

CHASING THE WIND

(Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-23)

- Intro: I have a certain fascination with sail boats.
- When I was in Key West last October.
 - #I spent:
 - *Afternoon.
 - *Early evening.
 - +Sailing.
 - +Snorkeling and sailing.
 - +Kayaking and sailing.
 - +Drinking wine and sailing.
 - +Watching the sunset and sailing.
 - #It was great fun.
 - When I was in New Zealand several years ago.
 - #America's Cup yacht races were being held off of Auckland.
 - *We took a harbor tour.
 - +To see the yachts in their boat houses.
 - *I took a ferry across the bay.
 - +Hiked to a scenic lookout.
 - =To watch the races just off of the coast.
 - #Another day we went aboard a 50' sailboat.
 - *Sailing and eating lunch.
 - *Sailing and watching:
 - +Whales.
 - +Porpoises.
 - *I was invited:
 - +To take the helm.
 - +To sail all the way through Auckland Bay.
 - *It was great fun.
 - When I was in the Caribbean on another occasion.
 - #Our cruise ship docked on the island of Antigua.
 - *During race week.
 - #There were sailboats from all over the world.
 - *Watching all the sailboats was great fun.

But sailing can also be quite frustrating.

- When my son Josh was just a toddler.
 - #He, his mom, and I spent a week at Camp Luther.
 - *On Range Line Lake.
 - *In northern Wisconsin.
 - *Sharing a cabin with my parents.

- One morning I signed up for a sailing class.
 - #Taught by one of the camp counselors.
 - *I learned the very basics.
 - +Sailing.
 - +Tacking.
 - =Little 12' Sunfish sailboat.
 - #I learned enough to be allowed:
 - *To check out a Sunfish.
 - *To go sailing by myself.
- Couple of days the sailing was just delightful.
 - #Gentle breeze.
 - #Smooth water.
- But other days were not so pleasant.
 - #One day there was no wind at all.
 - *Not even enough to fill the sail.
 - #Another day there were gusty winds.
 - *Not the best winds for a novice sailor.
 - +But I had gotten confident.
 - =Maybe overconfident.
 - In my sailing skills.
 - *Sailing across the lake was no problem.
 - +Even when the wind died down.
 - =I had enough momentum to keep me going.
 - Until the next gust of wind filled my sail.
 - +It only took about 10 minutes to cross the lake.
 - *Coming back was another matter
 - +You can't sail against the wind, obviously.
 - =You have to sail perpendicular to the wind.
 - Zigging.
 - Zagging.
 - +I didn't have:
 - =Inboard motor.
 - Like the sailboats in:
 - #Key West.
 - #Auckland.
 - =Tow boat.
 - Like the yachts in the America's Cup races.
 - +I never seemed to have enough momentum.
 - =To carry me during the dead periods.
 - When there was no wind.
 - #I would end up dead in the water.
 - +Every time I tried to tack.
 - =It seemed that the wind would die down.
 - I would end up dead in the water.

+ It took me an hour to get back across the lake.
= Hour of chasing the wind.

I. Writer Of Ecclesiastes Knew About Chasing The Wind.

A. We Might Wonder Why The Book Of Ecclesiastes Is Even In The Bible.

1. Qoheleth is the author.
 - a. Preacher.
 - b. Teacher.
 - c. Philosopher.
2. Qoheleth seems:
 - a. To be suffering from a major case of clinical depression.
 - b. To have forgotten to take his anti-depressants.
 - Prozac.
 - Zoloft.
 - Cymbalta.
3. His philosophy.
 - a. Life is useless.
 - b. Vanity of vanities!
 - All is vanity.
 - #Ecclesiastes 1:2.
 - c. Life is an unhappy business.
 - Ecclesiastes 1:13.
 - d. Life is like chasing the wind.
 - Ecclesiastes 1:14.
4. There are a couple of bumper stickers.
 - a. "HE WHO DIES WITH THE MOST TOYS WINS!"
 - Philosophy of the rich man in our gospel lesson (Luke 12:13-21).
 - b. "HE WHO DIES WITH THE MOST TOYS IS STILL DEAD!"
 - This last is the viewpoint of Qoheleth.
 - #Negative.
 - #Cynical.
 - #Pessimistic.
 - Have you ever been around such a person?
 - #Critic.
 - #Sour puss.
 - #Nay-sayer.
 - #Fault-finder.
 - *Not much fun, are they?
5. So why is Ecclesiastes in the Bible?
 - a. Because there are people in the world like Qoheleth.
 - b. Because we are sometimes like Qoheleth.
 - If not all of the time.
 - At least some of the time.

