

Review: What is Worth Living For?

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Date: 19 June 2022

Preacher: Bill Story

[0 : 00] It is very honest and realistic and sincere and points us back to Christ. I like the second verse. Mine are tears in times of sorrow, darkness not yet understood.

That's very honest. Through the valley I must travel where I see no earthly good. That relates to our Ecclesiastes time. But then the refrain is, but mine is peace that flows from heaven and the strength in times of need.

I know my pain will not be wasted. I like that phrase. My pain will not be wasted. Christ completes his work in me. What a great insight.

Take out your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Ecclesiastes. Again, you'll find it right after Proverbs, which is right after Psalms, which is after...

I don't know, I'd have to look. I think 2 Chronicles. Right? Because you have the Pentateuch. You have the first five books of the Pentateuch, the law.

[1 : 09] The next 12 books are history books. So that would go to the last Joshua through 2 Chronicles. Then you have the poetry books. Then you have Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Song.

So, Ecclesiastes. So we're going to do a review today. So I'm just going to read portions, excerpts from these first six chapters.

We're looking at kind of an overview of these first six chapters that give us perspective on life and the hard questions in life.

So he really asks the questions. Everyone at some point at least considers. Right? These hard questions. How do I deal with evil?

What is the purpose of life? Where is meaning? Where is fulfillment? How do I get that even in the difficult times? And our life is fleeting.

[2 : 12] So he takes a very, very honest look. And he doesn't want the easy answers. So it is a great wisdom book in that sense.

We have found that the author who we assume from what he tells us about himself is Solomon. And it's either Solomon in his later days after he has apostatized, after he has kind of forsaken the Lord because he seems to have a pessimistic kind of incomplete view, faith of God.

Or Solomon playing devil's advocate, possibly. Or someone pretending to be Solomon who just doesn't buy the whole truth of Proverbs.

So it's a little bit different of a Solomon here. But it's still good for us. It's still good for us because it causes us to look at those hard questions. Right? And he doesn't always give us the full answer.

But he at least hints at them. And then we can draw from Christ. We can draw from the New Testament to complete the answer that he doesn't give us. So, okay. So, all that.

[3 : 21] Let me do a few readings from chapter 1, verse 2. And then 12 to 14. And then we'll go to chapter 2. The end of chapter 2. And then the end of chapter 3. And the end of chapter 5.

So, just a few. I want to kind of read the good parts. Well, the first couple of readings will be kind of his thing. And then we'll go to the answers that he gives. I think we'll focus there.

So, if you're able, please stand as I read from Ecclesiastes chapter 1, beginning of verse 2. Then we'll skip down to verse 12. So, vanity of vanities.

Vanities. Or he could be saying breath of breath or vapor of vapor. Verse 12. Says the preacher. Vanity of vanities. All is vanity or unfulfilling or useless.

Verse 12. I, the preacher. I have been king over Israel and Jerusalem. And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven.

[4 : 21] It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. I have seen everything that is done under the sun.

And behold, all is vanity. Useless. Empty. Whatever word you want to put there. And like striving after the wind.

Now, let's go down to chapter 2, the end of chapter 2, verse 24. Here's his first answer. There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil.

This also, I saw, is from the hand of God. For apart from him, who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

For to the one who pleases him, God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy. But to the sinner, he has given the business of gathering and collecting only to give to the one who pleases God.

[5 : 29] This also is vanity and striving after wind. Over to chapter 3, verse 10. I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with.

He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart. Yet, so that he cannot find out what God has done from beginning to end.

I perceive that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live.

Also, that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil.

This is God's gift to man. I perceive that whatever God does endures forever. Nothing can be added to it nor anything taken from it.

God has done it so that people fear before him. Down to verse 18 in chapter 3. I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them.

[6 : 40] That they may see that they themselves are but beasts. For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same.

As one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath and man has no advantage over the beasts. For all is vapor.

All go to one place. All are from the dust and to dust all return. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beasts goes downward into the earth.

So I saw that there's nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work for that is his lot. Who can bring him to see what will be after him.

Finally, end of chapter 5 verse 18 to 20. Behold. Now here's this probably his most complete answer. Okay. To all these questions. Behold what I have seen to be good and fitting.

[7 : 45] 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. 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. For he, man, will not much remember the days of his life.

Because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart. Difference maker. So reads his word.

Let us pray. Father, grant us your eyes to see. Your heart to receive. Our ears to hear. Lord, what you want us to hear out of Ecclesiastes.

