



## **Ecclesiastes 1:1-11**

### **“What’s New?”**

**5/29/2022**

Speaker: Pastor Drew Hunsley

Anaheim Hills | CA

RockCC.com

## **Transcript**

23:16

Good morning. It's good to see all of you guys. It's good to, I look around and I see some familiar faces and I see some unfamiliar faces around the room as well. So thank you guys for being here and I'd love to catch you afterward.

23:30

So I'm going to be either floating around up here or hopefully I'll make it back to the back so that you can't escape without catching me. But I'd love to get to know you a little bit. So this weekend is a special weekend.

23:41

I don't know if I'm sure most of you are aware, but you know it's important for us to have memorials or monuments or different things that we can look back to in life that remind us of significant moments, significant people or things or events that have happened.

23:56

So this weekend is Memorial Day and so we want to just take a moment and thank all of our veterans who have served our country. As I think about the service that troops have given as they've gone and served our country, you know there's few things in life that I can think of that have a more clear biblical application than someone that's willing to go and to give their life in the service of another.

24:23

It's an incredible picture for us as we consider those who have fallen, who have given their lives in the sacrifice for someone else. So we're thankful for those, we remember those who have fallen and we're thankful for those who serve that were willing to go and to give their lives even if perhaps they got to come home.

24:39

So thank you to all of our veterans. Let's give them a quick round of applause. We also, if you guys weren't able to be there last weekend, we also had another memorial kind of a monument moment that we were able to experience last weekend as we celebrated baptism.

24:59

We had a couple of different people that were baptized last week. So for those of you guys that weren't able to be there, this is Paris Moukabaa on the right and Ariana Sellarole on the left. So it was an incredible opportunity for us to just celebrate what God was doing.

25:17

You know our church exists, our mission, is to help people to know Jesus. Well that's what that stands for, right? That's what baptism, know Jesus, follow Jesus, serve Jesus, and obey Jesus is our mission, right?

25:30

But part of that is helping people to have a relationship with Him. And baptism is our clear and public way of declaring before friends, before family, before the world that we belong to Jesus. That Jesus has come into our lives and has changed us and has made us into a new creation.

25:47

And so as we were able to celebrate that with them last week, if you're not able to be there, you weren't able to be there last week, you missed out. But the good news is that we're going to have another service in a few months.

25:58

So if you hear about it and want to come, it's an encouraging time. I'd encourage you, please make sure that you can be there and support the people that are being baptized, that are declaring that they belong to Jesus.

26:09

And maybe you've never done that before, and so it'd be an opportunity for you in a couple of months as we do this all over again, to have your opportunity to publicly declare, I'm all in with Jesus.

26:22

So as we get started this morning, I'm going to invite you to make your way to Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes chapter one in your Bible or in your scripture journal, if you picked up one of those scripture journals.

26:35

So I know that there are many who wanted to pick up a scripture journal and weren't able to last week because we ran out. So encouragement for you: we've got them ordered. We've got more coming on the way.

26:46

So if you missed out on that, make sure you take your notes on a scratch piece of paper or something this week, and you can drop those into your new scripture journal that'll be here by next weekend.

26:56

So you should be able to pick one of those up. But as we jump in, we're going to make our way to Ecclesiastes chapter one, and we're starting in verse one this week. So last week we had our round table discussion where we had our elders kind of share just the overview of the book, some of the details of what the book's about, how we need to look at it, some of the details of what the book is about, and how we're prepared to study this new and interesting book.

27:23

So if you weren't able to be here with us last week, I'd encourage you to go back and check our website because I think that's going to be a valuable resource to you as we continue through this book for the next few months.

27:34

But as we study Ecclesiastes, if you missed that, just to give you just the brief version so that you're on the same page with the rest of us this week, the book of Ecclesiastes is an important book for us to study because the book of Ecclesiastes is a study that is honest about the troubles of life. As I was studying this week, I saw this, I thought this was a humorous description of the book of Ecclesiastes. Think of Ecclesiastes as the only book in the Bible that was written on a Monday morning, right?

28:03

There's so many places in scripture where we see this optimistic view of life, but Ecclesiastes was kind of written with that Monday morning, "Here we go again", kind of an outlook. So as we read this book though, I believe it's gonna help us to be honest with God and with ourselves about the problems of life and how do we face those things?

28:24

Anyone that's ever been through more than just a few experiences in life. We've got young people in here, guys, teenagers, I'm disappointed, but gonna have to break the news to you. Life's hard, right?

28:35

I'm sure you've already kind of figured that out by this point, even by the time you're 13 or 15. We all know that life is difficult sometimes, right? That there's problems that exist in life. And so as we look at this life, if we look at this life and think it's going to fulfill us, well, it's gonna come up short a lot of the times, isn't it?

