Jesus Christ?" Yes. "But it's so easy," you say. No, it's not easy. Christ died for you, it's not easy. But He did pay for you.

"But what about justice? I mean all my wrongs, I mean I've never paid for it. Is it just going to be scot-free?" It's not scot-free; Jesus suffered for you on the cross. So the Bible calls all who are wicked, who have been living unrighteous lives to stop in your tracks to repent and believe in Jesus Christ. The way of the wise is obedience. The way of the fool is rebellion, but the fool can repent today and rely on the finished work of Jesus. Well, what do we do when there are life's questions like, why do bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people? Do you get obsessed, do you get troubled with it? Solomon gives you a final recommendation in verses 15 to 17. He says:

And I commend joy, for man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful,

for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him

under the sun.

When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep, then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.

(Ecclesiastes 8:15-17 ESV)

“I commend joy, for man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful.” Now, take this in the right context. Solomon is not saying, “Ahh, let’s forget about life, since it's so difficult. Let's just eat, drink and be merry.” No, that's not a statement of despair. Neither is this a statement of pride and arrogance; I don't care what God is going to do, I'm just going to enjoy my life. No, so it's not despair, it's not arrogance. But this is a verse, this is a speech of someone who is grateful, who is positive, who trusts in God, who says, “I don't understand why bad things happen to good people or good things happen to bad people all the time but I can trust God. I'll trust him, and I'll gratefully enjoy this life as I walk in obedience.”

You see, he goes on to say: “However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.” So, instead of troubling yourself and wondering what is this all about, Solomon says, “Trust God, don't worry, be happy.” In essence, gratefully receive this life with a contented heart. You see, my friends, life is not going to be easily explained all the time. His ways are higher than our ways.

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In my devotional reading this week, I read about the two men walking to Emmaus after the death of Jesus Christ. You know how it is, they were talking and Jesus turned up. I mean, they did not recognize it's Jesus. So when Jesus asked them, “What are you thinking about?” Well, the two of them said:

Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.

(Luke 24:19-21 ESV)

We're talking and thinking about Jesus of Nazareth. Now, he is a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people and... But you see, our chief priests and

rulers are such fools. They killed Him! They crucified Him! But we had hoped that He was the one to redeem Israel. I could hear a tone of disappointment in these words, can't you? I can hear the words of despair. "They really messed up; our leaders messed up. Actually, I think Jesus messed up. How could He deliver us and yet still die? Come to think of it, God really messed up. He is supposed to be our Saviour but now it's all poof—gone!" Well, it certainly looked like that for every one on Friday when Jesus went to the cross. Messiah? In 3 days, I'll raise this temple? The King of the Jews? What a joke! It's a mess—doesn't look right.

But Jesus here then began to show them from Moses, from the prophets, that this is not an accident; this is not a mystery; this is exactly what God has intended. What seemed a mess, what seemed a mistake to us is a marvellous plan of God. So, on the cross, man's idea is: this is folly; man's idea is: this failed. But it never failed. Friday, it looked like a failure. But all along, God says it is the success; it is the way I've designed for salvation in this world. Everything looks brighter on Sunday.

Timestamp 0:36:27.8

Today, you may be living in gloomy Friday—looked messy. Your husband walked out on you; the doctor told you you've cancer; you messed up in your life; you blew it. Not only did you think you blew it, you think God blew it. But wait till Sunday. Trust in Him and He'll make all things clear. The way of the wise is a very simple way. I can't think of a better word to capture the way of the wise than these words: Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

The fool today is always scheming—cannot trust, got to do it myself. The fool today is always saying: "Don't follow God's Word. My way is better." But the wise man trusts and the wise man obeys. If you today are going through life and you are bitter and you are troubled and you cannot figure out life, maybe listen to Asaph when he said:

until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end.

(Psalm 73:17 ESV)

Asaph was troubled. He didn't know why good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to him. "I cannot figure it out," until he went to the sanctuary of God. The mysteries of life can only be understood in the light of the master of life. When you fear God, you can fear not in this world. So he went, and when he sees God, he trusts in Him and his problems are no more.

I say to you who are living, you are a child of God, you are believers of Jesus Christ. Remember: obedience is better than sacrifice; obey God. Dietrich Bonhoeffer says: "One act of obedience is better than one hundred sermons." Tremendous statement. We can hear so many sermons, but it doesn't make you wise, you realize that? What makes you wise? Obedience.

