

Ecclesiastes 3:16-22 "Evil, Death, and God's Gift of Joy"

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[0 : 00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Let's just bow our heads in prayer for a moment. Father, you know how many of us would don't like uncomfortable truths. You know how many of us regularly choose distractions over uncomfortable truths. But you also know, Father, how deep in our hearts we desire to be thoughtful. So we ask, Lord, that you would do a wonderful and gentle work in each of our hearts this morning. That you would, Father, put to death our love of distractions. You would grow within us our desire to be thoughtful. And you would open our hearts to receive your word written this morning, allowing you to do a wonderful work in our lives, that we might learn day by day by day the beauty of gratitude in the joys you give. And we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Please be seated. So it's amazing how often something connected to the Bible text that I have to preach on on a Sunday ends up happening in my life during that week. And I don't know how many of you were paying attention when Ecclesiastes was being written, but it talked about injustice and it talked about death. And fortunately, I didn't have death, I didn't experience a death of a close loved one this week. But unfortunately, I did come face to face with some real injustice, I think. I have to be a bit careful about it. But I have one of my favorite places to have coffee, which I've been going to for quite a long time. On Thursday, towards the end of the day, it was around quarter to five or whatever, I went there to have a decaf coffee, try to finish my emails for the day. And there was a sign on the door that it was closed for a private function. And I thought, well, that, you know, too bad for me, but you know, didn't think anything of it. That was on Thursday. Friday, I go just before lunch to get a bit of work done there. And there's a sign on the door that the coffee shop was closing at the end of the workday on

[3 : 22] Saturday. And so the reason the place had been closed on Thursday was to inform the staff that they were unemployed very shortly, in basically in 48 hours. And the manager then had to call people on Friday, Thursday night and Friday morning to tell them they were out of a job. And it was just very, very, very sudden, and sort of made even more uncomfortable by, because two weeks prior to that, it was told to the staff that they were going to be hiring, going to be promoting somebody from within.

And so people who wanted to apply for that, and they went through interviews. So you don't normally think you're going to go through interviews about promotions only to get fired, have everything shut down a week and a half later. But that's what's happened. And it just seemed unjust. And obviously, there can be other things going on. I don't know why they couldn't have given it a month's notice or two months notice. I feel especially bad for those who had been working, you know, there for a long, long, long time. And also, as Bell, for the students who are working there, to have your job cut out, you really think you're set up to dealing with your student, you know, the debts and paying your way and working your way. And then to have that completely taken out on you towards the end of September, I just thought the whole thing was really quite unjust. And it was a very, very, very, very sad place on Friday. And I didn't go there on Saturday for the last time. I mention this because the text talks about injustice and in very, very interesting ways. And so we're going to look at it. And what we need to know as we're going through this, this is the book of Ecclesiastes, is on one hand, the book of Ecclesiastes is the most philosophical book in the Bible. But it's not philosophical in the sense that it has a whole pile of, you know, thesis and antithesis and synthesis or, you know, like a whole series of lines leading to an argument. It's philosophical in the fact that it deals with your, how you understand and view the world. And it regularly gives you these things that you need to think about.

And I compare it to, it's always putting pebbles in your shoe. And when you have a pebble in your shoe, I wear Birkenstocks. I know it's a weird thing that I do. But they're always getting pebbles in them. I try to decide how many steps I can take before the pebble is so irritating that I have to stop and get the pebble taken out. But we all know that experience of having a pebble in our shoe and it's just uncomfortable. And that's what the book of Ecclesiastes is doing. It wants to regularly give us these pebbles, these stones that force us to think about certain uncomfortable truths in the hope that we desire to be thoughtful. And so the very, very first thing is that today, in fact, today, what we're going to look at are two very important things if you want to be thoughtful.

