

Hey, we are in week four of our series called Hoosiers. And throughout the month of June, we're going to hear from some of my favorite Indiana preachers, men who have shaped my own faith through their teaching, but more importantly, through their lives and their friendship. And today's Hoosier preacher is Scott Kenworth. Scott was born and raised in Indiana. He went to IU.

He actually attended Sherwood Oaks during his time in Bloomington, but with all of that red flowing through his veins, the Lord called him and his wife Sarah to the mission fields of Kentucky, where he now serves as the lead minister of Owensboro Christian Church. But even though he lives on the wrong side of the river, Scott is a hoosier through and through. And I could not imagine doing a series with my favorite Indiana preachers without Scott being one of them. And he is one of the best preachers I know. But more importantly, he's one of the best men that I know.

And so would you please give a warm Sherwood Oaks welcome to my friend, Scott Kenworthy.

Well, thank you. It is wonderful to be with you. And it is true. We live in the state which shall not be named directly to the south, and we've been there for the last eleven years and I've really enjoyed it. But it is good to be back home.

We still call Indiana home. I grew up about 45 minutes from here. My wife grew up in Plainfield as well. So all our families around this area, and I did. I came to IU from 99 to 2001.

I used to sit right back here in this section, and Tom Ellsworth and this church had a huge influence on God, kind of leading me from the path that I was on and towards ministry. So I'm glad to be here on several levels. Tom is one of my absolute favorite preachers. I love Shawn as a preacher, too, but Sean is just one of the best people that I know. And he loves you and he loves this church.

And I'm so glad to be able to let him and Amber enjoy some of the sabbatical by filling in for him. And thank you for giving them that time, because it really does make a difference. Shawn said that I could preach on whatever I wanted. And last fall, we did a brief series in Owensboro on this obscure old Testament book called ecclesiastes. And I'm going to pull one of the messages from that series.

Now, when I say ecclesiastes, I'm guessing there were three groups of people in the room. There are some who are like, oh, yeah, like, I know all about ecclesiastes. That's one of my favorite books in the Bible. There are probably a good number who go like, I know the title, and maybe I've read part of it, but I don't know a whole lot about it. Didn't the birds write a song from ecclesiastes?

There's time to be born and time to die, and then there's probably a big group that would go like ecclesiastes. I've never even heard of it before. So let's just take a minute to set up what the book is and what it's trying to do. The word ecclesiastes, to give a very simple history, is to mean something like one who speaks to a gathered audience, or some people translate it as saying it's one who has accumulated or gathered a body of knowledge, and they're now trying to share it with a group of people. And so that's what the author of ecclesiastes is trying to do.

It's why the main speaker in the book is typically referred to as the teacher or the preacher, because they've accumulated life lessons they are now sharing with a gathered group of people. And that includes now us, some 3000 years after the book was written. And so we're going to receive the wisdom that the teacher preacher has for us. That's what the name of the book means, but it doesn't really answer the question about what the book is about. And so to answer that, we honestly don't have to look very far.

We see it in the first few verses of the book. Ecclesiastes one, one, two begins this way. The words of the teacher. So there's that title, teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem. Here are his words.

Meaningless. Meaningless, says the teacher. Utterly meaningless. Everything is meaningless. So very chipper, very upbeat.

Yeah, that's the start of the book. It's important we understand as we get into it, the point of ecclesiastes is not that life has no meaning, no beauty, or no purpose. The point of ecclesiastes is that life and all the stuff within it is fleeting. You know, it's transitory. In fact, the hebrew word for meaninglessness, it means vapor breath or smoke.

So you think about, like, even the smoke. You blow out the candles on your birthday cake, and the smoke rises before you. If you were to try to, like, wrap your hands around that smoke, it would just slip through your fingers. And the author of ecclesiastes is saying, that's what life is like. What you work so hard to achieve, either slips through your fingers, and it escapes you.

