

Series: Coming to Grips with Reality

VBC

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Ecclesiastes 7

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Another Look at the “House of Mourning”

I had a great time trout fishing this summer with Sarah, my 22 year old daughter, on the Breitenbush River.

Climbing out of the steep gorge, the terrain was crumbly, loose, dusty shale;

I was near the top, arms and feet looking for something firm to hang onto,

spread out; clinging, and reaching.

... and I am terrified of heights.

Then Sarah, waiting at the top, says to me,

"Boy Dad, if you could just see my view."

I did imagine her view, and it was a bad suggestion.

For what was behind me (under me) was a nearly vertical drop of a couple hundred feet.

And I froze.

It took quite awhile for me to make it that last ten feet ...

I tell this story because it illustrates how we are often far closer to danger and peril than we realize.

Just because we can't see it doesn't mean it's not close.

Sometimes it takes just a simple reminder to put it into focus.

But we typically operate from a state of denial, as though tragedy will never touch us.

When I hear news like I heard yesterday –

(Of Heather Johnson's cerebral aneurism)

My system just floods out.

My human response is a blown circuit board.

I think this especially strikes us because John is our Shepherd.

His family is our family.

We're tuned into their pain.

At the same time though,

let's remember that others among us are struggling with life-threatening and life-changing events.

If you aren't there, or haven't been there ...

well, your turn is coming.

The thought that has occurred to me ...
How fortunate we are that we do not have to go through such experiences alone.
We are not without a Great Resource.

The "Wonderful Counselor" (see the placard on the platform)
Infinite, All-loving God.

One of the questions we ask children when videotaping their testimony for baptism:
When are you the most happy that you know Jesus?

I think it's in THESE situations that we are most glad we are God's children.
Glad for His power and the hope we have in Him
Glad that he cares for us and sustains us.

I suspect some will ask – "Why would God do this?"
God did not do this.
This is what happens in a fallen world.

The reality is we are all headed for the grave.
For every one of us, it's all downhill from here.

Pointing our finger at God is just a part of our denial.

No, God did not "do this."
If anything, He prepared us for it.
He led John to preach in Ecclesiastes, and specifically the message last week.

Who would have thought after John's comments from Ecclesiastes last week
Comments to be prepared for death or tragedy to strike
That his family would be the next to experience our fragility

As one pastor on our team, I confess, I usually turn to John in situations as this.

I jotted down some direct statements from John's message: (Eccles. 7)
If you missed his message last week go download his notes or the audio version
from our webpage

Last week we read in Eccles. 7 (vss. 2-4) ...
"It is better to go to a house of mourning
than to go to a house of feasting ...
Sorrow is better than laughter,
because a sad face is good for the heart...
The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning...

At first look, this is confounding
Not what we'd expect.

Here's what John had to say about these statements ...
Why it is better to enter the house of mourning?

1. It makes the heart better

Superficiality is replaced with depth

We tend to resist the certainty of life's limitations, breakability, and brevity

We come face to face with the frailty of humanity and the fragility of life

2. Self-importance is replaced with God-importance

In loss—be it in life or death—we face our smallness,

our helplessness, our fleetingness, and our need for God

We refocus that God alone is our hope.

It is in times like this that God gets our attention.

And He has our attention now.

It IS in times like this that we are glad we are God's children
and have Him to turn to.

We want to spend some time praying for Heather, and for John and the family.

Before we do, I want to read this passage from ...

Ps. 33:16-22

16 No king is saved by the size of his army;
no warrior escapes by his great strength.

17 A horse is a vain hope for deliverance;
despite all its great strength it cannot save.

18 But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him,
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,

19 to deliver them from death
and keep them alive in famine.

20 We wait in hope for the LORD;
He is our help and our shield.

21 In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.

22 May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD,
even as we put our hope in you.