

# The Limits of Wisdom

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[ 0 : 00 ] Douglas Sean O'Donnell shares an account about Daniel Tammet. He's the man who broke the European record for reciting Pi, the mathematical constant pi, from memory.

I'm sure that all of the students this morning still remember pi, those who are taking BGCSEs and BJC definitely should be remembering pi.

The rest of us probably have a faint memory from geometry about pi, but pi is that constant number 3.14 that comes from the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter.

For those of us who have forgotten all of this stuff I thought this morning, I would also give the students a reminder of why it's good to come to church because they can review certain things for their exams.

What I want to do is share a diagram. If we can maybe kill the lights, yeah.

[ 1 : 19 ] It's kind of small. But yeah, this is the circle and you'll see that it labels three parts of the circle.

It labels the diameter that runs through the center to the sides of the circle. And then it labels the circumference which is the total distance around the circle.

And of course the radius which comes from the center just to one of the sides. And so pi is taking this distance around there and that distance there and dividing this distance into that distance.

So you divide the diameter into the circumference and no matter what the circle is, you get 3.14. No matter how big the circle is, once you get the diameter and you get the circumference, always 3.14. So if you go into the exam, and actually I understand that the exams are earlier this year because of Easter. If you go into the exam and they say to you, can you have a circle that has a circumference of 10 and a diameter of 5?

[ 2 : 34 ] Your answer needs to be no. Because when you divide 5 into 10, you get 2. You should get 3.14 if it's a circle. Now, that's not fully true that pi is 3.14.

That's rounded. Pi, actually, the decimals go on, never repeating forever, just forever and forever and forever. Well, this man, Daniel Tammet, his claim to fame is that he broke the European record on the 14th of March, 2004, reciting pi from memory.

And he didn't just remember 3.14. What he did was, for 5 hours and 9 minutes, he recited 22,514 digits.

In other words, beyond 3.14, he recited 22,511 other digits without an error. For 5 hours and 9 minutes.

Now, he's an unusual man. And he was actually diagnosed with a condition called Asperger's syndrome, which is an autism spectrum disorder.

[ 4 : 07 ] And in his commentary on Ecclesiastes, Douglas O'Donnell goes on to quote from Daniel Tammet's memoir, in which Tammet wrote the following.

This is what Tammet wrote in his memoir. I still remember vividly the experience I had as a teenager lying on the floor of my room, staring up at the ceiling.

I was trying to picture the universe in my head, to have a concrete understanding of what everything was. In my mind, I traveled to the edges of existence and looked over them, wondering what I would find.

In that instant, I felt really unwell. And I could feel my heart beating hard inside me. Because for the first time, I had realized that thought and logic had limits.

I could only take a person so far. The realization frightened me. And it took me a long time to come to terms with it.

[ 5 : 20 ] Well, Daniel Tammet is not the only wise person who came to grips with the fact that logic and wisdom has limits.

He wasn't the first person. In this section of Ecclesiastes that we come to this morning, we see that the preacher came to a similar conclusion.

The preacher came to the conclusion that wisdom has limits. And so if you have not turned there already, please turn in your Bibles to Ecclesiastes chapter 1.

And the last time we left off at verse 11. And so this morning, we will pick up at verse 12. And we will be reading through verse 18.

Ecclesiastes chapter 1. We begin at verse 12. I, the preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

[ 6 : 16 ] And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. 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 and a striving after wind. What is crooked cannot be made straight.

And what is lacking cannot be counted. I said in my heart, I have acquired great wisdom surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me.

And my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly.

I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind. For in much wisdom is much vexation. And he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

[ 7 : 23 ] Let's pray together. Father, we thank you this morning that you have preserved your word over the ages. We thank you this morning, Lord, that we don't have to depend on word of mouth or hearsay.

But we have your inscripturated word. Your authoritative and fallible word. That we can sit under the instruction of.

Lord, you know our lives through and through.

Before you, nothing is hid. All things are naked and open to you. And so, Lord, we pray that you would speak to each heart. But, Lord, speak to us collectively as well as a local church.

Would you use your word to build your church? Lord, as we sang earlier today, would you use your church and build your church for your glory?

[ 8 : 28 ] We ask for much grace to help us to both hear and heed your word this morning. We trust you in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, in the previous message, we considered how the preacher asked and answered the question that is found in verse 3 of chapter 1.