Or if you were able to grab hold of it, eventually you have to hand it over to somebody else. You bring your kids home from the hospital one moment, and the next moment it feels like you're sending them off to college. Life just slips through your fingers. Or perhaps you've just gotten rid of your kids. They got out of the house, and then they turned around, they moved right back in.

And so empty nesting had a way of kind of slipping right through your fingers. Maybe you retire to enjoy your golden years, but within 18 months of retirement, you're diagnosed with cancer, and it just seems to escape you. Or you save for decades only to have the market crash right when you need the funds, you move to a new community, and you work really hard to be vulnerable and to make friends. But then those friends that you make, they then

move to a new community, and you're starting all over. What you thought would bring you joy in life proves to be unfulfilling.

You're downsized at 50 and forced to start a new career. Your spouse of 40 years leaves you for someone younger, and then in the end, you die, and everybody forgets you. Meaningless. Meaningless, says the teacher. Everything is meaningless.

Aren't you glad you came to church today? Wonderful. It was rainy this morning. It all just fits together. So ecclesiastes, really.

It's this dark and cynical book. There's no getting around that, but it's also incredibly realistic. And by being realistic about life's frustrations, ecclesiastes, it paves a way towards hope. Now, all the books in the Bible, in their own way, pave us towards hope. But if you're in a really, really dark place, some of them can come across as too simplistic.

And what I like about ecclesiastes is it really meets us in the dark places. We're going to get into today's text in just a moment. A little bit of chapter one, a little bit of chapter two. But first, we need to acknowledge something about human nature. And so this includes all of us in our own way.

And that is sometimes, as people, we have this tendency to try to bypass the meaninglessness of life by turning to different escapist behaviors. So because we understand that life can slip through our fingers, sometimes we deal with the pressure or we deal with the sadness, or we deal with the frustration or depression. But by turning to different, this was Solomon's story. There's a longstanding Jewish tradition that King Solomon wrote this book. He wrote the song of songs in his early days, in his youth.

He wrote proverbs in the height of his kingship, so kind of that middle age of life. And then the tradition says that he wrote ecclesiastes towards the end of his 40 year reign as king, as sort of the sober reflection upon his life and all the hard lessons that he had accumulated through the years. And what we find is that in Solomon's attempt to escape the meaninglessness of life, he plunged himself neck deep into a number of distractions. Now, if you ever heard the phrase maybe you've been in a brainstorm meeting, let's just throw things against the wall and see if any of them stick. This is exactly what Solomon did with his life.

So he would try one pleasure for a while, and it satisfied him for a bit, but eventually the effects wore off and he was left feeling empty. So he tried another pleasure, and again, it satisfied him for a while, but it left him feeling empty. And so he tried a third pleasure, and it was the same story. Solomon details his experience for us, for his audience, to help save us from making the same mistakes, and to help save us from some of the pain that we or people we love might experience if we follow down that same path. And so if we'll listen and lean into his wisdom, we can do a lot of good for us or for people that we love.

So I want to pick up, we can't read the whole book. This is kind of a flyover of the book today. But I want to read a little bit from chapter one and chapter two with you as sort of our main text. And something that we do in the church, where I serve in the state, which shall not be named, is that we, I invite people to stand for the reading of the main text of scripture. Maybe Shawn does this as well.

But I invite you to stand with me as I read ecclesiastes chapter one, verse twelve through 14, and then chapter two, verse nine through eleven. And I like to say that we're standing out of respect for God's word, and we're even trying to say in our posture that we're open to receiving what God has for us in our spirit. So here we are. Ecclesiastes 112. I, the teacher, was king over Israel and Jerusalem.

I applied my mind to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens. What a heavy burden God has laid on mankind. I have seen all the things that are done under the sun. All of them are meaningless. A chasing after the wind.

A little bit later in chapter two, Solomon continues, I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this, my wisdom stayed with me. I denied myself nothing my eyes desired. I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil.

Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind. Nothing was gained under the sun. This is the word of the Lord. Amen. Amen.

You may have a seat. We just read part of chapter one and part of chapter two. Sandwiched between these two passages that we just read, if you would read them later on in your own time, you find that Solomon looked for escape in different outlets, and I summarized them in just five w's to make them more easy to remember for me. But Solomon looked for meaning and escape and wisdom. He looked for it in wine.

He looked for it in work, wealth, and also women. And just very briefly, here are his conclusions. These come from in between the two passages we just read on wisdom. Solomon writes, I said to myself, look, I have increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me. I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge.

Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom and also of madness and folly. But I learned that this, too is a chasing after the wind. For with much wisdom comes much sorrow, and the more knowledge, the more grief. If you ever got a master's degree, you say amen to this, right? The more knowledge, the more grief.

On wine and work, Solomon says, I tried cheering myself with wine and embracing folly, my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was good for people to do under

the heavens during the few days of their lives. You've probably asked that question. I have limited time. What is it good for me to do?

He says, I undertook great projects. I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water, groves of flourishing trees. But just a little bit later, in chapter four, Solomon writes about the emptiness he felt from these achievements.

He said, and I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person's envy of another. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind, he says, there was a man all alone. He had neither son nor brother, but there was no end to his toil. Yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. For whom am I toiling, he asked, and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?

This too is meaningless, a miserable business. And then finally, on wealth and women, he admits. He says, I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I amassed silver and gold for myself and the treasure of kings and provinces.

I acquired male and female singers and a harem as well, the delights of a man's heart. So this book is clearly written from the perspective of a person who has failed to restrain even a solitary impulse. If Solomon thought something would make him happy, he pursued it. If he thought something would help him forget his troubles, he tried it. Now, Ecclesiastes tells the story of Solomon specifically, but you could write a similar story just as easily from a woman's point of view.

From a younger person's point of view. Solomon is older at this time. You could write it. I'm firmly in middle age myself, so you could write it from a middle aged person's point of view. It doesn't matter.

This is simply the story of a person who has tried everything only to find in the end, they have gained nothing. And it's no wonder because of this that the teacher concludes just a few verses later. We read it when we were standing, when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind. And what I want to try to do in our remaining time together is I want to try to take this big idea that we've kind of put out there, and I want to try to apply it to, to your life and to my life. And so I'll start with a question.

What do you turn to when you were trying to escape, when you're trying to escape the frustrations, depression, stresses of life, what do you turn to? I remember maybe you do, too. When Southwest Airlines ran a campaign with a tagline that said, want to get away? Anybody else remember this marketing campaign? They ran it for years.

I would watch the Pacers on channel four when Channel Four was a thing, and they would always run these ads. You'd have, like, a, just a regular person with their family, or maybe they were doing their profession. So let's say they're a museum curator, and there's a big dinosaur fossil behind them, and all of a sudden, like, a nine year old comes by and touches the elbow of the dinosaur, and it all falls to the ground. And the narrator would come over and would just say, want to get away? And just pointing out all the different things that happen in life, all of us just at times want to get away for a moment, escape our problems, forget our pain, take a break from people.

We can't always hop on a plane, but we all have someplace that we go. We all have something that we turn to that's designed to help us escape our troubles, even if it's just for a moment. And so maybe you found yours on Solomon's list. Wisdom, work, wine, wealth, women. Maybe your list is different than his for you.

Do you go shopping? Do you load up on caffeine? Do you binge eat? Do you binge Netflix? Do you look at pornography?

Do you scroll through social media? Do you get a new tattoo? Do you work out? Do you work outside in your garden? Do you work harder at the office or at school?

Do you drink? Do you live vicariously through your children or grandchildren? Some of those choices are more destructive than others. Some of them are less destructive. But if we turn to any of them as a source of escape, what we find is they all come with a cost.