If I was to go into a coffee shop or any place and say, by the way, if you want to really be thoughtful, you have to think through the question of how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. Well, everybody would just think I'm completely insane. Like, obviously, all sorts of world, like, who would ever think about that as important to a worldview? But if I was to say, if you really want to be thoughtful, how you understand the world, whether you have a very consistent, well thought out philosophy, whether it's bits and pieces of things that you're sort of working on, you know, willy-nilly, but if you want to be thoughtful, surely everybody who wants to be thoughtful has to think about death. Because death is inevitable to you, not just as an abstraction, to you. You will die. I will die. And you cannot be thoughtful if you don't consider death. And you also can't be thoughtful if you don't consider the problem of injustice and the problem of the evil that human beings do. And those are the things that this short section of Ecclesiastes are going to press in on and try to have us to think about. So if you turn with me in your Bibles, it's Ecclesiastes chapter 3, verses 16 to the end. It's a very short little unit of the Bible. Ecclesiastes chapter 3, verses 16 to 22. It's just seven verses. And here's how it goes. It starts like this.

Moreover, I saw that under the sun in the... Sorry, I'll begin again. Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness. And in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness. Now, just sort of pause here. The way that this little unit starts is something which those of you who've heard a couple of the other sermons might remember or might not, but it's very important to understand in the book, is the phrase under the sun. And so what under the sun is, it's a regular thought experiment to look at the world as if the triune God doesn't exist. It's not looking at the world as if religion and spirituality don't exist. It's looking at the world as if the triune God doesn't exist. He hasn't spoken. You don't know anything from him. And how do you see the world if the triune God is completely and utterly absent? And that's what he's talking about.

[8 : 49] And what he does here, he says something which really fits with what happened, the experience of the staff and the regular customers and the sadness that was there on Friday. And the sadness was probably vastly greater on Saturday. What you'll notice here, first of all, is he says something really important about human experience. Look at it again. It says, I saw that under the sun, that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness.

And what this means is that on one hand, it can just refer to the fact that there's institutions that should be just and should behave in a right way. Like you'd expect that judges actually are just.

You hope that people in parliament actually pass just and good laws. But it's also just referring to something different about human experience, that there is in fact, well, here's the thing, and we're going to come up to it a bit towards the end when it says vanity. And as I've said before, one of the big ideas 37 times in the book of Ecclesiastes is to understand this word vanity, which literally means vapor. And I've used the expression, if you go outside in a very cold day and you can see your breath, that's what the word is trying to communicate. And it's trying to communicate to us how transient things are, how things fall apart very easily. But if we take that image and we grasp that it's talking about transience, that's good. But if we think of it a bit more vapor literally as vapor, like the vapor of steam or the vapor of our breath, we're going to be confused about the world because the world isn't like that. It isn't like unreal that you can sort of see through just a bit dim. The world is brief and it doesn't hold itself together, but the world has a type of a context. It has a type of a givenness. It has a type of flavor, a type of shape. It's not just nothing. And one of the things which characterizes the world is that there is a sense of oughtness about justice. And there is a sense of oughtness about right and wrong. And obviously you can talk a little bit about how some of those things can be a little bit different and there's sophisticated ways to show that some of them aren't as different as you think. And people's views of what justice is and what's right and wrong. Those things can have a bit of, you know, incompleteness in them. But I can tell you that on the coffee shop on Friday, like one of the fellows that I've met who goes there is an

Antifa sympathizer. And I can tell you he would have thought that was unjust. And a guy that I've met at that place is a guy who wears a Black Rifle Coffee Company t-shirt. And some of you might not know who they are, but they're very, very conservative. Started by SEAL Team 6 veterans and had very pro Second Amendment. I asked him once if he felt nervous being in a place like the gay village wearing a t-shirt like that. And he's all covered in tattoos, huge muscles. He said, no, I'm not worried in the least. But I can tell you he would have thought it was unjust. The Antifa fellow would have thought it was unjust. The gay activists would have thought it was unjust. The civil servants would have thought that it was unjust. The poor people living in subsidized housing who would come into that place, they would think it was unjust, what was happening to the staff. There is some common sense of injustice in there. And that's what this is saying, that there is some common sense that human beings have of something like injustice. And that's how God has woven together the world.

