

**“The Foolishness of Wisdom”**  
**Ecclesiastes 1:12-18**  
**Sermon Series: “Unsatisfied”**

**Introduction:**

Definition of wisdom: Living life according to the truth of God; there is earthly wisdom (“under the sun”) that has some value and God’s genuine wisdom (Proverbs 1:7, Proverbs 2:6-7, Proverbs 4:7, 1 Corinthians 3:18-20).

The background of Solomon’s wisdom (1 Kings 3:7-13, 1 Kings 4:29-34).

**Main Idea: Earthly wisdom is ultimately foolish, but God’s wisdom is revealed in Jesus.**

**Earthly Wisdom**

- 1. Earthly wisdom brings grief (Ecclesiastes 1:13, 18).**
- 2. Earthly wisdom has some value but is ultimately unsatisfying (Ecclesiastes 1:13-14).**
- 3. Earthly wisdom cannot actually explain life (Ecclesiastes 1:14).**
- 4. Earthly wisdom cannot actually fix what is wrong with us or the world (Ecclesiastes 1:15, 17).**

Danny and Jonathan Akin write, “Solomon gives a proverb to explain this situation when he says that what is crooked cannot be made straight and what is lacking cannot be counted (1:15). Crooked is a metaphor for sin or moral brokenness in the wisdom literature (Prov. 12:8; Job 33:27). Why is the world in this broken state? The world is perverse because of human sin. Ecclesiastes 7:29 makes this clear: “I have discovered that God made people upright, but they pursued many schemes.” Humanity has gone its own way against God’s design. So because of others’ sin and our own sin, we live in a messed-up world, and we can do nothing to fix the situation according to the proverb. It will take a miracle from outside of us to fix what is broken. As Alistair Begg points out, we are trying to line up the squares on the Rubik’s Cube with a couple of colors missing (“Word to the Wise”)!

When humanity departed from God’s design, God imposed a curse on the world (Gen. 3; Rom. 8). Therefore, everything is broken in our world and in our lives. We try to find ways out of the brokenness but only end up more broken and frustrated. We turn to possessions and pleasurable experiences and status and relationships and even to religion to fix what is broken, but it is futile. No amount of pleasurable experiences, job

success, or religious ritual can fix what is broken. As we will see, this reality is part of God's goodness in our lives. He imposed the futility in hope that we would long for and hope in Him!

Solomon declares that his wisdom surpassed everyone before him in Jerusalem, but he also says he applied his heart to know madness and folly (1:16-17), which in biblical wisdom literature stands for sin, or the wrong way of life. Solomon was wiser than anyone else, and it did not bring meaning in his life. He also partied harder than anyone else, and that did not work either. That is what he is saying. I tried it all. I lived life the right way (wisdom), and I lived life the wrong way (foolishness), and nothing brought meaning. It was all like trying to grab the wind."

## **5. Earthly wisdom can lead to pride (Ecclesiastes 1:16-17).**

### **God's Wisdom**

#### **1. God's wisdom is not discovered but revealed in the person of Jesus Christ (Ecclesiastes 1:16-17; Ecclesiastes 8:16-17; John 1:1, 14; Colossians 2:1-10).**

-The wisdom of God is the actual knowledge of God Himself

-True wisdom includes principles but is ultimately the Person of Christ. Principles won't change our lives.

-C.S. Lewis said, "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it but because by it, I see everything else."

#### **2. Jesus is the only One who can actually set things straight (Ecclesiastes 1:15, Luke 3:4-6).**

#### **3. God's wisdom is demonstrated by the foolishness of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5).**

**Conclusion: Are you defining and trying to understand life by your own wisdom or are you looking to Jesus to understand the meaning of life?**