28:55

So as we study Ecclesiastes, I think it's good for us because it's going to help us to learn what will happen if we choose to just chase after whatever it is that the world has to offer to us. Because the world ultimately, it gives us this illusion of something that's gonna fulfill us, but then ultimately it leaves us empty.

29:12

This is where we begin the book. As we pick up the study this week, as we begin chapter one, verse one, what we're gonna see is this man described as the preacher in verse one. He has money, he has had pleasure, he has had more human wisdom than was possessed by anyone else.

29:31

But in the midst of all of it, all of it ended in frustration. All of it ended in emptiness. And the reality, the sad reality, is that the same result is coming for all of us if we chase after those things, those things in life that we think will give us meaning, will give us purpose, will give us fulfillment, but money never can accomplish that.

29:52

Power can never accomplish that. Success or relationships or anything else can never accomplish those things. So, as we look at this book, what we're gonna see is what seems like sometimes a discouraging picture, but there's also some really encouraging details in the midst of it if we take our time and look for them.

30:11

Last week, if you weren't here with us, the Bible Project video that we watched that kind of gave us the summary of the book, it touched on one specific thing that I think it's important for us to think about, but just so that we're all on the same page so that you guys don't get confused when I keep saying this title, this word over and over again, there's some disagreement about who the author of the book of Ecclesiastes is.

30:34

Now historically, there's a huge number of people who think it was King Solomon who wrote this book, and that's entirely possible. There's so many places in the book of Ecclesiastes where we look at it, we go, well, that's gotta be Solomon, right? Oh, he was rich, he was wise, he was a king under the line of David. Well, all these things, it's certainly possible, but he's not identified clearly as the author in the book of Ecclesiastes like he is in the book of Proverbs, right?

31:01

There's other places that as we study through the book of Ecclesiastes, we're gonna see that there's some things that don't necessarily line up perfectly. Maybe Solomon said them, but it doesn't make perfect sense if he did.

31:13

So, in Ecclesiastes five, just as one example, the preacher in Ecclesiastes criticizes kings and their officials for being wealthy and criticizes them for their oppression of the poor. Well, that doesn't make a lot of sense for us if Solomon said that, right?

31:28

So regardless of this, I think it's important for us. We talked a few weeks ago. Hopefully, we get this in just a second. So, as we look at the book of Ecclesiastes, do you guys know who the ultimate author of the book of Ecclesiastes is?

31:43

It's God, right? We believe that the Bible, that every word in this book is inspired and is breathed out by God, is given to us directly from God. So as we know that there were different humans that kind of served as the hand that wrote down the writings, we know whether it was Solomon, whether it was some other individual that kind of took on this Solomon persona that some people think maybe happened.

32:07

Regardless of who the hand was that wrote it down. We know that it's from God, right? So as we look at this incredible book, I think it's important for us to remember that they are equally inspired by God no matter who the hand was that wrote them down.

32:22

But in Ecclesiastes 12, verse 11, right at the very end of the book, it reminds us that the wisdom of this book, that the wisdom of God that is in this book was given to us by one shepherd. Well, that means God, right?

32:34

It comes from God. So in order for us to avoid some confusion, avoid some disagreement that may exist there if we get too far into those weeds, my plan for as we study through this book is not to refer to the teacher, the preacher, by any specific name.

32:51

So maybe it's Solomon, maybe it's not, but the term, the Hebrew term that's written in verse one that's translated in our Bibles as the preacher is the term Qoheleth, it means the preacher, right? The teacher or the preacher.

33:05

So you're gonna hear me refer to the author of this book many times, the voice that's speaking in this book. I'm simply gonna use the term, the preacher, or Qoheleth as we study through. So it's not his name, but rather his title, but that's what we've got.

33:19

So we're gonna identify him by that. So I'm gonna invite you guys to read along. We're gonna read chapter one, starting in verse one, we're gonna go down through verse 11 together as we follow along in your copy of God's words or on the screen.

33:32

Starting in Ecclesiastes 1:1, it says, the words of the preacher, the son of David, the king of Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the preacher. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. By what does a man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

33:48

A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises and the sun goes down and hastens to the place where it rises. The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north.

34:00

Around and around goes the wind. And on its circuits, the wind returns. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full. To the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. All things are full of weariness.

34:15

A man cannot utter it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. What has been is what will be. What has been done is what will be done. There is nothing new under the sun.

34:28



Is there a thing of which it is said, see, this is new? It has been already in the ages before us. There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after.

34:42

These are the words of our Lord. Would you guys pray with me this morning? God, we thank you for, God, for giving us your perfect word in this book. God, as we consider, as we study the words of the preacher this morning, God, we pray that you would give us eyes that would see what you have for us.