[8 : 48] These first six chapters. Grant us a good discussion. Grant us, Lord, to stimulate our minds and our hearts, Lord, to truly integrate, Lord, these thoughts and questions into our own life.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. So to begin, let me ask a question or pose a scenario. How do we understand Ecclesiastes?

He seems to be going here and there and everywhere. You know, it's like, yeah, he asks hard questions. That does. But he'll just kind of go everywhere. He seems to repeat himself a lot.

Right. So it's like, so how do we understand Ecclesiastes? Well, it's like this. Imagine a blind man encountering an elephant for the first time.

Now, he's blind, so he can't see. So he bumps into the elephant, the side of the elephant. What does he think maybe that that is? It's immovable, hard, big.

[10 : 02] Perhaps it's a wall. So he feels along the elephant and goes down. He feels this, the leg of the elephant. But it's not like other legs. It's big.

It's round. What does he think maybe that is? Could be a tree trunk. Could be a tree growing by the wall. So he goes along the elephant and goes up.

And then he feels this thing that moves. This trunk of the elephant. What would he imagine that is?

You got a wall. You got a tree. All of a sudden, maybe it's a snake in the tree.

Yeah. But how can he understand an elephant? How would you understand an elephant if you've never seen an elephant and you just touched it? That's what Ecclesiastes is like.

We apparently encounter a wall. Is that a wall? Is that a trunk? Is that a snake? What? And how do all these things fit together? Well, you don't understand the elephant by its parts.

[11:09] You understand the elephant by its hole. You understand the parts related to the pole. Right? Oh, the trunk. Oh, I see. It's an elephant. That's a leg. That's a side.

Got it? So, how do we understand Ecclesiastes? The same way. We don't. We understand the parts of Ecclesiastes by its hole.

So, as we back up. And that's what we're doing today. We're backing up to look at those first six chapters. What is holding all that together? What's his point? What's he getting to?

Right? So, we see that the big picture of Ecclesiastes is asking these hard questions. He's wrestling with the hardest questions in life.

Right? What's the meaning of it? Why evil? These kind of... Where do I find joy? Lasting joy.

[12:09] All right? So, he's wrestling those hard questions. And he's not shy about asking them. Nor giving his opinion on some of this.

Well, the best you can do. Carpe diem. You know. Live for now. Sometimes it's what it sounds like. So, part one.

These first six chapters is this quest to find lasting satisfaction. He's going to ask, where do I find it? What gives fulfillment and meaning? What is the source of it?

How does time relate to that? So, he has that wonderful poem in chapter three. A time for this. A time for that. A time for this. A time for that. Everything's beautiful in its time. But, how do I work time into finding meaning and fulfillment?

What about evil? What kind of people hinder their own fulfillment and enjoyment? And, is there a secret to joy and enjoyment? So, what is it?

[13:11] Okay? So, those are the kind of things that he does. So, I want to do a, I want to hear from you. I want to discuss these things. Let me give a quick overview. Because I'm sure you don't remember everything we've done over the last seven weeks or so.

All right? So, let me give a brief review. I can't, I'm not going to go into detail. And, once I get to do the review of these sections, we'll go wherever you want to go.

Okay? We'll just look at whatever you want. So, we're not going to try to walk through everything.

So, we'll just go where you want to focus. Okay? So, first of all, he starts out in chapter one, verses one through eleven, with this theme.

He reveals this theme. We see it right away in verse two. Vanity, vanity, everything's vanity, right? Everything's vapor. Everything's smoke. Everything's elusive. Everything's fleeting. Nothing has substance.

That's kind of what he's saying, right? And, remember, he's talking about life under the sun. Under the sun. So, he's talking about a horizontal perspective. An earthly perspective.

[14:15] Not a vertical one. Not God. He will mention God. But, he's mainly talking about as far as life is under the sun, on a horizontal level. Everything's empty.

There's no lasting fulfillment. That's his quandary. He introduces two problems in these opening verses. Frustration one.

Life is so fleeting. Where can I find true fulfillment? You know, vanity. He uses this word vanity 38 times in this book. Literally, it means vapor or breath.

It has the implications of life that is elusive and fleeting. It has maybe more of the implication of what is unsatisfying.

What's unfulfilling. What's empty. You know, that kind of idea. Okay? So, our translators use vanity. Empty. Then, a second frustration he names in these opening verses.

[15:11] If all our toil leaves nothing in the end. Nothing under the sun satisfies. Why bother? Why bother? It's kind of like what Paul said. You know, in 1 Corinthians 15.

