

What's The Point To Life?

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this morning with the Lord's help, and the Lord's enabling, if we could, turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the book of Ecclesiastes in chapter 1.

Ecclesiastes chapter 1, and if we read again from the beginning, it says there, the words of the preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? Have you ever asked yourself, what's the point to life?

Have you ever asked yourself, why are we here? What's it all about? Is there more to life than this? Do our lives actually have meaning?

Do they have a purpose? And you know, before I became a Christian, I asked myself the same question. Because when I considered the timeline of our lives, and how short they really are, I thought to myself, well, the beginning of our timeline, you're born.

[1 : 24] Then later on, you go to school, and then you grow up, and well, you go through school, you leave school, you get a job. And if you're blessed with a husband or a wife, you get married.

If you're blessed with children, you have children. Then you work hard, you keep the home, you look after the home until your retirement, and then in your retirement, if you're fit and healthy to enjoy it, you enjoy it, and you grow old.

And then eventually, you reach the end of your timeline. And you die. And you know, that's what I was thinking about. Well, if so much takes place in such a short space of time, and when we look at what life is really about, it left me asking the question, well, what is the point to life?

What's the point to life? And you know, I'm sure that we've all asked that question at some point in our lives. Because there are times in our lives when we are confronted with the realities of life, whether that's through illness, or broken down relationships, or even through death itself.

There are times in our lives when the reality of life hits us, and we're left asking the question, what's the point in all this? What's the point to life?

[2 : 36] Why are we here? Well, believe it or not, that's the same question which has been asked here in this Old Testament book called Ecclesiastes.

Many people will tell us today that the Bible is an irrelevant book which is completely outdated and outmoded for the 21st century world. But what we will discover as we begin a study in the book of Ecclesiastes, we'll see that this 3,000 year old book, it's more relevant to us and to our lives than tomorrow's newspaper.

And you know what's fascinating about the book of Ecclesiastes is that it's not a historical narrative. It's not even a letter to the church. It's not a gospel account of the life and ministry of Jesus.

The book of Ecclesiastes is a sermon. It's a sermon which has been written and preached to all those who are in the hearing. And for centuries, well, in fact for millennia, there have been many people down throughout the generations who have read and heard this sermon called the book of Ecclesiastes.

And that's why the book is called Ecclesiastes, because the word Ecclesiastes means the preacher. Literally the word Ecclesiastes means the one who calls out.

[3 : 57] The one who calls out. And that's what a preacher is. A preacher is someone who calls out to his audience. A preacher is someone who's preaching to those who are in the hearing.

And the preacher, he's beckoning his audience and he's pleading with them to listen to his teaching and respond in faith. And that's what we see happening in the sermon of Ecclesiastes.

The preacher is urging those who are in the hearing. He's urging us. We are in the hearing. And he's urging us to consider the meaning of life. Because he wants us to see that living our life without

God, it's meaningless.

He says it's vanity. And so as we hear the introduction to this sermon called Ecclesiastes, that's what chapter one is all about. It's the introduction.

As we hear this introduction, I'd like us to introduce ourselves to three things. Because I want us to introduce ourselves to the preacher of this sermon.

[4 : 59] Then the proposition in this sermon. And then lastly, the purpose of this sermon. So the preacher, the proposition, and the purpose. So if we look first of all at the preacher of this sermon.

If you look at verse one. He says the words of the preacher. The son of David. King. In Jerusalem. Now as we said, the title to this sermon is Ecclesiastes.

And Ecclesiastes means the preacher. The one who calls out. And as the preacher, he's calling us and he's pleading with us to listen to his teaching. And we can see that that's how the preacher, how he begins his sermon.

He says the words of the preacher. Literally, it's the words of Ecclesiastes. And with this, the preacher is saying to us. These are my words.

This is my sermon. This is my proclamation to you. This is what I have studied and prepared for you to listen to. These are the words of the preacher.

[6 : 02] So please listen. And give your full attention to what I'm going to say to you. He's saying don't become distracted. Don't allow your mind to drift. Don't start thinking about other things.