34:59

God, that you would give us hearts that are prepared to hear this message, what seems like on the surface, a discouraging message of the hopelessness of life, that the cycles of life that we just see come and go and come and go seemingly with no obvious progress.

35:18

But God, in the midst of all those things, God, we pray that you would help us to realize that there is a vertical nature to the existence that we live as well. God, that we look at these things and as we look at them under the sun, they seem to be meaningless or vanity.

35:32

But God, in the midst of all these things, God, we pray that you would help us to fix our eyes on you as well. God, that you would speak to us and that you would use this time. So we give it to you and we pray that you would use it for your glory.

35:43

That's in your son's name we pray, amen. Alright, well as we jump in, what we're going to see in a few different places is this unrest from the preacher. So the first thing that we see in the first three verses is the preacher identifying himself as the one that's speaking in this book, but asking the question, how much does it pay, right?

36:05

How much does it pay? So the book starts and then the book ends with this same summary statement. It's the preacher's thesis that he kind of presents and then argues throughout the book. So as he presents this whole idea, he says at the very beginning, he says, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

36:23

It's all vanity is the argument that he's going to make over and over again. So this word that has been translated here as vanity has been translated in different ways, depending on which version of the English Bible you've got sitting there in your lap, you've got a couple of different options, a couple of different words.

36:38

So it's important for us to have a good understanding of this word though, as we prepare to study this book, because a good understanding of this word is going to give us kind of the whole meaning of the book.

36:49

As we look at this word, it's translated as vanity. Some translations, I think the NIV describes it as meaningless, saying meaningless, meaningless, it's all meaningless. So I don't like that use of the term meaningless because there are things that are mentioned in the book of Ecclesiastes that, well, they do have meaning, right?

37:08

There are moments where it talks about family, it talks about hard work, it talks about these different things, and you know, those are relevant things, those are meaningful things if they're kept in their proper place.

37:20

But if we translate this word, this Hebrew word hevel, as vanity, or some translations will say smoke, I think that's a better translation for us to keep in mind because what it gives us is this picture that we're going to see over and over again throughout Ecclesiastes.

37:36

It tells us that whatever it is, these things in life that we're looking to, they're not meaningless, but they're this idea of smoke, of vapor, as some translations will say. These things of life, if they are our goal, if we take things of this world, whether it's power, whether it's money, whether it's success or relationships or whatever other things are mentioned in the book, if we take one of those things and we remove it from its proper place in our lives,

38:02

and we put it as the most important thing in our life, you know what it's going to do? It's going to ultimately fail us. It's ultimately going to leave us empty because that thing that may be a good thing in its proper place, if we make our lives focused on just that one thing, it can't bear under the weight of that pressure.

38:23

The reality is that money was never meant to be the sole focus of why we exist in life. And so while it's necessary, while it's useful for certain things, if that's the goal, how much is enough? When is someone ever happy or content with having a certain dollar amount?

38:42

Think of that dollar amount. What's that dollar amount? And as you think of that in your head, you know what? If you were to ever achieve that number, you know how many more dollars you would want? You'd want at least one more, right? There's always that desire to chase after, I need another one. I need another one. I need another one. So these things that are described as vanity are described as smoke, as all things just being vanity throughout the book of Ecclesiastes.

39:07

It reminds us that these things of life, if we take those things and we make them the most important thing, if we place a burden on their shoulders that they were never meant to bear, well, they're going to leave us empty.

39:19

They're going to slip through our fingers in the same way that smoke. As we look at smoke, we think, oh, well, we can reach out and touch it. We can reach out and grab it. But as you try to grab smoke, what happens?

39:30

You get your arms around it and it's just, it's never really there. It's never really able to be what you thought it was. It's this enigma that we think we understand and then as we try to grasp it, it just slips through our fingers like smoke.

39:44

So as we see this argument throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, we're going to see the preacher talk about the emptiness of life. We're going to see him talk about this vanity that exists. And from the beginning words of the book, we see this idea already start to show up, right?

40:00

In verse two, he states that the theme of this book, his motto for life, he says, vanity of vanities, it's all vanity. But then in verse three, we see him start to make this case for the emptiness of our existence under the sun.

40:15

He asks in verse three, what does a man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? We actually see this same question come up again later in Ecclesiastes in a few different places, but Ecclesiastes 3:9 asks this same question.

40:30

What gain has the worker from his toil? Jesus even makes a similar argument in the book of Luke that we were just studying over the past several months. In Luke 9, Jesus says, for what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

40:46

Talking about this idea of profit, what does it pay? There's this interesting idea that we see here. See, the preacher is a very practical person. The voice that we're going to see throughout Ecclesiastes is very practical and looks at things very tangibly a lot of the time.

41:03

And so as he's looking at these things of life, he's asking the question, what's the point? What does it pay? How much is this worth to me? Well, that's a relevant question. It's actually this question, what does it profit a person or how much will a man gain?

