

Everything is Meaningless Apart from Christ



Eccl. 1:1-11

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If you know anything about Elon Musk, you know he's a very eccentric man doing some really crazy stuff. I have read a few things about him just from PayPal to Tesla to Space X. I listened to a long-form interview by Elon Musk. I have always been fascinated with leaders and entrepreneurs; I just want to get inside their heads. Elon Musk wants to build spaceships to go to Mars and colonize Mars. The interviewer asked Elon Musk why Mars, "What is the purpose of going to Mars?" To which Elon Musk said, "In order to understand the meaning of life." It's a really strange answer. That caught me off guard a little bit. He goes on to say, "To know the meaning of life, we have to expand the scope and scale of consciousness. A species that does not become multi-planetary is simply waiting around until there is some extinction event." He said we have to get to another planet because we have to have time. Something is going to wipe out Earth, maybe like the dinosaurs, maybe an asteroid. We are going to kill ourselves and we

have to go somewhere else to be there long enough so that we can ponder and figure out what life is all about.

Church, I would love to be interviewed about this. It would be like, “Elon, you know we have had a lot of time to think about this, like thousands of years. Do you really think thousands more are going to help us arrive at the meaning of life?” Of course, if you are a Christian, you know that’s a really sad goal — to get to Mars to understand the meaning of life because we know the meaning of life, right? The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. We see the meaning of life in Christ, but if you don’t have Christ, you have to search for it somewhere. Elon Musk is one of the most brilliant people on our planet, and his idea is let’s go settle on Mars and maybe we will figure out what life is all about. At least Elon is asking these deep questions because I don’t know that most of us ask questions like that, like what is the real meaning of life? We just sort of go about our life and try to create meaning and hopefully it will turn out to be the right thing. We end up chasing things that don’t actually satisfy us and then we are left empty, and we just keep chasing and we keep going. If we were a little bit honest with ourselves, we aren’t really sure why we are here and why it all matters, but then we just go right back to what we are doing because we don’t really want to think about that reality.

What Ecclesiastes is going to do is force us to think about those questions. Does your work really matter? Does your life really matter? At the end of the day, do the things you are doing really matter? The good news is we don’t have to go to Mars to figure that out. We can actually go to Scripture and figure out what life truly is about. Let’s read the first couple of verses and then we are going to walk through chapter 1:1–11.

Scripture

“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?”

In the Hebrew, the word, Preacher, is Koheleth and Koheleth transliterated into Greek is Ecclesiastes. This sounds like Greek word, Ecclesia, which is our word for church. What this means is there is a guy who is assembling a congregation and he is going to preach to them. We know some things about this preacher. The Bible says that he is the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Now, most scholars will agree that this is Solomon. Though there's disagreement on that, the church and most conservative scholars all agree this is Solomon speaking. So we are just going to go with that and believe that Solomon, the king in Jerusalem, the son of David, has a message that he wants to get out to the people.

Solomon's message is going to start with the problem and he is going to address the problem. Here's his message. Verse 2 says, "Vanity of vanities, says the preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity." Great sermon, right? Nothing matters. All of life, it's not really that great. I remember going to a Passion conference with Chris Lawrence in Atlanta. One of our favorite preachers was preaching, John Piper. We got there an hour before the doors opened. We are the first ones in line. When the doors opened, we ran as fast as we could to get on the front row, the front seat. We wanted to get as close as we could. We sat there for about forty-five minutes waiting for John Piper to walk in, get on the podium, open his Bible, and preach to us. We couldn't wait. For preacher boys, this was like Michael Jordan coming in to do a dunk! This is unbelievable. Just imagine if John Piper would have come up, opened his Bible, and said, "Hey, guys. I just want to be frank with you — life is terrible, it's all meaningless. You are just wasting your time. You guys can just get up and leave." That would be a pretty big letdown, right? I mean, we are like 'joy in God' or something, but no, it's all sham. Life is just meaningless. Just go and do whatever you want because nothing really matters. Well, that's this guy's sermon in Ecclesiastes. That's like the beginning, and then in chapter 12, again it's the same thing — he says I have kind of researched everything, it's basically all vanity, it's all meaningless.