What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? And we saw that the preacher actually had given the answer to this question in verse 2.

He gave the answer in verse 2, but he asked the question in verse 3. And the answer that he gives in verse 2 is, man gains nothing from all of his toil because in the preacher's words, it's all vanity, which means a mist, a vapor, or a mere breath.

And then we considered how the preacher went on to illustrate the emptiness and the monotony of life in a fallen world by reminding us of how the earth is like this permanent merry-go-round where people come on when they are born and they come off when they die.

[ 9 : 46 ] And it is generation after generation after generation this goes on. And he also reminded us of the repetitive nature of the sun rising and setting and the circular nature of the wind blowing and returning and the constant flowing of the rivers into the seas over and over again and the seas are not any fuller at the end of the day.

The seas don't overflow. And he says, all of this repetitive activity illustrates how life under the sun, and remember, life under the sun speaks to human existence, human living on this earth without any reference to God.

we are living under the sun. We are living just with what is right in front of us. And he says, it is a mist. It is a vapor. It is a mere breath.

It is nothingness is what he says that is. Now in this section that we have come to this morning, the preacher shares with us one of the methods by which he came to this conclusion that it is all vanity. That it is all a myth. It is a mist. Sorry, it is a vapor. It is a mere breath. The preacher used wisdom to come to that conclusion.

[ 11 : 10 ] And be able to appreciate how he is working through this. Remember that the preacher is not making this up as he goes. This has happened and he is now documenting it. So he gives us

some conclusions up front where he says, you know what, the whole thing under the sun living away from God in this fallen world it is a vapor.

It amounts to nothing. But now he is telling us how he arrived at his conclusion and he says that he used wisdom to determine it.

That is what he says in verse 13. He is still answering this question in verse 3. What does man gain from all of his toil? And he tells us in verse 13 that he tried to seek and search it out by wisdom.

And at this stage, of the preacher's quest to use wisdom to understand life under the sun, he helps us to see that wisdom is not enough for understanding life and satisfying people.

Wisdom is not enough for understanding life and satisfying people. What the preacher says in these seven verses is that in this fallen world, fallen men and fallen women in a fallen, broken world will never be able to understand the activities of men and human involvement in the earth by wisdom alone.

[ 12 : 49 ] And he also helps us to see that going after wisdom, that pursuing wisdom as a means to escape or to evade or to elevate above the craziness in this fallen world is disappointing because it's a dead end street that will never satisfy.

And so this morning in our remaining time, I want us to consider these two conclusions that the preacher came to in these seven verses. The first one, the limits of wisdom in understanding life.

the limits of wisdom in understanding life. That's the point the preacher makes in verses 12 through 15. Now again, it's important to mention that the preacher is starting to elaborate to tell us how and why he is able to say it's all a mist, It's all a vapor, it's all a mere breath, it's vanity of vanities.

He is elaborating now to tell us how he is able to say that. In verse 13, the preacher says, I applied my heart to seek and search out by wisdom all that is done under the sun.

Those of you who have the English Standard Version of the Bible would see that there's a footnote number six after the word heart. In verse 13, and at the bottom of the page, there's an explanation that says that the Hebrew term from which we get the word heart means the center of one's inner life, including the mind, the will, and the emotions.

[ 14 : 27 ] So the heart doesn't mean this organ that pumps blood in our bodies, but what the heart means is that it is our whole person, our inner life, our mind, our will, our emotions.

And why this is important is we're seeing that the preacher didn't just casually consider this issue of the activities of men under the sun.

The preacher was not casual. He gave himself to it. He applied his heart to it. He's not kind of thumbing through or scanning through the pages of life to figure it out the way we would do a book, the way we would sometimes just do like that with a book.

No, the preacher applied himself. He gave it a full effort. He gave it his all. And he tells us some anecdotal or we can call it autobiographical information about himself in verse 12 when he says, I, the preacher, have been king over Jerusalem.

And what this helps us to see is that the preacher was able to bring all of his resources as king and fully engage and seek to understand and search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven.

[ 15 : 45 ] He was a resourced person to be able to do this. He was wise as we'll see in a little while but he was also king and he had all these resources before him. As we touched on in the introduction to this series, there is some uncertainty about the exact identity of the preacher.