If there's no resurrection. If there's no life after death. Then, let's just eat, drink, and be merry. Because tomorrow you die. If there's nothing else. Then, carpe diem.

Right? So, he's kind of saying that. If this is it. Then, what's the point? Just so just, you know, find what you can. Which is where a lot of people land. It's where a lot of people land.

That is the ultimate question. Okay? So, that he raises those issues. Now, so, in then, beginning of verse 12. Notice that it changes. It changes.

Back in verse 1. It's the words of the preacher. It's somebody talking about the preacher there. In the first 11 verses. Verse 12. Now, it goes to the first person.

[16:10] Now, we hear the preacher himself. And we're going to hear him from chapter 1, verse 12. All the way through chapter 12, verse 8. It will be his journey.

So, there's somebody at the beginning, at the end of the Ecclesiastes that's editing this book. Okay? Somebody who's quoting him. Somebody who's saying, okay, what do you think of what he said?

Right? Okay? So, just so you kind of recognize. So, now we hear the preacher himself, verse 12. So, the first quest. So, he's going to have six questions he's going to go through from 1, 12 through 6, 9.

Which is the first half of Ecclesiastes. Where is his quest? He's searching for fulfillment. He's going to go on all these quests. He's going to ask six hard questions. And then, by the time he gets to 6, 10, then he's going to try to give his answers.

So, the second half of the book is really about his wise advice. Here's his quest. Here's all the questions. So, searching for six questions. So, let me just show you those six areas.

[17:18] It's on your outline. It's all there already. All the answers are there. You got my answers. Right? So, if you want to look further later, that's fine. So, the first section is 1, 12 to 2, 26.

So, the second half of chapter 1 and all of chapter 2 is the first section. Where he's searching for fulfillment. And the question. The question is, what brings lasting satisfaction under the sun? On this earthly level, what brings last? Not just what brings satisfaction that's temporary. What brings satisfaction that lasts? That's truly fulfilling.

That's not disappointing or not fading out. Right? Okay. So, he has two conclusions. First conclusion. All worldly pursuits are ultimately unfulfilling.

He tries pleasure. He tries wisdom. He tries possessions. All of them are temporary. Or even the wise person still dies like the fool. So, what's the point?

[18:15] Right? Is one conclusion. And then possessions. You can accumulate all this stuff. And then at the end, you've got to give it away. And what if the person you give it away when you die, what if that person's a fool?

Oh, how aggravated. So, that's his point. All worldly possessions are ultimately unfulfilling. But, at the end of chapter 2, he has a change. Yet, we can find fulfilling joy in God's gifts now.

So, this is where, at the end of chapter 2, as we read, there's a gift of God. That apart from him, that's the connection. Apart from him, we can't enjoy.

But connected to him, if we are connected to him, we can find joy. Because it's a gift he gives.

Okay? So, that's his first answer. Then, the second section, chapter 3, verses 1 through 15.

That's where we find that beautiful poem at the beginning of chapter 3. Time to be born, a time to die, time to plant, time to plant. Right? He goes through all those comparisons. Times. Times. So, everything beautiful in its time.

[19:19] The question there is, how do we find beauty in our vain life? In our vapor life. In our fleeting life. So, he has two views.

He's going to give an earthly view, and then a heavenly view. The earthly view is that every event in our life has a time. There's a time we're born, a time we die.

There's time that we gather things, times that we get rid of things, etc., etc. Time for peace, time for war. He kind of covers all of life in the snapshots.

There are times for that. But, we can't control them. I can't ultimately, I can influence them, but I can't ultimately control, I certainly can't control when I'm born.

I can't control when I die. Right? And so, there are times for everything, but I can't control it. So, that's frustrating. So, his, but the heavenly view.

[20:17] So, that's an earthly view. Heavenly view of time is God shapes our times. So, why does, why does he shape our times? He shapes our times so that we will fear him.

He's the only one who controls time. He's the only one. He begins things, he ends things. He's the alpha, he's the omega. He is the sovereign God.

So, why does he shape times the way he does? So that we will fear him. So that we will recognize his sovereignty. Okay? So, that's the second section. Third section, chapter 3, 16 through 4, 6.

He's going to deal with the problem of evil. So, how do we live and work amid oppression and injustice? So, this is one of the hardest questions in life. Right? Why is there evil in this world? Why does that still persist?

And how do we deal with that? Right? And so, he has, so where do, the question, the hard question is where do we find joy or enjoyment or fulfillment? In an evil world.