So, we need to know what exactly Solomon means by the word, vanity, because he's going to use that word thirty-eight times throughout this sermon. It can be translated several different ways and some of your

Bibles translate it in different words, but it can mean futile, meaningless, smoke, a vapor, a mist. One commentator said it's what's left over when you pop a soap bubble. A soap bubble is all pretty and shiny and then you pop it, and it's like what's left over — that's life. Everything you are pursuing is like this popped soap bubble. That's the idea of vanity. I like to think about it as cotton candy. You see a kid carrying around cotton candy, just smiling because they just love cotton candy. Their whole mouth is pink and purple. They are having the time of their life and they get to the end of it and they are not satisfied. They are not full. They are actually cranky because all that sugar hasn't helped them; it's actually hurt them. That's basically like all of life, all that we are doing, we end and we are just cranky and hungry and unsatisfied. That's what life is. It's vanity. It's meaningless.

Solomon doesn't just say it's vanity, he says it's vanity of vanities. In Hebrew, that's a way to put exclamation on it. It's a superlative. Think about the Holy of Holies, it's the most holy place. Well, vanity of vanities is the most vain thing. What is the most vain thing in the world? Everything. That's what he's saying. Notice, it's all is vanity. What are we talking about? Everything. Just name something...yeah it's vain. It's vanity. It's meaningless. It's like cotton candy, it might have joy for a moment but it's not going to last, it's not going to actually fulfill you. So now, he has to back this up. We have the preacher, we have the problem, and now we are going to have the ponder. He's going to start thinking about this, he's going to mull this over...he's going to ponder. The question he's going to ponder throughout the whole book is in verse 3, "What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?" So, what are we actually gaining?

Now, that word, gain, can also be translated as profit. It means what's left over. If your life was a job, at the end of the day when you clocked out and picked up your paycheck, what would you really be getting? Of all the input, of all that you do, of all the sweat, what are you actually able to hold on to and say, oh, this is meaning, this is joy, this is eternal happiness? What is actually left over? What is profitable? I mean, at the end of the day we want to get paid for our work. We want all that we do to have some

leftovers so that we can enjoy the leftovers. That's how most jobs are. Farming is the exception, right? You do all the work but you may only break even at the end of the year. You want to make something but it doesn't actually produce. But that's not the goal — you want profit, you want excess. The preacher is saying think about your life and all the things you are doing...what are you gaining by it? What can you show for it right now? What can you hold in your hand to say this is what your life has been building to?

Now, I want to share a key line in these opening verses that helps us understand the whole book. Here is this question, what does man gained by all the toil (now, listen to this) at which he toils *under the sun*. Twenty-eight times, he uses that little phrase, under the sun, (or under heaven) throughout the whole scope of this book. It's a very important phrase. Why is it important? Solomon is trying to chase down meaning and reality *under* the sun. In other words, if we measure everything from the sun down to the earth, we are just going to look at the here and now. We are not going to bring God into the equation; we just kind of leave Him out. We are not going to connect all of our life to God. We are just going to take life on its own. What he says is if you take life on its own, if you disconnect your life from God, no matter what you do and what you pursue, it will end up being meaningless. He is going to chase down themes, and we will see that every theme you can chase down, it's going to be empty if you don't connect that thing to God. If you don't live your life *above* the sun, you will be unsatisfied and your life will be meaningless. That's his argument. Life *under* the sun, life apart from God, just enjoying friendship, wealth, work, and whatever you want to go for — if you do it apart from God, disconnecting from Him, guess what? Life is going to be meaningless.

So, here's kind of the big sum of what I think we are going to see. Number one is everything is meaningless under the sun. That's what Solomon is going to prove to us. If you don't live above the sun, life is going to be meaningless. I think translated into our time; we are going to say everything is meaningless apart from Christ. You have to connect all of your life to God for it to have meaning. Now, I want you to think about that statement — everything is meaningless apart from Christ. Some of

you in this room don't believe that. You are like...*umm, I don't know. That's a little bit of a stretch.* Maybe you are not a believer yet, maybe you are agnostic, maybe you are an atheist, maybe you just haven't really committed to Christ yet, and you think there are a lot of things that are meaningful apart from Christ, so you don't believe that. Here's what I want to say to you — you actually know that's true. Or if you don't yet, you soon will, and here's what I mean. If you don't believe that, you are going to find out that as you live your life, whatever you pursue will end in brokenness and emptiness. Your life will play out, and if your life is not connected to Christ, it will end up being meaningless. So you might not believe it but you know it, or you *will* know it and the plead will then be come to Christ, because in Christ everything is meaningful.

