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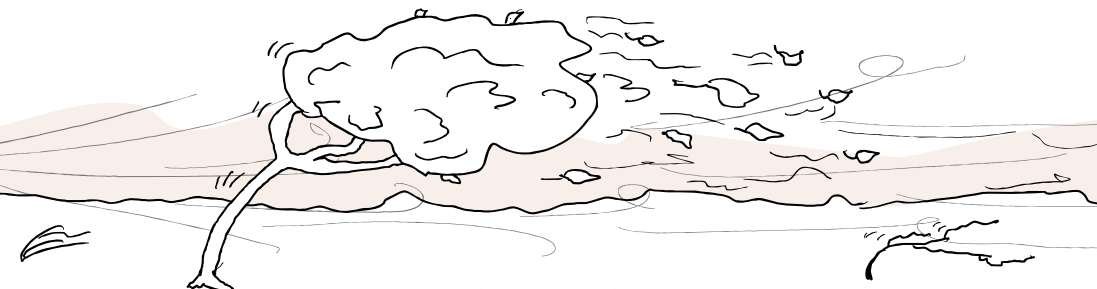




## THE BOOK OF


# Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes is a highly independent, philosophical, thoughtful little book of the Bible. With sober insight into life, it calls into question conventional values such as wealth and career. It advocates simple living, concentrating on important human relationships (Eccles 9:9), and being mindful of God's eternal action (Eccles 3:14–15).



► The name Qoheleth is related to the Hebrew word for “gathering”; hence the Greek title Ecclesiastes. As son of David and king of Jerusalem, Qoheleth is identified with Solomon, the legendary wise king (→ also the “Song of Solomon” following Ecclesiastes).

► “Vanity” is an image for transience. The word is repeated five times in v. 2, stating a theme for the entire book.

 “Isn’t it odd”, someone said to his friend, “that every day just as much news happens in the world as fits in the newspaper?”

### All is vanity (Eccles 1:1–11)

**1**<sup>1</sup>The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

**2**<sup>2</sup>Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

**3**<sup>3</sup>What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

**4**<sup>4</sup>A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains for ever.

**5**<sup>5</sup>The sun rises and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises.

**6**<sup>6</sup>The wind blows to the south, and goes round to the north; round and round goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns.

**7**<sup>7</sup>All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again.

**8**<sup>8</sup>All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

**9**<sup>9</sup>What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; and there is nothing new under the sun.

**10**<sup>10</sup>Is there a thing of which it is said, “See, this is new”? It has been already, in the ages before us.

<sup>11</sup> There is no remembrance of former things,  
nor will there be any remembrance  
of later things yet to happen  
among those who come after.

### Try to make friends (Eccles 2:1–11)

**2** <sup>1</sup> I said to myself, “Come now, I will make a test of pleasure; enjoy yourself.” But behold, this also was vanity.

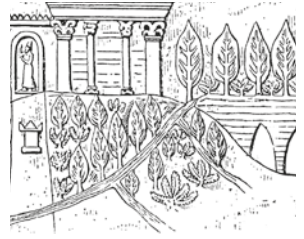
<sup>2</sup> I said of laughter, “It is mad,” and of pleasure, “What use is it?”

<sup>3</sup> I searched with my mind how to cheer my body with wine—my mind still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

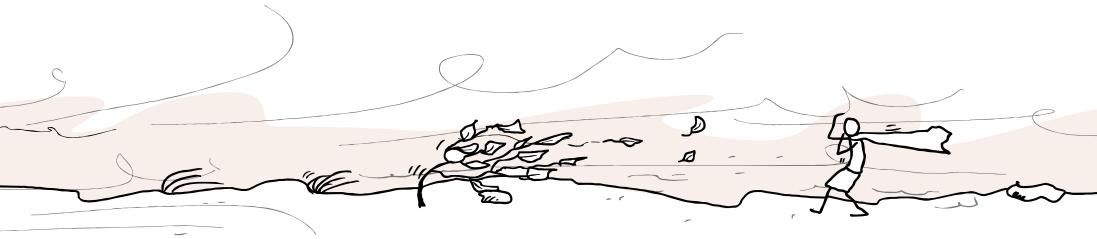
<sup>4</sup> I made great works; I built houses and planted vineyards for myself;

<sup>5</sup> I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

<sup>6</sup> I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.



► Gardens (v. 5) in the largely desert Near East were among the greatest luxury items and status symbols of kings. The hanging gardens of Semiramis in Babylon, like the pyramids of Giza, the Colossus of Rhodes or the sculpture of Artemis in Ephesus, were among the seven wonders of the ancient world.



<sup>7</sup> I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house; I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.

<sup>8</sup> I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces; I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, man’s delight.

<sup>9</sup> So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me.

<sup>10</sup> And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them; I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil.

<sup>11</sup> Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

### A time for everything (Eccles 3)

**3** <sup>1</sup> For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

<sup>2</sup> a time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

<sup>3</sup> a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

<sup>4</sup> a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

” If I cling to things, [God] lets me have my things. If I am empty of things, he fills me with himself.

