

The Limits of Secularism

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Date: 14 February 2016

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[0 : 00] What is your view of life in this world? Or to put it another way, have you taken the time to think about life on this earth in general! And why it is that we humans do what we do and we live as we live.

I think the answer for most of us, if not all of us, is no. We just have not taken the time to do that. And to the extent that we have taken some time to think about life, I believe that most of us have thought about life on a very personal level.

We have thought about our lives, the things that pertain to our lives in this world. And really, however we think about our lives in this world, is how we live.

You see, the sober truth is that in order to live well, we need to think well about this life. We need to think well about this life in order to live this life well.

And this is why I think that this sermon series in the book of Ecclesiastes is so helpful to us, is so beneficial to us because it will cause us to think about life in ways that I don't think any of us have actually thought about.

[1 : 26] And it will reveal to us God's wisdom for living life in God's world. And we would learn what it means to live well in this world based on how God defines well.

So this is God's book of wisdom to us. It is a gift to us and it will help us to think about life based on God's wisdom.

And we will be able to live life aided by God's wisdom. So we come this morning to Ecclesiastes chapter 1. And although we covered verses 1 and 2 in the introductory message some two weeks ago, for continuity, I want to begin this morning reading from verse 1.

But our attention largely will be verses 3 to 11. That's where our attention will be. But I begin in verse 1 of Ecclesiastes.

The words of the preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the preacher.

[2 : 37] Vanity of vanities. All is vanity. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever.

The sun rises and the sun goes down and hastens to the place where it rises. 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. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full. To the place where the streams flow, there they flow again.

All things are full of weariness. A man cannot utter it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the air filled with hearing.

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?

[3 : 48] It has been already in the ages before us. There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after.

Let's pray together. Father, we come this morning and we begin, first of all, thanking you for your word. Lord, and then, Lord, we quickly add how much we need your help this morning.

Father, I pray that you would open our eyes and grant us illumination in your word that is before us.

I pray that you would speak to our hearts and you would uncover the wisdom that is contained in your word to help us think well about life so that we might live life well, to please you, and to bring glory to your name.

Father, would you pour your abundant grace upon the proclamation of your word and upon the hearing of your word and the application of your word in our lives?

[5 : 05] We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. As we prepare to consider these introductory words in the book of Ecclesiastes, we need to bear in mind that these words are the introduction to the message of Ecclesiastes.

They are the introductory words of the message that the preacher is preaching to his audience. And he knows his audience. He knows his audience quite well.

He knows what preoccupies them. And he knows what he's going to say to them. The preacher is not going to string together some words and kind of end up at some point.

No, the preacher knows where he wants to end up. And he begins at this particular point. And based on what the preacher goes on to say in the rest of the book, we're able to understand the kinds of things that his audience was preoccupied with.

Drawing from the contents of the book of Ecclesiastes as a whole, commentator Chun Long Hsu observes that the preacher's audience, those in the preacher's audience, those in the preacher's audience were apparently preoccupied with all sorts of social and economic issues.

[6 : 29] The volatility of the economy, the possibility of wealth, inheritance, social status, the fragility of life, and the ever-present shadow of death.

That was the situation of the people whom the preacher addressed in Ecclesiastes. And friends, this morning, we share much with those whom the preacher addressed.

We too are occupied, and even I would say preoccupied, with financial issues and social issues. We think about inheritance issues.

What will my parents leave for me, and what will I leave for my children? How will my children be educated? Will they get a good education, and would they get good jobs to enable them to take care of themselves and take their place in society?

And will they marry, and will they have children? And perhaps they may die before I do. We're preoccupied with things like who's going to form our next government in this country.

[7 : 47] Who's going to replace Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, who passed away last night, and all the implications of that. Will the person be a conservative, or will the person be a liberal?

And the list of preoccupations go on and on. So the preacher is addressing people who have these concerns and questions about life.

One of the real dangers that we all face is that it is possible to live in God's world without any reference to God. It is possible when we think about life and when we live life that we can do so without any reference to God.

And this is the witness of human history. That human beings who were created by God can and do live in God's world even as they reject God and refuse to acknowledge Him as their creator.

And they refuse to acknowledge this world as His creation. And this way of living without any reference to God or any interest in God is secularism.