But there's a second thing. Some of you know it but you don't believe it. Some of you know everything is meaningless apart from Christ. In your mind, you know that's true but you don't believe it. Do you know how I know you don't believe it? Because you are still chasing everything that the world has to offer trying to find ultimate meaning and satisfaction in those things. You are still living your life apart from Christ. You are building your own kingdom apart from Christ. You are trying to get all your pleasure and joy apart from Christ. You are saying...oh yeah, I need Christ to be joyful and happy and satisfied, but you really don't believe that because you are not banking your life on it. You are not trusting in it. I hope whichever group you are in that through this book you would know it and also believe it, that you would learn to lean and trust on that.

So, what exactly is Solomon doing in this book? I want to invite some scholars just to speak into this. GS Hendry says this, "Koheleth [the preacher] writes from concealed premises, and his book is, in reality, a major work of apologetic." So the idea is the whole book is really an apologetic. He's going to build up these themes and show how they are vain, and the whole idea is for you to look around and say what should we live our lives for? He's going to say, nothing under the sun. You have to go above the sun. You have to be connected to God. He's leading you towards something through an apologetic. Jay Adams, the counselor says this, "What is Solomon's purpose? To urge the reader not to place his faith and

hope in what a world under God's curse can do for him, but instead to place his faith and hope in the creator Himself." That's what the book is trying to get you to do — not to place your faith on anything this world has to offer. It's under a curse. It's going to be futile. It's going to be broken. It's not going to satisfy you. It's to put your faith in the creator of this world who is going to create it all new in the age to come. Philip Rankin says this, "More than anything else in the Bible, Ecclesiastes captures the futility and frustration of a fallen world." That's what the book's going to do. It's going to capture the frustration and futility of a fallen world and some of you feel that. You went through an event, you struggled through something that you thought was going to work out and it didn't. You feel that frustration and that struggle. Derek Kidner, one of my favorite scholars says this, "He wants to expose the meaninglessness of life in a cursed world in order to create a hunger for something better." That's what he's doing. He wants to create in you a hunger for something better, something more, something other, something that is to come. So, Solomon is going to explore some themes like wisdom, pleasure, work, wealth, death, evil, injustice, piety, and if you think about it, all those things are like earthly things, they are what we deal with all of the time. He's going to deal with all those things to show us how fleeting they are and how ultimately, in all those things what you need is the glory of Christ.

So, we have had the preacher, we have had the problem, we have had the ponder, and now we are going to have the probe, all starting with peace. The probe is in verses 4–11. What we are going to see first is that we are all tired. If you look in verse 8, it says all things are weary. That's where he's going with this line of argument. All things are weary. Why is life vanity? Why is life meaningless? Well, the reality is we are all really tired. He is actually going to prove that to us. Notice in verse 4, it says, "A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever." So the first thing he talks about is generations. These generations come and they go but the earth actually remains forever. The earth remains the same, and that really was troubling to Solomon because the idea is as generations come and go, things should be different. Things should be better. We should be making progress. But Solomon can look back to his history, to all of those Old Testament verses, and he can remember a

garden. Things haven't gotten better. Generations have come and gone and the earth is basically the same. We are on the cycle of sin and longing and evil and oppression. It just keeps happening over and over. The world's not getting better; it's staying the same, generation after generation after generation, and this is frustrating to Solomon. It seems like at some point, one generation would fix all of the problems, but instead, it's just a weary cycle of birth, life, death, birth, life, death, birth, life, death.

