

# Risk, Consequence, Fear and the Future

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 04 September 2016

Preacher: Kajle Radbourne

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Hey, good morning. Sometimes people say good morning back to you when you say that, but that's okay. You're welcome to do whatever you want. As Dave said, my name is Kyle.

It's my privilege to join you guys from Vancouver this morning. Had a beautiful drive up on the Sea to Skies. I'm sure you guys are familiar with that particular drive.

I'm jumping into a series that you guys have been going through in the book of Ecclesiastes. And if you're just visiting, if you're just maybe getting back from holidays, you've been out of the town for a little while and you haven't been here for much of the series, Ecclesiastes is one of those buckle your seatbelts up type of book.

And that's one of the things that I love about the Bible. I mean, it looks like a book and we call it a book, but in truth it isn't really a book. It's a compendium. It's a collection of writings.

And each has a different human author, writing with a different style, a different personality, oftentimes in a different genre, writing at a different time to a different people and to a different type of audience.

[ 1 : 1 1 ] But each of these writers is empowered by the Holy Spirit. And as we looked at earlier, they're telling one story. So here in Ecclesiastes, the writer we've called the preacher takes a different look at things.

And he's telling this story of God's action in the world in a different way than most other books do. So he's very philosophical.

He speaks with a lot of sayings and proverbs that sometimes at first can be really difficult to understand. And he's putting forth wisdom by critiquing other worldviews, what other people say.

Are you familiar with this concept of a worldview? A few of you are. Basically, a worldview is something that everybody has. Some of us are much more aware of our worldview.

We've thought about it. We've studied it. We've carefully considered it. Others of us just kind of back up into a worldview and we just have it. And we're not even necessarily even aware of it. But everybody has a worldview.

[ 2 : 1 3 ] It's, I guess, aptly named because it's the way that we view the world. It's kind of like our glasses. Everybody has to look through it and see it. So a worldview is important because it affects everything that we see.

And the way that we see something affects how we behave. It affects our actions. And so there's a whole different set of tests where people can ask a few simple questions and determine your worldview in a specific area and category.

And then they can predict with amazing accuracy how you will behave in a whole bunch of different situations based on that worldview. So worldviews are very important as they shape who we are.

They shape how we act. And throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, the preacher is interacting with different worldviews. And he's exploring and critiquing them. And sometimes to do that, he gives them a problem to wrestle with.

And he shows how those worldviews are deficient. So this morning, we're going to be in Ecclesiastes chapter 11. I'll encourage you to turn there if you have your Bibles with you.

[ 3 : 19 ] If you are using the Bible that's at the back, Ecclesiastes chapter 11 is on page 559. So we're going to read Ecclesiastes 11 verses 1 through 6.

So if you've found that, I'll read it in a minute. I'll just give you a few seconds to either turn on your devices or open your Bibles to Ecclesiastes chapter 11 verses 1 to 6.

Now this is a passage that falls kind of in the middle of a larger passage that's dealing with the theme of human ignorance. So let's get started. Ecclesiastes chapter 11 verse 1.

Cast your bread upon the waters for you will find it after many days. Give a portion to seven or even to eight. For you know not what disaster may happen on earth.

If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth. And if a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls there, it will lie. He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap.

[ 4 : 20 ] As you do not know the way of the Spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman who is with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.

In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand. For you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.

A bit of a confusing passage. We really see this, the way that the preacher speaks in these metaphors and in these symbols. And like I said, one of the main themes of this passage, actually all the way back into chapter 9, is the ignorance of humanity, how we don't know everything.

There are simply things that we do not know as finite beings, things that we simply can't know. So here in this passage, the preacher is building a worldview by asking the question, what do we do in the face of human ignorance?

What do we do in the face of not knowing everything about the world? And he touches on three different answers to the question. Three different approaches, three different worldviews.

[ 5 : 28 ] The first worldview is to push against human ignorance, to just figure it out. To either deny that we don't know things, or to say we might not know things now, but we will.