And the truth is, the cost increases the more times we escape to the particular thing. And this is really key, and that's why Cs Lewis put it this way. CS Lewis once said, natural loves that are allowed to become gods do not remain loves. They are still called so, but can become, in fact, complicated forms of hatred. So he's saying the things that we escape to eventually begin to take life from us rather than to give life to us, they go from sort of an innocent pleasure to a serious problem.

And so you could take even the most innocuous example, like, I'm a coffee drinker. I enjoy a good cup of coffee. There is something good and beautiful about after a hard day, meeting up with a friend and having a cup of coffee and talking about your troubles and talking about the day, that's beautiful. There's something altogether different about developing a caffeine addiction where you can't make it through your day without the steady stream of caffeine and Americanos or espressos or whatever it might be. So you see the difference here between something good and beautiful and something that can begin to get a hold of our life.

Whatever you do to escape the meaninglessness and frustration of life eventually takes on a life of its own. And so what I want to ask you is, what if the trigger that tells you it's time for your escape activity, whatever that activity may be, what if that trigger is actually God's way of calling you to himself when you feel that impulse? That's God's invitation to find solace,

security and strength, and his love, grace in truth. So what if, upon noting that trigger, we turn to God before we turn to anything else. What might that change for us?

What might it change for you? If we're talking about why we escape in the first place, we're generally seeking to do one of four or five things. We might be trying to avoid problems. There's someone or something that I don't want to deal with, so I go shopping instead, or I go to the gym instead. Sometimes it's not avoiding problems as much as it is numbing pain.

You know, we're dealing with. We're carrying an emotional wound or psychological fear, and we're trying to repress it through sugar, substance abuse, sex. Other times, we're fighting boredom. A lot of escapist activities occur because we don't. We just don't know what else to do with our time.

We're bored, so we stay up at night, we're scrolling our phones rather than getting the sleep that we need. It could be that you're hiding insecurity. This is a really big one. Maybe you feel insecure about being a father or being a mother, and so you're out with your friends a whole lot more than you are at home with your family, because when you're home, you feel insecure, or you're insecure as a student. And so rather than studying for the test, you're playing video games because you don't want to fail.

Some of you have kids or grandkids. That describes them very well. It's a way of escaping. But the last one I want to share is the one I want to spend more time with. Sometimes we're actually rebelling against our limitations.

All these things can contribute to escapist behavior, but at the root, there's often some form of rebellion, rebellion against society, rebellion against our self, rebellion against parents, like schools, oftentimes even against God. In his book the rise and triumph of the modern self, a man named Carl Truman explains that while escapist tendencies have been around forever, it's modern people like us who face a particularly difficult and deceptive temptation. And he points out that in the past certainly would be true for Solomon's day, but it even would have been true a few generations ago. People lived a very dependent lifestyle. So your food supply was dependent upon that year's harvest.

If it was a bad crop, you didn't have as much food or your access to education and work. Opportunity was very much dependent upon where you were born. And if you were born in a place with great access, you had great opportunity. It wasn't uncommon in biblical times, and certainly even in colonial America, that people would only travel a short distance from their home for most, if not all, of their life. So today, a family of four can travel from Philadelphia to London faster than Benjamin Franklin could travel from Philadelphia to Chicago.

It's just a different world that we live in. And with AI and with the Internet, you can be virtually anywhere in an instant. So we are far less dependent upon our environment for sustenance, for education, for identity formation. And in some ways, all this is very positive.

But it also leaves the impression that we are and should be shapers of our own destiny, shapers of our future and our reality.

I read an article last fall about this from the Wall Street Journal on biohacking. I don't know if you're familiar with biohacking. I was not overly familiar, but it detailed stories of people who have turned to technology in an attempt to increase either the quality or the quantity of their life. And it shared some different stories. It talked about one man in his forties who takes 150 custom vitamins and supplements a day.