Don't ignore what you're going to be told. Because this sermon is important. This sermon needs to be listened to. So listen to my sermon. Listen to what I have to say to you.

And you know, we might think, well, that's a bit arrogant to say listen to me. Listen to my sermon. I mean, we might think, well, who does he think he is? Who does this preacher think he is telling me to listen to his sermon?

But it's then that the preacher explains who he is. And why we're to listen to his sermon. Because he says the words of the preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. The preacher explains that we should listen to his sermon because he's the son of David.

And he's the king in Jerusalem. And as the son of David, who was the man after God's own heart, brought up in a Christian home. He was also, this preacher was also the heir to the throne in Israel.

[7 : 13] And now after the death of King David, he's the successor to his father. He's the king of Israel. He's king in Jerusalem. And as king, the preacher has a divinely appointed office.

As king, he is to direct people away from worshipping false gods and bowing down to idols. And he's to lead them to worship the living and through God.

In his office of a king, the preacher is to exhort and to encourage those in his hearing to worship the Lord as the living and through God. And so we can see that the preacher is beckoning us.

And he's pleading with us. And he's urging us to listen to his sermon. Because he is the divinely appointed king in Jerusalem. He's been called by God to tell others to worship the living and through God.

But there's more. Because the reason we should listen to the sermon of this preacher is because this preacher is Solomon. Solomon was the son of David and the successor to David's throne.

[8 : 19] Solomon was also the wisest man who ever lived. Because his wisdom, as we know from the Bible, it tells us that it was gifted to him by God.

We read that in 1 Kings chapter 3 when the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream. And the Lord said to Solomon, Ask me for anything and I will give it to you.

Now there's a question. If the Lord offered you anything you would ask for, what would you ask for? What would be your heart's desire?

What would make you happy? What would solve all your problems? Would it be riches or popularity or fitness or family or health? What would be your heart's desire?

If the Lord offered you anything, what would you ask for? Well Solomon, he asked for wisdom. He desired to be made wise in order to discern between good and evil.

[9 : 20] And so that he could lead the people in the way of wisdom to worship the Lord. And we're told that it pleased the Lord that Solomon asked for wisdom.

The Lord said to Solomon, Because you have asked for this, you didn't ask for long life or riches, but to discern what is right, I will do according to your word. I will give you a wise and a discerning mind so that no one will be like you.

Moreover, says the Lord, I will give you what you have not asked for, both riches and honor, so that no other king will compare with you all your days. And you know, when the Lord made Solomon the wisest man who ever lived, Solomon devoted himself to studying and to teaching and to writing. And we have many of Solomon's wise thoughts written down for us in the book of Proverbs. And if you were to read through the book of Proverbs, you could do that, chapter a day if it's 31 days in the month.

If you were to read through the book of Proverbs, Solomon, you'll see, he's stressing to us again and again that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

[10 : 30] Solomon says, you want to be wise, then fear the Lord. Fear the Lord. Because the fear of the Lord, he says, it's the beginning of wisdom. And you know, that's why Solomon is preaching this sermon called Ecclesiastes.

He's preaching about the need to be wise with your life. He's preaching about the need to have wisdom when it comes to the things of God and the things of eternity.

And Solomon, he affirms that to us down in verse 12. He says, I the preacher have been king over Israel and Jerusalem. And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven.

And Solomon, he's saying to us, as the son of David, as the divinely appointed king in Israel, I have applied myself by studying with all my God-given wisdom to discover what the point to life really is. And Solomon says, he's presenting to us his sermon and he's saying, I have prepared my sermon for you to listen to and for you to respond to what you hear. And you know, my friend, we need to listen to this wise preacher because he's going to give us a message of good news.

[11 : 45] And he's going to speak to us in love. He's going to preach to us with all wisdom. And he's going to herald before us the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And you know, thinking about Solomon as this preacher, it's no wonder the apostle Paul stressed the importance of preaching.