[9 : 03] It is to live life and to have a worldview that does not include God. And among the secularists are atheists, those who do not believe in the existence of God, and those who are agnostics, those who doubt the existence of God.

Now I'm sure it doesn't surprise you that atheists and agnostics live as secularists. They live with no reference or awareness of God in their lives.

I don't think that surprises us. But here's what I think should surprise us. What should surprise us is that there are people who would be theists, people who would believe that there is a God above all of this design.

And yet, they live like secularists. They live with little reference or interest in God in His universe, this God whom they profess to believe in.

Not only do they have the same preoccupations about this life as the secularists, they share the same values and they live in the same way. And really, this was the situation with the preacher's audience.

[10 : 27] The preacher's audience were theists. They were Israelites. They were God's chosen people but many of them were living as those who had no knowledge of God.

Much history had gone on. They had gone through the ups and downs of nationhood and they had gone into captivity and come out again. And maybe they were beginning to wonder, does this whole thing make sense?

Where does it add up? And where does it lead to? And they saw the nations around them living in other ways. And perhaps they began to learn from those other nations and they began to live like others without any reference to God in their lives.

And so in his message in Ecclesiastes, the preacher challenges this secular worldview. He challenges this worldview of these people who are God's people but they are living in God's world without any reference to God.

Making decisions that do not reflect that they belong to him. And to the extent that we who are gathered this morning have embraced views and values of this world, we too need to hear the preacher's message.

[11 : 52] The preacher lays the foundation for his message in these opening verses that we have just read. And it begins with these words found in verse 2, vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

It's easy to see in verse 2 that the preacher uses this word vanity five times. And in total in the whole book he uses it some 38 times.

vanity. And I think it's pretty clear what the preacher's theme is in this book. It's about vanity.

The vanity of life. But the meaning that the preacher has when he uses this word vanity is very different from the meaning I think most of us would naturally have in mind when we think about vanity.

vanity. When we think about vanity we think of a vain person or a person who is preoccupied with him or herself. A person who is preoccupied with appearance.

[12 : 59] A person with excessive pride who is concerned with abilities and achievements in an excessive way. A person who makes much of those things and who draws his or her identity from those kinds of things.

But that's not the way the preacher uses this word vanity. vanity When the preacher in Ecclesiastes refers to vanity he is referring to that which does not last. He is referring to that which at the end of the day amounts to nothing.

Those of you who have the English Standard Version would notice a footnote number two next to the first occurrence of the word vanity in verse two. And then at the bottom of your page you would see the English Standard Version translators tell us that the word vanity can be translated as mist a vapor or a mere breath.

We all know that a mist a vapor or a breath is something that is here in a moment and soon disappears. So in verse two we have the preacher's summary of life that his audience is preoccupied with.

He says to them it's all vanity it's a mist it's a vapor it's a mere breath that will soon come to nothing. While the preacher's audience does not know where he is going with these words I mean could you imagine if I showed up I didn't announce a title and I just started by saying vanity of vanities vanity of vanities all is vanity.

[14 : 39] They didn't know where the preacher was going but the preacher knew where he was going. He had thought long and hard about life he had thought long and hard about the life that these people were living he had observed it he had come to many conclusions about it he saw how people were living they lived driven by their preoccupations and they had little reference or interest in God he saw that they were living as secularists people whose world view excludes or even denies God and so the preacher's starting point is to call his audience to consider secularism life without reference to God he will talk about God later but for now he focuses on for their benefit life without any reference to God and here's the point that the preacher seems to be making in these opening verses he seems to be saying without

God all human toil amounts to nothing without God all human toil amounts to nothing no matter how great the endeavor if God is not in it it really amounts to nothing it is a dissolving mist it is a disappearing vapor it is a fleeting breath and so in our remaining time this morning I want to consider the words of the preacher in verses in these 11 verses and I want to do so under three headings for those of you who are taking notes and want to follow along they are number one questioning life under the sun we see that in verse three he raises his question number two illustrating life under the sun he does that in verses four through eight and then number three summarizing life under the sun he does that in verses nine through eleven so first the preacher questions life under the sun he questions life under the sun in verse three and he asks the question what does man gain by all of his toil by which he toils under the sun in these opening verses the preacher uses this term under the sun two times he uses it in verse three and then he uses it again in verse nine it is a term that is only found in the book of ecclesiastes and the preacher uses it in this book some 28 times on two other occasions he uses the term under heaven and he really refers to the same thing so some under heaven or life under the sun he's referring to the full range of human activity

