

## What's the point?

## Ecclesiastes

Let's keep worshipping by opening up our Bibles to Ecclesiastes chapter one. Ecclesiastes is right after the book of Proverbs. Before Song of Solomon. Not focusing on just one main passage but taking a cursory look at several verses throughout the book of Ecclesiastes. We will be turning pages so be ready.

### Introduction:

Ecclesiastes is an interesting book to say the least. Philosophical and well a bit depressing as the book speaks about life with unflinching reality and truth.

### Chapter 1, verse 1, The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

The context is the Preacher(Solomon) standing before the people of God, sharing his hard learned lessons from the way he lived his life.

And so, he also does with us this morning.

Solomon ...the son of King David, the son who succeeded his dad on the throne ...quite literally had it all.

He spent his life experiencing the countless pleasures this world could offer. He built a magnificent kingdom. And he had the fullest life anyone could hope to have—at least according to the world's standards. And he comes to the end of his life he asks, "what's the point?"

Sober reflections from an old man, who lived the vast majority of his life for his own glory and not God's. And God has preserved this book to instruct those coming behind Solomon.. Which of course, is all of us.

Ecclesiastes right off the bat says...

**Stop expecting this world to satisfy Look at (1:2-3) Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity 3 What does man gain by all the toil, at which he toils under the sun?**

Vanity of vanities. 5 times vanity is used in two verses. And it is found in 11 of the 12 chapters of Ecclesiastes with it showing up 38x's in the book. Repetitive to make a point.

The Hebrew word used there for vanity literally means breath. But it's being used figuratively. Like when you see your breath on a cold winter morning, it's there but for a moment and then gone. That's the idea of vanity. Temporal.

Ecclesiastes is saying that everything that we do, see, and experience is momentary. It's here one moment and then gone. All of life is temporary and fleeting.

If you have reached any age of maturity with any life experience under your belt, you know what Ecclesiastes puts forth is very true.

Every day, all of life is made up of one fleeting moment after another. Oh, we look forward to those moments, and live to experience the moments (whatever that is) but when it finally comes it is like breathing out into the cold—we know it for a moment and then it's gone.

And in verse 3 the rhetorical question is put forth of what is even gained by our constant striving in such a temporary world?

Appropriate question to ask. What's the point then? Certainly not satisfaction. At least not permanent satisfaction. Really the return for the constant work we find ourselves grinding out in this world is more work and weariness.

How someone answers those questions reveals a lot about the worldview they are operating with. As in what lens do you look thru in order to make sense of this world? Clearly, we hope that every believer will operate with a *biblical* worldview. We look within God's Word for the answers to our purpose and reason for our brief existence in this world.

We know what Solomon's worldview for satisfaction was.

Turn to **Chapter 2**. Not reading all of it but want to highlight some of the verses to make the point. **1. I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity.**

**4 I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. <sup>5</sup> I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. <sup>6</sup> I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.**

**7. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. <sup>8</sup> I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces.**

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

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

**"under the sun"** in verse **11** and back in **chapter 1:3?** Not to mention the 27 other times it's used in the book. Repetitive to make a point.

Under the sun, was the perspective for Solomon's life. IOW--he looked for meaning to his life from the world around him. What he saw in front of him. He had an earthly perspective.

He tried to answer the question of what's the point? with...

*The gaining of stuff. The experiences of this world. The building of a kingdom. The gathering of pleasures.*

That was his focus...it was unadulterated hedonism—self-indulgence. And none of it satisfied. **All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.** (Chapter 1:8)

There is nothing that Solomon saw, heard, did, or experienced that satisfied him.

And at the end of his life, he has only one thing to say, "it's all vanity and striving after the wind, and I was never satisfied." It was all for not. And he knew better.

And yet he lived as if God didn't exist and couldn't satisfy him. That is the definition of a *godless* life. This is all there is. Getting and experiencing is what it's all about.

How easy it is for a believer to live a *godless* life. Not that we quit believing that God exists. No, we just live like God doesn't exist. Especially believers, who know better.

We can so easily live like he is not enough. We live doubting if God himself is enough. Instead, we will live and act as if the material world--things, money, reputation, kids, success, health--is somehow able to satisfy the eternal longing within our souls.

And in doing so, in a sense we don't acknowledge God. We don't consider him. We don't long for him. We don't fear him. Instead, we replace the God of the universe with the things of this world! That's a godless and idolatrous existence.

And then life comes and goes. And we are still left wanting. And we say things within our heart like, "The next thing will satisfy" "If I only had \_\_\_\_\_ then I'd be satisfied." If it's not more God. If it's not more Jesus. Then it's an idol and it won't satisfy. Nothing in this world, was meant to completely satisfy. Instead, this world was meant to expose the longing within our soul that God alone can satisfy.

Look at this quote by the great thinker **C.S. Lewis**  
**"If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world."**

Not that we are aliens from another planet. But that we were made for God. Not for stuff. We were saved for God's glory, not our own.  
And as a believer, our future is living for his glory for all of eternity.  
And just in case you are wondering, eternity is much longer than our brief life here.

But it starts now. We need to live today believing that God alone satisfies.  
Our perspective, our focus can't be like Solomon's--everything under the sun. Our focus, needs to be biblical. It needs to be on the One who sits above the sun. He who rules and reigns over everything...including our lives.

The purpose of Ecclesiastes is to keep us from going and trying to find out for ourselves that this world is unable to satisfy; there is nothing new under the sun(1:9)

And one of the best things you can do to fight against the never-ending need to be satisfied is to..