[21 : 13] Recognize that there's evil. So, evil one, he recognizes two evils. One, there's injustice. How do you deal with that? We can't solve that.

It just keeps going on. It's through history. So, how do you deal with that? Well, he ultimately says our ultimate response is about eternity. I can't solve that evil problem. Of course, I can respond and try to do, to overcome those things.

But I can't fix all of it. But my ultimate response to that evil that I can't control is about eternity. The ultimate question is, right, do I go up or down?

And then, evil number two, he recognizes oppression. People oppress other people, but it's driven by envy. They oppress people because they want to get more power, more money, more whatever. They do oppression. They do evil because they're envious or covetous. Right? They want more. So, the response to that is learn contentment and godliness in this evil world.

[22 : 19] How do we learn contentment in those hard things around us? Right? So, then, the fourth section, chapter 4, 4 to 16, he warns about the lone wolf.

What are the lone wolf? Question is, what people hinder their own lasting fulfillment? He names two. One is a driven individualist who will never find satisfaction in his achievements.

That's that section that, you know, he talks about two are better than one. Right? Two have a better return. Right? He's not talking about marriage there, though it applies to marriage.

But he's talking about two are better than one because the one who's alone is all alone. And what kind of aloneness is he talking about? In that context, he's talking about someone who is self-imposed aloneness.

They don't want help. They don't want help. They want to do it on their own. They're a driven individualist. And because they're a driven individualist, they will never find satisfaction.

[23 : 23] And the same thing for the people in power. He names those with power, in other words, governors, those in leading people, those in power who want to find lasting appreciation will never find lasting appreciation.

Because someday, ultimately, they'll be forgotten. Right? They get forgotten. Or the history books get written and the story gets twisted. And we don't remember them well or rightly.

So the lone wolf, those who are kind of out there for themselves, they'll not find lasting fulfillment. Fifth section, chapter 5, 1 to 7.

A little bit unique in this whole book because now he focuses on something just positive. How do we worship God? What is meaningful worship? How do we practice his presence? Right?

So he has two applications there. Walk with the Father with... Both are about intentionality here.

Walk with the Father with conscious intention to listen. Go to listen rather than speak.

[24 : 29] Go to the Father. Come. How do we guard our steps coming to worship? We go to listen. To hear from him. That's most important. It's about him, not about me. Right? And then second application is...

He talks about vows. But that doesn't really relate to us today. Because Jesus says don't, you know, just say yes or no. Don't make a vow anymore. But about serving God, it applies.

Serve God with the deliberateness to treat him as holy. So he talks about vows in that sense of, you know, you make a vow and then you regret it later. He says don't do that, you know.

A vow is a serious thing before God. That's something you deliberately intend to keep. So don't do that casually. Do that, you know, very, very careful about that. But in everything we do with God, we want to be intentional.

And I don't want to serve God just kind of casually. And, you know, he's a holy God. I'm walking with him. I want to truly please him.

[25 : 26] I can't do that every minute of my day. But I kind of renew my mind. Right? It's about that. Deliberateness. And we see Acts 5, right?

The Ananias and Sapphira story where they're pretending to give more than they really give. And God strikes them, right? And the result is fear in the church.

Oh, we take this God seriously. Okay, that's the point. I don't treat him. Right? Especially publicly. I don't treat him as, you know, oh, he won't care about this.

Okay. And then finally, the last section we looked at, he portrays chapter 5, 8 through 6, 9. He portrays an unsatisfying and joyless life.

He talks about, again, two kind of evils that he sees. Two scenarios of people who have everything but are unsatisfied and have no joy.

[26 : 33] And so it raises the important question. What's the secret of true joy? Where do you find true joy? So he talks about one evil is people that have wealth but are never satisfied.

He talks about they have money but they never are satisfied with money. They never have enough money. They always want more. It's never enough. So, and particularly it's evil when they have money and they're not satisfied.

They hoard it. Then they waste it. And they end up with a miserable life because it's all about finding that answer and it's elusive. The exception, he says, at the end of chapter 5 there is what we read is that God gives to some people wealth and wisdom and honor and he gives them the power to enjoy it.

And then in chapter 6, verse 2, he says, other people, he gives wisdom and honor and possessions to them but he does not give them the power to enjoy it.

He does not give them the ability to enjoy it. They have everything but he, the author is saying, God doesn't give them the power to enjoy it.

[27 : 48] So, there's the big \$10,000 question. Why does he give some the ability and not others? He's gifting both of them. He's gifting power or he's gifting wisdom and wealth and possessions.