Some say he's Solomon. Some say he's not. that it's really somebody else who's using Solomon to make a point, using his life to make a point. And as I shared in the introduction, whether he is Solomon or not really is not important.

That's not important for us to get to the heart of the message of the book of Ecclesiastes. Whoever the preacher is in these verses, let us accept the point that he is making and the conclusions that he is making.

What we see is these are the conclusions of a great king, a man who, according to verse 16, was wiser than all who were before him in Jerusalem.

So these are not the musings of a minor lightweight. Now these are the words that are attributed to an experienced and wise king.

[ 16 : 59 ] So how did he seek? To search out all that is under heaven? How did he do that specifically? How did he go about that? What did he do?

We don't know. We don't know what his inquiry entailed. And the reason we don't know is it's not important. That detail or those details are not important.

What is important for us is what he concluded in the end. The bottom line that he came to as a result of his line of inquiry.

For however long he inquired and in whatever ways he inquired. And what we see is the preacher gives us three concluding statements from his discovery.

What he discovered in his search. The first statement he gives us is in verse 13. In the latter part of verse 13 he says, it is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with.

[ 18 : 00 ] That's the first statement he makes from his discovery trying to understand the lives of fallen men and women in this fallen world. He said, it is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with.

So the preacher told his audience and by extension he is telling us that God is the one who ordained the toil of man on this earth and he describes it as an unhappy business.

It is a very insightful discovery on the part of the preacher. So here we have for the first time in the book of Ecclesiastes God is mentioned won't be the last time but this is the first time and on this occasion and in all the other mentions of God in this book the preacher uses a particular Hebrew name for God.

He doesn't use the covenant name or the personal name that God revealed himself to the people of Israel by which is Yahweh. That's the covenant God.

That's the people who know God in a personal way. He uses this other word Elohim which is the generic word for God and it speaks to the creator God, the God who is revealed in creation and the God who speaks to all people not just his covenant people and what some theologians who are much smarter than I am say, the reason that he does that, the reason he specifically uses Elohim as opposed to Yahweh is he wants to show that the message of Ecclesiastes transcends the covenant people of God Israel and speaks to all the nations and all people in all the nations.

[ 19 : 54 ] but as the preacher the preacher points out he says God is the one who has ordained this unhappy business of life in this fallen world in which people are born into it on this merry-go-round and they go through toys and difficulties and then they leave through death.

goes on generation after generation after generation and what we learn is from Genesis 3 life in this world has been made hard because of Adam's sin and because of God's curse.

That's what Genesis 3 tells us. Genesis 3 tells us that the reason for the toil the reason for this brokenness and this fallenness in the world that we live in is because of Adam's sin and because of God's curse.

And the preacher is saying God is the one who ordained it. God is the one who ordained that we would have this unhappy business of busying ourselves of all that we busy ourselves with in the earth.

And because Adam disobeyed God by spurning what God gave, the generous gift that he gave and recognizing that though God said to him, you can eat of all of these trees except one, Adam ate what God forbade and he spurned what God actually gave.

[ 21 : 30 ] And what that resulted in is that resulted in a curse directed to his disobedience. And notice that in the very area where Adam disobeyed is the very area where the curse was issued.

The Lord said to Adam, he says, since you did not trust me essentially and you disobeyed me by eating what I told you not to eat, from now on you are going to eat by your sweat.

You're going to toil. The ground that's supposed to freely give you food is no longer going to cooperate with you. It's going to give you thorns and thistles. And you're going to eat from the ground in pain all the days of your life.

life. And with those words God set in motion man's unhappy business of existence on this earth.

And then we see in the very next chapter in Genesis 4, things begin to go downhill.

We see two murders recorded. Cain kills his brother because he's jealous of how God approved of his offering. We see a man, Lamech, kills another man just for hitting him.

[ 22 : 43 ] And things are just going downhill because now this curse is beginning to set in. And so the preacher says to his audience and he says to us, this unhappy business of living in this broken fallen world was ordained by God.

Now he's going to say more about that but for now that's all he says in verse 13. Now look at verse 14. In verse 14 the preacher makes a conclusion.

He says as a result of his study, as a result of his wise evaluation of the full gamut of human activity under the sun, he says the life lived by fallen men and women in a fallen world where men and women largely live their lives without any reference to God, he says I've seen it all.