And in fact, actually, see, this actually gets at like... One of the things I'll tell people if I have an opportunity and I get into a conversation with them about... They'll say that the problem of evil disproves God's existence. But I'll say to them, well, that's a very interesting question about evil and why it exists. But you, as a skeptic, as a naturalistic person, as a secular person, you also have that problem. And they say, no, I don't. I said, yes, you do, because you have to account for where goodness and justice come from. I can tell you I, as a Christian, can account both for goodness and justice and for evil and injustice and a solution. But you need to account for where on earth that ought comes from. And that's what the text is saying. There is a type of structure to this world, which is very transient. And then the guy, the writer, teacher, the Solomon says something.

[13 : 26] He takes an interesting turn. Look at verse 17 and the interesting turn that he takes. And this is sort of an ambiguous term. Not ambiguous. I think people in Canada have a double type of love-hate relationship with it. It says this in verse 17, I said in my heart...

So now he's actually going beyond the sun to talk about God. God will judge the righteous and the wicked. Notice he's going to judge the righteous too, and the wicked. For there is a time for every matter and for every work.

Now, I bet if I was to say to the coffee shop people, you know, God's going to judge those people. Like, he's going to judge that if there was just some guy or some gal sitting on the beach in Hawaii, drinking their pina colada, typing away on their laptop and saying, yeah, I think I'll close this door.

Boom, this one, boom, this one, boom, this one, boom, this one, boom. Another drink. Servant, can you come and bring me another one? This one. Those guys are going to get judged.

That would be an appealing thought, I think, to them. They might ask me, which we're going to talk moment, why doesn't God do it quicker? You know, why didn't even... But there's this... On one hand, there's this idea that we like the idea that God will judge evil, but the problem starts to come when we realize that once you give God the power to judge, maybe he will judge me.

[15 : 00] And so on one hand, we like the idea, but we actually, without always being aware of it or putting it in words, we'd only like it if we can control who he judges. But if that happens, then I'm God, right? And let me tell you, it is really good that I am not God. And I don't want to demean you, every one of you here, it's really good you're not God. Because you'd screw the world up big time.

You really would. Just imagine how you would judge the world when you were 16 years old, if you had that power to control things. Maybe all your parents and family would be dead, by now you'd be an orphan. I mean, you can just think about it for a moment. It would be terrible if you had got to control who God judges. So on one hand, there's this very, very good idea, but the question is, why does he wait? Why does God wait? Well, that's... Once again, Solomon gives a very surprising answer in verse 18. Look what he says, verse 18.

I said in my heart with regard to the children of man, that God is testing them, listen to this, that they may see that they themselves are but beasts. Now, by the way, just to be clear, he's talking about me here and each one of you. I said in my heart, verse 18, with regard to the children of man, all human beings, that God is testing them, that they may see that they themselves are but beasts.

Now, the word test there is obviously a bit of a scary type of word, but you have to take that, take it in a, in the right type of sense. So, you know, I just, I sit in amazement. No, I don't sit. I stand in amazement every Sunday when I hear Jono just effortlessly play things, you know, and if you, if you come up here and look at him, you'll see during communion when he's playing, he has no music. He just plays, and I just, boy, that's just fantastic, okay? He also teaches piano. So, if you're looking for a piano teacher, here's a little plug for Jono. But one of the things he would do in September, probably, when the students have had a time off, is he probably has them play a few pieces to test them to see how much, whether they've practiced all summer or not, or whether they haven't, and where he has to begin his lesson. In other words, he's testing them to expose and bring to light where they are.