And one has everything and one has everything and one can enjoy it all. One can. Why? God is the difference but why?

Okay, so that's where we are. Okay, those six questions. We could dive in anywhere you want.

What do you see? What's your response to this book initially?

How do you feel? Is it frustrating and you struggle with it? Of course, you struggle with it because it's a little bit of a struggle monster. Sorry, I didn't have a word for that.

What do you find helpful? So, just maybe first of all, just kind of general response. How do you, yeah, Chris. I think about that. The last question that you went over and how in the wilderness, the Israelites.

[28 : 52] Yes. They wanted, you know, they wanted the meat. They wanted the stuff they enjoyed in Egypt. But they didn't want the word. Yeah. And so he sent leanness into their heart and they couldn't even enjoy what he did.

But that's what makes the difference. Yeah, they had freedom from slavery. But they had to trust God. Right. So they'd rather go back to slavery and have the meat and the, you know.

But they didn't want him. Right. That was it. They didn't want him. Yeah, good perception. That was the difference. Yeah, Rick.

Yeah, I guess just thinking about this with my little engineer's brain here. Okay. The thing that kind of fits this into perspective for me is 1 John 1, 5.

This is the message that we have heard from him and proclaim to you. God is light. And in him, there is no darkness at all. If I'm put initially in the presence of God apart from anything else, all I see is blinding light.

[29 : 57] I can't make sense of anything. I'm just surrounded by light. I have no understanding of the light. I have no appreciation for the light. I'm overwhelmed by the light.

As we look around this room, the reason that I can perceive a window and a log and a pastor and a bench is because of the contrast between the light and the dark.

I need the dark to see the light. And to me, that's what Ecclesiastes is all about, is reminding me that I am a creature in his current shell, his current body, that is made for the world.

So I may be attracted to the world. I'm made to be made happy by the world with my interaction in the world, the pleasures that I receive from the world. And that's the darkness.

Because as you outlined in your start there, everything's bleeding. Everything's vanity. There's nothing stable and eternal in the world.

[31 : 01] But yet, everything about me is attracted to the world. Yes. So I need to get to that place where I recognize that, that everything about me is attracted to the world.

I love eating. I love running up and down the mountains. I love flying. I love whatever. But none of that lasts. Right. Everything that we see is falling apart.

And Dan, being an engineer, too, especially in the world that he's in. He's got pictures he's drawing to figure this out. But now, there's this physics principle called entropy, which basically is talking about everything falling apart.

Right. And I can build something up and make it more ordered, but I do it at the expense of making something else fall apart. Because everything is winding down. Right.

And that's the way it is with me. I can get temporary satisfaction from my job. But if I come back to it in six months, the thing that I worked on and I'm so proud of is falling apart.

[32 : 02] Yeah. Change. We need the dark to understand the light. Good point. Good point. And he is emphasizing in here, and he reminds me of something, that what God has created is good.

Right. There's darkness in the world. There's evil in the world. But God has still created a good creation. It's because of Adam. It's gotten thorns in it.

And, you know, because of that fall. Right. It adds all that darkness. It adds all that. But he is making a good point to enjoy the true creation God has given.

That is, we can enjoy our work. That's nothing wrong with that. We can enjoy the creation. We can love the trees and the flowers. You know, we can enjoy that. We can praise God for that incredible sunrise and sunset.

Right. That rainbow that appears on us. You know, we can thank God for those kind of things.

Because they remind us of his gift. Right. So, yeah. But that's not the, that's not all our fulfillment.

[33 : 08] You know, that's a temporary. What else? What else? What else? How else do you respond to this? What do you think about it? Yeah. Is he suggesting a balance?

Everything, the style is kind of free flowing. Right. This, this, this, this, this, that. But in it all, there is a sense to me of, yes, enjoy, but don't obsess about that enjoyment where you lose track because of that very verse that you quoted.

God is focused. Right. God is focused. Right. Of this. Well, he's made that, so remember Romans 1 talks about, right, how, how do people get it wrong? So they know there's a God.

They know he's a creator. Everybody knows that. Right. There's no agnostic. There's no atheist deep down in their heart. They all know this because God has shown it to them.

But they can become convinced that they're agnostic or atheist because they just focus on the creation instead of the creator. And so we can take God's good gift and make it something bad.

[34 : 25] If we make that the end in itself. If we just, you know, I love, love creation. If I take that too far and it, and that's my idol, then I lose. And I think that's a huge point that the author of Ecclesiastes is making is that there is no joy in that.

