

Sunday the 21st of February 2021

We read from the Bible: Ecclesiastes 4,13-5,6 (Djomee)

Theme: Would-be happiness of meaningful life (5): Handhold

### **Introduction**

Last week there was an interview on television with an owner of a restaurant. He had been busy with rebuilding his restaurant during one year. But when the opening was near, corona came and he could not open his restaurant. All his efforts, all his work were done for nothing. Sometimes we can have the same feeling. A lot of work, but no profit.

The writer of the book Ecclesiastes has this theme all over his book. And in this passage he also starts with such a story. There is a king in a country, but the people do not like him. He does not listen to good advice and is a bad ruler. But there is new talented person. He is in prison. He is poor. But he becomes a great king and takes great measures. But after a while his popularity declines. And the people are looking forward to another king.

Someone said: this is the way it goes: to rise, to shine, to sink. It is always the same.

And now the author writes about a new subject in the next verses: church service, meeting God. And you expect the same conclusion. This is in vain. This is for nothing.

But ... this time it is the opposite! It is worthwhile! In church you can experience the meaning of life. Where God is, things happen that are important and can change your life. So invest in the contacts with Him! Take this very serious! How? Meeting God, means getting a handhold. How?

### **Meeting God means: listen (4,17)!**

When paradise was lost, mankind was in trouble. We thought that we were able as human beings to manage life on our own. Without God. But it turned out to be a disaster. The whole creation was in trouble. And there developed a separation from God. It was clear: we can not arrange life. We are not capable to do that.

And it is a big surprise that God did not leave us. He loved us. He promised to repair the broken relationship. And there was built a temple in the middle of Israel as a sign of His presence. At the end He sent Jesus to restore the relationship with us. He gave His life as a sacrifice. He paid our debts. So it is so important to meet God and hear about His love. It is astonishing that He still loves us! This is great news in our present crisis.

Once an Iranian mystic (Rumi) said: It is better to sell your tongue and buy thousand ears, when the One comes close and speaks. Please, pay attention to the Word of God. It is of great value. It is astonishing that God speaks to us. The Lord of heaven and earth!

You can read about this in Matthew 17,1-8. Jesus is glorified. Peter wants to arrange all kinds of things. But God says: Do not do that. This is My beloved Son, pay attention to Him. Hear His words. Often we speak many words. But it is better to listen.

Foolish people do not listen. They go to the house of God to bring offerings. And they use a lot of words. But their lives are the opposite of those beautiful words.

In this passage you can find the word fool 3 times and the word God 6 times. So please pay attention to God. Moses had to put his shoes off when God spoke. This was a holy moment. Faith comes through hearing (Romans 10,17). God has words of eternal value. Listen to Jesus. Do not speak too much. Listen how He tells you: I am the good Shepherd. I am the One that gives His life for the sheep (John 10,11). I am the light of the world. If you follow me, the darkness will vanish (John 8,12). If you hear these words, it will change your life completely. So do not speak too much words, if you meet God. His words can be of a great value for you. Sell your tongue and buy thousand ears. He has words of eternal life for you. Words of grace, love, forgiving.

### **Meeting God means: pray (5,1)!**

There is a real risk of too many words. It is like being busy all day and afterwards you have during your sleep a lot of dreams. You can do nothing with them. Very often words are nonsense.

So think of your prayers. They can be automatically, perhaps the same words as before.

But please realise that you stand before a holy God. He is in charge, honour Him. Approach Him with awe.

But it is also true that this is very meaningful. Because God is the Creator of heaven and earth, He is mighty. And when you pray, you may know that you put your prayers in the hands of the mighty One. He has the overview. Jesus learnt us to pray: Our heavenly Father, who is in heaven. This is very intimate. What a surprise! You can call God your Father! But you also have a mighty Father. If He gives attention to your prayer (and He does!), then you can expect activity in heaven. James tells us that the prayer of a common person can have a big result (James 5,16). So please realise that you have a connection to a mighty God when you pray. Come with awe and expectation!

**Meeting God means: promise (5,3-4)!**

It is a good thing to make promises! Nowadays we do this less. But it can be very helpful that you know that you can count on people. They promised their help. Great! This can give hope and rest. In the Bible there are several chapters about making promises (Deuteronomy 23,21-22 or Numbers 6 and so on). You can read about the promise that Hannah made (1 Samuel 1). People in Israel made promises about giving their time to God or they promised a special donation.

But if you did so, do not forget your promise.

This happens very often. For instance when elections are near, politicians can make promises. But what happens when they are chosen?

It can be the same for us. Maybe you promised to visit someone. And? Did you keep your promise? Jesus will say: let your yes be yes. But we know, that we make mistakes with our promises. Fortunately God is different! He keeps His promises. You can read about this in 2 Corinthians 1,20: For all the promises of God find their Yes in Jesus Christ. That is why we utter the Amen through Him, to the glory of God.

The promises of God come true. Jesus told this in Matthew 24,35: Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. The disciples of Jesus wanted to know what will be going on in the crisis that is coming. Jesus told them to hold fast His promises. I invite you to do the same in this corona crises. Never give up hope. God will keep His promises.

**Conclusion**

These weeks I try to do some gym every day. During this lockdown we have to, I think. But walking in the south of the Netherlands gave me some problems. The ground is very wet and slippery after all the rain that had fallen. So I had to change my shoes. And now I use my walking shoes. They have a good profile. Now I have a good grip. I have a handhold to go on.

We all need a handhold.

There are a lot of things that are in vain. One thing is not.

Seek contacts with the mighty One: please, listen, pray and promise. He gives you a handhold in this crisis. It will change your life!

God bless you!

Pastor/minister Jan Bosch.