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People Christ Can Trust by Ben M
Ecclesiastes 12:9-14

We are looking at being a people that Christ can trust. In order to be a people that God can trust with his kingdom we have to take wisdom seriously. In order to do that we have to prioritise the kingdom by putting the kingdom at the forefront of our minds. This is demonstrated by our commitment to the church.

We cannot meet in these circumstances without the royal family being in our thoughts and conversations. There is a whole conversation going on around the world about this family. It is a great privilege as well as a great burden to be in the public eye. We have our own opinions about them, but what do they think and feel about us and the way we react to Prince Philip's death? It's hard to get inside someone else's skin but just by human empathy we should have some common feeling with our fellow human beings. In the book of Ecclesiastes we get to look out at the world through the eyes of the great monarch, King Solomon. After 40+ years of experience he writes about the things he has done (right and wrong) and he looks out at his people to see the condition of the kingdom. They are a wealthy and advantaged nation but what is the spiritual climate like? Are they worthy ambassadors of the kingdom of Heaven? Turn to Ecclesiastes 7:28 "while I was still searching but not finding, I found one upright man among a thousand." This is a personal observation of a particular king looking out at a particular people making a particular observation about what he sees before his very eyes. He's not finding what he is searching for. The thing he is expecting to find in all the people of the kingdom is just one man in a thousand and that is not enough. As an old man, he writes that God created man upright but they have gone in search of many schemes. They are not living as God made them to live. (v 29) The few upright (yashar), straight-up, honest, decent, good, folk are swamped by the tide of unrighteousness. They cannot make the difference he longs to see in the world. But he still remains committed to his original belief in the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom. Through the fear of the Lord we can start to rebuild and become the people God can trust with the kingdom. "The whole duty of man is to fear God and keep his commandments." But the kingdom of Israel is not in safe hands.

When Solomon died the kingdom descended into civil strife from which it could not recover. What he is dealing with is that he as a king he has failed. He built a beautiful temple to bring the people to God in unity. On the outside was power and glory and honour but the inside is a broken man. He wrote the book of Proverbs so his children and courtiers could gain wisdom and instruction. He wants them to be upright, and prudent, clear thinking, wise: Yashar! (proverbs 1:1) He looks at his kingdom and thinks 'we are just a big bunch of fools' who haven't learned the lessons God wants us to learn. The lesson is 'Take wisdom seriously.' Listen to those who have experience. Solomon wrote much about the sin of adultery. He had listened to the teachings of his father and mother who knew from experience the effects of not fearing the Lord.

Solomon inherited a prosperous nation from his father but he also inherited a spiritually wounded nation by the public nature of David's sin. As the upward projectory of prosperity increased so did the downward projectory of the weakening character of the nation. Unless prosperity is matched with righteousness it will send a nation to hell in a handcart at a hundred miles an hour. With growing prosperity came increased selfishness that was rotting the foundations of the kingdom.

The parable of the sower (Mark 4:19) reminds us of the 'worries of life': the more the wealth, the greater the possibility that the word is choked. In our prosperous western society we have to prioritise the kingdom. Everything else must fit in around it or it will collapse. We cannot do this on our own. One in a thousand will not make the change. We need each other. Yashar has to be cultivated together. Take Moses as an example: Under Moses, God gave them the law and they had the opportunity for pure justice around God's revealed will. Moses was the expert in the law but as Jethro (Exodus 18:18) pointed out to him, it was too heavy for Moses. He couldn't do it on his own. He needed to get wise trustworthy people around him to 'build a team'. Ephesians 4:11 shows us the roles of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the building up of the body of Christ so that faithful people will be able to teach others. (2Tim 2:2) The apostles could not do it all. They had to share out the work so that fissures did not appear in the church. They found people full of the Holy Spirit to share the load. We need to be able to say 'help me.' Working with other people can be disappointing. Moses had Miriam and Aaron, the two most trusted people in the kingdom. They muttered against Moses and Aaron built the golden calf. Korah who was trusted to lead worship started an outright rebellion. We don't have a choice because we can't do it on our own. There will be disappointment and frustrations. In Leviticus 8 Moses calls out Aaron and washes him clean. Moses robes him in the garments of the high priest. It is a moving testimony of someone who betrayed Moses so deeply but because of God and his kingdom Moses loved and restored him.

The very people Moses trusted to spy out the land of Canaan came back and said they weren't going into Canaan. This caused them to spend the next forty years of their lives in the wilderness. God had to deal with them. Let God deal with all the hurts and disappointments, frustration and rebellions. Moses remained committed to trusting people and working with them. We all have something inside of us warring with the spirit and we make mistakes. We sin. We fail. We fall. Without a culture of grace and restoration and trying it again then we are lost because "we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

Jesus takes a random group of people who certainly are not examples of 'yashar' and simply starts loving them. He teaches and disciplines them time and again. And they let him down again and again. Jesus never quits. These are the people who go out into all the world and tell the world about Jesus: the one person who never gave up on them, their gracious king.

It's one thing to have a fine temple but it's the people. We all need people we can trust. People need you to be trustworthy. We also have to know that we will let each other down but we must never give up. Be someone people want to hold onto because you are a wise counsellor and faithful friend.

We have a sinless king who is worthy of our loyalty. I pray that as he looks out over this miniscule corner of his glorious kingdom here in Mold that he will find something to gladden his heart: people who love wisdom and are willing to serve together because we care about his kingdom. We care about him our king. We are committed to the place where the rubber hits the road. We are committed to the church.