

Hello. /We will begin our 5th lecture on the book of Ecclesiastes. /The title of chapter 4 is “Unity.” /First, the oppressed. /Verses 1-3. /Second, envy and the fool. /Verses 4-5.

/Third, the toiling rich and the peaceful poor. /Verse 6. /Fourth, the vanity of selfishness. /Verses 7-8. /Fifth, the benefit of unity. /Verses 9-12. Sixth, the foolish king and the wise youth.

/First, the oppressed. /Verses 1-3.

/Verse 1. Let us read. /Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them.

/In this world, there are many people who oppress. /Those in power oppress other people. /The rich oppress the poor. /The powerful oppress the powerless. /Those on top oppress those on the bottom.

/The mother-in-law oppresses her daughter-in-law. /The rude daughter-in-law oppresses the weak mother-in-law. /The husband oppresses his wife. /Also, the wife oppresses her husband. /There is no one to comfort the oppressed.

/Others in power may oppress people, but those who are being oppressed are not comforted. /The only comforter is God. /He is a God who helps the oppressed and comforts them. /He is the only one who comforts the oppressed while punishing their oppressors.

/Proverbs 17:5 says that whoever mocks the poor insults God. /Psalm 13:3 says, / “As for the saints in the land, /they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.” God does not delight when his people are oppressed.

/This is because his people are the excellent ones. /In Exodus 1, Pharaoh oppresses God’s people. /That is why Exodus 3 says that God heard the cries of his people.

/God saw the Israelites’ pain. /He knew their sadness. /It says that God will rescue them. /As he promised, God sent Moses to punish Pharaoh with the ten plagues and to rescue his people.

/Verse 2. /And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive.

/The verse says, “And.” /It is a conjunction that connects verse 2 to verse 1. /Being oppressed in this world is a miserable thing. /The verse says it is better to be dead /than to be oppressed.

/Verse 3. /But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun.

/It is better for people /to not see the deeds of oppression. /God is the only true comforter. /The verse speaks about how painful it is to be oppressed.

/Therefore, God does not delight in the oppression of his people. He is the only comforter, /and God punishes those who persecute his church.

/Second, envy and the fool. /Verses 4-5.

/Verse 4. /Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

/I said "Envy and the fool." People become envious when their neighbor prospers. /The verse says, "Then I saw that all toil and skill in work."

/There are those who succeed with the wisdom of the world and their personal talents. /But it says he was envied by his neighbor. /Thus, his worldly success was vanity.

/A Korean proverb reads, "If my cousin buys land, my stomach aches." This stems from envy. /If I succeed, some people tend to envy me rather than congratulate me. /This is why it says that success too is vanity.

/Verse 5. /The fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh.

/The verse is saying that those who are envious /are fools. /The fool does not work, /but is afraid of his work, /taking his hands off his own work. /This person eats his own flesh. /Eventually, he meets his ruin.

/Third, the toiling rich and the peaceful poor.

/Verse 6. /Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind.

/The verse says, "Better is a handful of quietness." /There are two hands. /Only one hand is full, but it is full of quietness. /Two hands are also full, but they are eventually abandoned. /The two hands are full, but it is like a striving after wind.

/If both hands are full but the person is not at peace, how unfortunate is he? /James 1:15 says that when desires is conceived, it gives birth to sin, /and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

/If we are filled with greed, we eventually die. /In India, people catch monkeys by luring them with bananas. /The monkey approaches to eat the banana. /Because monkeys are greedy like humans, they snatch the banana with both hands.

/At this moment the hunter chases after the monkey. /What should the monkey do to survive? /Shouldn't it climb a tree? /But the greedy monkey slips down the tree because it is holding the banana in its hands.

/In the end, the hunter catches the monkey, and the monkey dies. /It is better to have one hand full of quietness. /We may work hard and do our best to fill both hands, but it is all vanity and striving after wind. /Which would you rather be: the toiling rich person or the peaceful poor person? /I hope that you choose to be the peaceful poor person.

/Fourth, the vanity of selfishness. /Verses 7-8.

/Verse 7. /Again, I saw vanity under the sun:

/It says "I saw vanity under the sun." /The Preacher saw the vanity of things while he lived on this earth.

/Verse 8. /one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, "For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?" This also is vanity and an unhappy business.