- c. God is saying:
 - “I understand that.”
 - “I can deal with that.”

B. Qoheleth Chased The Wind In Three Ways.

1. Wisdom.

- a. If he could just understand:
 - Why things are the way they are.
 - Why people are the way they are.
- b. World would make sense.
 - All he came up with was:
 - #Generations come.
 - *Generations go.
 - +But the earth remains forever.
 - #Sun comes up.
 - *Sun goes down.
 - *Round and round goes the sun.
 - +Back to where it first began.
 - #Wind blows south.
 - *Wind blows north.
 - +Back to where it came from.
 - #Rivers flow into the ocean.
 - *Yet the rivers are never empty.
 - *And the oceans never overflow.
 - #What has been is what will be.
 - *What has been done is what will be done.
 - +There’s nothing new under the sun.
- Pursuing wisdom was all just chasing the wind.
- #Ecclesiastes 1:3-9.

2. Pleasure.

- a. Eat.
- b. Drink.
- c. Be merry.
 - After awhile.
 - #This got old, too.
 - There was nothing new under the sun.
 - #Pursuing pleasure was all just chasing the wind.

3. Wealth.

- a. Until Qoheleth said:
 - “Wait a minute!”
 - “What’s the use of this?”
 - “I work and work to get ahead.”
 - “One day I’m going to die and it will all belong to someone else.”
- b. Pursing wealth was all just chasing the wind.

II. Are We Chasing The Wind?

A. With Work.

1. I once had a summer job working in a furniture factory.

a. I started out working outside.

-Scraping.

-Painting.

#Window frames.

*I had to be careful not to scrape too hard.

+Window frames were pretty rotten.

+If I scraped too hard.

=I was afraid I might pull the whole window out.

b. One day it rained.

-Foreman asked me if I wanted to work inside that day.

#It wasn't so much a question.

#It wasn't just for that one day.

*It turned out to be for the rest of the summer.

-He put me to work at a lathe.

#Sanding:

*Table legs.

*Chair spindles.

#Other machines were semi-automated.

*You put in:

+Strips of sand paper.

+Table legs.

*You turned on the machine.

+Machine did the rest.

#Not my machine.

*I put in the table legs.

*I held the sand paper in my fingers.

+10 hours a day.

=Monday through Thursday.

+8 hours.

=On Friday.

+5 hours.

=On Saturday.

*I don't know which was more numb.

+My fingers.

+My brain.

#I thought I was chasing the wind.

c. Next summer I worked in the same factory.

-But in the finishing department.

#Scuffing the furniture.

*Between finishing coats.

- It wasn't as physically exhausting.
 - #Even though we worked with ovens on three sides.
 - *It was 110°.
- It wasn't as mind-numbing.
 - #Because I worked with three other people.
 - *There was somebody to talk to.
 - #But three months still seemed like forever.
 - *How anyone could work in that place for:
 - = 10 years.
 - = 20 years.
 - = 30 years.
 - *Mind-numbing to me.
- I felt like I was chasing the wind.

2. Those who are chasing the wind at work.
 - a. Can identify with Ecclesiastes.
 - b. Qoheleth felt he was chasing the wind.

B. With Material Things.

1. Hoping that your next purchase will add meaning to your life.
 - a. New outfit.
 - b. New tool.
 - c. New iPhone.
 - d. New Lexus.
 - But if that's what gives meaning to life.
 - #Aren't we just chasing the wind?
2. Hoping that your retirement savings will last.
 - a. Retirement nest egg for some of you.
 - Shrank during the recession.
 - #Of the last two years.
 - Maybe you're wondering if all those years of:
 - #Working.
 - #Saving.
 - #Investing.
 - *Was just chasing the wind.
 - b. Retired ELCA pastors.
 - Have had their pensions cut 9%.
 - #This year.
 - #Each of the next two years.
 - How many of them look back on their years of ministry.
 - #Wonder if:
 - *At least financially.
 - *They were just chasing the wind.

