

Contrasting Foolishness With Worship

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[0 : 00] to know that when we finally get to glory, we're going to do a whole bunch of that. Have you ever wondered what kind of songs we'll sing?

I wonder, will we just sing the Psalms to God all the time? Or has heaven orchestrated a whole new litany of wonderful choruses and songs that we'll sing to God all the time?

But nevertheless, we're going to sing, right? That's what we're going to do. Let me invite you to turn in your Bibles, if you would, beloved, to Ecclesiastes. Chapter 10 is where we'll be this morning.

Now, it'll be just a little bit before I actually get into chapter 10, so you'll want to hold your finger there as I take you to a couple of other places and speak to you this morning from the perspective of God's wisdom working in our lives in some very practical ways to help us live faithfully before the Lord.

So the title of my message is Contrasting Foolishness with Worship. Contrasting Foolishness with Worship. And I'm speaking specifically, as I'll explain in my message, about worshiping, of course, God.

[1 : 21] Worshiping the Lord. Now, Solomon has been teaching us that all of life, all of life is a gift from God.

He's also taught us that the enjoyment of life is God's gift. So it's not just that we have all of life to thank the Lord for. The fact that we can enjoy any aspect of life is the gift of God as well.

Do you know people who have lots and lots of stuff? They have wonderful jobs. They have all kinds of play toys and everything else in their life. Plenty of money to do what they need to do.

And yet, you know that those people in their heart of hearts are not happy. They're not fulfilled in their lives. It is the Lord God that gives us the ability to enjoy the stuff of life.

And so we owe him a great debt of gratitude for that. Solomon's also taught us that God designs every single detail of adversity and prosperity in our daily lives.

[2 : 25] So, beloved, every detail of your life is by God's design and purpose. Now, we believe that. We believe that God is sovereign, but we don't only believe that. We believe that God is sovereign in love.

He's a loving God who is sovereign. Not a tyrant. We are under the blessings and providence, the caring control of Almighty God.

So your life, your enjoyment, and your value to God. You didn't know that. You are very valuable to God. What did it cost God to purchase you away from sin?

Nothing short than the blood of His own Son. That's a high value, isn't it? So you are very valuable and dear in the sight of your heavenly Father, beloved. He cherishes you.

He's jealous for you. He's zealous for you. I remember there was a song that I heard not long after I had been a Christian by an artist that I came to really, really like.

- [3 : 29] And he called it the Hound of Hell. And it talked about how Satan pursues and pursues and dogs us. And then we are saved by faith in Christ Jesus.
- And then we are hounded not by hell, but by heaven. God pursues us and owns us. And then He keeps us. And He'll do whatever it takes to help us love Him and know Him.
- Well, it is a terrible, terrible insult to God when we take the Lord's gifts for granted. These blessings I've been talking about.
- But folks, it's a terrible sin. A terrible sin when we take God Himself for granted. Our relationship with Him.
- And we begin to back burner that relationship in any given moment of our lives. And take God for granted. And I've pointed out to you that we do this on occasion, even unintentionally, by making some aspect of what God has created or God has given to us more important than God as our Creator.
- [4 : 47] In other words, and I hope this makes sense to you, in other words, we worship something God has given or made rather than worshiping God.
- Christians do this. In any given moment, context, or situation of our lives, this is what we're tempted with constantly. That we would elevate some aspect of God's blessing in our life or some aspect of what God has made around us to be more important than God in that moment.
- More important than pleasing Him or honoring Him. And church is a three-letter word that we label that with. We call it S-I-N. Don't we?
- Sin. And that's how God sees it as well. Now someone might ask this question. Can't we do both? In other words, can't we worship these aspects of life or even life itself and the stuff of life and also worship God?
- Does it have to be one or the other? After all, Solomon's been telling us throughout Ecclesiastes, grab life, enjoy life, eat, drink, be merry. So, can't we worship aspects of life or life itself and worship God?
- [6 : 07] Now you say, man, that's kind of a silly question. Well, in your walk with God, in your level of growth and maturity and grace, that might sound like a really silly question.
- But in my time in ministry, you might be surprised to find out how many of us who are walking with the Lord struggle with that very concept. We struggle with worshiping stuff and trying to worship God at the same time.
- Where we get into the most trouble is when we worship self and God at the same time. And you say, can't we do both? And Scripture has a really definitive answer for us in that.
- A really definitive one. And I want to take you there and show you that so you'll hold your finger in Ecclesiastes and turn to Matthew if you would. Matthew chapter 6. Now I'm setting you up here in a good way as we march into Ecclesiastes chapter 10.
- I want you to have some of these things at the forefront of your mind. Matthew chapter 6. Beginning in verse 24.
- [7 : 15] And we're answering the question, can we worship the stuff of life and life itself and also worship God? Jesus said, no one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to one and despise the other.
- You cannot serve God and wealth. I want you to notice in that verse the words that he uses to describe the positive aspects of what we treasure or worship.
- He says, we will love one, we will be devoted to one, and we will serve one. Love, devotion, and service. Does that sound like worship to you?
- Absolutely. That is worship. And Jesus has made it clear, you cannot have two masters in life. You can only truly love, devote yourself to, and serve one master in spirit and in truth.