We can think about our living generations right now. We even have labels for our generations. The Greatest Generation (which by the way is the greatest name), those born from 1901 to 1927. There is the Silent Generation, 1928 to 1945. We have the Baby Boomers, 1946 to 1964, Generation X, 1965 to 1980. We have the Millennials...that's me, 1981 to 1995. Then there is Generation Z, 1996 to 2010. Finally, we have Generation Alpha, which is after 2011 to 2025. We love this idea of putting ourselves in generations, and the idea is we are the generation that's going to save the world. That's why we group together with people. If you ask anybody, what's wrong with the world, it's really easy, it's kids these days...*Oh, man! Kids these days, they are just not like my generation. We were hardworking, and these kids, they don't know how to work. If our generation could just have had a little bit longer, we would actually change the world!* In fact, someone said this about a generation, "The children now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority, they show disrespect to their elders." Doesn't that sort of mark what some of us think of the younger generation? Sound familiar? Do you know who that was? Socrates — twenty-five hundred years ago...*Do you know what's wrong with the world? Kids these days! They are just disrespectful, no sign of authority, they are wearing their toga all kinds of ways!*

This is Solomon's frustration! All generations come and they all go. Everyone lives and everyone dies, and the world is basically the same. If you read the Old Testament, it's kind of the same problem. If you read the New Testament, it's kind of the same problems. It's always been like that! We are all in the cycle of sin, rebellion, evil, and oppression, that's always how it's been. We want to be part of that generation that actually fixes the

world's problem. Saint Jerome in the 400's wrote this, "What is more vain than this vanity? That the earth, which was made for humans, stays but humans themselves, the lords of the earth, suddenly dissolve into the dust." That's kind of the problem, and that's one of the problems for Solomon all the way through — maybe we could fix the world, but we all live and we die, and no matter what we do, we are going to die. Solomon struggles with this all through the book. We are a people who don't like to think about death, but we need to think about death if we are going to live our lives correctly — not under the sun building this perfect world, but above the sun, connected to God where actually things matter.

So, we see we are all weary. Generation after generation, we just come and we go, and it's because life often feels like a treadmill. Look with me in verse 5, "The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises." The picture is the sun like a marathon runner that hasten. He's out of breath, he's panting because he's got to get back to what? To rise. And then, you have to run the next day to do the exact same thing. It's like Groundhog Day over and over and over, the sun does the same thing. It's weary and panting and it's going really hard, but it's not doing anything different. There are no different results through all of the labor. Look at the wind, verse 6, "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." The wind is busy blowing and going, but at the end of the day, it all kind of circles back to same place. It doesn't actually go anywhere. And then, there is this vivid illustration in verse 7, "All streams run to the sea..." You get that idea like they are running, they are weary, they are going, but the sea is not full. There is all this effort to come together and fill the sea, but the sea stays the exact same. He says, "...to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again." It's like they get to the sea but then it recycles — winds, evaporation, and the water goes back in the clouds, falls back to the earth where the streams flow, and there they flow again. He's saying everything is on this relentless cycle of busyness, like a treadmill.

I think the reason Solomon puts the things in there is he wants us to feel that's kind of our Monday through Friday, our everyday life. We get up and we go to work, we check emails, we do our thing, build that something,

and then we go back to bed. We wake up the next morning and we go, go, go, go. And half the time at like lunch, we are thinking... *What have I done today? I have no idea. I hope nobody finds that out because I don't know what I have done today!* It's just this endless cycle of going, running, and doing, and it's as if we are on a treadmill. But if we are honest, we are all pretty weary and tired. It kind of feels like we don't even know how we got in this game. At my age of life, we have four kids so we are in this parent game. I don't know who started it, I don't even know the rules, but I find myself playing. The parent game goes something like this...we all get together on a Saturday and it's like, "Oh hey, what are you doing?" "Well, I have to take my kid to the soccer game at 8:00, and then, my wife is going to take other kid to dance recital, then we are going to meet back here because we have a ball game. And then, tonight we have got a clarinet lessons so we are going to take him to that. Beat that!" It's kind of like you like you are trying to one up each other — "Look how busy I am. My kids are doing a ton of stuff and we are all exhausted. What have you got?" Then the next person will say, "Well, let me start my day. You just started today, but last night we drove out of town and we were at a tournament all day on Friday, and today, we are going back to that tournament. We have the grandparents taking the other kids to other games. And then on Sunday, we aren't going to go to church because the kids have some other things. And, my little girl is going to be an astronaut so we are going to drive down to like Alabama and take her to astronaut school. It's going to be awesome!" Then the next person says, "Oh, you think that's good? Let me show you what I do with my kids!" We are all looking at each other to see who's the most tired. Now, I am not sure how you win the game, but I think the most tired person wins...I think that's the victor, but I haven't quite figured it out. It's like we are in competition, but then I find myself wondering why am I telling people all that? Is there a prize for how many games you go to or how many things you do? We all instinctively do this. I mean, when somebody says, "How have you been?" "Busy." Have you ever heard someone answer, "Lazy. Man, I have just been like chilling and been resting. It's been a good week." "Really? You have sinned that much?" I mean, that's like sin because we think we are supposed to go and do! It's as if we are on this treadmill.