/This rich person loved money so much that he did not have time to look after his son or brother. /This person embodies selfishness. /He doesn't have a son /or a brother, /but he lives alone. /But his eyes are never satisfied with his riches.

/He is a selfish man whose spirit has no pleasure. /Because of the riches of the world, he does not think of his children and brothers. /The verse says, "For whom am I toiling /and depriving myself of pleasure?"

/There are people who work extremely hard. /But they do not find pleasure. /All they find is unhappiness. /Thus, as a person lives in this world, /he finds happiness when he serves God and does what is right to his family and friends.

/That is when we will experience true pleasure. /Even if we have money, we need to be loving to our children. /We need to give freely to our family. /We need to do good to others. /When we do good, we are filled with joy.

/I cannot tell you how much grace and how many blessings we receive when we do this. /Believers! I hope that you do good. /When we help the weak /and do good for the poor, /we will find pleasure.

/Believers! I hope that you find pleasure. /It is a sin for us to know how to do good and not put it into action. /A merchant once said this. /Today or tomorrow, go to any place and do business.

/The merchant tried to make a large profit. /But he said everything was an empty boasting. /It was all evil. /A person who knows how to do good but does not do it is sinning.

/James 4:14 says, / “Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. /What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. /Instead you ought to say, /“If the Lord wills, we will live /and do this or that.” /As it is, you boast in your arrogance. /All such boasting is evil. /So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, /for him it is sin.”

/A person does not know his children, /parents, or brothers /as he toils to earn money for the empty boasting of this world. /But because he is caught up in selfishness, his spirit does not find pleasure. /If we know what is right but fail to do it, for us it is sin.

/Believers! Do good when you have the chance to do good. /We need to do good to our neighbors. /We do not have a tomorrow. /Please at this moment /do whatever you can to help your neighbors.

/Fifth, the benefit of unity. /Verses 9-12.

/Verse 9. /Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.

/The verse says, “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.” /God’s kingdom is not a kingdom of selfishness. /It is a kingdom in which people work together and accomplish things.

/That is why it says two are better than one. /They have a good reward for their toil. /It is more rewarding for people to work together than for people to work alone. /People are made to work together.

/In the Chinese alphabet, there is a character 人 that stands for “Man.” /It is formed with two sticks, and if one stick is gone, the other stick falls. /There needs to be two sticks for the character to stay in place. /A husband and wife need to assist each other as they live together. /They need to support each other.

/They need to be united as they encourage one another. /In the church life, believers must be united as they go forward. /I do not speak Chinese. /Then how can I preach the gospel to a Chinese person?

/Because there is a translator to translate what I say, I am able to deliver the gospel. /The verse says, “Two are better than one, /because they have a good reward for their toil.” /This is why unity is important.

/Psalm 133:1 says, / “Behold, how good and pleasant is it when brothers dwell in unity!” /When brothers dwell in unity, we are seeing something beautiful. /God created everything in this world to work in unity and do good.

/Matthew 18:20 says, / “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them.” /God delights in unity. /Every church has a choir.

/The members of the choir sing in soprano, alto, tenor, and bass to harmonize as they sing beautiful praises and bring glory to God. /God delights more when we gather together to harmonize for his glory than when we do it alone.

/Acts 2:42 says that the believers gathered together. /They devoted themselves to prayer and fellowship. /I will read for you. / “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching /and the fellowship, /to the breaking of bread /and the prayers.”

/The people gathered to learn from the apostles. /They devoted themselves to fellowship. /They broke bread. /They were united in prayer. /And Acts 2:44 says, / “All who believed were together /and had all things in common.”

/2:45 says they sold their possessions and distributed them to the needy. /2:46 reads, / “And day by day, /attending the temple together /and breaking bread in their homes, /they received their food /with glad and generous hearts.”

/Their hearts were united as they gathered daily in the temple. /Revival in the church was made possible by the power of unity. /When Gideon’s three hundred men stood united and said, “For the LORD and for Gideon,” they were able to defeat the Midianites.

/Verse 10. Let us read. /For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!

/If one person falls, /the other person can lift up his fellow. /Therefore it is important that two or three people are together. /It is important that they work together.

/When the Israelites escaped from Egypt, they encountered their enemy, the Amalekites. /Moses went up a mountain and raised his hand. /Joshua went out and fought. /Moses was a man of great strength. /He lifted his hand.

/But Moses /was also a weak human being, /and he began to lower his hand. /When he dropped his hand, Joshua and the Israelites retreated.