Right. That will be ultimate. Apart from him, it will be unfulfilling. Temporary unfulfilling. What else? That's it.

Okay. Yeah. Great. It strikes me too how the focusing in Ecclesiastes seems to be so much on stuff and things.

And not so much on people and relationships. Oh, good. It stands out to me that when we're created for relationship, we're created for, you know, to relate to the personhood of God.

And when our focus becomes stuff and things, you know, we're like a fish out of water. And we don't know why. Yeah. You know, but we're not interacting with the thing that can bring us life, which is him.

[35 : 57] And it's fulfillment in all relationships. You know, God created the family. He created other people for us to interact with. Right. The image of God is in people.

Yeah. But it's the personalities. It's not. Yeah. It's not about the stuff. It's about. It's about interacting. Yeah. Especially finding that relationship with the one who created us.

Yeah. And being able to interact with him as a person. Yeah. That's where fulfillment comes from.

Yeah. But it's kind of counter to our natural, right? Our natural wants to.

I mean, most men, right, they want to be fixers. They want to be doers, right? They want to, you know, they want to be relators so much. You know, we want to just fix problems. We want to, you know, do stuff.

And it feels good to do it ourselves. That's kind of natural. We want to do it ourselves. And so we can easily become that driven individualist. That I self-impose my isolates, my aloneness.

[36 : 58] Not really, not totally alone, but I'm. But I can be prone to it, right? Just because I want to go do it, accomplish it, pat myself on the back, feel good. Right?

Yeah. Yeah, just to leverage off what you're saying, too. If you're focused on things, you're focused on yourself. Right. There is no relationship.

The only relationship is that person I see in the mirror. We're going to try to please this. Yeah, and so he keeps posing this scenario over and over again with, so the driven individualist is one who's

trying to gather things, trying to accomplish things, right?

But it's, the ultimate goal is fulfillment, and he will never find it. He'll never find fulfillment because he just finds things, and then he needs more things, and on and on, right?

Or the people in power, he talks about, right? The governor, you know, they can't have, by the way, not all people in power are bad. Right? But he talks, right, brother? Because we, well, that's a question that we ask when we look at that.

[38 : 00] What? God ordains that government. God ordains. So what's good? He's not saying they're all bad. He just says the one in power that's looking for appreciation will never get it.

Even the good ones. So we, so God says, are there good ones? Yeah, there's good ones. There's, there's the Josephs. There's the Daniels. You know, there's those people that submit to God and see God in it, right?

So, yeah. We need good people in heaven. So, yeah? That's a question, Pastor. It's about meaningful worship.

Yes. When you go, and I might have this wrong, but when I look at the start of chapter 5, it says not to be quick with your mouth, and do not be hasty.

When I'm thinking about worship, I am thinking that's here in this church. And that's what he's talking about, going to the house of God. But is it not also talking about, as we happen, I would go along our lives and the rest of the world?

[39 : 10] Are you always worshipping, or is... Right. So that, so you're asking about the New Testament perspective. Right? So in the Old Testament, everything was the temple or the tabernacle.

Everything was centered there. And it was centered in Jerusalem. Right? And even when the nation split, it was, you know, he had split worship. So when Jesus came, remember in John 4, the discussion with the Samaritan woman.

So worship. What about, you know, she says, you worship in Jerusalem, we worship in Samaria. You know, it's all good, right? And Jesus, no. No. Salvation is through the Jews, so don't reject the Jewish faith.

And then he says, but the hour has come and now is when it's not going to matter where. Now it's God's looking for people who worship in spirit and in truth.

It doesn't matter where you are. So now he's talking about lifestyle. Now he's talking about lifestyle. Right? So what you're talking about. It's not about a place. Yes, we still worship in public places.

[40 : 11] That's what we are to gather. To do that. But then we're also, Jesus says we're to pray every day, right? So he talks about that prayer. How do I approach God in my personal prayer line?

Well, I don't stand on corners and pray. I go into an inner room. It's between me and God. I don't have long-winded prayers because God doesn't need to hear all the information. He already knows what I need.

So just get simple. Keep it simple. Unless I'm having tragedy like a psalm and I need to vent a lot to God. But in terms of just my prayer, he just wants me to relate to him.

He already knows what I need. So why do I pray? I pray because he wants a relationship with me. And then he gives us a pattern. He gives us some structure to pray by. So there we have the Lord's Prayer.

He gives us those six areas that cover everything we would ever pray about. His name, his kingdom, his will. And then our stuff. Our bread, our physical needs. Our forgiveness, our relationships.