41:18

Comes up over 10 times that I was able to find in the book of Ecclesiastes. We're going to see this idea come up again and again. So the preacher was making sure that he was going to get a good return for his work.

41:29

Are the time and the energy and the things that I'm investing in different areas of this life, are they going to pay what I think they should pay? Are they going to ultimately reward me with what I think they should reward me?

41:41

Is it worth it? It's kind of the question that he's asking, right? Is it worth it? What will I have to show for all my work, for all my investment, for everything that I pour into something? You know, really that's a question that a lot of people in this room ask every morning when they get up.

41:57

Monday morning comes, right? And you have to answer the question for yourself, all right, it's time to get out of bed and go to work again. Is it worth it? Do they pay me enough? Do I love my job where it's something that I go and enjoy doing?

42:10

Does it make a difference in the world? Is it worth it? Is it a question that we have to ask and answer every single time we invest our work into whatever the project may be? Is it worth it? Does the pay match the amount of work that I'm going to put into this?

42:27

Some people usually, as they look at work, there's a lot of people that are willing to do hard work if the pay is there, right? If it's worth it to them, people are willing to do hard work. I know I look around the room, there's many of you that are willing to do hard work if it has a valuable payoff.

42:42

See, if we evaluate whether or not something is worth doing, that's important for us to ask that question and to answer. But the preacher, as he talks about this idea of, well, you know, if we work a little bit harder, then it should pay a little bit more.

42:57

The preacher is starting to doubt whether or not that's actually true in life, whether that actually exists in the world. Is it really that if we work harder, it pays more, and if we invest more of our time, well, then it pays off the way that we think it should?

43:11

He asks us to consider, in verse three, if the things that we invest our lives in, consider what will we have to show for all of those efforts? When life is over, what difference will it make? The things that we poured our lives into, are they actually going to pay off like we think they will?

43:30

Verse three, what does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? The answer, as he asks this question, he asks the question, what does it serve a man? What does it gain a person? The answer that he gives, though, in the book of Ecclesiastes, is that it gives us absolutely nothing, right?

43:50

There's these cycles that go through life. He asks this question in order to draw us in. Good preachers always ask questions at the beginning to draw us in, right? We've got a pastor, Pastor Dave, who always starts with, let me ask you a question, right?

44:04

He does that to draw us in, to get us curious, to kind of pique our interest as we're listening to whatever the conversation is. So the preacher does the same thing in Ecclesiastes. What does it benefit a person for all the work that they do, all that they invest their lives into?

44:21

But the reality is that he's about to ask that question, then proceed to answer it. He knows what the answer to that question is. Coheleth believes that as far as he could tell, all of the things that people work hard for, all of the things that they chase after, they never actually amount to anything.

44:38

They never actually gain anything. And so to prove this idea that we have nothing to show for all of our effort, the preacher lists this series of things that seem to go and go and go, but never actually go anywhere or gain anything.

44:53

In this week's passage, we see this. It's this poem that shows up. And from verses four through 11, we see a couple of different things. We see in the first half of this poem that he gives examples from creation, from the natural world of things that go and go and go, but never actually go anywhere or accomplish anything.

45:12

The second half gives examples from human experience that people chase after and go and do things, but never actually amount to anything. So in the first little section, we see in verses four through seven, we see this idea that nature is going in circles.

45:27

Let's start in verse four, we'll read that again. It says in verse four, a generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises and the sun goes down and hastens to the place where it rises.

45:40

The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north, around and around goes the wind. And on its circuits, the wind returns. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full. To the place where the streams flow, they flow again.

45:54

I was curious this week, and so I did very, very little research, but a quick Googling told me that people estimate that there's been somewhere between like 100 billion and 120 billion people that have lived on the earth during human existence.

46:09

As we think about 100 billion people, roughly, that have walked the earth, that have lived throughout the course of history, I want you to think how many of those people have made an impact that still impacts us today?

46:23



How many of those people do we remember that we can look back in our history books or we can look at the tangible progress of our lives and think that person made a difference in my life today? How many of them have we heard of?

46:36

Or how many of them do we even remember that they existed? Seemingly, verse 4 kind of makes this same argument. It tells us that there's this endless trail of people that comes and that goes, but that the earth remains forever.

46:49

The idea that the mountains are gonna be there even after we're gone. The tides are gonna come in and go out and come in and go out, whether we're here or whether we're not. Really, our existence doesn't change the realities of nature a whole lot, does it?

47:03

Even talking about nature itself, he makes the argument that the daily journey of the sun seems pointless, right? The sun comes up in the morning, it rises in the east over here on this side of the building.

47:14

It's gonna make its way as it races across the sky and sets over here on the west side of the building. And as we see it do that, you know what it does while it's nighttime? It races around to the east side again and it's gonna come up again the next morning and go over and then races around.