And so you have a choice before you, don't you? Now to help us with that, Jesus takes us back up into, I will take you back up into, verse 21 of Matthew 6.

[8 : 30] Look what it says. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Jesus explained this for us here in verse 21.

He explained the reason that we can only have one master in life. one master. So as Christians, when we struggle with sin, we are struggling in that moment with who will be master in that context.

Who are we treasuring most in that context? Or what are we treasuring most in that context? And I want to do a little bit more with this to help you see where I'm coming from in all of it.

Let me give you an example. Think of God's gift that we've mentioned already of enjoying your life. Now that is a gift that we recognize comes from the hand of the Lord.

You can actually elevate, elevate the gift above the giver. That is capital G, God. Simply by making your enjoyment more important to you than pleasing God in any given moment of your life.

[9 : 51] You can do that to the point where it is more important to you to sin to get what you most are treasuring in that moment or to sin if you're not getting it.

You with me? I'm just trying to be very practical about how worship works out in our lives in any given situation or context that you find yourself in.

among your friends, your co-workers, doing your job, going about your family life, being married, raising your kids, being on vacation. I like to tell folks that come in on vacation, remember, we're not taking a vacation from the Lord Jesus, right?

All right. That's right. He's still Lord in all of this. So what happens when we do this, taking this example about our enjoyment, we do this. we transfer our worship of God onto things.

And the things then occupy the place of God in our hearts. We always live for and out of what we treasure most in our hearts.

[11 : 03] And that's any given moment of the day. Christian, have you ever gotten up in the morning and had a wonderful time of worship with the Lord before you went about your daily business and 10 minutes into your daily business, you find yourself having to go, oh, I blew it.

I sinned. I'm cranky. I'm complaining. I'm hollering at somebody on the street as I'm driving down. You know, what happened?

What happened to that wonderful time of worship just a few minutes ago? I'll tell you what happened. Life happened, didn't it? In any given moment, what we treasure most in our hearts is what we're going to live for, what's going to define us, what we're going to worship.

You with me on that? We always live for and we always treasure what we have most in our hearts. And here is where our troubles multiply because we become too willing to sin to make sure that whatever it is that we're treasuring most, we get.

Sometimes it's this. I just want a little peace and quiet and I'm willing to sin to get it. Maybe you didn't mean to, but that me time, that me time that we demand of the world and our families and the people around us, uh-oh.

[12 : 31] That can be one. But let me give you a couple of others before I move on. Let me really help you see how I'm seeing this as I think about this message that I'll bring to you today.

We do this in so many areas of our life where we transfer this worship from the Lord, from treasuring the Lord in that moment, onto something else, some desire of our hearts, some goal, some aspect of life, something we've convinced ourselves we deserve or that's owed to us or whatever.

Let me give you a few more areas. I'll put this one up here on the screen for you, this first slide. Here are three areas over the course of my ministry that I have worked with many, many Christians in dealing with this issue in terms of transferring worship from God to a, first of all, a sense of satisfaction.

That's the enjoyment of life. I want a sense of satisfaction about my life and that can get in the way of worshipping God, believe it or not. What about number two? A sense of security or well-being.

It's very important to me to feel safe. It's very important for me to have a sense of general well-being about my life. Maybe it's your health. Maybe it's something going on in your body.

[13 : 50] Maybe it's just a general feeling of I just don't want to be messed with. And then finally, a sense of self. That is approval of worth. The fear of man is what we call that.

I want to have a sense that other people approve of me. I want to make sure that other people respect me and afford me a certain sense of dignity about my life.

We can get to the place where we actually begin to sin in order to make sure that we have a sense that that's happening in our lives. even good things.

None of these things in and of themselves are bad, are they? Not a single one of them. But we can elevate those things to a point of treasuring them so much that we're willing to sin against God to make sure that they're part of our life.

We call that an inordinate desire. desire. It's become a ruling desire in our life. If you take, for example, that second one, this is something that I think we all can relate to, the sense of security or well-being.

[15 : 00] Have you ever in your life been hurt by someone? Now, everybody in here who's married ought to be going, yep, I sure have. I live with that person every day.

How long was it before you were married that you realize that this person can hurt me and deeply? We get hurt deeply by the people we love the most, that we trust the most, that we depend on the most.

Now, let me ask you something. Has God ever hurt you? You love God? You depend on God? You ever complained against Him?

You ever complained about some aspect of your life? Uh-oh. Should I stop meddling or should I just keep doing this? I want this to be practical for you.

I want you to see how your enemy, Satan, uses even good things against you. And why you need the grace of God and the love for Jesus every single moment of your life, Christian.

[16 : 05] And why you need to be cultivating that love for Christ above everything else in your life. Nothing can replace what Jesus said are the two highest commandments that we live by as human beings on this side of heaven.

Life under the sun, as Solomon says. To love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself.

It's love, isn't it? If you've ever been hurt by someone, then you know what it feels like to desperately want a sense of security or well-being about yourself.

You want to safeguard yourself against people hurting you, against being wounded. Solomon tells us we live in a world where that happens all the time. There's great injustice in the world, and we sin against each other.