But look at what Solomon says in verse 8, "All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it..." We are all weary. The reason I think we are weary is I think weary is connected to our quest for satisfaction. We want to be satisfied and somehow we think if I just run enough, go enough, and do enough, I will be satisfied so we keep running as fast as we can. We are like hounds going around the track with little rabbit, and if we can just catch the rabbit — the rabbit's always going faster, dog, it's not going to work. But that's what we do, we just go round and round and round. It's like that treadmill, you get on it and you run and you run, you sweat and run, but where are you going? You are going nowhere. That is literally our lives, and Solomon said we are all weary; a man cannot utter it.

Not only are we weary but we are also we are not satisfied. Meaning at the end of the day, I think we are all empty apart from Christ. Here's what we see in verse 8. "...the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." See, the problem with seeking life under the sun is that's a life not attached to Christ. That's a life just seeking out jobs and pleasure and sports and entertainment just for the sake of those things in order to build our kingdom apart from Christ. We are tired but also we are empty because it doesn't actually work. It doesn't actually satisfy our soul.

The eye is not satisfied with seeing, and the ear is not satisfied with hearing. In other words, we see and we see and we see, but we have to see more. We hear and we hear and we hear, but we want to hear more. And this is Solomon thousands of years ago...imagine if he came in our culture and he got one of our rectangle, shiny things. Could you imagine if he grabbed one of those shiny phones...he would think we really do have a problem with your eyes can't get enough of what you see, and your ears what you hear! We have the endless scroll, right? We are all looking down, thumb swiping, and scrolling! all, We all kind of look ridiculous but nobody's going to say it because we are all doing it. It is this endless scroll because we are always doing it. Out with a friend, dinner with your wife, even then we are scrolling. It is this endless scroll because there's something I haven't seen, and if I get that last thing, then I will be satisfied. If I just see that news update, that alert...The news is always alerting and we have to stay up to date because our sports team needs us,

our political party needs us! Scroll, scroll, scroll because our eyes are never satisfied. We want to hear and see the next podcast, the next article, the next meme. Those things aren't bad in themselves, but when you disconnect them from God, they become ultimate things that do not satisfy you. I mean, connect some of those things to God and you can have a healthy engagement with a phone if it's connected to God, but we often see our phones *under* the sun and we are just seeking those things for themselves and they leave us unsatisfied...endless scrolling endless seeing an endless hearing and we always have to have more. That's why when you leave your house and you don't have your phone, you are like, "Where is it at? Honey, have you seen my phone? I don't have my phone. What if somebody is texting me right now?" We all freak out, right, because we have eyes that aren't satisfied and ears that don't hear. Solomon would say it's leading us to no satisfaction. We are actually empty trying to be full.