47:29

Day after day after day, there's movement, but there's no progress. Day after day, the sun rises and the sun falls. The tides come in and the tides go out. The rivers race to the sea as we have all these different water sources that feed the sea, but the sea never fills up because the water cycle, we know how that all works, it continues to go back and come and go and come and go and come and go.

47:55

This movement is repetitive, but it's not progressive, right? In the same way that we see in life, life can be the same way. It seems like at times everything can just be in a rut. Things don't actually, we do lots of things, but they don't ever seem to bring progress in life.

48:11

What's the point? What's the profit? What does it benefit a man for all of the work? I was thinking about that this week as I was studying and preparing for all of this and it seems to be especially true in my life.

48:24

Every time I have a day off and I spend a day at home, the reality is that we do lots of things, but it doesn't ever seem to amount to any progress, right? You guys will be able to testify to that. I think last Monday, as I was having a day off and at home, we ran like 12 loads of laundry.

48:40

We got five kids, so there's all this laundry to be done and so we're constantly doing and doing and doing and so we run all these loads of laundry and wash all the sheets and the blankets and the towels and did everything and we get to the end of it and you know by the time the laundry process was done, you know what was back in the basket?

48:57

There was probably a couple more loads of laundry, right? As we feed all of these kids, you know, it's important. We feed them and we put the dishes in the sink and all right, we got a full sink full of dishes.

49:08

So we wash the dishes and then the next time, it's dinner time, there's another sink full of dishes. There's these moments, there's these things that we think we see progress in

different areas of life, but whether it's the honey do list that you check off and check off and check off and guys, it always seems like it grows at the bottom of the list.

49:26

Faster than we're able to check off the things at the top of the list, right? There's these things where just because there's things that are happening doesn't mean that there's ever actually progress that happens.

49:37

There's always more meals to prepare, there's always more clothes to wash, there's always more floors to scrub. We see these cycles as we continually do and do and do, but what progress is there? What change is there?

49:51

We see in verses eight through 11, the argument that there's nothing new under the sun. Verse eight, the preacher continues on. He says, all things are full of weariness. A man cannot utter it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

50:08

What has been is what will be. What has been done is what will be done. And there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, see, this is new. It has been already in the ages before us.

50:20

There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after. This second half of this opening poem that we see in our passage this week gives us some examples from human experience, right?

50:37

Examples of movement, but not necessarily progress. So as we look around at the world around us, as we look at the existence of other people, even as we perhaps consider our own life experiences, the point is the same.

50:49

There's not really ever anything to gain. There's nothing that we actually ever benefit as we go and do all the things that we do in life, right? There's a notable example of that weariness of all things in verse eight.

51:01

He says, all things are full of weariness. A man cannot utter it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. People are always looking around and watching stuff. People are always listening to things.

51:13

This is especially true in living in the age that we live in now that I've heard described as "the golden age of content," right? There is always another album to listen to. There is always another show to chase after.

51:26

Every day we see this endless stream of visual images as we turn on the TV, you can cut on Netflix, and there is always a new option for you to get on there and watch. If you get on and watch YouTube, there's always more.

51:38

As you get on Instagram and start scrolling and scrolling and scrolling, there's always more stuff to look at. There's always more things to watch. And we always have that constant stream for our ears as well, don't we?

51:50

Anybody ever tried to find the bottom of Spotify or iTunes before? You gotta go for a long, long, long time as we scroll and scroll and scroll. Yet even after all of our looking, after all of our listening, our eyes and our ears are never satisfied, are they?

52:07

Anybody ever gotten caught in that loop where you find yourself just scrolling and scrolling and scrolling, and then you look up and like, how did an hour go by? As I was just sitting here soaking an image after image, thing after thing, yes, many of us can probably answer the question.

52:23

Yes, Netflix, I am still watching, right? So as we watch these things, as we see these things, we just scroll and scroll, watch and watch, listen and listen, but the question, as we look back on that now, sitting here with kind of a clear mind, well, what did that benefit us?

52:39

What changed? What have we gained? What have we accomplished by watching all of those things? Nobody's ever going to hit the bottom of Netflix or the bottom of Instagram or the bottom of YouTube. Just like a sea is never filled as the streams run into the sea, our eyes are never filled no matter how much we watch and watch and watch.

52:57

Our ears are never filled no matter how much we listen and listen and listen. As we continue on with this idea, Ecclesiastes 1:10 essentially tells us there's nothing new under the sun. It's just reruns.

53:10

It just gives us over and over again. Verse 10, he asks, is there a thing of which it is said, see, this is new. It has already been in the ages before us. Essentially, we see this statement that it's all just reruns.