THOMAS DUBAY, S.M. (1921–2010), Catholic priest, author, and spiritual director



For me, property means being able to start a family. Owning things gives me security. I am a romantic, and it is difficult for me not to want to own a lot of things. Then I remember that things do not satisfy. I experience true joy in my relationship with God.

SHARON



The time to seek God is this life. The time to find God is death. The time to possess God is eternity.

FRANCIS DE SALES



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

# Mark



The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of all the Gospels. It focuses on two main themes: the public ministry and the public suffering of Jesus. The Gospel shows, in the light of the Easter faith, that these two things go together. Jesus laid down his life for his message—and his message is embodied by Jesus himself, by his life and his death.

Anyone who wants to understand where Jesus' authority comes from must look at the helplessness of the Crucified; and anyone who wants to know what the Cross means must begin in Galilee with the Good News of the Kingdom of God (Mk 1:14f.).

Tradition attributes this Gospel to John Mark, a disciple of Peter. Today it is often regarded as the oldest Gospel.

At one point, the evangelist directly addresses those for whom he is writing: "Let the reader understand" (Mk 13:14). That is a motto for the whole Bible.

Mark begins his history of Jesus with John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan. He describes how Jesus proclaims the Good News in word and deed: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk 1:15). Typical elements of Jesus’ teaching are his parables. The evangelist groups them together as examples of Jesus’ preaching:

## JESUS IN GALILEE (MK 6:1–56)

### Disbelief in Nazareth (Mk 6:1–6a)

**6**<sup>1</sup> He went away from there and came to his own country; and his disciples followed him. <sup>2</sup> And on the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue;

and many who heard him were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? What mighty works are wrought by his hands! <sup>3</sup> Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?”

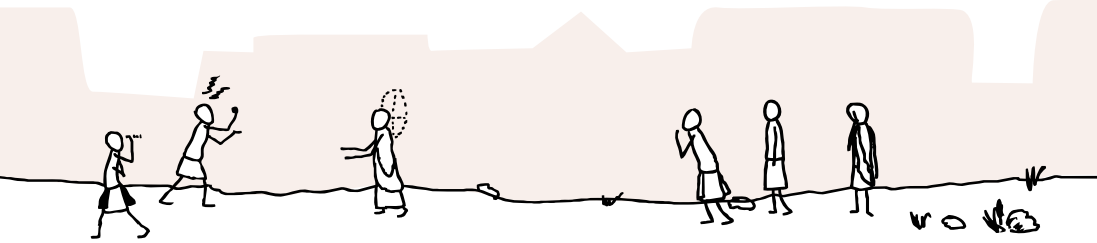
And they took offense at him.

<sup>4</sup> And Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.”



What is disbelief? The inability or unwillingness to imagine how close God can come to us.

► The “brothers” and “sisters” of Jesus are his relatives: they belong to his extended family.



<sup>5</sup> And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them. <sup>6a</sup> And he marveled because of their unbelief.

### The journeys of the disciples (Mk 6:6b–13)

<sup>6</sup> And he went about among the villages teaching.

<sup>7</sup> And he called to him the Twelve, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. <sup>8</sup> He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; <sup>9</sup> but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.

<sup>10</sup> And he said to them, “Where you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. <sup>11</sup> And if any place will not receive you and they refuse to hear you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet for a testimony against them.”

<sup>12</sup> So they went out and preached that men should repent. <sup>13</sup> And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them.

### A false follower (Mk 6:14–29)

<sup>14</sup> King Herod heard of it; for Jesus’ name had become known. Some said, “John the Baptist has been raised from the dead; that is why these powers are at work in him.” <sup>15</sup> But others said, “It is Eli’jah.” And

► In Nazareth, Jesus is sent away. But he does not take offense or give up but rather extends his ministry. He sends out his disciples. For all people are supposed to hear the Good News in high-fidelity audio. The disciples are supposed to say and do precisely what he says and does—so that those who encounter only his disciples and not Jesus himself will be at no disadvantage whatsoever. On their missionary journey, the disciples are supposed to share the poverty of Jesus himself—and thereby give to the people to whom they are sent the opportunity to do a good deed and offer hospitality.

► This Herod is a son of the tyrant who murdered children (Mt 2:16–18).

# Instructions for Use



Here a Scripture passage from another book is cited that offers a deeper insight into the passage you are reading.



The Bible is full of surprises and often full of humor, too. When you see this sign, a light will go on or there will be some fun.



This sign stands for helpful explanations from scriptural scholarship. There are many passages in Sacred Scripture that seem obscure to today's readers. Then, too, one would often simply read past certain passages unless there were an indication of why they were so important.



Saints interpreted the Bible by their lives. Many of them even gave their lives for the truth of the faith. What they have to say often comes from their prayer and meditation.



Testimonies by young people show how the Word of God moved them and changed their lives.



Millions of people have read the Bible and grappled with it. Original quotations by Christians and non-Christians bring to light the relevance and power of God's Word.



God's Word challenges us and changes us. Where especially important questions come up, you find them under this sign.



When you see this sign, you can look up the topic in YOUCAT, the Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church. There you will find in question-and-answer format the basics that a Catholic Christian must know. The Church's knowledge of the faith is drawn from the original document of faith, Sacred Scripture. Readers who want very precise information can look it up in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the great reference work of Church teaching.

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