I want you to notice from the outside that the preacher does not ask a personal question in verse three he doesn't ask what do you gain or what do I gain from all of the toil which you toil under the sun or which I toil under the sun I think we have to answer the preacher question you have to consider it on a personal level but the preacher does not ask a personal question the preacher instead asks a universal question he asks the question what does man gain by all of the toil at which he toils under the sun now really the preacher's question takes us back to Genesis it takes us back to the garden of Eden because the Hebrew word that he uses for man is the word Adam and there's no accident on the preacher's part that he uses this word and that he refers to toil after all he is a preacher and he's preaching

God's word to God's people and by these words that he uses Adam and toil the preacher reminds us of the fall of Adam and the fall of the human race because of Adam's sin and he's referring to this new life that man now lives under the sun this life of toil this life that now is going to be a sweaty toil this life that the ground now will not cooperate and will bring forth thorns and thistles causing work to be difficult causing work to be hard and so the preacher asks this question against the backdrop of the fall of man he observes people working and earning money and pursuing what money can buy and he asks the question what does it profit what does man gain from all that he does all of his toiling what does he gain from it and here the preacher uses an interesting word for his audience he uses this word for gain as a commercial word it is a word that's found in the marketplace it is the word that means to have access when you have made an investment or you have gone into a business enterprise and after you have considered all your expenses and you considered the money that you brought in you have something left over you have some profit he says what do you gain from all of your toil in the book of ecclesiastes the preacher uses this word nine times and this word is found nowhere else in the

Old Testament other than in the book of ecclesiastes things now I believe that we all know that the preacher is asking what we call a rhetorical question so it's not a real question it is a manner of arguing it is a manner of speaking it is a way that you make a point where you ask what seems to be a question but the question is a statement and the answer is obvious the preacher is making a statement in the form of a question and he's saying that none of man's toil will bring him gain none of it will bring him profit the answer to the preacher's question what does man gain from all of his toil by which he toils under the sun is nothing that's what the preacher is communicating to his hearers now I think it's clear and it would have been!

[21 : 28] clear to the preacher's audience in the account that we have here in Ecclesiastes is also from my own experience that people do accumulate wealth that people do engage in enterprises and they invest money and at the end of the day they have much profit and gain left over after they've covered their expenses and even recovered their investment we can think in scripture of many men who had excess we can think of Abraham and David and Solomon who are all incredibly wealthy people and our own time we can think of Bill Gates we can think of Warren Buffett and other people locally we can think of people like Brent Semonet and we can think of Franklin Wilson they have a lot of wealth they've taken risks!

what is the preacher saying? the preacher's point is this the preacher is saying even the massive amounts of wealth that people sometimes accumulate in life is really just vanity it is a mist it is a vapor it is a fleeting breath in the grand scheme of things it is nothing so the preacher is asking a question that he's already answered in verse 3 sorry he asked this question what does man gain by all of the toil at which he falls under the sun but the preacher already answered in verse 2 where he says it's all vanity it's all nothing it is all this mist and vapor and fleeting breath the preacher says man gains nothing by all of his toil at which he falls under the sun he gains a mist of vapor a fleeting breath the preacher wanted his audience to think differently about the things they were pursuing the things with which they were preoccupied he wanted them to see all of these accomplishments as vanity has nothing but they didn't and perhaps this morning there's some of us who are not fully persuaded that it really is nothing and so the preacher needs to persuade them he needs to convince them that it really is nothing and what the preacher then does is he begins to give them a series of illustrations to prove his point that all of man's toil is vanity or emptiness and it brings no lasting gain and so he illustrates his point with several illustrations this brings me to the second point where the preacher illustrates life under the sun he begins in verse four his first illustration is death in verse four he says a generation goes and a generation comes but the earth remains forever the preacher is saying that people are born and they toil on this earth and then they die and then other people come they're born into this world they toil and they die and the cycle continues one generation goes and another generation comes and it's like one big merry-go-round because the earth remains here to receive them and to let them off and people come and go and come and go and come and go and toil and sweat and it all amounts to nothing they all die a new group comes a new generation comes toil and then they leave