Because he asked, how will they call on him? How will they call on Jesus if they have not believed? How can they believe in him? And how are they to believe in whom they have never heard?

And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how is he to preach unless he is sent? And so Paul says, faith comes by hearing. And hearing by the word of God.

And that's Solomon's desire. That's my desire as we listen to this sermon called Ecclesiastes. The preacher wants us to listen to a sermon and respond in faith.

[12 : 44] Because faith comes by hearing. And so we've considered the preacher of this sermon. It's Solomon. But secondly, we need to consider what the preacher's proposition is.

So the proposition of the sermon. If you look again at verse 1. He says, the words of the preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the preacher.

Vanity of vanities. All is vanity. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? And in these verses we can see right from the outset of his sermon.

That the preacher gives to us his proposition. He presents to us his proposal for looking at life. And discovering what the point to life really is.

And as Solomon introduces his sermon. He says that in order to discover the meaning of life. We have to see that living our lives without God is vanity.

[13 : 45] Vanity of vanities, says the preacher. Vanity of vanities. All is vanity. And what Solomon is saying is that without God, life has no real meaning.

Without God, life has no real purpose. Without God, life has no direction. Without God, life is vanity. Without God, life is vanity. Vanity of vanities, says the preacher.

All of life is vanity without God. My friend, from the outset of his sermon, Solomon is preaching to us and telling us that without God in our life, our life has no real meaning.

Without God, there's no point to life. It's all vanity. It's all meaningless. It's all chasing and striving after the wind, he says.

And with this, Solomon is reminding us that without God in our lives, we will just spend our lives chasing and striving after all these things that will never satisfy.

[14 : 44] Whether it's money or positions at work or happiness or entertainment, we're always trying to grasp at everything. Without God giving us meaning in life and purpose and direction, all these things, they'll never satisfy us.

And because these things will never satisfy, and they will never fill that void in our heart, which only Jesus can fill, Solomon says, it's all vanity. Vanity of vanities, says the preacher.

Vanity of vanities. All is vanity. And Solomon is stressing this to us because he wants us to know for ourselves that it's God who gives us meaning in life.

It's God who gives us purpose in life. It's God who gives us order in life. It's God who gives us dignity in life. It's God who gives us the point to life.

But without God in our lives, it's all vanity and chasing and striving. Striving after what will never satisfy. And you know, as we walk through this sermon, we'll see that the preacher's opening proposition here, where he says, vanity of vanities.

[15 : 59] All is vanity. This opening proposition, it's actually the motto of the whole sermon. It's the theme of the sermon. And like many preachers, Solomon is using this literary skill of repetition in order to emphasize his point.

Because he repeats this motto all the way through the sermon. And with every repetition of this motto or this theme of vanity, Solomon is stressing to those in his hearing.

He's stressing to us again and again. He's stressing so that we will see that life is meaningless without God. Life is meaningless without God.

And you know, what's remarkable about this sermon is that Solomon, he analyzes every area of life. There's no stone left unturned.

Because he looks at every area of life and he questions the point to it. Solomon, he takes this realistic approach. And he comes with this realistic view of life.

[17 : 04] You could say that his sermon is very open-minded. He's not going in all religious and just throwing God into everything and every equation. No, in fact, Solomon, he does the opposite.

Because when he preaches his sermon, he does so by looking at life from the perspective of living without God. He looks at life as someone who is unconverted.

And you could actually say that Solomon is being very scientific because he's simply observing things as they are. And he looks at all the different areas of life that we're involved in.

Whether it's our work or our education, our pleasures, our recreational activities, all our relationships. My friend, in his sermon called Ecclesiastes, Solomon, he takes every area of our lives and he just puts it under the microscope.

And he looks at it from every angle. And it's having carried out this investigation and all his study and all his analysis. It's then that Solomon introduces this sermon with his findings.

[18 : 10] And the conclusion that Solomon has come to, after looking at every area of life, the conclusion he's come to is vanity of vanities, says the preacher.

Vanity of vanities. All is vanity. It's meaningless. It's empty without God. Your life is empty without God, he's saying.