And that's how you should understand this phrase, testing. That I said in my heart, verse 18, with regard to the children of God, that God is testing them, exposing to them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts. And in this text, he's going to now use beasts to connect injustice, and he's going to use beasts to connect it with death in a very, very clever way. And what does he mean by saying that human beings are beasts and comparing us to injustice? Well, here's... My wife loves dogs, and I love my wife, so we have dogs. And I'm fine with dogs. But one of our dogs kills rabbits and squirrels in our backyard. She is fast enough that she can burst out of the door and chase down a squirrel or a rabbit and kill it. Which is a bit distressing, obviously, for my wife, and still distressing for me, but not maybe as distressing as it is for my wife. And I can't imagine what the grandchildren would say if they saw sweet Billy killing a baby rabbit in the backyard. But the point of this is, you don't say that Billy's a bad dog for doing that, because dogs are amoral. Morality doesn't apply to them. It's the nature of dogs to do something like that. Just most dogs we've ever had haven't been fast enough to catch the squirrel or the rabbit and kill them. And it's just the nature of dogs. But if I was to say that a human being is amoral, what I'm really saying is that they are immoral. Because they should be moral.

[19 : 03] And the fact of the matter is that when we do evil things, we are often acting in a completely amoral way. Not considering the person that we're doing, that we're putting out of work, that we're oppressing, the promises that we're breaking, the lies that we're telling. In a sense, for that moment, in a sense, we step out of morality and act purely out of selfishness or whatever our interests are.

And when we act in an amoral way, we are acting in an immoral way. And so to say that you are acting like Billy becomes an insult if it's not true, but a troublesome thought about yourself if it is true.

Why is it that human beings, why is it we can know the right thing and do the wrong thing? Why is it that that is the case? Why is it that we can even have pressure to do the right thing, but we do the wrong thing? Why is that about human beings? How can you be thoughtful? How can your system of thought about the world really be thoughtful if you don't consider that reality about human beings?

And then he takes an even darker turn. And beast is, by the way, it's an in-your-face word. But you have to view it as it's a pebble in your shoe word. It's meant to get under your skin.

But look what he goes on to say, and he connects now the other aspect of us being beasts in verses 19 and following. Here's what it says. 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 vanity.

[20 : 58] I'll go on to read in a moment, but we'll just pause here. Here you see the word vanity meaning both aspects of being impermanent, but also vain. So I don't know who the richest man or woman in the world is right now, but, and I don't know, maybe they are unbelievably humble, unbelievably kind, unbelievably good, and maybe I shouldn't pick the richest, but one of these people who are very, very rich, a person who thinks they're the master of the universe, and they think they have godlike powers, and they think that everything they do comes from them, and they have no compunction at all about just clicking, pressing on a button. Yeah, I'll fire this person. I'll fire. I'll close this place.

I'll close this place. I'll close. Servant, can you bring me another? I'd like a rum and coke this time, not a pina colada. And just, yeah, I'll fire them, fire them, fire them. And they might think they are a master of the universe. They might think they are a god, and they might think all of those things, and they're in their car one day with their dog, and they drive too fast, and they go over a cliff, and being a master of the universe doesn't stop them from dying just like their dog, does it? Being a billionaire doesn't protect them from that.

They die. They have no advantage. And now here, the writer Solomon, the teacher, is thinking from the perspective of under the sun. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beast for all his vanity.

We are vapor. We are transient. And for those of us who are transient, but think that somehow or another we are like gods, that is an unbelievably vain thing to think, for vapor to think, when we are but vapor. And then he goes on.

Solomon, Solomon, the teacher, goes on, all go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. I'm going to return to this in a moment. Some of you who know the Bible very well know that he's just quoted Genesis 3. Verse 21, who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward, and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth. Now here he's just being very, very profoundly un-Canadian.

[22 : 59] I have been to countless funerals. I always allow people to get up and make their own little speeches beforehand. And I've heard that poem about, don't think of me as having died. I've just gone into the next room. And the writer of this would say, really? Like, why do you think that?

