

Our Life's Purpose

preached by Rev. Paul Sakasov on November 25, 2018

This morning we have reached the final sermon in our ten part series on the book of Ecclesiastes. Written by Solomon, Ecclesiastes is the reflection of a king of Israel near the end of his days where he ponders the meaning of life. Today's reading is from Ecclesiastes, chapter twelve, verse nine through fourteen.

Ecclesiastes 12:9-14

9 Besides being wise, the Teacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs. 10 The Teacher sought to find pleasing words, and he wrote words of truth plainly. 11 The sayings of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings that are given by one shepherd. 12 Of anything beyond these, my child, beware. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. 13 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone. 14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

One of the reasons God gave us the Bible is to guide us through the big questions of life. In the first book of the Bible, Genesis, God revealed to us where we come from and to whom we belong. In the last book of the Bible, Revelation, God revealed to us what happens to us after we die. In the book of Exodus, God revealed to us through the Ten Commandments what is right and what is wrong. In the book of Job, God provided us with an explanation for why He allows bad things to happen to good people.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, which we have been exploring over the last several months, God gave us the answer to the question, "what is the meaning of life." This answer was provided through His servant Solomon, who was the son of David; the King of Israel.

In providing an answer to this timeless question, which every human being has wrestled with throughout their journey on earth, Solomon, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gave us an answer that is rooted in his personal life experience. Throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon addressed this timeless question from two perspectives.

The first perspective is from the viewpoint of those, who live under the sun, in the physical world; the habitation of humans. This is the perspective that most people adopt as they try to make sense of their world, and how to live in it.

Like most humans, Solomon actively engaged with this perspective of life. In

Ecclesiastes, he gives us a full account of his journey viewing life as one who lives under the sun. Furthermore, being the richest and wisest man in the world at the time, Solomon was able to pursue his observations to the extreme, and to document for us where we will end up if we develop a philosophy of life that is strictly formed from the perspective of those who live in the physical world with no reference to God.

In telling his story, Solomon starts out in chapter one by giving us his conclusion on the meaning of life from the perspective of those who live under the sun. In one word he sums it all up. “Meaningless!” “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.”

If we examine life solely from the perspective of human beings, leaving out the supernatural realm, wherein we find God and all matters beyond human experience, this is the conclusion we will inevitably reach. However, before we get there, it will require going down some rabbit holes. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon takes us down each one of them.

The first rabbit hole is the pursuit of pleasure. In chapter two of Ecclesiastes, Solomon tells us that he availed himself of all the pleasure the richest man in the world could provide for himself. And he had a very good time. But, very quickly the life of pleasure became empty. And so Solomon concluded that it was not a sufficient foundation upon which one could build a life.

So, he pursued his next endeavor. Wisdom. Knowledge. Learning. Solomon hit the books. He became an expert in all fields of science. He became a walking library, capable of answering any trivia question, or providing a mathematical proof. And this fulfilled him for a brief moment. But, like the pursuit of pleasure, the pursuit of learning eventually became wearisome and once again, Solomon went searching elsewhere.

The next endeavor Solomon pursued in his attempt to finding meaning in life under the sun was good old fashioned work. Like any business tycoon I have ever read about, Solomon became a workaholic. He rose before the sun and retired long after it set. Day and night he labored at the tasks he had assigned for himself. And these tasks engaged him for a season. But, they too, were found wanting.

This led Solomon to pursue advancement in life. He sought power. Prestige. Legacy. How could he rise to the top of ladder? Enter the Hall of Fame? Be the all time leader of leaders who would never have a rival? This became the obsession that consumed his heart for a season. And like all his previous endeavors, Solomon experienced overwhelming success. And yet, his success did not fill his heart. It did not satisfy his

quest.

Neither did the pursuit of riches. As an aside, from what I have read, once you reach a household income of \$70 000 per year, any additional money you earn will not make you any happier. While many of us fantasize about coming into a windfall of millions of dollars, thinking it will catapult us into a perpetual state of bliss, the reality is, it won't. Extra money won't buy us eternal happiness. Nor will it provide us with an answer to the meaning of life. Just ask Solomon. He tried it. And he obtained phenomenal wealth, becoming a billionaire by today's standards. But, money could not help him find what he was looking for.

It, too, was meaningless. As was any attempt to view life from the perspective of those who live under the sun, in the physical world; the habitation of humans, with no reference to God. This is something Solomon states at the beginning of Ecclesiastes and which he reiterates all the way through the book, concluding with our reading for today.

In contrast to this humanistic perspective, which we noted in a sermon from a month ago, has been universally adopted, Solomon provides us with the proper perspective from which life must be viewed in order to find meaning. From the opening pages of Ecclesiastes until the end, Solomon continually makes reference to our Creator. In the later chapters of his book, Solomon provides us with timeless proverbs that reflect a worldview that is grounded in the existence of God.

And just as he began Ecclesiastes by providing the meaning of life from the perspective of those who live under the sun, Solomon ends his book by providing the meaning of life from the perspective of those who acknowledge their Creator.

Here is his answer from verses thirteen and fourteen. "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil."

And that is it. That is how we find meaning in life. First by recognizing that truth does not come from within, it comes from above. It comes from God. And it has been revealed to us through God's Son, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, it has been preserved for us through God's Holy Word, the Bible, and it is confirmed in our hearts through the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

This is the perspective we must adopt, and this is the authority we must embrace in order to possess meaning in life, both in the present world and in the world to come.

Furthermore, this is the truth we have been called to embrace and this is the truth we have been called to employ in making the big decisions of life, such as: whom to marry, how to raise our children, what career to pursue, how to manage our money, and how to treat our neighbour. This is also the truth we are to use in determining the day to day decisions of life, including: what clothes we will wear, what food we will eat, and what entertainment we will consume.

In all matters of life, our starting point must be the Lord. As Solomon writes in Proverbs, chapter three, we have been called to trust in the Lord, with all our heart. We are not supposed to lean on our own understanding. In all our ways, we are called to demonstrate our devotion to God, and in doing so, we are assured that God will direct our paths. In other words, if we fear God and keep His commandments, we are assured that God will lead us beside still waters and green pastures, through the valley of the shadow of death, and into the house of the Lord, where we will dwell forever.

This is the path we must take if we are to find meaning in life. This is the narrow road we must walk upon in order to experience abundant and eternal life. But, the truth be told, walking down this path is not easy.

As we have discovered throughout Ecclesiastes, even Solomon struggled to stay on track. And if a man of God, whom God appointed to build His Temple and dedicate it, stumbled, who are we? And if a man of God whom God inspired to write three books of what we know as the Bible went down numerous rabbit holes that he shouldn't have pursued, how likely is it that we will not travel down the same roads? The odds aren't good.

And yet, by the grace of God, we have hope. For as God spoke into the darkness and created light, as God hovered over the chaotic waters and brought forth land and all living creatures, as God cleansed the world with a flood and brought forth new life, as God raised a holy people from a godless world, as God sent his only begotten Son into a sick and dying world so that we may have life; as God has done in the past, we possess the hope that God will act in the present and that God will act in the future.

Not because of who we are. Not because of what we have done. But because God is good, and because God is just, and because God is love we have eternal hope. Thus, as His chosen people may our lives reflect this hope and may we be a light in the world where God has called us to serve. In the big decisions of life, and in the small details of our daily living, may we fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is our duty; and this is the witness God has called us to render in the place where we dwell, under the sun.