**Life Under the Sun**

**Sermon From Ecclesiastes**

There are a few questions that all human beings, even atheists ask. These are what I call the important questions:

Where did I come from? (origin of the universe, of the earth, of life, of humans and of one particular human—you!)

Why am I here?

What is my purpose in life?

What is my value?

What is the right thing to do?

What is the nature of ultimate reality/God?

Solomon, the wisest person to live before Jesus Christ, thought carefully about these things.

Ecclesiastes is not God speaking to people (most of the Bible)

Ecclesiastes is not people speaking to God (Psalms)

No! Ecclesiastes is a person talking to his fellow persons!!

The only other books in this genre are Job and Proverbs (but Job also has sections in which God speaks to people)

It is a supernaturally wise person reflecting on the important questions.

Can human musings on the questions of life be inspired? Judge for yourself. I say definitely yes!!!

Solomon spent his life investigating the meaning of life. We can learn from him rather than having to reinvent the wheel.

Why Solomon?

1. He was in a unique position—Israel at the absolute peak of its political and economic success, and a period of relative peace.

2. Because he had David, a man after God’s own heart, as a father.

3. Because as a humble youth, Solomon prayed for wisdom.

1 Kings 3:4-15 Solomon’s request.

1 Kings 3:16-28 A famous example of Solomon’s wisdom. We will not read this one.

1 Kings 4:29-34 The result. Solomon’s wisdom.

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11 Life under the sun. (v. 9)

This is a Jewish idiom for life on the earth. The human experience here on the earth. Life in the human realm. Life under the human philosophy known as humanism.

This is Solomon, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

What is the conclusion of Solomon’s quest for meaning “under the sun?”

Meaningless!!!

Meaningless in view of what?

Solomon will list in the next three chapters several senses in which life is, indeed, completely void of meaning.

Note: He will qualify himself. He is a careful philosopher, and he anticipates possible objections.

But he will stick with his overall conclusion.

Meaningless!!! Chasing after the wind.

Have you ever felt your life was meaningless?

I have!!! Why am I doing what I am doing? I remember this crisis in my sophomore year in college.

For me, it can bring on a panic attack if I think too much about it.

The world’s answer: Don’t think about it. Get drunk. Take hallucinogenic drugs (my solution at the time) Have a lot of sex. Gamble. Work really hard. Seek relationships. Create a legacy. Build something. Keep moving.

Example of the German doctor I lived with.

Solomon will conclude that these do not work!!! He can save you the trouble. You can learn from Solomon and avoid the pain and the destroyed lives.

Ecc 1:1-11 In the big picture, your life is meaningless!

Example: There are 8.1 billion people on the earth. You represent 0.000000125% of all people living today.

That tiger in the wild is more significant than you are. Why? There are 3890 tigers in the world. That one tiger is 0.26% if all tigers. If that one dies, it matters.

Solomon:

In view of the vastness of time, life is meaningless….

You are insignificant!

v. 4 Generations come and generations go, but the earth is unchanged.

The sun comes and goes.

The wind blows. It goes round and round and never stops.

Streams keep flowing, but the sea remains the same.

The Colorado River carves out the entire Grand Canyon.

Compared to the age of the universe or the age of the earth, how significant are we?

My lifespan is .0000018% of the age of the earth.

v. 9 There is nothing new under the sun. Depressing, but true!!!

You are not unique. You go to school, you get a job, you have children, you get old, and then you die.

Who will remember you 200 years from now?

In the big picture, what will your individual life contribute to the overall fate of humanity?

Mark Almond: What am I living for? Why am I living, why am I giving all my life, bring up family, children and wife. Tell me my friend, hasn’t that been done before?

In view of the immensity of time and space, life under the sun is meaningless.

Solomon. OK, in view of the vastness of time and space, life is meaningless, but what about exploring knowledge? What about pursuing degrees, doing research, making discoveries, pushing the bounds of human knowledge?

Ecclesiasts 1:12-18

Solomon’s conclusion:

Sure, wisdom is a good thing, but:

What is crooked cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted.

In the big picture, the big human problems will never be solved.

In the end we will not defeat sickness. Everyone dies.

We will not end poverty.

We will not put an end to evil and corruption.

v. 14, v. 17 It is like chasing after the wind….

v. 18 Besides the more wisdom, the more grief.

They say that ignorance is bliss.

Knowledge and wisdom are not bad, but do they give ultimate meaning or purpose?

Ecc 2:12-16

Solomon:

v. 13 OK. Sure, to be wise is better than to be foolish. “Wisdom is better than folly”

v. 14 But both the wise and the fool die. Does it really matter?

v. 16 And your wisdom will be forgotten.

v. 15 Wisdom is meaningless!!!

So, in view of the vastness of time and space, life is meaningless.

So, in view of the fact broken things cannot fixed, and because the fate of the fool and the wise is the same, Wisdom is meaningless

Solomon:

Well, at least we can have fun. At least we can pursue pleasure

Ecclesiastes 2:1-10 (also Ecclesiastes 6:7) Pleasure is meaningless.

Q: Is pleasure evil? No! Ecclesiastes 3:11-13 Just like wisdom is better is than foolishness, similarly to enjoy life is better than to be a spoil-sport.

But these things do not give ultimate meaning and purpose to life.

Solomon: If pleasure could create meaning and value, I would know. (300 wives, 700 concubines, fantastic wealth)

Been there, done that.

Back to Ecc 2:2 What does pleasure accomplish? Answer: Nothing!

Besides Ecclesiastes 5:10 Whoever loves money never has enough. Whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This, too, is meaningless.

Can you relate?

We are SOOOOOO prone to forget this simple truth.

This is true of every form of pleasure.

OK. In view of time, life is meaningless.

Wisdom and knowledge are meaningless.

The gathering of wealth, pleasure and fun are meaningless.

But, fortunately, great life achievements give purpose and meaning to life!

Ecclesiastes 2:12-23

Work and accomplishments are meaningless.

The Olympics are a perfect example.

OK, you won a gold medal, now what.

Ex: Chariots of fire. Eric Liddle and Harold Abrahams.

After his gold-medal performance, Harold is very depressed.

OK. I did it. Now what.

I write books. Great. Will anyone read my books 100 years from now? No!

Piling up wealth and creating a legacy—Meaningless.

Building a business? Meaningless.

You spend 40 years saving for retirement, and then you die a week after you retire.

What about religious accomplishments? Phil 3:3-11 Meaningless outside of Christ.

v. 8 garbage v. 8 a loss. Meaningless.

Well, we are all now very depressed, Solomon. So, is there any meaning in life at all?

Ecclesiastes 12:8-14

v. 12 Much study wearies the body…

Q: What, then, gives life meaning?

v. 13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for the is the entire duty of mankind.

Put God into the equation and the math is completely different.

Anything with eternal consequences has great meaning. Fearing and serving God gives meaning. Helping people to be saved has meaning.

Conclusion: The things that are “meaningless” according to Solomon are given meaning if they are used toward eternal ends.

Serving God and helping people to be saved gives our lives significance.

It makes our use of knowledge and wisdom meaningful.

It even gives meaning to pleasure. It makes our work meaningful.

Even the building of wealth can be meaningful if it is used to build the kingdom of God.

The meal cooked for the sick, the date with your boyfriend, the work in the yard…

But here is the question: Are you truly, deep in your heart, doing all of these things for God or for yourself?

Life? Meaningless.

Wisdom and knowledge? Meaningless

Pleasure and fun? Meaningless

Accomplishments—achieving goals? Meaningless, Meaningless

Doing these things in Christ? Great value, meaning and purpose.