Like, why do you think that? Like, what's your evidence for it? You could see how annoying Solomon would be. Go to the funerals. Really? You think that? They'd be calling the police, getting him kicked out. But if you ask it, like, okay, what proof does Hinduism have for this idea of reincarnation? Like, what proof do you have for it? What proof Buddhists do you have for that? Like, Islam, what proof do you have for that? You know, natural people, secular people who think, say things like that. Well, what, like, why do you think that? Like, what evidence do you have for it? What proof do you have for it?

You could see he wouldn't get invited to a party a second time. He's asked a very uncomfortable truth. From the perspective of under the sun, why the evidence just is that if I die on the same day that Billy dies, both of us will go to dust.

Now, we're going to come back. You get a bit of a hint in this really weird way that it, well, no, actually, what I'll say is this. I'll say something about this. This, by the way, what he's done is he's put together a series of puzzles. Why is it that we have a sense that there's an oughtness around justice? Why is it we have a sense of oughtness around right and wrong?

Why is it that we don't want to face the uncomfortable truth that when we die, we go back to dust? But why is it that we think that there should be something more that, like, we really do think that justice shouldn't win? I mean, injustice shouldn't win. We really think that evil shouldn't win, and we really think that death shouldn't win. But why do we think those things, and what evidence do we have? We have a sense that that death can't be the final word, but where is the evidence for, like, where does that come from? And what he's doing is it's as if he's putting together a lock with pieces of a lock, and then he's going, it's opening, it's preparing us for later on when we read the gospel and to realize that only Jesus and only the biblical teaching is the key that goes into the lock that unturns it and opens the door to hope.

[25 : 25] You see, he quotes Genesis 3, to dust, from dust you have come and to dust you will return. And it's a text of judgment against Adam and Eve for the fact that they have desired to be like gods and have turned their back on God and chosen lies and selfishness and self-centeredness. And so part of the punishment, the judgment of God on our human beings doing that is death. That's how Christians understand death.

But if you listen to the text and if you read the rest of the Bible, you, and I get this phrase from C.S. Lewis, I didn't think of it myself, death is a severe mercy.

Mercy is the noun. It's a severe mercy, but it's mercy. Mercy. Well, why on earth is it a mercy? Well, it's mercy in this particular sense, because death for us as human beings is unavoidable. And we have a sense that there's something not right about it that shouldn't be final. But God created or allowed death to come into the world.

That's a whole other bit of a topic of conversation. It's a severe mercy because of course death is terrible, but it warns us of the true and greater death that awaits human beings in our rebellion against God and living amoral lives and abusing power and living as if the triune God does not exist.

And so he has left death there as something unavoidable for us to think of, hoping that we realize as we consider death that there must be a God, God, please show mercy. It's a pointer, a hint, a clue, clue to a true and greater death of judgment from God. And so realizing that we will die, there is the hope that God has that we human beings will call out for mercy and relief.

[27 : 48] And only Christianity provides that key because, you see, here's the first thing about this. This text is preparing us to hear the gospel. And who is Jesus and what is the good news? Jesus. The good news is that God, the Son of God, stepped down from heaven to become a beast like you and me, so that by faith in him, we can become the adopted children of God.

God, in his profound love for you and me who takes no delight in the death of a sinner, he stepped down from heaven to become a beast like you and me, that when we put our faith and trust in him, we are united with Christ and become God's adopted child, his adopted son and daughter.

He suffered that lesser judgment and that greater judgment when he died on the cross, and he suffered it in my place. Every wrong thing that I have ever done, all my pride, all my amorality, all of those things that I have done wrong, he willingly comes and puts his arms on me, so to speak, and puts his arms on you and says, George, out of love for you, I will take your place.

I'm not being forced and there's no compelling. It's purely and utterly out of love. I will take your place. So it isn't that just, you know, it's not like other religions where the mercy of God just means, yeah, yeah, I picked favorites. Yeah, I like you. Yeah, yeah, you've done all sorts of terrible things.