[41 : 11] Right? Forgiveness from him and forgiveness of others. And then our spiritual warfare. Right? So we get all those cover everything. And so he gives us structure. So he's talking about how do I guard myself.

I think he's answering the same Ecclesiastes 5 in Matthew 6 when he's talking about how we worship. Now, the problem is some people have taken that too far and go, oh, see, it's just about me and Jesus.

It's just me alone in my prayer room. And that's just me about, no, no, no. You miss that Jesus said, no, we're a body now. We love one another. That's, the church is not a building. It is a people.

But we have a chapel to meet in where we gather. Anyway, that's a long-winded answer. But that's a great question. That's where I think, you know, Ecclesiastes can only go so far.

Or, you know, we ask, where do we find Jesus in here? So we see, does Jesus speak about these issues? Yeah, he speaks over and over about these very same issues.

[42 : 15] And so we get his perspective, which fills. So when he talks about worship, yeah, it's not just in a public house. It's a daily walk with him. And to pick up with what Marianne has brought up is to worship as, well, we always look at the Bible through the eyes of Jesus.

Right. He taught us that. Jesus. And the worship is, we were at, one of the Bible studies was at a restaurant, and we said grace publicly.

We held hands. And to me, that's a form of worship. Yeah. Thanksgiving. Yeah. And what happened is, unbeknownst to me, I was leading it, and I had my head bowed.

But the owner was standing by the table. Oh, yeah, Heather, you were down there. Yeah. So the owner was there, and he started talking to that end of the table.

And I said, what's going on? He said, he was in prayer with us. Cool. And he said, I really, I enjoyed this.

[43 : 27] I think he's doing this. Good. That's a witness. My point is, right, this is a witness. You don't intend it to, but yeah, it just, it can become this. The point is, you don't know. Yeah. We were fulfilling also part of that commission to proclaim God.

Yeah. And. Let your light shine. And you don't know. Right. Here's a man who was thankful. Yeah. And hurt. Because. So, so worship is living out, right?

That's why I called it practicing the presence of God. It's not just worship is somewhere and not elsewhere. It's, it's my whole life. So I practice his presence. That's worship.

My whole life is worship. Amen. There are acts of worship. Deliberate acts of worship. But there, but I'm walking with him. That's. That pleases him.

That I walk with him. Thank you. Yeah. Yeah. I, I, I think on that, on that, on that note right there, Bill, uh, number, uh, in 226, it says, for the one who pleases him, God has given wisdom, knowledge, and joy.

[44 : 37] And so, you know, that's, I think about that whenever, whenever I'm in the world, and the hard parts of Ecclesiastes and losing, losing perspective on what he's talking about and everything, that, uh, maybe I just need to pray a little harder and seek the right way to gain that understanding.

Because, yeah, it seems like he, uh, is very negative. It appears to be. Yeah. Yeah. And he gives you the answers to everything except for the right answer.

Yeah. This is better than this, but he doesn't tell you about this. But, but consider he might be doing that intentionally. Yeah. To make you think.

I don't know. Jesus said some things to stir people to think, right? Yeah. He didn't always give them a quickie. He often, right, what was Jesus' tactic, right?

When you ask a question, what does he do? Ask a question. He asks you a question. Yeah. And I'm not just giving you the answer. I want you to think about this. He's a good teacher. He's a good teacher. He asks questions. Because then it will stick if I search out the answer myself.

[45 : 54] So, yeah. Yeah, I know. This is a frustrating book, but that's. So, the first draft we read through Ecclesiastes, I kind of go, okay, he's got some points, but you know, I don't like it.

It's kind of. Right? But then I give it another read, right? It's like reading James the first time. It's like, it's not faith alone. It's faith with works.

And you're going, wait a minute. What's he doing? What's he talking about? Right? First we think, oh. But then we read it more carefully. And so the church throughout history has had struggled with Ecclesiastes, but at the end of the day, they say, no, it belongs.

It is good for us. It is not heretical. It's incomplete. So. But we have books in the Old Testament.

Job is like that. Job has a bunch of human responses in it. Job's friends. Right? So it's not unusual.

[47 : 01] Yeah, but with Job, you get the story. You know. At the end, Jesus. Yeah. At the end, God comes and says, okay, you were wrong. You were wrong. You were wrong. You were okay. Job, who do you think you are? Right? You know, get that kind of.

You know, where are you there? Right? Come to Jesus moment. Yeah. But I think we get hints of that here. I think 518 to 20 is a really significant portion.