I think many of us are increasingly aware of this we're actually seeing people we grew up with die and we're seeing our generation fade and go and we're seeing another generation come behind us but much of it is going to be the same pattern of toiling and dying and being born and toiling and dying and being born so the preacher says it's one big merry-go-round the earth remains and generations come and generations go and it all amounts to nothing and here's why it amounts to nothing it really amounts to nothing because whatever we accomplish we cannot take we leave the preacher helps us to see that we can't stop death we can't with our possessions and our accomplishment get lasting happiness the preacher helps us to see later on that it can also be lost through a bad investment he tells us it won't even guarantee a status he talks about observing where a rich person has a low status and a poor person has a high status and he also tells us that it won't even be remembered we can't even cause what we do what we accomplish to be remembered so his point is it is all a mist it is all a vapor it is a fleeting breath the second illustration the preacher gives us is in verse five it's the sun and he illustrates the lack of gain in life by observing the sun the lack of gain for all of our toil he says you can look at the sun the sun teaches you how man gains nothing from all of his toil he says we observe the sun rising and then setting and going back to where it rose only to do the same thing over and over and over again and the preacher literally says he says it does it out of breath and hastens the

ESV has a note there and it's like being out of breath the sun is just rising and setting and rising and setting and rising and running back to where it sets and the preacher says what is gained by it the sun does the same thing over and over and again rising and setting and rising and setting and what is gained his third illustration is the wind in verse six and he tells us that the wind is similar he says the wind blows in this continuous circular manner from south to north and around and around on the same circuits and then returns to continue the pattern and gains nothing and then fourth he tells us that the sea is also a vivid illustration of life under the sun verse seven he tells us that even the sea which has streams and rivers flowing into it he says it happens again and again yet it doesn't fill the sea it continues over and over and over and over and over again flowing into the sea and back and forth and the sea is in full and his point is there is no gain and rather than continue to give these specific illustrations the preacher in verse 8 he generalizes and he says in verse 8 all things are full of weariness

He says when you consider life if you continue to think you will see more examples like the sun and like the wind and like the sea and like death with generations coming and going he says all of life is filled with this weary repetitiveness he says it's more than the mouth can express the mouth can talk and talk and talk and talk it'll never fully express all the repetitive examples and patterns that we observe in this life and he says and similar to the sea that is never full from the rivers flowing and streaming into it he tells us in verse 8 that the eyes never become full of seeing or the air filled from hearing we see and see and continue to see and our ears hear and hear and continue to hear and we can continue to see and continue to hear and so the preacher brilliantly illustrates from life and nature that the persistent toil of man under the sun produces no profit it produces no gain no matter how much and how long we toil so the preacher has now questioned life he has now illustrated life under the sun and then he goes on to summarize life under the sun starting in verse nine because of the repetitive activity observed in life under the sun the preacher is now able to make some bold conclusions the obvious conclusions from what he has already said they're quite bold the first one that he makes is in verse nine he says whatever has been is what will be and what has been done is what will be done and there's nothing new under the sun the preacher's point is that there will continue to be no gain for all of man's toil at which he toils under the sun generations will continue to be born and die and the patterns of this world will continue and the most important one being that there is no gain to man for all of his toil under the sun whatever man accomplishes the preacher says is 100% pure vanity a mist a vapor a fleeting breath and to those who would hold out hope that well maybe things will change down the road the preacher says no no there's nothing new under the sun the preacher is saying that man will never gain from his toil from all of his toil under the sun and he seems to anticipate this objection to his statement that there's nothing new under the sun so he raises the question in verse 10 and he says is there a thing of which it is said see this is new is there something that you can say see this is new the preacher says no it has been here already in the ages before