**Start enjoying what God has given you (5:18-20)** Turn to chap. 5:<sup>18</sup> **Behold, what I have seen to be good, and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot.** <sup>19</sup> **Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God.** <sup>20</sup> **For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.**

What a shift --thank you Solomon for recording a bit of positivity for us this morning.

This is not a let's eat and drink because tomorrow we die approach that Solomon is putting forth. It is not fatalistic view.

And I do not believe that Ecclesiastes is saying we should hate our life. As in despise the good things of this world because they don't satisfy. That is not the answer to our ongoing dissatisfaction.

We can't and shouldn't despise the incredibly good blessings that God himself has gifted to us. One of the best ways to glorify God is by enjoying the incredible gifts he has given you.

Is that not what brings us joy when we give a really good gift to someone we love, and we see them enjoying it. Of course. That is a pale reflection of the joy our Father experiences when we acknowledge and enjoy his good gifts to us.

Yes, this world won't satisfy, but God has selected this time to be the time for us to be on this earth. To live this life. To experience the world as we know it today. And all of it is an incredible gift from God.

**God himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.** <sup>26</sup> **And he made... mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,** <sup>27</sup> **that they should seek God,.."** Acts 17:25-27

God's desire is that we live contented in where God has placed us and in what God has given to us in this brief life that we live.

When we live contented knowing and believing that; We won't despair. We won't self-indulge. We will live glorifying lives unto God.

\*I understand what I am saying to some of you. I can only imagine some of your situations. I believe what Paul says in **Philippians 4:11-13** <sup>11</sup> **Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned, in whatever situation I am, to be content.** <sup>12</sup> **I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.** <sup>13</sup> **I can do all things through him who strengthens me.**

Paul's meaning of saying "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" is the context of contentment. Paul can be content in all circumstances because Christ's grace allows him to be. He says that no matter the state of his life—abundance, poverty,--in every circumstance he has learned to be content because of the grace of Jesus Christ in his life.

And these verses here in Ecclesiastes teach that we are to be content and to give thanks to God regardless of the weariness in life. In spite of the vanity of life, God blesses us with contentment.

Which then produces joy. **because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart—verse 20.** No matter the state of the world. No matter the grind of life. No matter the weariness of our work—we can have joy in this temporary life.

When we get our eyes off the horizontal world around us and start fixing our eyes upward, life changes. Our perspective is sanctified. Our attitude changes.

Maybe not necessarily the circumstances, but:  
Joy grows. Peace reigns. Life begins to matter. Purpose comes alive. And God is glorified because of your faith and trust in him.

And finally turn to the last chapter ---and the last 4 verses of chapter 12 and

**Keep the main point the ultimate goal (12: 11-14)**

**<sup>11</sup> The words of the wise are like goads** (a prod that a farmer used to keep their ox heading in the right direction while plowing the field), **and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings;** (God's wisdom is permanent. They are firmly fixed. Nailed down and immovable) **they are given by one Shepherd.** **<sup>12</sup> My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.**

**<sup>13</sup> The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.** **<sup>14</sup> For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.**

**for this is the whole duty of man**—IOW...this is all there is to man. This is what the point is for man's life. For your life. The whole of your life is this.

To oversimplify a bit; What's the main point? God. What's the ultimate goal? Making all of life about him. Making much of God.

More specifically from the verses that close out Ecclesiastes; God's Wisdom, God's Character, God's Commandments.

- **God's Wisdom** (Obtaining) -- gaining wisdom (not stuff) is the exhortation for us this morning. Oh, how we need wisdom. God's wisdom before man's. **"Beware of any books beyond this book"**. Does Ecclesiastes mean that we shouldn't read good books? Or that good books shouldn't be written? Definitely not. The warning is not to place earthly wisdom above God's wisdom.

Because God's wisdom is a prod that keeps us on the right path. It prods us back onto the path of righteousness. It reminds us what the point of this life is.

And within God's Word we hear the Shepherd's voice. The one Shepherd (**vs 11**)—that's Jesus. Jesus is right there in the OT. Within the Bible we have the Word who was made flesh. He speaks and we listen. He leads and we follow. It is from his voice and leading that we find life purposeful and meaningful. Because he is the point of the Word.

Next it is all about.

- **God's Character**(Knowing) —as in fearing God in verse 13. Fear God. To fear God is a holy fear. It is a righteous fear.

If you read all of Ecclesiastes, you will see the fear of God being inserted multiple times. (chapter 3,5,7,and 8). Within the pessimism of Ecclesiastes is inserted a key solution to the vanity of this world. The fear of God.

To fear God is to live your life believing God is who he says he is and will do what he says he will do. It's living truly believing that everything in this life matters because someday everyone stands before a just and holy God.

When we fear God, we...

- **Submit** to his will (James 4:7)
- **Tremble** at his power (Ps. 76:7-9)
- **Awe** at his greatness (Ps 33:8-9)
- **Revere** his holiness (Lev. 19:30)
- **Trust** in his goodness (Ps. 115:11)

As you can see, knowing God is the requirement to fearing God. When we start to see God clearly, the only natural response is a genuine and holy fear of him.

Lastly and quickly...

When we live for God's kingdom and not our own, obedience will flow from our life. Our goal will be

- **God's Commandments** (Obeying)

Which is a natural outflow of fearing God.

Obeying God is the glorious duty of a believer. Obeying should be the joy of every believer. Doing what he says to do. Not doing what he says not to do.

Ex. of the 1k commands in NT: Repent. Deny yourself. Take up your cross. Follow Jesus. Abstain from sexual immorality. Worship. Pray (always). Do not lose heart. Be holy. Humble yourself. Make disciples.

**<sup>14</sup> For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.** Meaning everything matters. Everything.

God's Word gives the answer to the point of life. May we be found wise and joyful to live accordingly.