



Wind and Water Discussion Sheet

Scripture focus: Ecclesiastes 1-2; John 4:4-42

In our sermon series “Let it Out”, we’ve been learning about the importance of sharing the hope that we have with those who have none. After all, life without hope ultimately lacks meaning. In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon reflects upon his endeavors to discover meaning and satisfaction in the things of this life. He searches in wisdom and finds it “an unhappy task”. He searches in pleasure, in many ways becoming like the pagan kings of other nations, and comes up empty. He searches in toil, lamenting the fact that whatever great things he builds or accomplishes will pass to another, and who knows what they’ll do with it? His conclusion: life is meaningless. The Hebrew term *hevel* (meaningless) is related to a mist or vapor that quickly dissipates or evaporates. Something that doesn’t last and can’t be grasped. He later calls life “a chasing after the wind”. Throughout the book of Ecclesiastes Solomon continues to deliberate on his observations regarding the meaning of life until he comes to his conclusion in Ecclesiastes 12:13. Meaning is only found in fearing God and keeping his commandments.

In John 4:4-42 we see another character searching for something that will satisfy. A Samaritan woman has an encounter with Jesus at Jacob’s Well in the heat of the day. Note that Samaritans would be scorned by most Jews, and it would be deemed inappropriate for a Jewish man to speak to a woman alone, let alone a Samaritan woman. Yet Jesus destroys those social boundaries by asking her for a drink. Through clever dialogue, Jesus reveals that the woman is not only seeking water from the well to satisfy her but is seeking satisfaction through men. This yearning for meaning has made her a social outcast to the point that she can’t get water in the cool morning

with other women but must go in the heat of the day. One can imagine that her life seemed hopeless. Yet Jesus offers her something: living water. At first the woman is confused, for the well is deep and this crazy man has nothing to draw water with. But eventually he convinces her of his true identity: the Messiah! Her response is to drop her water, run into the village, and shout “Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” Having realized that she had found the only thing that could offer meaning, she forgot her shame and let it out.

We too spend much of our lives searching for meaning. Like Solomon we seek it in numerous ways, yet always come up empty. However, like the woman at the well, we have been offered living water! We have access to the ONE thing that will give us meaning – the gospel! And if we’ve found it, how can we not offer it to those who haven’t?

Discussion Questions

- What are some things our culture attempts to provide meaning with?
- What are some things you personally search for meaning (security, hope, worth) in?
- Contrast the “vapor” that Solomon talks about in Ecclesiastes with the living water that Jesus offers. What are the differences?
- Who is someone you know who needs to find a different source of meaning in their life? (i.e., the gospel?)
- If we really understand the meaninglessness of life without God, what gets in the way of us sharing the gospel with others?