And you know, for a sermon, it catches our attention straight away, doesn't it? Solomon grabs our attention and he makes us want to listen to him. He makes us want to hear what he has to say.

Now, of course, there are some who have accused Solomon of being this pessimistic preacher. They claim that he's very dull. He's trying to take the fun out of life by not seeing the good side of life and the good things in life.

But by claiming that everything in life is vanity without God. Solomon wasn't trying to destroy our hope. Actually, he was doing the opposite. Solomon was, he's trying to make us see that our only hope.

[19 : 19] And he's trying to direct us to our only hope. The only person who can fulfill all our hopes in life is God. And for Solomon, life is not all bad.

Because throughout the sermon, and we'll see that as the weeks go on. Solomon, he affirms the value of knowledge. He affirms the value of relationships and that work is necessary. And he acknowledges that pleasure is to be enjoyed.

But he says that all these things in our life, they should be viewed and kept in their proper place.

They're not to take over our life. Because all these temporary things, he says, they must be viewed in light of eternity.

And that's the proposition which Solomon gives in his sermon. He's saying that in light of the great eternity that awaits us all, if we live our lives without God in this world, then our life has been lived in vain.

And maybe for you, my unconverted friend, maybe you're saying to yourself, I don't live my life without God.

[20 : 28] How can you say my life has been lived in vain? God is very much a part of my life. Because, well, I believe in God. I believe what the Bible teaches about God. I believe that what the Bible says about God's Son, Jesus, that he is the saviour of sinners.

He died on the cross to take away our sin. He was buried. He rose again. After the third day, he's now at the right hand of God the Father. And he'll come again one day to judge the world. I believe all that. I believe what the Bible says. I believe in God. God is very much a part of my life. And I come to church. I'm a regular in church.

My seat is almost never empty. And I listen in church. I try my best to listen to what is being said and preached about God and the Bible. I don't live my life without God.

God is very much a part of my life. But you know, my friend, Solomon's concern is not about the existence of God. He's not trying to convince the atheist that there is a God.

[21 : 29] Because the Bible never tries to convince the atheist that there is a God. The Bible just asserts from the word go. Genesis 1-1. In the beginning, God. And so the proposition of Ecclesiastes is not to prove the existence of God.

Neither is it to stress the need for this intellectual assent to God. No, Solomon's proposition in his sermon is to make us see that we need to live our life in a relationship with God.

We need to live our life in a relationship with God. Because when we have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, it will affect every area of our life.

It will affect our education. It will affect our work. It will affect our pleasure. It will affect our relationships. It will affect our home and our family.

It will affect every area in our life. What Solomon is saying is, when you become a Christian, it will affect every area in your life. It will affect our life. It will change everything.

[22 : 39] And it will give to us a perspective and a purpose in life. It will give to us the meaning and the point to life. And this is what Solomon is stressing to us in his sermon.

That in light of eternity, the eternity that awaits us all, he says, if you live your life without having a relationship with God, then your life has been lived in vain.

And you know, that's the purpose of this sermon. The purpose of the sermon is to make us see the importance of living our life for God's glory. Because that's why we were created.

We weren't created to promote and to glorify and to enjoy ourselves. We were created as our catechism reminds us. Our chief end.

The main reason we exist in this life. The point of our lives is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

And you know, that's what the rest of this introductory chapter is all about.

[23 : 49] It's all about the purpose of this sermon. It's to make us look at life. It's to make us look at our lives. In light of eternity. And make us see that if we live our life without having a relationship with God, then we are living our life in vain.

It's all vanity. My friend, is your life being lived in vain? Are you living your life with a relationship with God through Jesus Christ?

And so in this introductory chapter to the sermon of Ecclesiastes, we've considered the preacher, who the preacher is, and what the proposition is.

But last of all, we need to consider the purpose of this sermon. The purpose of the sermon. If you look at verse 3, He says, And what Solomon is saying is that in order for us to grasp the purpose of his sermon,

Solomon wants us to take a step back and look at life objectively. He wants us to see the bigger picture of life.