He says I've seen everything under the sun. It's all vanity. It's all striving after wind. That's his assessment of it. That's his conclusion on it.

And here again the preacher's point echoes back to his earlier words in verse 2. When he in essence says human life on earth is one big repetitive merry-go-round that people get on when they're born and get off when they die and nothing ever changes.

[ 24 : 30 ] He says in verse 10, he says even when people say there's something new under the sun, he says there's really nothing new. It may have a new coat of paint on it. It may be a slightly different version of what you had before, but there's really nothing new under the sun.

It is one big monotonous nothingness. Now let's remember again the preacher's original audience. The preacher's original audience, which we can tell from the contents of the book, the preacher's original audience, they were preoccupied with all manner of things. They were preoccupied with working and earning a living, earning enough money to care for their needs.

They were preoccupied with accumulating wealth and who they were going to leave it for. They were concerned about the risks involved with business and whether investing in something may cause them to lose it all, everything they had worked hard for.

Some of them were workaholics and they worked and worked and worked and the preacher talks about this person, these kinds of people who work and they had no children. They had no one to leave all that they had for but they continued to work and work and work and he says they didn't even enjoy their labor.

[ 25 : 48 ] They were preoccupied with social standing and political power and certainly they were preoccupied with death. Now if you're tracking this morning what you should be saying in your mind is that sounds like us.

That audience sounds just like us because we have the same concerns, we have the same preoccupations and this is why the preacher makes a conclusion not just for those people, not just for this audience at that time, the preacher makes a universal declaration when he concludes about life in this fallen world.

From generation to generation it is fundamentally the same, it is all as he says vanity and striving after wind. Just imagine going outside, there's a little breeze this morning, just imagine going outside and trying to catch the wind.

That's the analogy, that's what the preacher uses to describe what life in this fallen world is and he's really saying to us is we are going after things in this fallen world and it's like trying to catch the wind.

We don't attain exactly what we go after. We go after much and we get little. We go down certain roads and we think our highways are dead end streets.

[ 27 : 10 ] And there's disappointment after disappointment after disappointment and we aren't able to grasp these things that we seek to lay a hold of in this life. The preacher says I've seen it all.

And the entire enterprise is vanity. It's a mist. It is a vapor.

It is a mere breath. Fallen men and women chasing after on this earth was never attained.

earth. Now from the preacher's words in verse 14 we should also see that not only is the preacher saying that fallen men and women in this life are busying themselves this God ordained activity that he's put us to in this earth that we are striving and chasing after wind won't attain it.

He's not only saying that, I think the preacher's also saying that there's a certain degree of limitation on his ability with his wisdom to fully comprehend and fully grasp all these things.

[ 28 : 26 ] So there's a kind of wind that he goes after and he just can't fully wrap his arms around it to be able to fully comprehend it and fully dissect it.

I think the preacher's not only talking about the frustration of fallen men and women in a fallen world but he's also talking about the limits of wisdom and trying to understand it all.

It is a striving after wind. It is a mist. It is a vapor. It is a mere breath.

And one of the reasons we know this, one of the reasons we know that the preacher is trying to understand life through wisdom is next he's going to pursue pleasure.

We're going to see that next week in chapter two. He says wisdom has limitations so let me try pleasure and he pursues to try to understand how everything works through pleasure.

[ 29 : 30 ] Now why is everything under the sun? vanity and a striving after wind. Why is it that God has given us this unhappy business busying ourselves in this earth with trying to grasp that which we don't fully get, we don't fully attain.

And the preacher's inability to fully understand the whole inner and outer workings of it all so much that for him it is also a vapor and a mist and he can't grab it in his hands to wrap his mind around it. But the preacher tells us in verse 15 in this proverb that he quotes. Notice what he says in verse 15. He says, what is crooked cannot be made straight and what is lacking cannot be counted. In this proverb lies the problem for those living under the sun and for the preacher who is trying to by wisdom understand it all.

You see the problem is that in this world there are things that are crooked and we can't make them straight and there are things that are lacking and we aren't able to count them.

[ 30 : 56 ] And when he talks about crooked he's not talking about crooked in a moral sense. He's not talking about someone's character in that way but he's just talking about brokenness.

He's talking about this fallenness that we experience where we can recognize that something isn't right. We can recognize that it shouldn't be that way. It's crooked.