We do wrong things toward one another. Sometimes intentionally. Sometimes because we've elevated a certain thing in our heart to an aspect of treasuring it where I'm willing to sin against you to make sure this happens in my life.

[17 : 13] We alienate people. We can alienate the Lord. All because we have a sense of woundedness about our life. And let me tell you, that's no way to live.

So what can we do about that? What can God help us do about that? Well, here's the issue, beloved. Here's the issue. Hear me carefully. All of life is worship.

All of it. When you leave here today, you will go on worshiping. Yes? Yes. You will go on worshiping.

We become like what or who we worship. Worship. Worshiping God in all of life counters foolishness.

And that's where we'll be this morning. Worshiping God in all of life counters foolishness. What God calls foolishness.

[18 : 18] Sin in your life. Living apart from the wisdom of God and doing right in your own eyes. You don't want that. I don't want that for you. So we need to talk about what God does about that.

So let me put this slide up here for you. The next one. Look at this. Christian living then is living all your life as a wise response of worshiping God to please the Lord in every aspect of your life.

That's what Christian living is. It's a response of worship. Now the question is who or what are you responding to in worship?

Is it God or is it something or someone else? Making your life about worshiping Jesus all day and in every way puts you in contrast with the world you live in.

You see what I'm saying? You don't have to go out there and beat the drum of telling everybody they're filthy sinners and they're all headed to hell and they better get right and turn and burn and all that kind of stuff.

[19 : 25] All you need to do is live in love for Christ and that puts you upstream, right? That puts you swimming against the current of the culture. Just love Jesus with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and you will live in contrast to the world around you.

Won't you? Yes. And that is exactly what we're called to be and to do. To live faithfully to God by loving Jesus with everything that we have in a world that hates Jesus with everything they have.

Now do you think that there's going to be some conflict there? Yes. Yes. What I'm saying here is you see it up here you are the contrast.

Or more specifically and accurately Jesus in you is the contrast you bring to every situation and relationship in your life.

I want to look at at least one of those. Now I have four of those in mind. We're only going to deal with one of them this morning and then we'll see when the Lord leads us to get to the others in chapter 10.

[20 : 38] Here's the first contrast I want to present to you for this morning and we'll flesh this out together. Contrasting foolishness in your workplace.

That doesn't sound practical at all does it? In verses 4 through 7 will you go there with me? Ecclesiastes 10 I'll just begin reading in verse 1 so that we can kind of catch up a little bit.

He says dead flies make a perfumer's oil stink. Hmm. So a little foolishness is weightier than wisdom and honor. A wise man's heart directs him toward the right but the foolish man's heart directs him toward the left.

Even when the fool walks along the road his sense is lacking and he demonstrates to everyone that he is a fool. If the ruler's temper rises against you do not abandon your position because composure allays great offenses.

there is an evil I have seen under the sun like an error which goes forth from the ruler folly is set in many exalted places while rich men sit in humble places.

[21 : 54] I have seen slaves riding on horses and princes walking like slaves on the land. Now we covered the first three of those verses last Sunday and so we will do four, five, six and seven together this morning.

What is he talking about in this? Contrasting foolishness in your workplace. Here's what we'll do. The positive side the positive side of this contrast is wisdom.

Wisdom and I'm going to choose the workplace to kind of do a little bit with this. As a Christian then this is how I hope all of us are thinking this morning as followers of Jesus.

Listen as a Christian you follow the Lord Jesus and what matters most to you is that God matters most to you. I hope that's true of your life.

What matters most to you as a Christian is that God matters most to you. God matters more than your wife or your husband or your kids or your job or your stuff or your fame or your enjoyment or your safety.

[23 : 01] God matters most in your life. Let me put this up here for you to see. I wanted you to see this in writing. You are the living contrast of godliness and wisdom in your daily contexts of life.

And I'm not going to go there and read it to you but Romans 12 1 and 2 are wonderful verses of Scripture dealing with that. Where the Lord tells us that we're not to be conformed to the world but transformed by the renewing of our mind to think the way Jesus thinks about life.

And he tells us that in doing that we are living by the mercies of God and we become an offering of worship to God as a living sacrifice.

We're not a dead sacrifice. We're a living sacrifice to God every single day. and he said that is your service of worship. You worship God by you offering yourself to God every day as a living sacrifice to serve Him to honor Him to live for His glory.

That's where we are in this. Now a few Sundays ago I brought a message with the theme what matters most is that God matters most.

[24 : 26] That was several messages ago. And that's true. But when God is factored out of life which is exactly what our culture does you become your own God.

You become your own authority. You forfeit being grounded in the truth for the way you live your life. One fallout of a scenario like that is that you make your own morality.

you make your own morality. You with me? You live in other words by your own inner sense of what you believe is right and wrong.

Do you understand this? You know folks like this. You and I used to live like this before Christ didn't we? We had our own standard of right and wrong. We had our own inner sense of what was valuable and what we would pursue in life.

What we wanted out of life. Then as we became Christians and began to grow in the faith we started to then understand and learn that everything about our life was to be offered to God in worship.

[25 : 40] And what mattered most was not what I wanted out of life but what God wants through my life. Right? So we're learning to live more and more for Christ in the way that we're married to each other relate to each other the way that we earn a living.