53:24

It's all just things that have come. We've already seen everything that we're ever going to see. This is such a sweeping broad claim that I think many of us would be tempted. You're probably... I see some of your eyes.

53:36

You're sitting there going, no, there's things that are new. There's always things that are new. The new iPhone, whatever it is, is getting ready to come out. No, the new pair of pants that I've been keeping my eye on.

53:48

The new pair of shoes. No, the new movie that's getting ready to come out. There's all kinds of new progress that we see in different places. People like to talk about progress. We like to talk about economic progress.

53:59

We like to talk about technological progress and advancements. We like to talk about all these different improvements as we can go home and many of us can just talk and say, hey, turn the lights on. And our house magically turns the lights on.

54:12

Progress, right? But we look at all these things. Ecclesiastes argues there's never any actual progress. It's just the same old, same old, time and time and time again. I wanna consider and work this out for just a minute with you guys.

54:25

Let's think about communication for a minute. Many of us have these incredible devices in our pockets. We have cell phones in our pockets and we look at these things and we go, no, no, no, that's an incredible advancement that's happened in the last 20 or 30 years or whatever it's been.

54:39

We can pick up a phone that's living in our pocket and we can call and talk to people on the other side of the world. Most incredibly, for many of us, as we've become more and more dependent on it in the last few years, we can video call.

54:51

You can hold up your device and see the person on the other end and have a real -time conversation with somebody. These are incredible advancements that have happened in communication in the last five, 10, 20, however many years it's been, right?

55:05

So we look at all of these things. Cell phones and video calling may be a legitimate advance of the 21st century, but there's also something that's kind of familiar about it. As we look at these things and go, see, our generation has done something that the generations before were never able to do.

55:21

I think we probably feel very similar to the people who wrote on a cave wall for the first time. Look, we took what we've been talking about and put it down in writing so that others can come along afterwards and see it.

55:33

The person who wrote the first book that was written, that people were able to go and to read their thoughts. Perhaps the first moment that somebody was able to pick up a book off of the line of the printing press as books were able to be made in mass production, there were these advancements in communication.

55:49

Whether it was the first telegraph, whether it was the first telephone call, all these things, we have these advancements in communication and there's something very similar in a way about our advancements today.

56:01

And we look back and go, oh, they've had advancements like this in the past. We look at these things and even more important than the fact that other advancements have existed in the past, the people who made those advancements years and years ago, the people that come up with these things today that we've been able to enjoy, well, we still have the same problems today with our cell phones in our pockets that people did hundreds if not thousands of years ago with no cell phone even in the idea world.

56:33

They had no idea that a cell phone would ever exist. But you know what? The problems that many of them wrestled with are the same problems that many of us wrestle with. We like to think, no, no, no, we're more advanced.

56:44

We've moved beyond those moments, but you know what? They fought with their spouse and we often fight with our spouse. They had to deal with economic issues and finding all of the resources that they needed to meet their daily needs.

56:59

And you know what? We do the same thing sometimes, don't we? Even though we like to think that we've moved beyond, we have the same basic problems that they had, the same moral deficiencies that they had, we have.

57:10

The same underlying issues that we face every day. Oh, they're not new at all. People have been facing those for generation after generation. And just as we look back at history and we realize that there's many who have come and gone and we have forgotten their existence, one day in the future, we will be forgotten as well.

57:33



It's encouraging, right? Teenagers, you guys are like ready to go take the world now, right? Everything that we do in life, eventually somebody's gonna forget about it. It's not gonna matter, it's not gonna exist.

57:44

Everything is terrible. Cool, right? Hooray, that's not a good graduation speech, right? We don't wanna send you guys out of here like that. But the argument that Ecclesiastes is making, he says, vanity of vanities, it's all vanity, it's all smoke, it's all going to leave us empty.

58:01

Why would we chase after all these things? All of these things are full of weariness. I hope you're encouraged that you came to church this morning, right? You're ready to leave now fulfilled and ready to take on the world because we've sat here and talked about how terrible life is for a few minutes, right?

58:19

See, there's this crucially important element of the Book of Ecclesiastes that we're gonna have to talk about every single week. As we look at this book, the preacher in the Book of Ecclesiastes makes argument after argument about how life under the sun is meaningless, is vanity.

58:37

There's nothing here that will ever fulfill us. There's this important idea that we see time and time again. The reason that he wants us to consider all these things is to help us feel the futility of life under the sun.

58:50

Derek Kidner was talking about Ecclesiastes, he said this. He said, the function of Ecclesiastes is to bring us to the point where we begin to fear that such a comment, that all is vanity, is the only honest one.

59:02

And so it is if everything is dying. We face the appalling inference that nothing has meaning, that nothing matters under the sun. But you know what? That's not the whole story that this book communicates to us, is it?