You know, you've committed, you know, these horrible things, but yeah, you know, whatever. I'm going to give you a pass and all that type of stuff. I'm going to judge that person. I'm going to let that person go. That's not what happens. Nobody's let go. God's justice always remains just. But there's this profound love and grace and mercy which is, doesn't turn justice into injustice but is greater than justice, which is this love and compassion of him taking our place.

[29 : 48] And only Jesus has tasted all there is to taste of death and all to taste there is to taste in a sense of the judgment of God and emerged on the far side of death. His resurrection vindicates him and there's evidence. There really is. Read some books, Who Moved the Stone? Read the biographies of people. Read the cold case detective who thought he was going to prove that Christianity wasn't true and ends up becoming a Christian. Lee, the guy who wrote the case for Christ, Frank Morrison. Like, countless people have looked into the evidence and been shocked how much historical evidence there is for the true death and true resurrection of Jesus. And there's evidence. And it's not just evidence in a vacuum. It's an evidence in the context of books like this. And the whole story, it's so astounding. I was watching an interview with Douglas Murray talking about the Charlie Kirk funeral. And it's just so interesting. Here he is, an agnostic gay man. I mean, he's a man of, I have a huge respect for him. I just think he's so courageous. And he just casually just says that it was a celebration of the Christian faith in the funeral for Charlie Kirk, a wonderful proclamation of what Christianity is all about.

And he said, for people like me, it's very important to hear. And then he just says casually, because of course, everything that we value in the Western world is ultimately a product of the Christian faith. He just says it casually. And he says, anybody who's, anybody who denies that is just ignorant of history. You know, human rights, the, you know, the value of women, the seeds of the destruction of slavery, the grounds of slavery, the grounds of science. And it's in that context of this profound worldview that Jesus comes in fitting with all of the, all of these riddles and all of the prophecies and Genesis three and all of that. It's in that context that he dies. He steps down from heaven to become a beast like you and me and to take our place in death, a death of judgment, so that when we put our faith and trust into him, God adopts us as his son and daughter.

And he does know about death and can speak to it. And we should listen. There is no one else to listen to. And that helps us to understand the odd ending of this literary unit. Look at, look at verse 20.

We'll read verse 21 again. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth? He's speaking like one under the sun. He's setting up a puzzle, a lock, that only Christ will empty, will open. And it's also pointed out in a very, very odd way, because the book of Ecclesiastes is a book designed to be pondered and discussed with others. And it says in verse 22, so I saw that there is nothing better than that a man or a woman should rejoice in their work, for that is his lot. Who can bring him to see what will be after him? Now this word lot is a, is the, is the interesting word. One of the things, if you go back and listen to my sermon from last week, one of the things which the writer Solomon of Ecclesiastes is trying to set the stage for is that we are vapor and we have a problem with pretensions and arrogance and thinking that we can control our lives and that we can create these things that will give long lasting meaning and all of that type of stuff. And, and, and I mean, I mean, I sure hope this doesn't happen, but like if a year after I stepped down as rector from this church, the person who comes in so completely butchers it with horrific acts that the church ceases to exist. And for, for many people, and it would be the same as if, you know, you die and you leave lots of money to your daughter because you really, really want to bless her. And, and then, you know, a year after you've died and she has all this money, she marries some huckster who ruins her and steals all of her money. And if you know that in advance, you would just feel really, really bad about it. And that helps to reveal that we have these other aspects of thinking that we can control the future and our eternity projects and all of that type of stuff.

And, and, and, and, and so what's going on here in this text is it's, it's, if, if we want to think that our actions and our behavior are going to be able to control the future and create this legacy that, that will, people will still be aahing over us when they think about us, that just is creating a way of enjoying, of, of being in life that just going to crush us. And it's foolish because we don't know what's going to happen in the future, but this idea of lot, of stuff that comes to us day by day, it's trying to create a framework not of controlling the future and everything about the future, but that the fundamental way for us human beings to understand our life here under the sun is a receiver of gifts.