150. I spent half my day just trying to organize that mess. 150 custom vitamins and supplements per day. Another couple eats a diet that's been specifically tailored to their genetic makeup. I don't even know what that means, but they have a diet specifically tailored to them.

Another couple in Scottsdale, Arizona, built an entire biohacking home, complete with pool spa, cold plunge, sauna with himalayan salt, steam, room with both aromatherapy and light therapy, infrared machines. And get this, heated floors. They live in Scottsdale. It's 114 degrees in Scottsdale today. They got those good heated floors.

They spent close to \$1 million on accessories. And when pressed on their spending choices, the family said, well, we spend quite a bit of money on biohacking, but we have to, because, quote, unquote, it is keeping us alive. It's keeping us alive. Now, those are some extreme examples. I don't imagine most of us could drop a million dollars on accessories for our home.

Maybe some could. Maybe. If you do have that access, you're probably not spending your money the exact same way. But these examples, they're not qualitatively different from any other attempt to cheat death, to escape the confines of time and aging, to transcend or change gender. They're all examples of us wanting to be creators with a capital c rather than creatures.

For many people today, a successful life no longer living well within the natural limitations that we've been given by God, or even the limitations that we've chosen for ourself. So who you choose to marry or whether or not you're going to have children. This is what the Bible would call stewardship. Like, you've got certain responsibilities and limitations. You live well within those.

You are a good steward. But for many people, a successful life is now breaking free from those limitations so that we can live without boundaries. And since the temptation to throw off restraint and pursue whatever our heart desires is more prevalent today than ever, you could argue that ecclesiastes is more relevant today than ever. Meaningless. Meaningless.

Everything is meaningless. And by the time you reach the end of the book, what we find is that ecclesiastes answer to the problem of meaninglessness is not to rid your life of

boundaries. Its answer is to embrace the appropriate boundaries. So by the time you get to chapter twelve, Solomon encourages his listeners to evaluate their life under the sun, which means, like, just the here and now from the perspective of God's life above the sun. So evaluate the temporary based upon the perspective of the eternal.

Solomon had failed to do this. So from chapter one, verse 14, to chapter two, verse 23, which was kind of that section that we, I read through earlier about wine, wealth, women, work, wisdom. During all that exploration, Solomon never mentions God. We don't see God's name. Once in the text, Solomon sought meaning in all sorts of different life experiences without ever seeking the author of life.

And it cost him. It cost him time, money, regret, confusion, depression. And it may have cost you. It may have cost you or people that you love. If you have sought meaning and purpose under the sun, you may have come to the same conclusion as Solomon.

Meaningless. Meaningless, right? Everything is meaningless. And so we're back to this question. Is there any hope or is there any way to course correct if we found ourselves on this path?

And the answer is yes, but it's not the answer that we might expect. The answer is not to reject the things of this world because they're temporary and meaningless and fleeting. That's gnosticism, right? That the material world is bad or the spiritual world is good. So let's just do spiritual things and forget about the material world.

That's not biblical. The Bible says God's given us good gifts to enjoy, right? James, chapter one. Every good and perfect gift comes down from the father of heavenly lights. He does not change like shifting shadows.

One Timothy six. Like, encourage those who are rich in this world not to find pleasure in riches, but also to enjoy the good gifts God has given. So God has given us good gifts, but he has given those gifts, and he has given us limitations. And so what that means is that while we can and should find pleasure in the things that God has made, we will never find ultimate pleasure. And while we should pursue purpose through the good gifts God has given, we will never find total satisfaction.

As Scott Gibson writes, satisfaction lodges in my heart when I accept the boundaries of my creaturely existence and accept the seasons of my life as coming from his good and wise hands. So we're not rejecting God's world, but we're also not rejecting boundaries within the world. I think of Maya and Sarah's eldest son, Ezra. We got our oldest son. He's about to turn six in a few weeks.