- c. I'm not retired yet.
 - But I'm getting there.
 - Sometimes I look at the quarterly statements.
 - #From:
 - *Board of Pensions.
 - *My investments.
 - *My savings.
 - #I wonder if I'm just chasing the wind.

C. With The Environment.

- 1. Those who are trying to clean up the Gulf of Mexico.
 - a. Trying to clean:
 - Water.
 - Beaches.
 - Wetlands.
 - b. Trying to save:
 - Seafood.
 - Sea turtles.
 - Waterfowl.
- 2. God bless them, every one.
 - a. I wonder how many feel like they are chasing the wind.

D. With Our Faith.

- 1. I recently watched the movie *Doubt*.
 - a. Made for theaters in 2008.
 - But I saw it on a TV movie channel.
 - b. Stars:
 - Philip Seymour Hoffman.
 - #As Father Flynn.
 - *Roman Catholic priest.
 - + In the Bronx, NY.
 - + In 1964.
 - Meryl Streep.
 - #As Sister Aloysius.
 - *Roman Catholic sister.
 - *Principal of the elementary school.
 - + In Father Flynn's parish.
 - 2. Father Flynn.
 - a. Well-loved by his parishoners.
 - b. Preaches a sermon on doubt.
 - “Every person of faith has doubts.”
 - “It's okay to have doubts.”

3. Sister Aloysius doesn't seem to have any doubts.
 - a. Suspects that Father Flynn is abusing one of the boys in school.
 - b. Has no evidence.
 - c. Convinced her instincts are right.
 - d. Lies to get him removed as priest of that parish.
 - In fact, he is promoted to another parish.
4. Younger nun couldn't understand how Sister Aloysius could do what she did.
 - a. With no evidence.
 - b. Lying to get what she thought was right.
5. At the end of the movie Sister Aloysius:
 - a. Breaks down and cries.
 - b. Says:
 - “I have doubts.”
 - “I have such doubts.”
 - #Doubts about what?
 - *She might have been wrong:
 - +About Father Flynn.
 - +About herself.
 - =Using unethical means to get what she wanted.
 - *That's never really resolved in the movie.
6. Spiritually.
 - a. Was Sister Aloysius just chasing the wind?
 - b. Are we just chasing the wind?

E. Wind Chases Us.

1. Hebrew word *ruach* means:
 - a. Wind.
 - b. Breath.
 - c. Spirit.
 - Holy Spirit.
2. When I was sailing that little 12' Sunfish on Range Line Lake
 - a. I might have thought I was catching the wind.
 - b. But maybe it's more accurate to say:
 - Wind caught me.
 - Wind caught my sails.
 - #Without the wind catching me.
 - *I would have been dead in the water.

3. Jesus ended up dead:
 - a. In the water.
 - b. On the cross.
 - c. In the grave.
 - Because we have done so much chasing of the wind.
 - #Mentally.
 - #Physically.
 - #Materially.
 - #Spiritually.
 - *We were dead:
 - + In the water.
 - + In our pursuit of:
 - = Meaning.
 - = Pleasure.
 - = Security.
 - = Salvation.
 - Our chasing of the wind.
 - #Leaves us dead in the water.
 - #Left Jesus dead in the water.
4. On Easter morning the wind caught him.
 - a. Breath.
 - b. Holy breath.
 - c. Holy Spirit breath.
 - Propelling him:
 - #From the grave.
 - #Back into the world.
 - #Into the future.
 - #Into our hearts.
 - Propelling us:
 - #To the font.
 - #To the table.
 - #Into the world.
 - #Into the future.
 - *Sailing where the wind blows.
 - *Sailing where the Spirit blows.

Concl: Don't chase the wind.

Let the wind catch you.