You know today, you can hear this message and you say: "Well, I understand that I need to be submissive to my husband." Very good, you understand. But when you go home and your husband still does not follow what you want, you take your shoe and you whack his head. That's not wise. Now, by the way, it's not my wife who whacks me with the shoe. She doesn't do that; she only uses the pot and pan (laughter in congregation). Just kidding.

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Wisdom is not in the knowing; wisdom is in the doing, Maxwell, John Maxwell says: "Most of us are educated far beyond our level of obedience." You are so well-taught in Scripture; the problem with you is not that you need to know more. The problem with most of us most of the time is: we've just got to obey more. Sure, knowing more helps in obedience. But don't comfort yourself with the fact that you know a lot, but you can get away with not doing any of it. James says a man is blessed in his deed (James 1:25). So, is there an area of life today that you need to repent and obey? Stop hearing the voice of folly.

Now, a wise man sees God in his Gospel. We started with Andrew Chan. He was killed, executed this week, Wednesday morning, midnight, with a shot to his heart. But when he died, he demanded or he insisted he will not be blindfolded. What was he doing before he died? He was singing. Singing what? Singing "Amazing Grace". You see, while he was in prison, Christians went and preached the Gospel. In fact, it was interesting one of those who preached to him was this Indonesian pastor, lady pastor who worked in Singapore for 5 years, got back, preached to him, and they got married in prison, while he was imprisoned.

Andrew Chan apparently received the Lord; I can't fully verify, these are from the reports I read. But it was apparent to all around that his life changed. He was a model prisoner within. He came to know Jesus and he said:

"When I got back to my cell, I said, 'God, I asked you to set me free, not kill me.' God spoke to me and said, 'Andrew, I have set you free from the inside out, I have given

you life!

From that moment on I haven't stopped worshipping Him."

"When I got back to my cell, I said, 'God, asked you to set me free, not kill me.'" But God spoke to him and said, "Andrew, I have set you free." Free from what? Free from sin; free from folly; from the inside out, I have given you life. What kind of a life? Not physical life, but spiritual life. And from that moment, he says, "I haven't stopped worshipping Him."

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Before he died, there were witnesses around and one of them was a pastor who said: "It was breathtaking. This was the first time I witnessed someone so excited to meet their God." You say why is this wicked man who dealt with drugs so confident and so excited to meet their God? Did he do some great things in prison to turn that around? No, but Jesus did something great 2000 years ago and he believed Jesus, he trusted in the finished work of our Saviour and his life can be changed. My friends, if you're walking the path of the wicked, the love and the mercy of God is here to lead you back. Won't you turn from your sin and trust in Jesus Christ, His Son? May you truly be wise today. Let's bow for a word of prayer together.

We're thankful this morning for a quiet, still voice. When you walk out of this room later on, you will be exposed to the loud voice of the woman, folly. She tells you, "Come and sin, come and lie with me." Constantly, people are clamouring for you to follow the ways of death. But this is a morning where you can hear the still, small voice of God. My question to you is not whether you have heard it; I trust you have. My question to you is: Will you do it, will do what God has said to you today?

Maybe some of you today are struggling through the struggles of life and you need to say: "Lord, I will trust you. I may not see through the shadows ahead, but I will look at the cross of my Saviour instead." Maybe some of you today come with a heavy heart because you know before God, there is a sin that grieves Him. Somehow, somehow you have believed that you could hide that by living a double life. Somehow you believe you could get away scot-free. But it will not be well with you, folks. That is the way of death; you can be sure about it.

Would you come clean before God? You know if you're God's child, if the Holy Spirit is convicting your heart, He's not saying to you, "You have sin. Run away from Me." But He's saying, "You have sin. Come to Me." The love of God should melt your heart to repentance and faith and obedience. Come to Him because He loves you. Come to

Him because you love Him. Stop ruining your life. Start living for God. Maybe some of us are like Andrew Chan—messed up, but always trying, maybe to think of a way to save myself, trying to earn enough spiritual points by coming to church. My friends, you can never earn a single point. But let me tell you someone who has won everything for you—Jesus. What looked like the most silly thing, what looked like the most ridiculous thing—that the Son of God will die on the cross—is the most glorious message of all human history. And this is His invitation to you: Come unto Me, all ye who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28). You can rest from your self-efforts; you can rest from your fears. I have paid it all; it is finished.

I pray this morning, you will be wise to obey the Gospel and believe in Jesus. May God give us wise hearts today. Father, we thank You for Your Word. Bless it now as we seek to honour and obey You. O Lord, help us, help us to see the world's delusive ways, help us fear You. Bless Your people here. We humbly pray in Jesus' name. Amen.