[34 : 50] Not a master of the universe, but a receiver of gifts. That's a good sip of water.

How many of us don't even enjoy a sip of water because we're inwardly pouting that it's not ice cold coke? And we can't even enjoy the glass of water because we think we'll do something better.

How many of us don't enjoy a family gathering because maybe one person is missing? And, and we, we should miss people. I'm not saying that. But how many times have we gone to family gatherings and maybe the mom or the dad is completely depressed because one person is missing? And you think to yourself, one moment, there's like 15 people here and they're all happy. They're all having a great time. Like, why aren't you in the joy of this moment? Like, why is it that I can't just think this has been a really beautiful day of worship and it doesn't have to bear the weight of something that will continue? This church doesn't have to continue 400 years if Jesus tarries. I can be present. And, and the, the, just the final thing about it, it's really interesting that it doesn't say here, notice what it says. It's very, very profound.

There's nothing better than that a man or a woman should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot. It's the whole idea that's going on in the book that there's these lot can also be translated as a reward or gift. And so there, there's these gifts that are constantly coming from God and that we're to learn to enjoy them. And it's connected to work, not leisure. Very un-Canadian. And work doesn't just mean capitalistic work so that all of you stay-at-home moms, or if there's a stay-at-home dad there that you just somehow are second class. No, it's, it's all labor and work and creativity. It's the setting of a table in such a way so that when your, your, your daughter comes over, you can have a really, really nice cup of tea with some nice shortbread cookies and you can just have a wonderful time.

And that's the work that goes into that. And it's not just an attitude of like eat and drink for tomorrow we die. We should just gorge ourselves, get as much as pleasure as we can right now because we're going to die. It's saying that part of the pleasure of work is dreaming and planning.

[37 : 03] Simple thing. What's a common lesson in carpentry? You measure twice, cut once, right? That's planning. You have a sense of what it's going to look like. It's, and, and, and so it's, it's this whole thing of, of the things that we do. And as we do these things, often unbidden, we have these moments of joy.

And we are to understand that the whole fabric of reality is centered around the fact that God is a giver of gifts and that we should receive and accept these gifts. And the greatest gift, the greatest gift is of course the gift of God, the Son of God, sent down from heaven to become a beast like you and me, that through him, by faith in him, we, not counting our merits, that we can become the adopted Son of God. I stand before you as vapor. I have done bad things. God has put eternity in my heart. Day by day, he gives me things that I should receive with joy and often I don't. And I am his adopted child, not because of my merits, but completely and utterly by grace.

And my hope and prayer is that if you have not yet received him and received his grace, there is no better time than today to say yes and ask him to be your savior.

And begin to have grace, be that which rules and governs your life. I invite you to stand.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, we're very Canadian here. And maybe, yeah, we're very Canadian. I don't know if there's tourists here from the United States or other places, but I'm sure they're very American or British or Australian or wherever. And it's hard for us to think about death. But Father, we see here that by not thinking about this, it actually means that we lose out on joy and we lose out on grace. And so, Father, we thank you for Jesus. We thank you that he came among us, that he is Emmanuel and he died on the cross as Emmanuel to make us right with you. And we ask, Father, first of all, that you help us to to value and marvel. And once again, especially at the Lord's Supper, where we can remember his death and the fact that he's going to come again, and we can feed on him spiritually in our hearts. Father, the miracle we know isn't in the bread. The miracle is what you do in our hearts as we think of Christ and receive and remember him and receive him into us. And that's the miracle you do. And we ask, Father, you would do that miracle in our lives today. And Father, part of, we also ask that you would help us to be ones who understand life as gift and receive with joy the gifts you give us this day as we do the things that we do for your honour, for your glory, for the good of this city and the good of the world. And we ask all these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Saviour. Amen.