[33 : 48] I know those of you thinking what about the iPhone what about cell phones in general what about scientific discoveries and new developments what about the airplane many things we can think about that were invented I think two responses will help us to see what the preacher is saying is true first of all remember that we're dealing with wisdom literature we're not dealing with evidence in a court we're not dealing with court evidence in terms of the words of the preacher what we're dealing with is wisdom literature and what the preacher is saying is that considering the broad activity of man and the patterns of life under the sun there's really nothing new there's really nothing new the point is that as we observe life in this world it is repetitive there's really nothing new and the second response is when we consider the history of man on the earth it is a progressive development that builds upon and learns from the past so really there is nothing that is entirely new it flows from a creator it flows from a divine creator and all that he has created so even when there's some new invention it really was not new because we've had inventions before they create something well we've had an invention before you know that was supposed to do this and do the other thing but we've had them and we'll have inventions in the future we've made discoveries before and we will make discoveries in the future so what we call new is really not new it is some variation or some improvement on what has been here before and I think if you think about that long enough it is as true with the airplane that flies birds flew it is as true as the discovery of electricity it was enlightening we communicated before cell phones and all the other kinds of things that we can think about and every bit of technology you can go way back and see that!

we found new ways of doing things so technology or some new technology is really not new it is just a repetitive new color as it were but fundamentally not new and finally in verse 11 the preacher tells us that we can't even hope that our gain will be okay I'm remembered he says there's no remembrance of former things nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after if you have the ESV you would notice that there is a note four and then a note five to the words things and the notes of the bottom will tell us that instead of being translated as things they can also be translated as people and that's the way the new international version took the translation to refer to people whereas the

ESV refers to things but really the point is still the same whether it is things that are not remembered or people that are not remembered the point is still the same his point is that over time even the greatest things or the greatest people will be forgotten for example no doubt there are many of us in this room who at one time or another benefited from penicillin wonderful development and scientific medical breakthrough we've benefited from penicillin but it's highly unlikely that other than maybe the doctors in the room that we know who invented penicillin and quite frankly we don't care all we care about is that we get the benefit of it so as wonderful as penicillin is and as many people around the world who have benefited from it among the billions of people on the earth today we don't remember it we don't remember the person who invented penicillin and the preacher's point then is that we can't even hope to have a lasting memory as our gain for all the toil that we toil under the sun

William Brown makes a deeper observation about this point that the preacher is making in verse 11 when he writes the preacher is not so much claiming that human beings are utterly oblivious to the past as he is undercutting their deepest and vainglorious aspirations to secure some permanent place or remembrance in history a life oriented towards ensuring its legacy for posterity only pursues the wind and then he concludes with this brilliant statement the future cannot be controlled any more than the past can be fully remembered and so

William Brown is making the point that there is within us apart from our desire to accomplish things there is within us this glorious desire to be remembered and he's saying that the preacher is undercutting this and he certainly does as he continues his message in Ecclesiastes and he reminds us that we can't control the future anymore than the past can be fully remembered but the preacher does not end in verse 11 he's actually just getting started but we must end at verse 11 this morning and pick up at verse 12 the next time and although we have much in common with the preacher's original audience in the sense that we share the same concerns the same preoccupations about life on this earth that they had we are a different audience hearing the preacher's words at a different time in addition the words of the preacher are really intended to point us to the greater preacher a greater preacher who has spoken and that greater preacher is

[41 : 36] Jesus Christ and Jesus asked a more pointed question than the preacher in Ecclesiastes the preacher in Ecclesiastes asked the question what does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun but Jesus the greater preacher asked a more pointed question he asked in Mark 8 36 for what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul the greater preacher goes beyond the preacher the preacher in Ecclesiastes touches on death he tells us the generations come and generations go but the greater preacher in the person of Jesus Christ goes even further Jesus goes beyond losing assets and not having a lasting memory and he addresses our souls he lifts the question into the eternal realm and he makes the point about man's soul that is more valuable than all that this world can possibly offer he says what will you gain if you got the whole world and lose your own soul to help you understand what

Jesus is asking what would you gain if you got all the wealth in the Bahamas and little Bahamas that'd be a lot but Jesus takes it further he says if you got all that the world could offer and you lose your soul you gain nothing it did not profit you you made a bad business deal you incurred a loss and so he calls us to live for the gain of our souls and he tells us how we are to gain our souls in that same discourse he alerts us to the value of our souls here's what he says in Mark 8 34 35 Mark records and he Jesus called to him the crowd and his disciples and said to them if anyone would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me for whoever would save his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it the greater preacher calls us to stop toiling for that which this life offers and take up our cross and follow him it's a call to die it is a call to live but it is a call to die a call to die to self and a call to live for