And when we do, we'll be able to control it. We'll be able to understand it. This has sometimes been called the scientific worldview, because it advocates that we can continue to learn and push past human ignorance.

I don't think it's really an apt name for this worldview, because science is simply the study of things. It's simply going and searching to learn more.

But this worldview says something different, something that almost puts a religious spin on it, because it says that we can know everything. And when we know everything, we'll be able to control it. Once we understand the fundamental principles of the universe, we'll be able to control it.

It's this idea that knowledge equals power, and that enough knowledge will make us gods, essentially. That we'll be able to understand how everything works, and we'll control it.

[ 6 : 29 ] So a better term for this is maybe the life control illusion. The idea that we can control our lives if we simply get enough knowledge. It's this kind of thinking that leads to that smartest man-in-the-room ideology that you hear about sometimes.

The type of thinking that financial analysts on Wall Street had just before the subprime mortgage crisis. Thinking that they could understand all of the market fluctuations, and they'd be able to protect themselves from a sudden collapse in the market.

But suddenly things changed, their models didn't work, and they simply didn't know what was going to happen. And many of them and their clients were out thousands and millions and trillions of dollars.

It's also the same thing that in 2001 caught the Enron executives. You remember all the way back to the Enron scandal? That was even the name of the documentary, The Smartest Men in the Room. And they thought they were so much smarter than everybody else that they could control them, and they would never, ever get caught for what they did.

But that wasn't true. They did get caught. They weren't as smart as they thought that they were. And this idea, as the preacher said elsewhere, nothing new, there's nothing new under the sun. This idea was a reality, was an idea way back when the preacher wrote as well.

[ 7 : 48 ] And he pushes against this ideology of the life control illusion, the idea that we can know everything and therefore control our situation in three ways. And the first thing he pushes back is he doubles down on the idea that we can't know everything, that human ignorance is a reality.

Okay, if you look back at verse 5, I hope you keep your Bibles open. We're going to be constantly referring back to it. And verse 5 says this, Now because of its poetic style and some quirks in the Hebrew language, this is a really difficult verse to translate.

I'm reading from the ESV. I don't know if that's the one that you have in front of you. If you have a different version, this passage might actually read quite a bit differently, especially the beginning of it.

But regardless of how they translate the beginning of the verse, the point and the second half of the verse is really clear. The idea that there are simply things that we cannot know.

And I think the ESV has the first part of the verse right. And what the preacher is saying here is there is this mystery of human consciousness. consciousness that somehow we know that we as humans have something that animals don't have.

[ 9 : 04 ] It's not just genetic information. It's not just DNA. It's not just biological. But we have something that animals don't have. And we call it a spirit that leads us to have human consciousness, gives us the ability to tell stories, gives us the ability to have empathy, things that we don't see in animals.

But the mystery is what is that? How do you define it? And how does every baby that comes out of the womb seem to have it? When does it happen? How does it happen? This mystery of human consciousness.

And we just have no way of knowing. This book was written, what, about 3,000 years ago? It was a mystery then. And it's just as much of a mystery to us now. How do we as humans become human?

How do we get this spirit? And how do the babies in the womb suddenly have this human spirit, this ability that no animal has?

So the preacher takes this as evidence that there are simply things that we don't know. Now, I'm not anti-science. I don't think that the Bible is anti-science.

[ 10 : 09 ] In fact, sociologists look back in history, and they see that at the rise of the scientific revolution in Europe, that evangelical Christians were actually overrepresented in these scientific communities like the Royal Society in England.

And there's this idea that it was actually a Christian worldview about an intelligent creator in a knowable world that led to the scientific revolution. So I'm not anti-science.

But there is a limit to what science can tell us. It's a limit to where science can take us. God has woven more mystery into the universe than we can possibly ever unravel.

So the preacher gave us one idea, one example of that, the reality of human consciousness. I have another one. And maybe it doesn't resonate with you, but I'm a bit of a physics geek. Anybody like physics?

Two people. Awesome. Good. If you don't, shut down. Take me about five minutes to get through this, and then I'll welcome you back. So there's this atomic theory.

