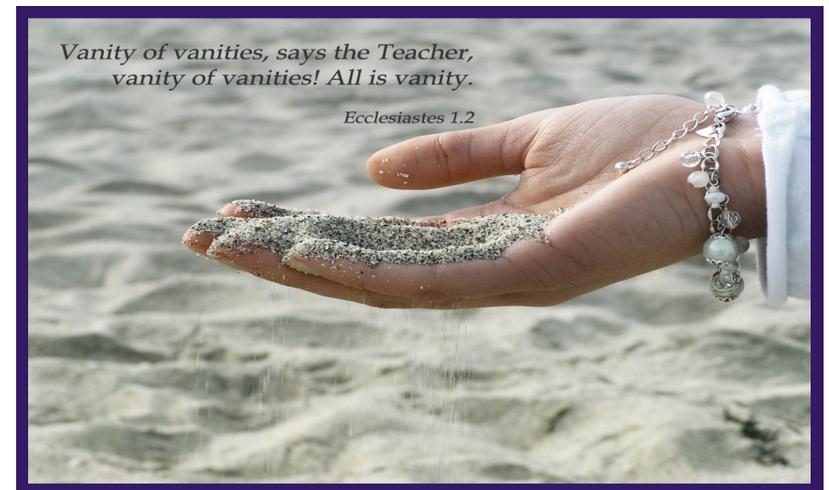




The Book of Ecclesiastes

(The search for the ultimate maxim to explain the nature of life).



Chapter 11

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Chapter 11

The book of Ecclesiastes occupies a unique position in the Bible due to its prevalent sense of pessimism and absence of God's intervention in our world. In fact, the all-prevailing mood of a God remote from our human condition sets the tone for Ecclesiastes which seems incongruent with the other books of the Old Testament. It contains reflections, more philosophical in nature, rather than a testimony of belief, which we would normally associate with the Hebrew scriptural tradition. For the traditional author, in the Book of Ecclesiastes, God is the inscrutable originator of the world who determines the fate of humankind. Just as the natural is in constant movement minus the presence of real change, so the human expenditure of energy comes to nought, despite the fact that reason leaves us baffled, the author affirms that life is worth living with all its limitations. The following metaphor (literal) interpretation, on the chapters of the Book of Ecclesiastes, are by Saint Gregory Thaumaturgus, an early Father of the Church.

Moreover, it is a righteous thing to give (to the needy) of your bread, and of those things which are necessary for the support of man's life. For though you seem immediately to waste it upon some persons, as if you cast your bread upon the water, yet in the progress of time your kindness shall be seen to be not unprofitable for you. Also give liberally, and give a portion of your means to many; for you know not what the coming day does. The clouds, again, do not keep back their plenteous rains, but discharge their showers upon the earth. Nor does a tree stand for ever; but even though men may spare it, it shall be overturned by the wind at any rate. But many desire also to know beforehand what is to come from the heavens; and there have been those who, scrutinizing the clouds and waiting for the wind, have had nought to do with reaping and winnowing, putting their trust in vanity, and being all incapable of knowing anything of what may come from God in the future; just as men cannot tell what the woman with child shall bring forth. But sow in season, and thus reap your fruits whenever the time for that comes on. For it is not manifest what shall be better than those among all natural things. Would, indeed, that all things turned out well! Truly, when a man considers with himself that the sun is good, and that this life is sweet, and that it is a pleasant thing to have many years wherein one can delight himself continually, and that death is a terror and an endless evil, and a thing that brings us to nought, he thinks that he ought to enjoy himself in all the present and apparent pleasures of life. And he gives this counsel also to the young, that they should use to the uttermost the season of their youth, by giving up their minds to all manner of pleasure, and indulge their passions, and do all that seems good in their own eyes, and look upon that which delights, and avert themselves from that which is not so. But to such a man I shall say this much: Senseless are you, my friend, in that you do not look for the judgment that shall come from God upon all these things. And profligacy and licentiousness are evil, and the filthy wantonness of our bodies carries death in it. For folly attends on youth, and folly leads to destruction.