

Approaching the Almighty Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

1. Introduction.
2. V.1—The command.
 - a. “Guard your steps” (1a).
 - i. Solomon’s intended audience—the people of God.
 - ii. “The house of God” as the very dwelling place of God.
 - iii. Examine your life to make certain you’re not approaching God for the purpose of personal gain (consumer mindset).
 - b. Explanation of “guarding your steps” (1b).
 - i. “Sacrifice.”
 1. zebaꝝ (זְבָחַי) = “Peace offering”
 - a. The one offering gets to keep part of the sacrifice for themselves.
 - b. The idea is that the one offering benefits in some way from coming to the Lord.
 2. œlâ (עֹלָה) = “Whole burnt offering”
 - a. The one sacrificing offers the whole portion. They don’t keep any of the offering for themselves.
 - b. This type of offering communicates complete surrender and devotion to Yahweh.
 3. To offer a “sacrifice (zēbaꝝ) of fools” means the one coming before the Lord is coming, in the first instance, to get and not to give.
 - ii. “Sacrifice of fools” is set in contrast to “draw near to listen.”
 1. Prov. 18:2.

2. The fool is always one whose purpose in approaching God is self-serving.
3. The message of Solomon is that God's will and desire for your life is stop using God for your purposes (gain), and instead, draw near to listen (to receive His word).

iii. The reason for the command to draw near and listen.

1. The sacrifice of fools is not merely foolish, but evil.
2. What makes the sacrifice of a fool so dangerous is most don't even know that they're actually engaged in this act.
3. The biblical concept of "listening" is not merely hearing, but always carries the idea of actual obedience.

3. Vss.2-3—The command continued.

a. "Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought."

- i. The focus is on prayer.
- ii. The sin of viewing prayer as a means of gain, and not worship.
- iii. We must remember God is in heaven and we are on earth.
 1. Not a reference to the fact God can't be bothered, but a reference to the fact God can't be manipulated through prayer.

2. He's the Creator, we are the creature.

iv. The focus of Solomon is on our attitude in prayer.

1. Do we only come to Him when we need Him to fix something?
2. Do not trifle with God. He knows our needs, and is faithful to supply them.
3. Our duty is to draw near and listen. So how do you view the Word?

4. Vss.4-7—Repetition of the same issue.
 - a. Vss.4-5—Vow making.
 - i. A common occurrence in the OT.
 - ii. A voluntary act and form of worship (Deut. 22:23).
 - iii. The key is that vows must be fulfilled in a timely manner because vow making has to do with truth-speaking and faithfulness.
 - iv. Vow making could be positive (1Sam.1).
 - v. Vow making could be negative (Num. 6).
 - b. V.6—“Do not let your speech cause you to sin.”
 - i. God’s response to foolishness is more than annoyance.
 - ii. God can respond in wrath.
 - c. V.7—Conclusion.
 - i. There is much emptiness in religion.
 - ii. Rather, fear God.
 1. Fear is the acceptable sacrifice to God.
 2. Fear is understanding:
 - a. Who God is
 - b. Who we are in light of God
 - c. And then responding in light of that truth (obedience).

5. Conclusion

- a. Solomon is setting us up for how to find lasting satisfaction. If God is the answer, then we must not come to Him in a flurry of words, but in humble submission to His Word—to draw near, listen, and obey.

b. Hosea 6:1-3.

Small Group Questions:

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. In what ways has your heart grown casual toward the Lord?
3. In what ways (or areas of your life) do you treat God as means of gain, rather than the object of worship and complete devotion?
4. What are the things that most drive you to prayer?
5. In what ways has this sermon challenged your view on listening to sermons and other venues of biblical teaching? In other words, do you find yourself viewing proper biblical teaching as mere suggestion, or as an actual event in which you're hearing from the Lord?