

WHATEVER YOUR HAND FINDS TO DO

Please be opening your Bible this morning to the 9th chapter of the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes. There is good reason to believe that this book was written by Solomon. **Chapter 1:1** introduces the author to us as, *“The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.”* My purpose this morning has nothing to do with who the author is. My purpose is to think with you about something that is found in chapter 9.

Ecclesiastes can be described as an attempt on the part of the author to reflect on life, on both its blessings and its challenges. As such, there is a good bit in the book that is not very encouraging; there is a note of resignation and sadness to it. One of the recurring themes of the book seems to be captured in **1:2**, where we read: *“Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.”* The word vanity is found over 30 times throughout the book.

In chapter 9, the writer is reflecting on some issues, and how everything that happens seems to be in the hands of God. He observes that most of what happens to people, happens to the righteous as well as to the wicked. He recognizes—verse 3—that the hearts of men are full of evil and madness, and yet death awaits them all. Whatever good a person can do must be done while on this side of the grave. And so, beginning in **verse 7**, the writer gives some simple, almost proverbial advice. He says,

7) “Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. 8) Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head. 9) Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun

And then in **verse 10** he says what I want to draw your attention to this morning: *“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.”*

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. We might paraphrase that to say, *whatever you can find to do that is good, do it with all of your heart and soul and mind and strength.*

Those of you who were with us during Mike Mazzalongo’s seminar will understand the graphic at the top of the slides today—the illustration of the spinning plates. And I wanted us to keep that in mind this morning because I believe we picked up a great momentum during that seminar and I don’t want us to lose it.

Brother Mike reminded us that based on the picture of the very first congregation of Christians that we can read about in Acts 2:14-41, in order to experience what he called the potential for “unlimited growth,” a church must first of all be faithful to God and God’s Word in every way. Secondly, they must follow the biblical organization of ministries as seen in Acts 2. Those

ministries include 1) evangelism, 2) education, 3) fellowship, 4) worship and 5) service. Study that passage in Acts to find out more about that.

Now what he was saying is that when a church is organized and effectively functioning in these five ministries, growth is going to occur naturally. I believe that is confirmed by what is said in **Ephesians 4:11-16**. Paul writes:

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12) to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13) until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14) so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15) Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16) from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Now, I want you to notice a couple of things that are said here. First, makes it clear that the saints are to be engaged in works of ministry. We have not been saved just so we can come sit on a pew and worship each Lord's Day. It is important and it is a blessing for us to be able to do that, and I do not want to give the impression that is not important that we do that, but let us not be confused about what it is that we are supposed to be DOING!

Do you remember in giving the great commission, Christ told the apostles, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20) teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* That is found in **Matthew 28:19, 20**. What do you think it means, *"teach them to observe all that I have commanded you?"* What does it mean to "observe" something? The dictionary tells us that this word is used in three related ways: The first one is to "notice or perceive something, and register it as being significant; to watch someone or something carefully and attentively; as in "observe what happens when we heat this element to 225 degrees." The second way is to "make a remark or comment." The third way is to "fulfill or comply with a social, legal, ethical or religious obligation." When the Jews observed Passover, they were not just making comments about it, or standing by watching something. They were doing something. They were engaged in practices that has been specified for them to do. That is the sense in which Jesus says his disciples are to be taught to observe all that he has commanded of us.

In the scene of the judgment pictured for us in Matthew 7, Jesus made it clear who those are who are pleasing to God; it is the one "who does the will of my Father, who is in heaven." We have heard the old saying, "Don't just stand there, do something!" That is what it means to observe the commands of Jesus. We are to be doers of the word, and not just hearers, who as

James says, “*deceive ourselves.*” (1:22). “*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all of your might.*”

The second thing that I want you to notice in the Ephesians 4 passage is that when each part of the body is working properly, the body grows. This is what brother Mike was saying—ministry = growth. When every member is being equipped for ministry, and is engaged in that ministry, you really cannot keep the body from growing. Christ sees to that.

So, if we are not growing, what does that tell us? It tells us that ministry is not taking place the way the Lord wants. There could be because of two problems. First, we may not be biblically organized as a congregation of Christ’s church, meaning we do not have all five core ministries in place and functioning effectively. The other problem might be that we do not have all of the members engaged in a ministry that God has purposed for them in the body. They might even be very busy, but if they are not engaged in the ministry God has prepared them for that busyness may not count for much.

Those who study organizations will often observe what they call the 80/20 rule. That is, 80 percent of the work is done by 20 percent of the people. I don’t know how valid that is, but I do know this, that isn’t the way our bodies work. Just imagine if we only had 20 percent of our heart working! What if only 20 percent of your brain was working, or 20 percent of your cells were working. If any of those conditions were true of you, do you think you would be in good health and growing? Of course not!

In fact, if only 20 percent of almost anything in our physical makeup was working, what would we be doing? We would be going to the doctor, wouldn’t we? We would want to find out, “What wrong?” So how can we be happy with the status quo if the body of Christ that we are a part of is not growing?

I don’t know how many of you have read my bulletin article for this week, but in that article I began with a quotation from **1 Peter 4:10**, where Peter makes it clear that every member has been given some gift. Peter does not assume that there are some Christians who are not given a gift. He assumes that every Christian does have a gift, and he urges them to use it in service or ministry to others.

And it is that service, that ministry, your ministry that I am urging you to think about this morning, and in connection with that ministry, what you hand finds to do, do it with all of your might!