The difference between enjoyment and not enjoyment is God himself. And why does he give it to some and not to others? Because according to this author, it's God's sovereign choice.

So does that mean, okay, I have nothing I can do about it? How do you deal with God's sovereignty and human free will? How do you deal with that?

Scripture's not afraid of that question at all. It's boldly God is sovereign. Jesus says in Matthew and John 6, right? Come to me. I will give you the satisfaction.

[48 : 06] Right? Come to me and take my bread. You will never hunger. You will never thirst. You will be satisfied. And then a little bit later in John 6, he says, oh, by the way, you can't come unless the Father draws you.

What? So why does he say that? Why does he openly, boldly welcome us to come and then say, oh, by the way, there's a caveat.

God's still sovereign and you're not. God's still sovereign and you're not. Well, I think, but Jesus is boldly welcoming.

Is he not? Over and over. But he's also a son under submission to his father. He does nothing without the father's will.

Even when he wants out, right? Let this cup pass. Please let this cup out. I don't want this cup. But you're one. So I think that's a good, hard question for us to wrestle with.

[49 : 24] Right? And I don't think the edge, I don't think Jesus intends us to answer that question. Come to me, but you can't. As, okay, then why bother? I think he means, wait, who's key to this?

Well, the father drudging. Okay, so I need to go talk to the father. Yeah, that's who I need to go talk to. Because then Jesus says, if you keep asking and you keep knocking and you keep, you'll answer.

Right? Right? We have to get the sovereignty thing in there, right?

Because it's a hard question. Remember Naomi? Everything is God's fault. Right?

That was actually true. Sad story ends up. Right? She goes from bitterness to blessing because she starts to see how sovereign he is.

[50 : 31] Yeah. Yeah, just in chapter three when you talk about everything and it's time. God shapes that time, not us. But we continue to try to shape that time.

Oh, yeah. I mean, the examples with Abraham. Yeah. The patience that was required. And he took control of himself. Yes. And it didn't work out. And Moses, I mean, the list goes on and on.

Yeah. These times were so important. But, you know, I mean, especially as men, because as you indicated earlier, we try to control those times. And it's very difficult. Our response should be just to submit.

And it's hard to submit. Oh, we don't like that. Because, you know, in all of our individual lives, you and your depression, and we just submit, and it could take 10 years, 12 years, 20 years to do that. Or, you know, a family trying to have a baby. Yes. To take that time. Yeah. But it's so difficult to do. Yeah. Yeah, I mean, God is testing.

[51 : 32] One of the texts talks about he's testing us to show us something. You know, that he is God and we are not. You know, he controls, I don't. That's hard.

That's hard to accept. Because a lot of things in life I can control, right? A lot of things I can fix. But when it comes to ultimate satisfaction, ultimate joy, I can control.

Temporary joy. But I can't control real. I have to depend on him. And sometimes I have to wait 12 years for that. Yeah.

Or even you're studying God. Someone you've been praying for for years. Yeah. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. A family member. Yeah. That they would finally reach out to God. Yeah.

So we've had... So I assume most of us here have experienced that full joy from Jesus, right?

We've got that. But we want that for our kids.

[52 : 27] And we want that for our loved ones. And we want that for people that we care about. But it's God who has to do that, right? So if I just give up, I go to God.

He's the king. Draw them. Draw them. Work. And I personally believe if he puts that particular person on my heart to call to him about to save, I believe he will answer that.

I may not get to see the answer, but I believe because I believe he put that prayer on my heart. So that I keep asking, keep knocking, keep seeking. And Jesus says, if you keep persistent, you'll get the answer.

Right? Okay. We good? Got it all? Got it all figured out? Ready for part two? All right. This is good. I love doing these review times. Hearing from you.

So, good. So, can we see the elephant in the room now? Sorry. No. No? Well, I mean, we've taken the parts of Ecclesiastes and put it into an elephant, right?

[53 : 53] That's a wiper blade. It's a fly swatter. Yeah. Okay. Let's pray. Father, thank you for our time. We thank you for this book that makes us think, makes us face reality, makes us struggle with some of those hard questions that we may not be able to answer to our satisfaction.

But we do see. We do see. It leads us far enough to see that you are the key. And as we see, as Jesus says, the real key is Jesus himself.

He is the bread. He is the life. He is the answer. And yet, it's the Father, Jesus says, who is the drawer, who is the opener of hearts.

And it's also the Spirit who applies all of this to us. And so we thank you, Father, for your revelation as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the God we love.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen. Amen.