We're concerned about earning a living in a way that honors Christ. We're concerned about raising you guys the children in a way that honors Jesus.

That's what we want. Why do we want that? We want that and those things because God has changed our want to. God is giving us new desires that are commensurate with heaven.

We're learning to be heavenly minded about life. We're thinking more and more about will this please the Lord Jesus? Will this reflect the character of the Lord Jesus if I say these things and I say them in this way or I do these things and I do them in this regard and for these reasons?

Does that please the Lord? Does it honor Him? Does it show people the love of Christ and the meekness and gentleness of my Lord? Am I bringing the contrast of Jesus into this context?

[26 : 56] I'm the contrast. I'm the living breathing contrast of this. Contrast of what? Foolishness. The foolishness of the world as it pursues the stuff of the world in the wisdom of the world which is contrary to God in every way.

that's what we're dealing with as we think about all of this. It's foolishness in God's eyes to live by your own inner sense of morality.

In this particular case that I'm laying out for you here's how those people think. Standards of right and wrong are not outside of you and based in objective truth.

No, that's not true at all according to them. truth is inside of you and you get to decide for yourself. You get to adopt the codes best suited to your agenda to live by.

My friends listen, as socialism gains ground in our culture we're going to see more of this. Mark that down. As God becomes more irrelevant, each person will continue to do what's right in their own eyes.

[28 : 10] we will do that as a nation, we will do that as individuals and families, communities, right? Now aren't you seeing that? Well, let me encourage you.

Since Adam and Eve fell into sin, that's been the case with humanity. That's not a new thing for our country and our time. It doesn't matter who's in political office.

It doesn't matter what side of your political equation is in power at any given time. the human reality is sin and the deceitfulness of sin is real and it works in the human heart.

And there's a common, often, always happening tug away from the things of the Lord, wanting to drag us down.

And so again, we need the love and grace of Jesus in every moment of every day. The same gospel that saved us and brought us to faith in Christ is the gospel that we need to live by every day.

[29 : 10] We never outgrow it. Amen? We never outgrow the gospel of God. So a casualty of this that I've been describing to you so far, everybody doing what's right in his own eyes, a casualty of this is a biblical theology of work.

Now I don't know if you've ever heard a sermon on the biblical theology of work. I can't give it to you this morning. Boy, I wanted to. But I'm going to jump back in my text here in just a minute. I'm just pointing out to you that's one casualty because this message relates to that.

A biblical theology of work. Just think about this for me. Is God a worker? What do you think? And what evidence would you provide? Is God a worker?

What did he do for six days and then do on the seventh day? Is God a worker? Yes. When God put Adam and Eve in the garden, he said to tend it. No sin had happened.

In the world. But they were to tend or work the garden. Right? And then God said, now what I want you guys to do is subdue the earth.

[30 : 17] Multiply and subdue and steward and manage over the earth. Right? That's work. That's labor. Work is not something that happened as a result of the fall.

Sweaty, hard, terrible, bloody, life draining work is what happened as a result of the fall, but not work. Work has been something that God's honored forever since he made us.

So don't let Satan convince you that work is bad, even hard work. People live as their own authority and they bring that worldview into the workplace and into how they view authority.

And that creates all kinds of problems. So look with me again. There's a slide I want to put up here for you. Solomon tells us in chapter 10, 4 through 7, that godly patience, godly calm, is how God wants us to respond to foolishness in earthly authority.

He says this in the text, look, do not abandon your position. In verse 4, if the ruler's temper rises against you, do not abandon your position.

[31 : 38] Your translation might say something slightly different. I'm reading from the New American Standard translation. Do not abandon your position if you find yourself up against this foolishness that's being perpetuated against you in the workplace or by someone in authority over you.

Now, what in the world is he talking about? Well, this is one of only three commands in all of chapter 10. We only have three commands in that chapter. This is one of them.

But what's it about? Alright? How many of us in here today have a king ruling over us? Where the monarch is the man.

What he says absolutely goes and we could be executed in a moment's notice by speaking against the monarch. How many of us are living in a place like that? Any of us? We're not living under that right now, are we?

So, hard to relate to something like that. So, what we're dealing with here is we don't have a king ruling over us. But here, here in our text, a ruler is a person in authority.

[32 : 49] It doesn't have to be a reference to a king the way that it's written. The context also mentions, if you'll notice in verse 6, rich men. And then in verse 7, notice princes.

They each have the idea of people with authority and influence. So, that's the context of what we're talking about with this ruler. Someone who's influential over your life.

Someone who has authority over your life. Now, we can understand that. I think, check me on this, I think the closest we might come to that in our everyday life would be this.

Maybe a boss. Maybe a boss. Maybe Jeremy's out in the other, our policeman is out in the other room out there. Maybe law enforcement.

Or a police officer that we might have to deal with. Or, even less likely, maybe a political figure. Right? But any of us who earn a living must answer to someone.

[33 : 58] Now, I'm seeing Doug sitting here with us. Doug is his own boss because he answers in his own company. Right? That's his company. He's the man. The buck stops with Doug. But I guarantee you, Doug has bosses.

Am I right? There are people, if he makes all of his customers mad, Doug, there's no job anymore. Right? So, we answer to people. Everybody answers to somebody.