59:15

Remember, this is only one way of us looking at existence, only one way of us looking at life, because over and over again, we see this statement show up in the Book of Ecclesiastes, that this is the way that things are under the sun.

59:28

He's using a completely naturalistic look at things, that if we look at life just through our lenses of work, just look at life through our lenses of pleasure, or success, or any of those other things, if we just look at life on this level, on the human level, well, many of us could describe it as meaningless, right?

59:48

Even if you work hard and earn this incredible fortune, ultimately one day, you're gonna die, right? Hooray! But that's not the whole story. It's not the whole story, is it? See, this is one way for us to look at things, if we look at them under the sun, it can all be described as meaningless or vanity.

01:00:07

But the phrase that occurs time and time and time again is the one that's key to us understanding the true meaning of this book. Where do we experience life's futility? Where do we experience this frustration that exists in life?

01:00:20

We experience it under the sun. We experience it in our human interactions. We experience it in our worldly hope and desires and searching for success and meaning and purpose in life. But this phrase also leaves the possibility of a different perspective, right?

01:00:38

It's talking about this horizontal perspective as we look at existence on this world and this life through the human existence. When he says under the sun, the preacher limits our scope to just what we can see and feel and touch, what can be observed in this world, but he rules out any spiritual reality.

01:00:56

So the last thing that we're gonna talk about is the existence that all things are new above the sun. Of course, this observation, nothing new under the sun, is not the only way of looking at things.

01:01:08

It's not even the right way of looking at things, because we know that there is a God in heaven that exists above this earthly plane that we live on. So we're not limited to our existence on Earth. We're not limited to our experience on Earth.

01:01:21

By the revelation of God's Word, we can see things not only from just an earthly point of view, but we can see them from a spiritual point of view as well. The reason that the preacher shows us the weariness of this existence is to help us fix our eyes on the things that are most important in life.

01:01:37

He helps us see that as we become more and more disillusioned with this life, more and more frustrated with all the things that are going to leave us empty in this life, we can realize that it won't be that way if we move beyond just the physical things that we can see, and we find our satisfaction, we find our meaning in God Himself instead of just the things of this life.

01:02:01

Looking above the sun gives us a different perspective on our experience. Is there anything new? Well, not in this life, but there is in the spiritual reality, maybe not under the sun, but the God who lives above the sun, over the sun, is always doing something new.

01:02:16

We see this over and over and over again in Scripture. In Luke 22, Jesus spoke of the new covenant of His blood as He was going to go to the cross to give His life as a sacrifice. As Jesus went to the cross and died and got up and walked out of that tomb that we celebrate every year at Easter, that new life as He got up and walked out of the tomb that He offers to many of us who would place our faith in Him,

01:02:39

that's an incredible gift of something that's new. It also talks in Ezekiel 36, there's a new heart that God gives to anyone who believes in Him. There's also a new self. As the Holy Spirit comes, as we place our faith, as God awakens us and gives us life in His Spirit, there's a new person that's there.

01:02:59

As 2 Corinthians chapter 5 describes it, there's a new self. There's a new person that the old person is dead and gone and passed away, and there's a new person in its place when we become a new creation in Christ.

01:03:13

In fact, at the very end of the book in Revelation 21, God who sits on the throne of the universe promises, He says, Behold, I make all things new. There is a new heaven and a new earth that is coming.

01:03:25

This existence that we live now in this broken world, in this place that we experience all the futility, all the emptiness, all the frustration that we feel in life, it's not the end. It's not the ultimate existence.

01:03:39

So while Qoheleth may be right in stating that there's nothing new under the sun, he's missing out on all the incredible things that God is doing above the sun in a spiritual world. So as we study this book of Ecclesiastes, as we're just getting going and just kind of getting our toes wet this morning, I think it's going to be important for us to keep this key in mind as we look at the reality that this is the way that things are described under the sun versus the ultimate spiritual reality that God is at work above the sun.

01:04:11

It's important for us to keep that key in mind. It's going to be the key that unlocks every bit of this book, all the confusing statements, all the things that we that we look at and go, why are we even studying this?

01:04:23

It's because it gives us this contrast of the way that things are if we try to do them on our own versus the way that things are if we try to do them in the power of God and the power of the bleak outlook on things that exist under the sun.

01:04:40

But we have to keep the ending of the book in mind in order for us to really have a good grasp of how everything works and what the meaning of this book ultimately is. There's things that may not make sense under the sun, but there's a greater reality.

01:04:54

This comparison between things that are under the sun and things that are above the sun is the reason why the very end of the book ends the way that it does. Ecclesiastes 12:13, I'm talking about our study of Ecclesiastes, but Ecclesiastes 12:13, talking about all the emptiness of life.

