

Sunday the 24th of January 2021

We read from the Bible: Ecclesiastes 2 (Djomee)

Theme: Would-be happiness of meaningful life (2): Is this all?

Introduction

Last year David Brooks, a journalist, wrote a new book, titled: The second mountain. In this book he investigates the meaning of life. He tells that a lot of people want to reach the top of the first mountain: a good job, succes of beautiful possessions. But when they reach the top of this mountain they think: Is this all? They long for a real meaning of life. This is the second mountain. During this corona crisis a lot of people think about life. Maybe the book Ecclesiastes can help us. The author does not give easy answers, but the most important is that he asks us very good questions, like a good coach does. You have to think about the meaning of life.

He sounds negative and dejected. But this has a reason. I give you this example:

Imagine you want to make a bus tour in Amsterdam. The driver is a good guide. He tells you about the beautiful things you see during the tour. But then the drivers change, because the first driver has a break. Now the other driver is the guide. He sounds negative. He misses several important buildings and he misses several happenings in the town. Why is he so negative and dejected? Then there is a lunch and you meet this driver. And then he tells that he is a Jew and several members of his family went underground during the Second World War and some of them were killed. He misses his family in Amsterdam. For the author of Ecclesiastes it is them same. In paradise we had a magnificent relationship with God and all creation was beautiful. But then sin entered this world and the relationship with God was broken. And now the author sees what happened to this beautiful world. There is brokenness now. Everything is vanity. So he wants to investigate: is there anything that makes life meaningful? Maybe this:

Investigation 1: pleasure

He enjoys life: music, a good meal, the garden, sports. They are important to him, and also to us. But ... there is no eternal value in it. There was a lot of pleasure, but what is the benefit of it? this sounds very negative. But this is a typical Hebrew style, called masjaal. It is an exaggeration. This is the way he wants to make clear what his point is. In the long run pleasure has no meaning. For instance: you have a nice feast, but next day you can have a hangover. Or there was this nice holiday. You had to take a break. You relaxed, but after three weeks working you were tired again. You can have a nice dinner with your friend of husband/wife, but when the relationship is not good, this does not help. So: pleasure has no meaning. It is vanity, says the author.

In 1 Timothy 6,11 the apostle Paul says: flee these things, person of God. As a human being you can do many things, but do these things with God, focus on Him and flee the other things. That makes life meaningful.

Investigation 2: Work

Maybe you think: my work is very important. That is where I want to live for! But what is the result? Maybe your successor changes everything. And do we remember the persons who built our houses or streets? We forgot their names. Is work that important? And if you do not take care, you can have a burnout. And during the night you can take no sleep because you are thinking about your work. So: what is the result of your work? Are you happy with your workload? Think about this ...

Investigation 3: Possessions/money

Maybe you think: my possessions are important. But after life you can not take anything with you. During the crisis a lot of people bring their stuff to circular shops. We have too much stuff.

And when you have a lot possessions it can worry you: you pay attention to Stock-Exchange notations. You can not take sleep. And you never have enough: see Ecclesiastes 5,9.

Jesus later says in Matthew 6,24: do not trust Mammon. You recognise the word 'amen'. This is Hebrew and means: reliable. So make a choice: where do you rely on?

Conclusion

So the author has good questions for us. But at the end he has some suggestions also:

1. See his book as a bath. When you work in the garden and you are dirty, you need a bath. You do not want to take the dirtiness with you. You want to lose it. So: be freed from all those dirty ideas in your life. All those things that you give a lot of time and they are not worth while!
2. Make a connection with God again. When paradise was lost, the relationship with God was broken. The author showed you this like a bus driver. Think of what we miss: the creation was beautiful and the relationship with God was great. But it is broken ... And now God restores this through Jesus Christ. He did not leave us, but sent His only Son. And Jesus gave His life for our sins. And when we repent, the relationship with God will be restored. So live with Him! And

when you enjoy life make a connection with Him. To give an example: someone who wrote a book, a non-believer, said when she woke up: she pulled the curtains and saw the sun shining. She said: it would be great if there was someone I could thank for this. I can tell you: There is someone to thank for this all. And He loves you: Jesus Christ! Thank Him!

3. Enjoy life and be a canal of blessing to others. Jesus Himself was a canal of blessing. He gave up His richness to make you rich: 2 Corinthians 8,9. Wonderful! God did not keep all the love for Himself, but He gave it to you. And now we can pass this to others. Be a canal of blessing!! So this is the question: what makes life really meaningful to you? Think about it, take a bath, make a connection with God and be a canal of blessing to others!

God bless you!
Pastor/minister Jan Bosch.