/At this moment, people came to help. /Aaron and Hur held up Moses’s arm. /Thus Joshua and his army were able to defeat the Amalekites. /They had worked in unity.

/Verse 11. /Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone?

/The verse says if two lie together, they keep warm. /One person does not keep warm. /If there are two, then they do keep warm. /It is very lonely if there is only one person. /That is why unity is important.

/Verse 12. /And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

/A man on his own will fall, but two can withstand a person. /It is frightening for women to walk alone at night. /But when there are two, it is not frightening. /Why is this so? This is because the two people find courage.

/We always need to unite under a leader. /One person may fail, /but two people can win. /One burning coal weakly burns. /However, many pieces of coal burn together as a bonfire.

/We gain from this kind of unity. /A threefold cord is not easily broken, but it is strong. /Therefore we must work to be united. /God wants us believers to build a unified spiritual temple.

/Jesus Christ is our head. /With him at the center, we must all be connected together. /Then we can be unified and build the beautiful temple that God wants us to make.

/We need to work to be unified. /Then we can together work for the kingdom of God. /Ephesians 2:21.

/Verse 13. /Better was a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who no longer knew how to take advice.

/Sixth, /the foolish king and the wise youth.

/A dull person who does not listen to others is a fool. /That is why it says it is better to be a wise young person. /We must become people of wisdom. /We need to be able to take advice from others and we need to learn discernment.

/We need to abandon what is bad and to adopt what is good. /It is what God wants for us to do. /God delights in such believers.

/The proud, old king does not listen to the advice of others. /This king will certainly perish. /For this reason, it is better to be a young wise boy than a foolish king.

/Proverbs 24:3 says that / “by wisdom a house is built, /and by understanding it is established.” /A house is beautifully built by wisdom. /The young boy may be young, but he is wise.

/Proverbs 25:5 says that / “a wise man is full of strength, and a man of knowledge enhances his might.” /The foolish king is strong, but he has no wisdom. /Rather, the young boy who has wisdom and knowledge will become strong.

/Proverbs 24:6 says that /the wise apply their wisdom even when they are at war. /The verse is saying that you should wage war by wise guidance. In the abundance of counselors, there is victory. /The person with many counselors is the one who wins.

/The king did not listen to others. /Therefore he could not be victorious. /Our plans will succeed when we have many counselors. /Being able to listen to others is great wisdom. /Having the ability to discern good from bad when listening to others and handling situations with wisdom will lead down a path of victory.

/Proverbs 15:22 says that / “without counsel plans fail, /but with many advisers they succeed.” /If we listen to the advice of multiple advisers /and come up with a plan, we will succeed.

/But the foolish king /has no counselors. /He is stubborn. /He only does what he wants to do. /The wise youth may be weak, but he makes his decisions based on his wisdom.

/Verse 14. /For he went from prison to the throne, though in his own kingdom he had been born poor.

/What kind of king was King Saul? /He came from the small tribe of Benjamin. /Where did David come from? /He was a shepherd. /He was the eighth son of Jesse.

/The verse says, “For he went from prison.” /David became king. /David was poor, but he became king. /Saul also went from being poor to being king. /If we compare the two, we can see that King Saul was a fool who did not take people’s advice.

/In his greed, Saul attempted to kill David. /The young David was wise. /He lived a life of obedience before God. /If we compare these two kings, /who can we say succeeded? /David walked the road of success.

/We need to have many counselors. /Then our plans will succeed. /We must not listen to bad advice. /We must only listen to good things and put them into practice. /King Rehoboam consulted in young men, and he met his downfall.

/Verse 15. /I saw all the living who move about under the sun, along with that youth who was to stand in the king's place.

/The Preacher observed from under the sun. /There were many kings in this world. /But the youth achieved as much as the kings that preceded him. /However, the youth’s wisdom and achievements all disappear.

/Verse 16. /There was no end of all the people, all of whom he led. Yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

/In the end, the wise youth disappears as well. /1 John 2:17 says, / “And the world is passing away along with its desires, /but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

/Eventually, both the wise youth and the king are forgotten. /The foolish king perishes.
/But those who fear Jesus Christ will remain forever.

/Therefore we must live for our eternal king Jesus. I hope that you receive your eternal rewards.

/This ends the 5th lecture on the book of Ecclesiastes. /Thank you.