01:05:12

This is what sums it all up. The end of the matter. All has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. that statement that this is the whole duty of man. I was talking with another pastor this week who had preached through the book of Ecclesiastes a few years ago and you know he we were talking about this idea this statement that this is the whole duty of man.

01:05:37

You know he told me dig into that word a little bit that's translated as the whole duty. It can actually be translated as the wholeness or the fullness of man. This is the reason that we all exist. This is the end of the after all has been heard.

01:05:52

Fear God and keep His commandments because that is what is going to give wholeness, is going to give fullness, is going to make us complete. That is the wholeness of man if we fear God and keep His commandments.

01:06:07

So while it's true that as we look at this book as the preacher takes this sober view of life is equally true that he has this solid hope in the fact that God gives us meaning and purpose, that we do have meaning, that we do have a reason for all the things that we do.

01:06:24

This is exactly why the book exists. It shows us that all of the things that we think are going to give us meaning, all of the things that we think are going to make us happy, that's not why we're here.

01:06:36

The good news, bad news situation for us is that there's lots of things that we're going to look at in life that we're going to consider in life as we talk about these different things with relationships, and love, and money, and success, and pleasure, and good food, and all these different things that Ecclesiastes talks about.

01:06:54

But in the midst of all of them, all of them have to be kept in their proper place. Young people, if you chase after, man, I just got to find that perfect boy, that perfect girl, that person that's going to make me happy.

01:07:07

It's a movie that you guys have probably never watched. I don't recommend it. But there's this movie several years ago that the guy and girl, oh, I love you, I love you. You complete me was kind of like the idea, right?

01:07:21

"You complete me." Okay. Does a person ever complete us? Or does a person ultimately one day is going to make us angry? Is going to fail us? Is going to disappoint us? Is going to leave us wanting? Why couldn't they pick their wet towel up off the ground?

01:07:40

All right. What? Why? Why do you put your dirty dishes in the sink? The dishwasher is right here. We look at these things and no person is ever going to complete us. No money is ever going to be enough.

01:07:52

There's no amount of education or success or anything that will ever fill us the way that we want it to. It's because things on this life, things under the sun are just things. We weren't created for these things.

01:08:07

We weren't created for this world. We were created by a God who is above the sun. We were created by a God that we would be his beautiful creation, that he would look at us and say that we have meaning because he made us and because he loves us.

01:08:22

We were created for him. We were created for a relationship with him. And as he has through the story of the Bible has made it available to us that we can have a relationship with him, we can know him, that we can be adopted as his son or as his daughter.

01:08:38

We have this incredible blessing that we don't have to live this futile existence that's just looking at things from a human perspective under the sun. God gives us so much more. The chief end of man, the goal, the reason why we all exist is to bring glory to God, is to fear God and to keep his commandments.

01:08:58

It's in those things that we transcend beyond just the junk of this life and are able to look at life with hope, with beauty. See that it brings fulfillment and meaning and purpose in life because it's not just the stuff that's going to leave us empty.

01:09:15

There's a God who loves us who wants more for us. So I'd invite you if you don't know him today, if you came here with that frustration or that emptiness or that life's just not ever enough, there is more.

01:09:28

There is more. So I'm going to be hanging around after the service, come talk to me and ask me what do I need to do to have that life of more, that life that Jesus described as the abundant life, the full life, that we would live life to the fullest.

01:09:43

That's why Jesus said that he came. He said that he came so that we might have life and that we might have it to the fullest. If you have that, man leave here and act like it.



And if you don't, don't leave here until you do so that you can leave here and live in that joy and in that experience.

01:09:58

So come find me. Our prayer team will be down here after the service as well. You can come talk with them, but please, please, please don't leave here in the existence that Qoheleth is talking about, that empty existence.

01:10:10

Would you guys pray with me? God, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the opportunity to dive into these things, to wrestle with the discontentment that shows up so often in life. God, as we look at things, as we look at relationships and just all of the stuff of this world, God, we know that so many of them, if we've ever experienced it, God, they leave us empty.

01:10:32

They leave us chasing more. And so God, as we consider these words, God, as we consider the rhythms of life, as the sun rises and sets and rises and sets, and the fact that it seems like many times there's not any real progress in life, as we consider our own mortality, God, help us to realize, God, to understand, and really to grasp onto this fact that this world is not our home.

01:11:00

God, that this world is not all that we exist for. And so God, help us to fix our eyes above the sun so that as we fear you, as we keep your commandments, as we live life the way that you invite us to, God, that we would find the meaning and the purpose that this life can never give to us on its own.

01:11:17

God, we offer ourselves to you. God, we pray that you would be pleased with everything that we say, with everything that we do. We offer our lives as an act of worship to you. And God, we thank you for the meaning and the value and the beauty that you give to us when we fix our eyes on you.

01:11:31

God, we love you, we praise you, and its in Jesus' beautiful name that we come. Amen.