[25 : 50] And he says to us, Consider this. Life is just one big circle where everything is just rolling on and on and on and on. One generation dies and another generation is born.

And the world goes on. People die, people are born, the world goes on. It keeps going on, regardless of what's going on in our little world and in our little lives, whether it's a generation going or a generation coming.

Solomon says, The sun will continue to rise in the east and it will always set in the west as it has always done. The world and the circle of life will just keep going on.

But more than that, says Solomon, he says, Consider the wind. He says, The wind goes one way and then it changes direction. It goes to the south and it goes up to the north and there's this

westerly wind and an easterly wind and the wind brings with it a storm and it brings rain and it brings snow.

It's constantly changing. The wind is constantly changing and it keeps changing regardless of what is going on in our day-to-day lives. And then you have the rivers, he says, They are constantly flowing.

[27 : 01] Constantly flowing. The water is coming off the hills and it's going into the rivers and it's flowing out into the sea. Just like it is here in Barbas. Coming off the moor, into the river, and out into the Atlantic.

And it's constantly flowing whether someone is watching it or not. It's still flowing. It's still going on. But he says, The sea never becomes full. And Solomon says, He looks at life and he says, Life is weariness.

Because we're never done. We're always working and striving and chasing. We're always trying to get things done but we're never finished. There's always something that needs to be done.

There's always the next project, the next purchase, or the next problem. Life is full of weariness, says Solomon, and there's nothing new. What we have done in the past we'll have to do again.

What gets old will have to be renewed. What breaks will have to be replaced. What falls apart will have to be restored. There's nothing new under the sun. The circle of life it's just full of weariness.

[28 : 06] It's constantly going on and on and on. But then Solomon asks in verse 10, Is there a thing of which it is said, See, this is new.

It has been already in the ages before us. There's no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after. And with this Solomon, he's talking about the rapid pace of life.

That one week rolls into the next. One month rolls into the next. One year rolls into the next. One generation rolls into the next.

And in no time at all, one generation, it just passes away. And Solomon, he looks at the cycle of life and he says, Can we really say, Look, there is something new here.

Because with such a rapid pace of life, where our life is like a vapour as the Bible says, it's a tale that is told. He's saying, We forget the past so quickly.

[29 : 09] We move on. We forget the past. We forget people. Because we move on. We forget places because we move on. We forget events because we move on. Life is going on.

It's going on and on and on. Life keeps on moving so quickly. The cycle of life is going so fast. Our lives are so busy. And you know, what Solomon is getting at is that there is this constant cycle of life.

That life goes on regardless of what happens in our personal lives. You know, Solomon, he'll talk more about the cycle of life when we come to chapter 3. He'll remind us that the cycle of life, it's full. Full of times and full of seasons. He says, To everything there is a season. There's a time for every purpose under heaven. A time to be born. A time to die. A time to plant.

A time to pluck up that which is planted. A time to kill. Heal. Break down. Build up. Weep. Laugh. Mourn. Dance. Get. Lose.

[30 : 11] Keep. Cast away. Love. Hate. War. Peace. Solomon reminds us that there is a time for absolutely everything in our lives. Our lives are so full.

Full of weariness. Full of repetition. Full of routine. Our lives are so full. And with this, Solomon wants us to take a step back and look at our own life objectively.

And he wants you to come to the point. He wants you to look at what is going on in your own life. And he wants you to come to the same point that he is at. Where he's asking the question, what's the point to life?

With this constant cycle of life that's so full and so busy and it's always going on with all its weariness, he says, step back.

Ask yourself, what's it all about? What's the point to all this? What's the point to life? And as Solomon has told us already, he wants us to see that our life, it's meaningless without God.

[31 : 29] If we're living our life without God, without a relationship to God through Jesus Christ, we're living it in vain. vanity of vanities, says the preacher.

Vanity of vanities. All, all our busyness, all the fullness of our life, he's saying, it's vanity. It's being lived in vain because we're not living it, living our life the way we were created to live it.

