

Ecclesiastes 4:1–16

“It May Get Lonely at the Top”

Sermon Outline

The Preacher offers wisdom by making comparisons.
He observes life under the sun, then provides a lesson.

Live Content (4–6)

Observation #1 — v.4

- Work is a gift from God and can provide pleasure in the right context.
- Distortion of work comes from envy (in this passage).
- Vanity = pointless.

Observation #2 — v.5

- Idleness is as destructive as working from envy.

Wisdom — v.6

- Quietness = contentment.
- A person who finds balance:
 - Hasn’t folded his hands in idleness.
 - Isn’t grasping greedily.
 - Accepts what God has given.

Scripture Support

- Proverbs 15:16
- Proverbs 16:8
- 1 Timothy 6:6–10
- Philippians 4:11–13
- 1 Corinthians 15:9–10
- Psalm 23

Application

- Work hard and find contentment.
- Contentment is not laziness or idleness.

Live Connected (7–12)

Observation — vv.7–8

- A person always striving, yet with no one to share life with.
- Vanity = pointless.
- A compulsive money-maker who never asks, “Why?”
- Replaced before the death certificate is signed.
- Reflects the rugged individualism of our society.

Wisdom — vv.9–12

- Two are better than one:
 - In work (v.9)
 - In walking (v.10)
 - In warmth (v.11)

– In warfare (v.12)

Reflection

- Who in your life is that companion of faith?
- Jesus is the friend of sinners.

Application

- The “third cord” in v.12 is Christ (not another person in marriage).
- With Jesus:
 - When we fall, He picks us up.
 - When our hearts grow cold, He warms them.
 - When we are in danger, He protects us.

Live Humble (13–16)

Comparison — v.13

- A poor but wise youth vs. an old and foolish king.

Story — vv.14–16

- From rags to riches.
- Endless people in his kingdom.
- Yet he is forgotten.
- Fame is fleeting.
- Do not put too much stock in earthly position.

Wisdom — v.13b

- “He no longer knew how to take advice.”
- He had arrived and perhaps forgotten his story.
- The wisest Christian is humble and teachable.
- The young must remember they still have much to learn.

Gospel Connection

- There is a King whose reign will last forever.
- He began in poverty and obscurity.
- He now reigns in glory.
- His reign and His people have no end.
- He will be exalted forever.
- Therefore, we do not puff ourselves up in pride—we bow in humility before this King.

Small Group Discussion

1. How did the Holy Spirit speak to you through the Scripture and sermon Sunday? What stood out? What questions do you have?
2. What does a healthy balance of hard work and contentment look like? How can we guard against envy-driven work and laziness?
3. Who are the people in your life who “walk with you” in faith? Why is it important not to be isolated? How can you be that person for someone this week?
4. The text contrasts a teachable young person with an older person who stopped taking advice. In what areas do you need to remain teachable?

5. How does seeing Jesus as the King who humbled Himself reshape your view of success, influence, and legacy?