Number three is this — nothing is new, which means at the end of the day we are all pretty bored. Here's what Solomon says in verse 9–10, "What has been is what will be, and 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." Now, some of you are not sure about that. I mean, there are definitely some new things. He just said there are no new things, but there are new things, because we have a commercial for an iPhone 14. That's thirteen versions newer than the iPhone 14, right? I don't know how many there are all told, but there are at least thirteen old ones and one new one. The commercial shows us that it's clearly new. There is this little black bar thing at the top that pops up your notifications, like 'check this out!' It's unbelievable! Who wants a 13? Just throw that away. Clearly, that's new. Solomon would say, well, I don't know how much newer that is... I mean, if you go all the way back to people talking to each other, that's what we are doing with cellphones. There was the telegraph...that was new. And then we got the telephone...that was really, really new. In our houses, there a rotary phone until we got the push button...that was really new. Then there was a payphone, put a quarter in, magic. Then we got a cordless phone, you could walk around, no cord...that was new. Then there was a cellphone, a bag in your car, and now you don't even need a bag anymore, and you can

go anywhere on the planet. This is new. So, what are we doing? We are still talking to each other, right, so Solomon would say that's not really new.

Ok, but we are in a whole new age, we are about to go in the Meta. Meta, which means everything...everything is going to be new in the Meta. You wear these goggles and it's all virtual. It's going to be so cool. I read an article that Nike is developing technology to sell you shoes in the Meta. In the Meta, in your virtual avatar, you are going to get to do something really new and crazy — you are going to get to walk in a store and buy sneakers for your avatar. That's new. You can't see it unless you put on goggles but they are there. We are going to get to buy houses and go to each other's houses in the Meta. Who knew? This is so new. You could come to my house! Oh wait, we already do that, don't we? Okay, maybe Solomon is right that we really don't have new things. We just have recycled versions of old things. That really frustrates us because what we think is I know I'm bored, I know I'm lonely, I know I'm empty, but man, that new thing, if I just get it, then I'm going to be happy. Solomon said there's nothing new that's going to make you happy. Everything under the sun has pretty much already been done and there's not going to be anything new that's going to make you ultimately happy because you weren't made for something new, you are made for a new Kingdom that is coming. You are made for something more, something better than just life under the sun.

So, we have this this boredom because nothing is new, and then the last point, nothing lasts. This is really, really troubling because the reality is you will be forgotten. Notice what Solomon says in verse 11, "There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of latter things, yet to be among those who come after." There will be no remembrance of former things. That means that right now, all of this stuff, it's going to be forgotten. Let's just do a little test. How many of you know your great, great, great, great granddad's name? That's four greats. How many of you know your great, great, great, great grandmother's name? Not very many of us, right? Do you know what that means? This is going to be troubling. That means that your great, great, great, great niece will

not know your name. Not won't know your life story and all that you posted on social, they won't know your *name*. Solomon looks at that and he is troubled. The generations come and go. We are all weary. At the end of the day, we are empty, we are unsatisfied, there is nothing new that pleases us, and at the end of it all, we die and we are forgotten. That is very troubling to Solomon. It is the treadmill of life — we are tired, we are empty, we are bored, we are forgotten.

I love this quote by Leonard Wolf. He was a British publisher and political theorist. He developed the Bloomsburg group. He says this, looking back at his life, "I see clearly that I have achieved practically nothing. The world today in the history of the human anthill during the past five to seven years would be exactly the same as if I had played ping-pong instead of sitting on and writing books." Just think about that. It's a sobering reality that it would have been better to play ping-pong than reading a bunch of books, writing a bunch of papers, and trying to fix the world. This is a guy who thinks it's just the reality of the world and thinks the whole thing is sort of a sham. We are giving our lives to everything, but actually, nothing really matters.

That's the point of Solomon. He wants you to get to that point so then from that point, you can hear a quote like this from Charles Bridges, "We are permitted to taste the bitter wormwood of earthly streams, in order that, standing by the heavenly fountain, we may point our fellow sinners to a world of vanity we have left into the surpassing glory and delight of the world we have newly found." That's what he wants us to see. That's what he wants us to proclaim. Yes, life is vain under the sun disconnected from God. But life connected to God above the sun in a relation with King Jesus, everything matters and there is great meaning, and that's we are going to chase down through this whole book.