And you know, that's how Solomon brings the introduction of his sermon to its conclusion. Because before he goes on to the next chapter, which we'll look at next week, where he considers the vanity of pleasure and pastime, Solomon says in verse 14, I have seen everything that is done under the sun and behold all his vanity and a striving after wind.

I've seen everything. Everything. Seen it all. And without God in your life, he's saying, it's all vanity. And so my friend, as we hear the introduction to this sermon called Ecclesiastes, we've considered the preacher of the sermon, we've considered the proposition in this sermon, we've considered the purpose of this sermon.

[32 : 57] And then the introduction to Solomon's sermon is reminding us this morning that in light of eternity, in light of eternity, if we live our life without having a relationship with God, then we are living our life in vain.

And what Solomon wants and what I want us to do as we listen to this sermon, I want us to look at ourselves. I want us to consider what Solomon is saying and consider where we are in our relationship with God.

And if we're not in a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ, if we're still striving and chasing and looking and pressing after all the things that are ultimately vanity and meaningless and empty, if we are, if you are that person who's still doing that in your life, where you are at in life today, Solomon is saying you need to do something about it.

Your life needs to change course. You need to do something about it. You know, Jesus said the same thing. What will it profit you if you gain the whole world?

What use is it to you if you gain the whole world and then you lose your soul? And your soul, says Jesus, it's the most precious thing that you've been given.

[34 : 40] So don't waste your life. don't don't waste one moment longer being out of a relationship with God because what Solomon is reminding us is that we are to seek the Lord.

To seek the Lord while he is to be found and call upon him while he is near. Because without the Lord in our life, life is meaningless.

It's all vanity. It's all chasing after what will never satisfy. And so my friend, as we listen to this sermon called Ecclesiastes, Solomon is urging us and I am urging you, seek the Lord with all your heart.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, O gracious God, we give thanks to thee for these warnings in life that where we are stopped in our tracks and reminded and asked what is the point to it all.

And Lord, that we would see that without thee in our lives, without God and without Jesus, that we are living our life in vain. It is passing away before us so quickly like a tale that is told.

[36 : 05] And help us then, we pray, to close in with Jesus, to cast our lot in with him, to commit our life to him, knowing that he is the one who has provided for us a new and a living way.

O Lord, bless us together, we pray. Bless thy word to us. We pray that we would find lodgment in our heart, that we, O Lord, would respond in faith, that we would respond and look to Jesus, knowing him and loving him as the author and the finisher of our faith.

Bless us together, then we pray, and go before us, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. We shall conclude by singing the words of Psalm 90.

Psalm 90 in the Scottish Psalter, page 350. Psalm 90 Psalm 90 It's the oldest Psalm in the Psalter. It's three and a half thousand years old and yet it has the most relevant truth. We're singing from verse 9 where Moses, who wrote this Psalm, he says, For in thine anger all our days to pass on to an end and as a tale that hath been told so we are years to spend.

[37 : 33] Threescore and ten years do sum up our days and years we see for if by reason of more strength than some fourscore they be yet doth the strength of such old men but grief and labour prove for it is soon cut off and we fly hence and soon remove.

And what Solomon is wanting us to learn from this Psalm, from his teaching, is that we ask the Lord to teach us to number our days that we might apply our heart to wisdom that we might be wise like Solomon by fearing the Lord and seeking him with all our heart.

So Psalm 90 we're singing from verse 9 down to the verse marked 12 to God's praise.

www.maep.com for in art and good all our trust to pass on to an end and as a day that hath been told Though we are years to spend We for a ten year to summer Our days and years we see Hearted by reason of more strength

Did some forescore they be Yet of the strength of such old men But grief and labor grew For it is soon cut off and we Thy hands soon renew Who knows the power of thy wrath Affording to thy fear So as thy wrath Lord teach thou us

Our end in mind to bear And so to count our days that we Our hearts may still apply To learn thy wisdom And thy truth That we may live thereby The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Know and forevermore Amen Amen