He just finished kindergarten in May. We've got a two year old as well named Joel. But when Ezra plays in our backyard, he feels free. We've got a backyard. It's an okay size, but, like, you could certainly throw a baseball across our yard.

There's a swing set back there and a little playground and got a fence around that part and some trees. And so when he's back there, you know, he runs and he laughs and he screams, and he swings on the swings, and he pees on the fence back there. We talked to him about it, but he still. And he drops his pants all the way down when he does it. I don't even know why he does that.

It's like, son, we're working on him still. But he's five, so he pees on the fence. He's free. You couldn't take it away from him. But by contrast, if I were to drop him off on Kirkwood, if I were to drop him off at college mall or I were to drop him off in the student union, he would have a much different experience.

There would be hesitancy there. There'd probably be some fear, timidity. Truth be told, he'd probably still try to pee on things.

But you hear what I'm saying. Having some level of definition and boundaries gives him the freedom to thrive. If you remove all the boundaries, no fence, no yard, no supervision, just openness, forever and ever and ever openness, you might think he'd have more freedom, but he would actually have less. Freedom has meaning only within the appropriate limits. And so if you think about some of your limitations, you and I have limited time.

We have limited energy, limited focus, limited sleep, compassion, knowledge, emotional intelligence. Some people have very little emotional intelligence. It's very limited confidence, patience, talent, training, education, relationships, money. We are limited by our DNA. And despite the goals of those in the Wall Street Journal article, we are limited, most emphatically, by death.

Death comes for us all. The inevitability of death hangs over this entire book of ecclesiastes. It opens and closes on the topic of death and judgment. So this is really key for understanding the book's message. And I'll put it to you like this about the emphasis on death.

We used to have a printer in the church office. Where I serve the office manager, affectionately called the printer Bob Marley. Because that printer, she said, always be jamming. Right? It would always be jamming.

And so she called it Bob Marley. Bob Marley was on the fritz and not working on his deathbed. The real Bob Marley said, money can't buy life. Queen Elizabeth I, on her deathbed, lamented all my possessions for a moment of time. I've sat with enough people as a pastor, and you probably have two family or friends to find in their final months, weeks, and days.

They do some evaluating, and they often reflect on things they would have done differently with the end staring them in the face. They have greater clarity about the excesses of their

life and the emptiness. This might even be more important. The emptiness the excess was trying to fill. They get some clarity about those things.

Adam Phillips has observed that our personal excesses are the best clues to our unique poverty. I think that is incredibly insightful. The thing we think will help us escape often becomes the thing that traps us. And so, just to give an example in self disclosure. So maybe you can see what I'm talking about.

I'm a person that's accumulated a lot of education. I like to learn. Like, I was kind of nerdy growing up, so I like to learn. Actually, of all the schools I went to, the only one I didn't graduate from was IU, because I ended up transferring and going into ministry. But I ended up getting four degrees.

And I've read a lot of books and got a lot of things hanging on the wall. And I will tell you, though, as good as education can be, there's some truth to the idea that the pursuit of knowledge, or at least my pursuit of knowledge, has been covering inadequacies in my own heart. Education can be wonderful, but it can also be a way of hiding insecurity. And it's a way of forming identity. And it's a way for a kid who didn't always know what to say in social situations.

And so didn't always have as many friends as other people around him to try to control things. Because if I feel like I have the most knowledge on something, well, then I can direct the conversation, or I can avoid other problems. And I have found something that probably many of you have found as well. Education is a wonderful good, and it is a horrible God. And the same is true for all of God's good gifts.

The person who makes sex, their escape, or even their ultimate purpose discovers that what God made good and pleasurable soon becomes inadequate. So they become chained to a path where enjoyment only comes through excess, increasing levels of perversion and the removal of all limitations and boundaries. And we see this in our world all around us. I was talking about this message with someone on our staff in Kentucky. I said it.