It should be straight but it's crooked and we don't know how to make it straight. And we look at something and there are gaps in it and it's almost like trying to count and you don't have all the digits to count with.

And so it's a frustrating thing trying to understand and appreciate it. The preacher is saying this world in which we live in is broken.

This world in which we live in is far less than perfect. And wisdom wisdom even can't make what is crooked straight. Wisdom cannot even fill in the gaps.

[ 31 : 55 ] And here again the proverb echoes back to the fall that produced this world where things are crooked where some things are lacking and we can't fill them in.

And we come face to face as we live this life of the stubborn realities in this world that frustrate us but we cannot change. Douglas O'Donnell comments on this proverb in verse 15 and the preacher's conclusion about life under the sun and he writes the following.

When we witness life under the sun scarred by suffering overflowing with oppression infected with injustice crawling with crime traumatized by terrorists polluted with impurity we know that this is not just the way things are.

People say it is what it is. On the contrary it is not what it could have been. We live east of Eden that was where the Lord put Adam outside of the garden east of Eden and so when we see death oh a cursed death knocking on the door of a child in the womb a newborn baby girl a five year old boy crossing the street on his bike a group of teenagers driving home from the prom a newly married wife with brain cancer a father of five leaping in front of a train a 90 year old bachelor in a hospital bed know that this is not just the way things are there was a fall and because of the fall a curse we are all punished in Adam for Adam's sin that is the way things are now and day after day after day after day we all walk down the same sorry street and how true that is and friends we don't have to consider these scenarios that

O'Donnell gives us right here in this room right here in this church family we have our own stubborn situations a family member despairs about life so deeply that he ends his a young mother gives birth to a child and days later loses her own life a surgery designed to make you better makes you worse and handicapped for life firing a miracle from God future years that were planned with the expectation of an empty nest and enjoying personal time after 20 years of parenting instead turns to long term care of an adult child suffering with multiple sclerosis and even where there was the hope that the burden of care would be shared with your husband that hope is dashed when your husband dies unexpectedly a job is lost in an industry that is shrinking at a time when there's a downturn in the economy and finding work becomes doubly hard and again

[ 35 : 49 ] I've not made these scenarios up these are crooked things that we can't make straight these are gaps things that are lacking that we can't fill in to be able to wrap our minds around them these are trials that have been faced and not being faced by people in this congregation and I can go on the time wouldn't permit me to do that so the preacher in verses 12 through 15 helps us to see the limits of wisdom and understanding life in this broken world and also being able to fix it being able to make what is crooked straight and being able to fill in those gaps so we can comprehend it the preacher with all of his power with all of the wisdom that he had wasn't able to do it and so we have his conclusion it's all vanity it escapes us it's a mist it's a vapor it's a mere breath

but there's a second thing that the preacher helps us to see the preacher helps us to see the limits of wisdom in satisfying people helps us see the limits of wisdom and understanding life but he also helps us to see the limits of wisdom in satisfying people he shows us this in verses 16 through 18 again we see the preacher giving some personal information in verse 13 as he did in verse 13 he says in verse 16

I said in my heart I have acquired great wisdom surpassing all who were over me who were over Jerusalem before me and my heart had great experience wisdom and knowledge so the preacher was a wise king he was a knowledgeable man more than anyone else over him in Jerusalem and he tells us in verse 17 that he commits himself to a different kind of endeavor the endeavor that he commits himself to in verse 17 where he says I applied my heart in verse 13 he does it differently in verse 13 he seeks to understand all that's done under under heaven using wisdom but now he tells us this line of inquiry is to inquire about wisdom itself to know wisdom itself he now applies himself to know wisdom himself he fully engages himself in it again no casual thumbing through the pages of life or wisdom

I should say he is engaging himself again we don't know how he did it and obviously to be able to delve into wisdom he had to interact with foolishness and madness to compare it to wisdom so in a sense he's holding up wisdom and he's comparing folly and madness to it this is what the preacher is doing again we don't know how we did it because it's not important God has given us what we need and it's really the conclusion that the preacher comes to the preacher comes to a very surprising conclusion it is a very surprising statement that the preacher gives us in verse 17 he says I perceived that this is also but a striving after wind it's a very interesting and curious conclusion that the preacher comes to and what helps us to see it is this word also this key word also what the preacher does is he connects the conclusion that he comes to in verse 17 with the conclusion that he came to in verse 14 in verse 14 he says when I considered everything done under heaven all the activity that that God has given man to be busy with he says is all vanity and then he says when I went and