And as a Christian, you answer ultimately to the Lord. So, does this text, let me ask you, does this text specifically apply to how Solomon's original readers were to answer to a domineering ruler?

And the answer is, yes. Yes. This text is speaking directly to the issue of what do I do when I have to answer to a domineering authority figure in my life.

But, it can mean anyone that you would answer to in a context such as the one that we're reading about here.

[35 : 09] So, I'm suggesting to you the context of your workplace as a more common area of application and it applies to our response as well to, hear me, government.

Oh, boy. Government. And given today's climate with COVID protocols and a supercharged political climate, Solomon's counsel, I think, is very, very timely for us.

Now, folks, I'm going to just give you a caveat right at the beginning as we march through this quickly together. I can't cover all the different scenarios and contingencies that you might think of as we talk about this and I lay out the basic idea of this text before you so that you can evaluate it and see, as a good Berean, am I cutting it straight?

Does it sound to you like we're dealing with this in a very honest and good way as we apply hermeneutical principles to the text? I can't cover everything.

So you may think of scenarios, yes, but what about? Well, what if? And I understand that. That makes for wonderful, rich conversation between brothers and sisters in Christ in these hallways and over coffee as the week progresses.

[36 : 32] And we want you to do that. You can even call Greg and get Greg to tell you all about this text. Right, Greg? Greg? Thank you. All right. But that's what we want you to do is deal with the realities of what we're going to put before you.

I'm using a workplace here to try to help you grasp some of this and apply it to something that I think you can relate to.

And I'm going to do more with that in just a moment. But here's how this might look on the level of our government. I think everybody wants to know, what's he going to do with this with the government? Because that's really a lot of what this is talking about here as he speaks about a ruler.

Most of us will never have, like here in Virginia, we'll never have our governor, we probably will never even have our state representative and certainly not the president of the United States personally speak to us in a foolish fit of temper, which is what this is.

Right? I've never had the governor do that with me. I don't ever anticipate the governor having a chance to do that with me. Speak to me in a foolish fit of temper. Or my state representative.

[37 : 44] And certainly not the president. So, the most likely place, however, the most likely place we'd need to apply this counsel is in the marketplace or the workplace as we encounter others who might speak abusively to us about policies and politics related to our governor, related to our president.

Pray for him. Related to our state representatives. Pray for them. Isn't that more likely? Yes. They may even speak abusively to us about these things, as I mentioned.

Related to our leaders' decisions. Not everybody's going to agree with you about COVID protocols and what's happening in the government right now.

You already experienced that? Well, what happens when they come at you abusively about this? And they're just parroting or echoing governmental decisions or governmental party lines or whatever it is.

From either side of the perspective of your politic. What do you do? Solomon says this. Will you notice the text?

[39 : 11] Maintain your position in humility and respond with patience. If the ruler's temper rises against you, do not abandon your position.

There's the command. respond because composure allays great offenses. Respond with patience. Now, let's apply this real quickly to the more common area of those in authority over you in your job and then bring these things together.

Temper. Temper here in my translation is literally spirit. Spirit. So, this has reference to, in our context, your boss's bad spirit.

Or, we might even say it this way, his bad mood or his angry spirit. Now, has anybody here in the adult world ever, ever dealt with a boss who was in a bad mood or had an angry spirit and you were in his sights?

Alright? Most likely, that's true. What are you to do when you're on the receiving end of the boss's ill mood and anger?

[40 : 22] Well, Solomon says, do not abandon your position. This refers to your position, hear me, as a servant. Someone in subjection to.

There's a ruler and then there are those who aren't rulers. That's me. That's probably you. Right? And so, he's saying to us, when the ruler comes at you in that way, and he is exemplifying foolishness toward you in this fit of foolishness, don't abandon your sense of servant-heartedness.

Don't chunk your servant-heartedness out the window and get an attitude. Don't do that. Don't elevate your pride in that moment. Don't do that.

Don't quit your post. Some of you have a translation that says that. I think the ESV says that. Don't quit your post. Don't leave your job because the boss is mad and being difficult and unfair.

The emphasis here is on your response. Notice. Notice. That's where the command of the verse is aimed. Do you see he's not taking your boss to task here?

[41 : 47] Your boss is in a fit of foolishness, but he's not aiming the command at your boss. He's saying to you, Christian, check your response. Don't abandon your position as a servant.

Don't quit your job and run off. Don't let your pride get the best of you. Don't respond to anger and a bad spirit with anger and a bad spirit.

In fact, one commentator, Derek Kidner, referred to this scenario as leaving in a prideful huff. I can't believe he or she would say that to me.

I'm tired of being treated like this. I'll show them. Off I go. I'm quitting. Now. See what you do with that. Ha ha ha ha. And off you go.

And he says, don't do that. How many times in my life have I done that in my heart? I'll show them.

[42 : 56] We call this cutting our nose off to spite our face. We chunk out that servant heartedness, puff up in pride, and say, I'll show them.

That's so much like Jesus, isn't it? Hanging on the cross. I'll show them. That's ridiculous, isn't it? That's not the kind of contrast we're talking about, is it?

When you return foolishness with foolishness. Nope. It's not what we want, but we do it. So a response in a huff would be more of a wounded reaction than a godly response.