I said, Kentucky, talking with someone on our staff. And he recalled a time that he took his kids to a video store. Do you remember those? There was a time when you would walk into a brick and mortar store, and they would hand you a cultural artifact, and it had film on it, and that's how you would watch videos. And then you had to be kind when you returned it and rewind the tapes.

And if you didn't, they charged you money, and you had to give physical money when you had to give it back to them. Like coins, literally coins, you'd give them. So this whole thing, you can google it later and read all about it. And so he remembered going to the. To the video store with his kids.

He had two young kids at the counter, and he said he heard behind him coming, the shuffling of feet.

He turned and he looked, and he said he saw a gentleman coming out of the back room at the video store carrying a stack of red tapes. Right, red tapes from the back room. And he was carrying them out. And he said, the man had to be in his eighties. And the staff member, who has publicly shared about his struggle with pornography earlier in his life, said that this was a key moment for him with his young kids, because he remembered thinking, I don't want to wind up there.

No one wakes up one day and says, I want to be dependent upon pornography at 80, just the same as no one wakes up and says, I want to be addicted to substance, or whatever it might be. But we all run the risk of the thing we thought would help us escape becoming the thing that traps us. One person becomes so excessive in their patriotism that their love of country overshadows their love of Christ, and they can no longer untangle one from the other. Another makes work their identity only to find that no matter how much money or respect they earn, they still suffer from this gnawing lack of self worth. You can fill in the blank with every one of the good gifts that God has given in this world musical competency, fitness, athletic accomplishment.

The teacher says, and we'll start to close with this the teacher says he God has made everything beautiful in its time, right? These are God's good gifts but also he has put eternity into man's heart. So God's good gifts are beautiful when they're used according to his design but they're not everything, they're not eternal for one, they're not going to replace God. They're not designed to replace God. I'm reminded of the story that Jesus tells the gospels tell of a woman, this group of sadducees religious group they come and they try to trick Jesus never a good idea to trick Jesus and they said this woman was married to seven men in this life they said in the life to come, Jesus, ha ha ha.

Because they're trying to trick him who will she be married to? Seven men in this life who's she gonna be married to in the life to come? And Jesus looked at them and said, you don't even know what you're talking about idiots. He didn't say that. He might have thought it.

He might have thought it. That may not be funny. I'll scratch that next hour. You all think I'm heretical now that he said that. Jesus tells them this life is only a shadow of the one to come.

That's what he tells them. So yes, there's a time church for vacation and drink and travel and sleep and love and patriotism and exercise and work and rest the things we see and touch, family, friendship, achievement, adventure, sex, sunsets, good food, these are all wonderful gifts life comes to us through these gifts but there is no life in them, right? There is no life in them. Everything is beautiful in its time but everything apart from Jesus has its limitations. Know today Jesus is the well that never runs dry Jesus is the bread of life that

never fails to satisfy and Jesus is the rock that will not crush you but upon which you can build your life.

So let's learn from the wisdom of Solomon looking past the gifts to the giver of these gifts let's enjoy what God has given us to enjoy but let's do so within the limitations that he has provided so that we don't use those as a substitute for him or for eternity. The only gift that will never let you down is Christ and he's the only one that can give you the rest that you're looking for as Jesus said, come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Let me pray this over you today. God, we thank you for the fact that you are a good God who loves to give his children good gifts. And I pray that we would learn from the example of Solomon and what he shared with us that we would not miss you as we were enjoying what you have given us in this life, but that we would use those gifts as a means of seeing you and pursuing you, not substituting for you.

And that we would also note that the most important gift given was your son, and that he is the only one who will not let us down. So, God, help us to be good stewards of this life. Help us to find joy. But may our ultimate purpose and joy be in you. Thank you for your love and grace.

Thank you that if we've been failing in this regard or stumbling, you invite us to start right from this moment back with you and back with Christ. And I pray for someone today. It can be a turning point. Pray all these things, Lord, in the holy and powerful name of Jesus and all God's people said. Amen.

God bless.