Christ it is a call to turn from a life of sin which is meaningless toil which is like making brick out of straw what Pharaoh had the children of Israel doing that pointless toil and he's calling us to live a life of righteousness which brings an eternal reward the greater preacher helps us to see that while there is no profit in life that is toiling without God we can profit from our labors if we don't store up our treasures on this earth in Luke 12 16 through 21 the greater preacher tells this parable of a rich man whose land produced an abundant crop this man thought to himself he said what I'm going to do is I'm going to break these small barns down I'm going to build bigger ones and when

I'm finished I'm just going to relax and take it easy I'm going to eat drink and be merry and I will tell my soul you have goods later for many years just take it easy and the greater preacher says but God called that man a fool because he was not even able to carry out his plans that very night God said to him your soul is required of you and that man lost because he was not rich towards God he stored up treasure for himself and this is what Jesus says this is what the greater preacher says in summary to this parable that he told so it is so it is with the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God so if he can be rich towards

God we can live in this life and we can have a profit towards God and the reason for that is though the first Adam brought us into toil that is meaningless and that is nothingness the last Adam came and through his redemptive work our toil can now be turned into productive work where we can gain a profit as we live for God through Jesus Christ and through the power that he gives us to say no to sin and yes to righteousness the greater preacher in the sermon on the mount says these words in Matthew 6 19 through 21 do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal for where your treasure is there will your heart be also and in

[47 : 45] John 6 27 the greater preacher says do not labor for the food that perishes! but for the food that endures to eternal life which the Son of Man will give you for on him God the Father has set his seal!

and so friends this morning the preacher and the greater preacher agree without God all of our toil on this earth is vanity it amounts to nothing it is a mist it is a vapor it is a fleeting breath it will not last but in the words of the apostle Paul talking about death in 1 Corinthians 15 he says these words in verse 58 therefore my beloved brothers be steadfast immovable always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain what precious words to hear against the backdrop of this view of the world and work in the world the secular view of the world without

God that the preacher paints for us what precious words are these to be able to hear now that through Jesus Christ that we can engage and work in this world we can engage in living in this world under God and that our labor will not be in vain and so as we close this morning I think we all need to personally consider the words of the preacher in Ecclesiastes and the words of the greater preacher in the person of Jesus Christ and first we need to ask what do I what do I gain from all of my toiling my efforts my getting up and going out and coming back and laying down and moving towards that point at which

I'm going to leave this earth what do I gain from it all and to say it more plainly do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that would make all of your living and your doing make sense and will cause it to last that will cause it to be work that is not just confined to this life that is a mere mist a vapor a fleeting breath scripture tells us in first corinthians 10 31 that whatever we do we are to do it for the glory of God can you honestly say this morning this is how you are living that you are living for the glory of God for the greater lasting glory of

God and then second connected to that have you ensured that at the end of this life you will gain your soul as opposed to losing your soul and Jesus tells us how we can he describes it as taking up a cross and following him but it's only possible to take up that cross and follow Jesus when we put our trust in the one who bore the cross that really matters who went to that cross and took the place of sinners and who took their sins and who died their death so that they could be reconciled to God it is only as we put our trust in him that we are able to take up that cross and though dying live and as we live for him that our toil will be converted into labor for

[52 : 26] Christ lasting joyful labor let's pray together this morning this where you see that I encourage you to just pond and reflect on the words of the preacher and the greater preacher and if you're able to say this morning in openness and sincerity before God that by his grace you have trusted in Christ you have taken your cross and you are walking in the light and following him and that your toil under the sun is now labor for the sun you have much to be thankful for this morning you have much to be thankful for that you are not seeing life as a big merry-go round though there is this repetitive nature in life of generations coming and generations going by the grace of

God you know that it has a terminal point and it's moving in a linear direction though going around and round it's moving in a linear direction and one day you're going to stand before the Lord and because of Jesus Christ you will have profit you will have gained from your labors in this world thought