I inquired into wisdom I began to study wisdom itself pursue wisdom that's also vanity it's surprising that he would come to that conclusion in both cases he says it's a striving after wind it is pursuing the impossible it's trying to wrap your hand and capture the wind so life under the sun and trying to understand human activity that's vanity a mist a vapor a mere breath striving after wind and so is seeking and pursuing wisdom and trying to understand it now why is that why is this pursuit of wisdom this inquiry of wisdom vain and empty and leads to nowhere well just as he did at the end of his inquiry about things under the sun the preacher answers by a proverb and the proverb is found in verse 18 for in much wisdom is much vexation and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow the preacher's point is that the wiser we are and the more we know the more vexation and the more sorrow we will have and I believe we all know this

I believe we've all lived long enough to know that ignorance is bliss but when we begin to be informed and we begin to know things about this life and we begin to see and experience things it's no longer bliss and it brings a lot of sorrow I remember a number of years ago when I was in Haiti I it dawned on me after being there a couple of days I looked around and nobody was smiling they did not smile and then one morning I noticed that in the midst of all of the adults with very stern faces not smiling there was a group of little boys playing with a soccer ball little little small boys and they were laughing and having a ball playing with that soccer ball they were the only one smiling but I think part of it is that they didn't know what their parents and the adults and all the other people knew to them they were indifferent

[ 43 : 21 ] I spoke with I was talking with William actually and he was telling me about his niece who just passed away and I was asking about the children I said how are the two kids doing and the older one he's saying she's taking it hard she understood she knew he said but the little baby is running around in pampers laughing and people are coming to the house and having a ball he doesn't know what's going on he doesn't know he's lost the mother the preacher says the more wisdom we get the more we know the more we become vexed and the more we become sorrowful the preacher's experience was that as he began to inquire into wisdom and inquire into folly and look at the things that people would do and all the things that are going on in the world as he became so acquainted with them instead of that being a pleasurable journey it was a sad journey it was a heartbreaking journey because we began to see fallenness from a front row seat we began to see brokenness in ways that we never could have imagined and it brings us vexation of spirit and

sorrow of heart wisdom has limitations and philosophy is actually the study of wisdom and it actually means the love of wisdom and one of the ways some people would escape or try to escape the fallenness and the brokenness and the hardness of this life is they try to pursue wisdom loving wisdom loving philosophy they try to elevate and to transcend above it all but just like the preacher in his quest he couldn't he couldn't take it all in because it was stressful because it was sorrowful because it was hard and so wisdom has its limitations and even satisfying us that if we would just pursue wisdom that maybe we could just live above the monotony and the craziness and all the other things of this life but the surprise is that as we do that we become more aware of this life and more acquainted of this life and the brokenness of this life and so that which promised some satisfaction by pursuing it actually turns on us and it doesn't satisfy and it doesn't bring us comfort all it does is it helps us to see more clearly that things are wrong in this world but in verse 1 of chapter 2 as I pointed out earlier the preacher is going to move on he is giving up on wisdom to try to figure it out to try to find satisfaction in this world he is going to pursue pleasure he is going to investigate pleasure and the point is that wisdom did not provide the answers to life under the sun and it didn't satisfy so let me investigate pleasure and that's what we are going to consider next week the Lord willing now in

light of the fact that at this point in the book the preacher has helped us to see that wisdom is not enough for understanding life it's not enough for satisfying those who go after it those who pursue it what are we to make of these seven verses that we've considered this morning how are we to think about and apply these words that were written thousands of years ago to people who live thousands of miles away how are we to think about these words in light of the words of Jesus in Luke 24 to the men to the road on Emmaus when he said that the whole Old Testament is about me and the whole Old Testament obviously would include Ecclesiastes that Jesus would have said to them it's all about me how should we this morning some two thousand years away removed from that event and even more thousands of years removed away from the preacher's writing how are we to consider these verses before us to apply them to our lives but from this passage