I want to end with Romans chapter 8 because Paul is going to use a familiar word in this text. He says this, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present age are not worthy comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For creation waits in eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility [that word, futility, is our word vanity, emptiness, the soap bubble, the cotton candy. It was

subjected to a meaningless affair] not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from the bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we are saved." Paul is saying I know life is futile. I know the present age, which sounds like language under the sun, is futile. I know there is drama. I know it's not all working out. We are presently in a state where there are much vain things in the world. There is much meaninglessness under the sun, but we also have hope. As Christians, we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly. That's what we do. That's the whole book. That's the point. We are going to groan inwardly — yeah, life doesn't work, bad things happen, our dreams don't come true — but at the same time, we wait eagerly for the return of Christ who is going to make all things new. Yeah, nothing's new except for the Kingdom of God, and it's coming.

See, the whole point of Ecclesiastes is it's shouting as loud as it can, *nothing* matters that's under the sun. But then, we have a cross and an empty tomb and a resurrected Lord who is above the sun, who connected to Him is shouting very loudly, IN ME *everything* matters. See, below the sun, just this world's level, take that out of the equation, nothing in your life matters. Connect your life back to God and what you will see is everything matters — your work, your wisdom, your play, your labor — everything matters if you connect it back to God. Disconnected? It will not matter. You will be that weary person who is empty and longing, on that treadmill running as fast as you can but you can't seem to go anywhere. That's what the book is trying to do. That's what the writer is trying to do. Solomon wants us to go from vanity to victory. We are vanity apart from Christ, but in Christ, we have victory. In Christ, we can live.

Philip Reinke, last quote we will have for today says this, "We come to Ecclesiastes with the despairing thought that nothing really matters." That's what Ecclesiastes is going to leave us with, nothing really matters. But by the grace of God, we leave with a hopeful realization that

everything matters. We have to prove the first to get to the latter. See, the reality is nothing matters apart from Christ. But in Christ, everything matters. I just want you to think about your life for a minute and just ask, am I on that treadmill? Are you just running, running, going, going, and trying to pursue and do, and there's no thought of God, it's just you and your kingdom and your pursuits? If you are honest, you are weary, you are empty, you are bored, and you realize your life will be forgotten. That's what Solomon wants you to know so that you will do one thing...you know that little red button on the treadmill? It's got a little string to it. Do you know what you can do when you run on a treadmill? You just grab it and pull it. Do you know what happens? The treadmill stops. It just stops. It's an emergency switch. He wants you to pull the emergency switch, to get off that treadmill of life that is seeking after all the things of the world for their own sake. Pull the button. Get off the treadmill and step over to the side, and you will see there's actually a path that is not meant to be run on, it's meant to be walked down. It's the path of the way of Jesus who says all who are weary come to me and I will give you rest. It's a different path. It's a path not pursuing all of the world for the sake of the world; it's a path living in this world but not of the world. We have our eyes fixed on King Jesus. We can see Him, and through His light as we see above the sun, we can let His sunshine shine on all things so that we see everything in our life actually matters if we connect it back to Christ. Yes, nothing matters, but everything matters in the Lord Jesus. So I urge you, pull the plug, stop the pursuit of all the meaningless things in this life, step over to the side, and start walking down the path of King Jesus. It happens through repentance and faith.

See, for some of us, we don't believe this whole thing...that everything is meaningless apart from Christ. But we do know it, or we will know it because everything we pursue will end up being empty. But here's probably the most tragic thing...a lot of us in here know it. We know everything is meaningless apart from Christ. We say it. We believe it. We think it. We know it, but we don't believe it. How do I know we don't it? Because we are still on the treadmill pursuing all the worldly things for the sake of the worldly things. We are still doing exactly what our neighbor who doesn't know Christ is doing. If we believe it, we will get off the

treadmill and get on the path. And so, very clearly, here is the step over. The step over is a real practical thing that you can do as you walk out that door —this week, spend time resting with Jesus. And here is what that looks like, just real practically. Get off of the tread, open your Bible, read, and pray to the Lord. That's real simple, not like magic tricks, just real simple. I know you are busy. But there's a red button, pull it, and it will stop. Your heart rate will go down, and then you will get over to the path and just walk with King Jesus in His Word and prayer this week. You will see that on that path, you will still do all of the things you were doing on that treadmill, but you do them with joy and satisfaction, and they won't be worthless; they will be with worth because of King Jesus.