You feel offended. You become angry and defensive. You react in pride. Solomon's counsel then protects you from prideful reactions.

That means he protects you from sin. Don't sin. So you ask, well, what is the godly response that Solomon is calling for here? Well, I think to answer that, consider, beloved, what we've been learning from Solomon along the way.

[44 : 12] I rehearsed it in my introduction. Let me put it up here for you to see on the screen. Living is a response to God. Your life is a gift from God.

This is what Solomon's been teaching us. The fear of the Lord, holding God in high and holy regard, is the beginning of wisdom, knowledge, and a meaningful life.

That's what we've been taught over and over for ten chapters now. You don't react. You don't react. You respond. There's a difference. And I want to help our congregation learn to be responders more than reactors to life, to God.

So you bring the Christian contrast. You hearing me? You bring the Christian contrast, the God-honoring response to the situation. You humbly hold your godly composure as a Christian.

If you look back at the text with me, if the ruler's temper rises against you, do not abandon your position because composure allays great offenses.

[45 : 21] Composure here. I'll put it up on the screen. Composure is the Hebrew noun marpeh. The Hebrew's rolling those R's, right? Marpeh. The verb form means to heal or to restore, but it rarely refers to a literal healing.

It's the idea then of inner wholeness, an inner sense of calmness or gentleness in your life. So the idea then is a mind or a heart of health, a calm mind.

Solomon is using healing metaphorically as an inner condition that is peaceful, calm, contented, so that it is not angry, worried, easily offended, easily rattled.

No. Here's how we say in our day, calm, cool, and collected. Calm, cool. Where does calm, cool, and collected come from?

It comes from a heart that's calm, cool, and collected in the Lord. You don't abandon your position as a servant. You don't throw serving the Lord Jesus out.

[46 : 31] You don't throw out the idea that you're under authority here and that you need to honor the Lord in that. Instead, you maintain your composure. You maintain that calm and that peace before the Lord.

You bring that into the situation. Now, some of us may be thinking in this moment that is, you can't do that. Who does that? Who lives like that? Christians live like that.

Christians live like that. Do we live like it perfectly? No. No. But this is our calling. This is what God has called us to. Now, let me give you just a few more things as I move toward wrapping some of this up for you.

I need to do a little more with you. Look at Proverbs chapter 14. This is going to be up on the screen for you. Proverbs chapter 14. Verse 30.

Here's how we can make this applicable for you. A tranquil heart is life to the body, but passion is rotteness to the bones.

[47 : 38] Notice the tranquil heart is life to the body. Tranquil is our word. Marpe. Composure. So from a tranquil, composed heart, respond with wisdom.

And if you say to me, well, what does that look like exactly? I want to show you what that looks like in Proverbs 15. Verse 4. A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it, in the tongue, crushes the spirit.

If you speak to your boss or that person in authority in the same crushing way that he or she is speaking to you, God calls that perversion in your life.

We don't return evil for evil. A soothing tongue is a tree of life. Soothing in the New American Standard Translation, again, is our word, marpe.

A healing tongue. So here is where you provide the contrast. It's where Jesus in you is the wise contrast to the foolishness happening around you.

[48 : 51] Can we throw that next slide up for them, Josiah? You speak from a heart surrendered to the lordship of Jesus in your life. And calmed by your trust in and love for God.

Do you see what I'm saying? We're always preparing, beloved. We're always preparing for that next moment in life. Today's moment is preparing us for another moment.

We're living in the here and now, constantly preparing for faithfulness as we move through our life in the Lord. We don't know if we'll have another hour, another day or 10 years.

Doesn't matter. The issue is, are you constantly keeping your heart centered on the treasure of the Lord Jesus Christ?

So that when these situations come up in your life, whether it's in your marriage or your workplace or whatever, you have an opportunity to respond to that in Christian love.

In composure with a tranquil heart. Your heart's not all like this. And we'll deal with another sermon. Well, what happens if I do blow it?

[49 : 59] You confess. You confess to the Lord. You ask for forgiveness. You go to the person that you wounded and you hurt and you spoke ill to and you ask for their forgiveness. But the point is, you respond.

You don't react. You use your mouth to bring calm and balm. You restore and you bless as foolishness is spoken at and around you.

So a composed, tranquil, steady, peaceful heart is life to you and blessing to other people. Now, I want to give you an illustration of this.

You can go there with me if you'd like. I'm going to go to the book of 1 Samuel. I'm going to stay in the Old Testament to give you this example. I think it's an apt example of what is going on here.

Now, one of the things that I know you're thinking or you may be tempted to think is this. Because I can't read your heart, but maybe it would be more accurate for me to say maybe you're tempted to think.

[51 : 00] Is this real? Can people really do this? Maybe you have done this in your life. You say, you know, I've done this. Well, I want to give you an Old Testament example of someone who did this.

And let me tell you something. Their life was on the line. They were within a gnat's hair of losing their life. Because the person that they were doing it with was wearing a sword.

And he put it on to murder. So this person had everything to lose. You either approach this person with a tranquil heart, keep your position and follow this counsel.

Are you going to get your throat cut? That's what's going on. The situation is this. King David isn't king yet.