I think the first thing we should consider as we contemplate how we should apply these words to our lives is that God the creator of the universe wants all people to see the limits of wisdom and understanding life and brain satisfaction God wants all people to see that the intent is to give us boundaries that we would run into to really point us to the Lord Jesus Christ the one whom the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 24 he says Christ is the wisdom of God God's design in ordaining this unhappy business to men and women in this fallen world is to point them to Christ the one who is pure wisdom the one who is perfect in all of his ways the one in whom nothing is crooked nothing is broken nothing is out of order as we experience the brokenness and the gaps and the things that we could never fully comprehend in this life it's all designed to point us to the one who is the wisdom of God and the preacher in Ecclesiastes points out that God is the one who has ordained that Adam and his disobedient fallen race would have this unhappy business of frustrating toil in this fallen world and grappling with crooked things they can't make straight missing things they can't count he's ordained it but neither the toil of our hands neither the pursuit of wisdom would ever satisfy so that we would be pointed to and we would turn to God and to his wisdom in the person of his son the Lord Jesus Christ the one who is the only source of true and lasting satisfaction in this world and this doesn't mean that when we come to Christ that the toiling ceases and the crooked things are automatically made straight and the gaps are all filled and it doesn't mean that at all no coming to Christ is not a bed of roses coming to

Christ is not a guarantee to a trial free life it also doesn't mean that if we grow in knowledge and in wisdom that we won't experience grief the writer tells us the preacher tells us that as we grow in wisdom as we grow in knowledge it will bring more grief but what it means is that in the midst of all these unhappy realities that stem from the disobedience of Adam we can look to the last Adam to Jesus Christ as our hope beyond it all seeing Jesus the last Adam this unhappy business of our toil under the sun this living life in a fallen world in a broken world will be fully and finally brought to an end it is in the last Adam that that will happen the first

[ 52 : 21 ] Adam brought it about the last Adam will bring it to an end and friends this is not pie in the sky this is not in the sweet by and by this is already begun this began when Jesus came into this world when he walked the face of this earth when he obeyed every single commandment and he sinned in no way and then he went to Calvary's hill and on a cruel Roman cross he took the place of

sinner he substituted himself for sinners who deserve to die and took their sins and took their punishment for those sins so that God could forgive them and reconcile them to himself and give them eternal life that they did not deserve that has already begun the reversing of the disobedience of

Adam the reversing of the curse has already begun in the obedience and in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and those of us who put our trust in Jesus Christ are able to live in this world where the things are still crooked and we can't make them straight where the gas is still there we cannot fill them in but we see them through hope as we look to Jesus Christ and we know that this is not it we know that one day the crookedness will be removed and one day the gaps will be filled in and that is our hope as we live in this world those of us who have put our trust in Jesus Christ here's how the apostle Paul explains it in Romans 8 18 through 25 he says why consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us for the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God for the creation was subjected to futility not willingly but because of him who subjected it in hope meaning God

God did that that's what the preacher said that the creation itself will be set free from the bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God for we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now and not only the creation but we ourselves we have the first fruits of the spirit we who have the first fruit of the spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons the redemption of our bodies listen for in this we are in this hope we are saved now hope that is seen is not hope for who hopes for what he sees but if we hope for what we do not see we wait for it in patience that is what those who have trusted in Christ are to do they are to wait in patience for God to complete and finish what he began in Jesus Christ when he came on this earth Isaac Watts penned it correctly when he wrote the Christmas hymn joy to the world he wrote no more let sin and sorrows grow nor thorns infest the ground he came to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found when Jesus returns the words of the preacher will no longer be true that what is crooked cannot be made straight that what is lacking cannot be counted when Jesus returns the words of the preacher that with much wisdom there is much vexation and he who increases knowledge will increase sorrow because scripture tells us that Jesus God himself will wipe away the tears from our eyes in the new heavens that is our ultimate hope but that hope only belongs to those who have trusted in Christ if you're here this morning and you have not yet trusted in

Christ hear the words of the preacher the words of the preacher are these it's all vanity whatever you pursue in this life and it doesn't mean that we give up on this life it doesn't mean that we don't engage this life it doesn't mean that we don't get an education and get a job and have families and do all the other kinds of things we do them but we don't see them as the end all and be all we recognize that they're passing things they're not eternal things and sadly so many are living for what the preacher says is striving after wind when the purpose of striving after wind is to point us to the Lord Jesus the only one who can give us rest in our souls let's pray together