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Day 149 – May 29

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## Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE)

### *Solomon's Reflections on Life*

**Readings: *Ecclesiastes 1:12-18; 2:1-11; 2:17-26; 4:1-16; 5:1-20; 6:1-9; 7:13,14; 8:2-15; 9:13-18***

### ***Reflections:***

- Solomon's list of "what is meaningless" is now detailed. When you consider that this list basically reflects his own life in detail, it indicates how incredibly subversive this book is to the story of Israel. The guy at the top of the heap at the end of his life is shouting out that everything that puts you at the top of the heap is meaningless. Again we are reminded of the exact parallel with Moses giving the Law and then outlining how the Israelites are not going to keep it.
- As Solomon begins he makes a powerfully subversive statement against himself. "For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief." This revelation to Solomon and to Israel is critical in the development of the story. A people looking to return to their own garden of Eden (the promised land) and looking for the ultimate leader (a new Adam of sorts); Solomon lets them in on a secret. "In the days we live, the more you understand, the more recognize how bad it is." You see, Israel's story of what doesn't work is clearest to the people with the most wisdom. And what a shocking plot twist. Isn't our journey as a nation about undoing the fall of Adam and Eve? Actually, no it isn't! It is about a careful analysis of all the things people think undoes the effect of sin so as to set the stage for what actually does work!
- So what is meaningless? Wisdom, pleasure, achievement (remember he built the temple), labor or productive work, accumulation of stuff (he had the most stuff of any king), aloneness, empty worship or religion, wealth, materialism, prosperity, defiance of authority, wickedness, injustice, and human strength. Basically Solomon recognizes that in both in his good days and in his bad days, his life was meaningless. Amazing! The ultimate king of the story of Israel declares his life was meaningless.
- Within this cataloging of what is meaningless, Solomon does insert some insights about those things that are still good: pleasing God, companionship, humility before God (stand in awe of God), enjoying the things God has given you, and enjoying the good times when they come. In other words Solomon doesn't take a position that there is

nothing good about life. He says that there are many simple, everyday aspects of life that are still good! The issue is that everything that people think gives ultimate meaning and true heart satisfaction just does not work!

- As we look back, it is amazing to see again that God is so careful to be clear and direct with his people. The story that unfolds is carefully told so that no who reads it can miss the point!