He's still, in many ways, this shepherd boy who killed this giant. And the prophet Samuel came and anointed David and said, one day you will be king in Israel.

[52 : 07] But right now, David isn't king. Solomon or not Saul. Saul is king. So Samuel has laid his hands on and anointed David and said, one day you will be, but not yet.

Well, Saul, King Saul, becomes jealous of David. Many of you realize, know some of these stories. So Saul sets his heart. I'm going to kill David. This young upstart who wants to take my throne from me and show me up.

I'll just take him out. So Saul gathers thousands of his best warriors and goes to find David where he's hiding out in the desert with 600 of his merry men.

And they're roaming all over the desert chasing each other and hiding and doing all this stuff. In the meantime, the prophet Samuel dies. So David's out in the wilderness.

He's doing his thing. And his men come upon thousands of sheep and hundreds and hundreds of goats and all this livestock.

[53 : 12] And they belong to somebody. And so David says, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll help guard these shepherds and this livestock. And we'll do a good turn to whoever this is.

And maybe they'll find favor with us in doing this. And that's a good strategy. That's a good thing. And he does it to be kind. He's a good guy. And his men are good men, right?

They're not running around raiding everybody and tearing everything down. They're not pirates and Vikings. That's not what's going on. Well, the Bible says that there was this rich man.

And he had 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats. And he says here that man's name was Nabal. And his wife's name was Abigail.

And it says about Abigail, she was intelligent and beautiful. And it says about Nabal, he was harsh and evil in his dealings.

[54 : 10] So we got this intelligent, beautiful woman and this clown. And they're married. Ha! Poor Abigail. Well, David finds out who all this belongs to.

And after I don't know how long of guarding them, he sends 10 of his young men to go talk to the owner, Nabal. And he says, hey Nabal, these guys represent me.

And so they show up and they say to Nabal, our master has sent us to you to ask if you would please provide us with some provisions. We have been out doing the right thing, protecting the sheep and protecting the shepherds and doing a good turn toward you.

And Nabal doesn't only refuse him. Nabal, because he's a foolish man, Nabal means fool. Because he's a foolish man, he rebukes these guys, scorns them and sends them packing.

Now, David is a man of war. He's a man's man. This is the man who ran up with thousands of Israelites, standing there shaking and quaking in their boots to include Saul, and ran out and met this giant with a sling and killed him and cut off his head.

[55 : 24] Don't mess with David. Well, Nabal's messing with David. Bad thing. This is about to be a really bad day in Nabal's life. So David says to his men, strap on your swords.

Armor up. We're locked in, we're loaded, and we're ready to do business. He takes 400 of those men and heads towards Nabal's house straight away.

He leaves 200 of them to guard all of his provision in his camp. 400 men go into Nabal, and David makes an oath on the way. I swear before this day ends, not one man or male person in Nabal's life will remain alive.

I'm going to kill every one of them. And off he goes. One of the young servants of Nabal went and found Abigail and said, guess what just happened?

Our master did this and told her the story. Abigail said, take all of this, get cakes of figs, get this, get that. I mean, she made this huge, I mean, it was enough for an expeditionary force, the Bible says.

[56 : 31] And he's got all that, and she said, take off, go meet him. Go head him off and get there with all of this. I'll be right behind you. She goes in and gets on a little donkey and starts after him.

On the donkey. Right? And so, all of a sudden, she sees David in the distance. Now, she's by herself. The entourage has already got there, and David's like, what's going on with this?

She gets off the donkey and goes and falls flat on her face in the dirt before him and begins to plead with David on behalf of her foolish husband, Nabal.

I want to get to where she's speaking to him. Here it is, right here. Listen to what she says. I want you to hear it in her own words. She says, Abigail hurried and took 200 loaves of bread, two jugs of wine, five sheep already prepared, five measures of roasted grain, hundreds of clusters of raisins, 200 cakes of figs, loaded them on donkeys, and took off.

On the way, David said, surely in vain I have guarded all that this foolish man has in the wilderness so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him. And now he has returned me evil for good.

[57 : 54] May God do so to the enemies of David and more also if by morning I leave as much as one man alive who belongs to him. When Abigail saw David, she hurried and dismounted from her donkey and fell on her face before David.

She bowed herself to the ground. She fell at his feet and she said on, now listen to this from her. This is, keep your composure, don't abandon your position, speak out of the humility of your life as a servant of the Lord.

She says this, on me alone, my Lord, be the blame. What? Please let your maidservant speak to you and listen to the words of your maidservant.

Please do not let my Lord pay attention to this worthless man, this fool. Nabal, for his name is, so is he.

I told you Nabal means fool. Nabal is his name and folly is with him. But I, your maidservant, didn't see the young men, my Lord, whom you sent. Now therefore, my Lord, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, since the Lord has restrained you from shedding blood and from avenging yourself by your own hand, now then, let your enemies and those who seek evil against my Lord be as Nabal.

[59 : 10] Now let this gift which your maidservant has brought to my Lord be given to the young men who accompany you. Please forgive the transgression of your maidservant, for the Lord will certainly make for my Lord an endearing house because my Lord is fighting the battles of the Lord.

And evil will not be found in you all your days. Should anyone rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, then the life of my Lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the Lord your God.