Those who have been given a gift that fits in with **the ministry of evangelism**, you need to engage in that ministry with all of your might. We need a lot of help in this area. This is one of the plates that we do not have spinning very well. It is pretty wobbly. I know God has gifted some of you with that desire, that passion, but are you engaged in it with all of your might? Or are you waiting for the preacher, or the elders, or some program to get you going? Don’t you see, if that is your calling, if that is your gift, you do not need a preacher or elder or program to

be doing what you know God wants you to do. You just need to get after it. You need to do what you were born again to do, and that is reach out and teach those who are lost about how to find forgiveness and new life in Christ. Not only that, but you need to be helping others who may also have that gift to get busy in the work of evangelism.

Those who have been given a gift that fits in with **the ministry of education**, you need to engage in that ministry with all of your might. We need a lot more help in this area also, even though we do have a number of good teachers. When people are taught the gospel, and when they are baptized in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, they are going to need a lot of teaching. We see that, don't we? One of the biggest mistakes churches make is going to all the trouble to teach people the gospel, but after they are baptized just assume they will be able to figure it out from there on. That isn't true, and what happens many times is that people fail to be taught and they soon fall away, if not completely, then at least practically. They become attenders only, and only attend now and then at that!

Incidentally, let me ask you a question: Do you think God is honored, and pleased with you if you have decided that you are only going to give back to Him a minimal amount of your heart and soul and mind and strength? Do you? I am not for making any rule or law where God hasn't spoken, and I'm not saying that the Bible says anywhere that you have to show up for worship and Bible study three times a week, but I wonder why some of you don't do that? Do you think God is pleased by your decision—because that's what it is—to not participate when the church gathers for Bible study every Sunday morning, or for worship Sunday evening, or Bible study during the week? Why wouldn't you, really, I want you to think about this, why wouldn't you want to be a part of things like the Friday night Bible study or the monthly fellowship dinners like we are going to have in a little while? Now, don't misunderstand me, I'm not trying to get you to church. I'm trying to get you to heaven, and I worry about that for you if you've made up your mind that a part-time commitment is good enough.

Think about that, will you? Let's move on.

Those who have been given a gift that fits in with **the ministry of fellowship**, if that's your calling, and you know it, you too need to engage in that ministry with all of your might. That's where you need to invest your time and energy. Don't give God the minimum! Give Him the maximum! Isn't that what He did for you?

Fellowship has to do with the times and ways that we share life together as a family. It really isn't just about eating, or sharing in a potluck. It is about getting to know one another, and being each other's true brothers and sisters. Fellowship is something that we do fairly well here, or at least in my opinion, we do. That doesn't mean that we couldn't do better, we can, but if we want to do better, if we want to do more, we need those in whose hands God has placed this gift to really begin doing it with all of their might. Brother Mike talked about ministries that are growing. If a body is healthy, it is growing, and one of the ways we can tell when something is wrong, is when a ministry quits growing, and it grows stagnant. Ministries

quit growing because people stop putting much into them. They stop thinking about them, cut back on the time they give them.

The fourth ministry is worship. Think about this now. Evangelism: some of you have been added to the body, you are God's gift to the church because He has placed in your heart a drive and passion for saving the lost. Education: some of you have added to the body and you are God's gift to the church because He wants you to be involved in teaching others, in being a guide and a mentor. Fellowship: some of you have gift, a spirit and disposition that makes it natural for you to work at helping people be loved and encouraged and helped. And then worship. Some of you have this calling, God has equipped you to help the church worship together, to sing and pray and praise God and offer Him what's on our hearts.

Worship isn't something that ought to be given the leftovers of our time and talent. What is it that needs to happen in order to help people come together and experience worshipping God? If we are truly going to worship God in spirit and in truth, is there more to think about than just whether or not we are having the Lord's Supper each Lord's Day and that we are singing without the use of instruments? Aren't we sometimes guilty of running in here, grabbing a songbook, saying a few rote prayers, quickly doing the Lord's supper, suffering through another lesson, and maybe dropping a few dollars in the collection, but we leave uninspired and unchanged!

Worship is a pretty simple thing really. It isn't complicated, and I'm not suggesting that we have to figure out all kinds of ways so people will have goose bumps when they leave here! That's not what I'm saying. But I am saying that those in whom God has placed this gift in your hand, then you need to do it with all of your might. When the church's ministry of worship is what it ought to be, everyone is blessed by it.

And then finally, think about **the ministry of service.** Believe it or not, this is the big one. There are all kinds of ways and opportunities to provide a service to others, and those of you who have been gifted by the Lord to provide a service for the body, do it, and do it with all of your might.

Do you remember what the master said to the wise and faithful servants? He said, "*Well done!*" Well done! Does that describe your ministry to the body? Are you an elder? Is He going to say to you, "Well done?" Are you a deacon, have you been given a task or ministry to see after? Will God be able to say to you, "Well done!" Are you serving the needs of the poor? Will you hear God say, "Well done?" Do you help out with the building and grounds? Can God say to you, "Well done?"

Let me ask you a question: give this some serious thought, would you. Do you have a servant's heart and spirit? Think about that, not on the basis of what you might believe about yourself, but on the basis of the ways you are currently serving others. You see, if we really cannot think of any ways that we are currently ministering within the body, then maybe we aren't, and we might not hear the Lord say to us, "Well done!"

So, whatever Your Hand Finds To Do, I want to encourage you this morning to really make a decision that you are going to do it with all of your might. I want us to really put this church to spinning! I want to see every member finding their place of ministry and to find the joy and fulfillment of knowing that they are doing their part, and they are giving it their best. Then the church will grow again, not just because of the demographics and economics of this city, but because God is adding souls to our number day by day.