But the lives of your enemies he will sling out from the hollow of a sling. And when the Lord does for my Lord according to all the good that he's spoken concerning you and appoints you ruler over Israel, this will not cause grief or trouble to my Lord because both having not shed blood without cause and by my Lord having avenged himself.

You won't do that. When the Lord deals well with my Lord, then remember your maidservant. And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel who sent you this day to me.

And blessed be your discernment and blessed be you who have kept me this day from bloodshed and avenging myself by my own hand. Later in the text, it says David was going to do an evil, sinful thing and Abigail kept him from it.

[60 : 27] Folks, let me ask you, what did Abigail do wrong? That she would need to ask for forgiveness? Nothing. What would you need to do with your boss or that person in authority that you would want to ask forgiveness?

That you would want to not return foolishness with foolishness? You say, I didn't do anything. He just went off on me. She just went off on me. Now here you have an example of a woman who has a higher regard for God and holiness than even her personal safety.

David could have killed her right on the spot. But he thanked her. And later on, he'll admit, that woman kept me from sinning. I was going to sin and I was going to cause all my men to sin.

And she kept it. How did she keep it from happening? She bowed before him as a servant. She kept her composure and didn't abandon her position.

And she trusted God to do the right thing through her in her life. But she didn't know if she'd live or die. By the way, it has an even better ending.

[61 : 40] Later on, Abigail goes back home and she finds Nabal drunk, as usual, in a big party. And so she decides, I'm not going to tell him all of this while he's drunk.

So she waits until he sobers up the next morning and goes in and says, oh, by the way, guess what? And she tells him the story and you know what happened? He had a heart attack. But it took him like a week to die.

So he just kind of went, oh, oh, oh. And it paralyzed him. And he stayed like that for days and days and then he died. It says the Lord took his life. And David married Abigail.

Whoa! Whoa! I love a happy ending. You just never know what God's going to do. Solomon, Solomon turns to tell us of his own eyewitness account all of this.

He says, look, there's an evil I've seen under the sun. As a king myself, I've seen and witnessed what he says in the remaining verses.

[62 : 47] I'll just mention them to you. There is an evil I've seen under the sun like an error which goes forth from the ruler. Folly is set in many exalted places while rich men sit in humble places.

I've seen slaves riding horses and princes walking alongside of them. The ruler here is anybody in authority just like in the other. It's a different word from what we had in verse 4.

It's actually a word that can be translated sultan or sultan. The difference, I think, is stylistic. The issue here is that we're seeing in this case someone else who in a fit of folly does something foolish.

And the foolishness trickles down in verses 5 through 7. Those in authority commit errors. They commit wrongdoing. They act foolishly. Right?

They do foolish things. And in turn, those foolish things trickle down and affect the people under them. You ever been in a situation in your job where people above you made decisions that filtered down to you and you thought, what in the world?

[63 : 48] Can anybody up there think? Don't do that. Say, no, don't do that. That's not the servant's heart. Right? We don't want to grumble against those people.

No. What happens is these people, many times incompetent, they're foolish. Perhaps in governmental situations they promote friends and they promote supporters to these higher positions, but they're not necessarily the best people to put in those jobs.

And so now you have a problem. While the more qualified and capable people, that's the idea of rich men, influential people, those who have the potential to influence an agenda other than that of the ruler, they're kept in a more manageable, humble, lower position.

While he elevates his incompetent friends to positions that affect everybody in foolish ways. horses were a status symbol for wealthy people and for nobles. That's why the Bible makes such a big deal of Solomon importing horses from all over the known world.

The Bible says he has 4,000 stables and 12,000 horsemen. He was the richest man on the planet at this time. That makes the picture of the foolishness here even more pronounced.

[65 : 04] This is where foolishness leads in our government. It's where it leads in our workplace, in our home, and in our church. It can even lead there in our churches. I'll throw this last slide up and then we'll be done.

Foolishness exalts the mindless. It gives approval to godlessness. It disregards what is right and does what is right in its own eyes. It turns people's lives upside down.

Don't let the foolishness of others rob you of the joy of life and serving God. Don't let that happen. There's a way to respond. So will you prayerfully endeavor to live the contrast of Jesus in you and will you do it with humility and grace and a patient spirit?

That's the message. It's powerful. It's challenging and it makes you go to God and say, Lord, I need more grace. I need more grace to live like this in faithfulness to you.

I know that doesn't answer all of our questions about all the things that could happen in a scenario like this, but I hope it gets you started. Let's pray together. Father, we've hurried through some of this together this morning and I can only ask that you would take the measure of what we've offered as we've sought to cut it straight, the Word of God and lay it before your people that it would be a blessing to them and a challenge to them.

[66 : 41] They would feel the sting of conviction about areas of their life that they need to surrender to you and yield to you and know truth in. Especially, God, I pray for your precious souls here today that you would make these wonderful folks a faithful group of people seeking to honor you, to forsake idols, and to seek out ways that they can offer themselves to you as servants and respond to this world in the contrast of Jesus living in them.

That's what we want, Lord. For our light to so shine among men that they will see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5.16 That's what we ask for and pray for.

May you get all the glory for all that we would do in our lives to honor you, Lord. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.