[ 11 : 10 ]    Actually, a couple hundred years after the book of Ecclesiastes was written, there was a Greek philosopher by the name of Democritus, and he philosophized. I'm not an English guy, a physics guy, so I don't know what the word is there.

And he said, I think that the world is made up of tiny particles that can't be broken down anymore, and he called them atomos. And it turns out he was right, probably in a very different way than he thought about them.

But it turns out that the world is made up of tiny particles as a fundamental formation of everything that we see. So fast forward to the year 1808, and a man named John Dalton created the first atomic theory.

Maybe when you were in grade 9 science, you learned about the billiard ball model. And so he had this idea that atoms were indivisible molecules, and when you put them together with other molecules, they would form different components.

And he was right in one sense, but it turns out it was a lot more complicated than that. It wasn't a solid billiard ball type thing, but a little while later we discovered that there's negative charged particles in that.

[ 12 : 14 ]    And so we had the raisin bun model. I love how they named these things. It made it so much more interesting in grade 9 science. But the idea was that maybe there's just these positive charged material, and little electrons, negatively charged particles, scattered out throughout that.

And that was partly correct, but it turns out it's a lot more complicated than that. And there's actually a nucleus, and in the nucleus there's positive charged protons, and neutral charged neutrons, and then floating around everywhere else is electrons.

And the more and more we discovered, the more and more we realized that we didn't know. In fact, that we couldn't know. So we have no way, it's actually a physical impossibility to know the motion of an electron and its location at the same time.

You can know one, but not the other. You can know where it's going or where it is, but never both. That's the Heisenberg uncertainty principle.

Thank you. Sometimes when you stand up in public and the lights are on and everyone's looking at you, you're like, ah, there's words, but I don't remember what they are. So later we discovered that protons and neutrons, they're actually divisible too.

[ 13 : 21 ]    They're made up of quarks. Has anyone ever heard of quarks before? More of you. Some of you guys are physics nuts, and you don't know it because you know what a quark is. And there's this idea that we could understand the motion of quarks, we'd be able to understand it, and if we could, then at a subatomic level, we would be able to understand the universe and in some way control it.

But it turns out that quarks actually float and jump around on this field called the gluon field. You see the empty space in molecules that we thought that were there?

It's not empty space. It's filled with this field, this gluon field that we can't understand at all, and we can't understand the motion of quarks unless we can understand the gluon field, and we just can't understand it because it seems so random.

Here's my point. I promise you, usually when I talk, there's a point. Is that even if we think we can dig deeper and deeper and deeper into something, we can get more and more knowledge.

There's always more to discover. And it's a reality of life that the more you understand about a subject, the more you realize there's so much more to understand, that you don't get it.

[ 14 : 26 ] And there's just this fundamental reality of human ignorance. The more we study, the more we realize that we don't understand it. And you could look at any field and you would find the same thing.

But the preacher throws another wrench into this life control illusion. It's the fact that the march of time is an inevitability.

So he doubles down on this unknowability of life, but then also he says that it's inevitable. So look at verse 3. What's he saying here?

The preacher is saying that rain will happen. It will rain. The clouds will be full of rain and it will eventually fall down. We can predict it, but we can't force it.

It's something that is just going to happen. So at the beginning of the growing season, Squamish isn't a great area for farming. So I don't know if a lot of farmers here, but maybe you're from Saskatchewan or Alberta or places where people farm.

[ 15 : 38 ] And at the beginning of the growing season, you know you're going to get rain. You just don't know exactly where or when. But it's going to happen. There's a certain inevitability for it. And we know, especially here, that the wind will rise and trees will blow down.

We know that they will fall, but we don't know which trees and we don't know which direction that they'll fall. But we do know that they will fall. It's going to happen, but we can't control it. We can't predict specifically what will happen, but we know that things will happen.

Trees will fall over. Disasters will strike. We know this. We know that there'll be earthquakes. We know that there'll be storms. But at best, we can make early warning detection systems.

We can give ourselves a little warning, but we can't predict it ahead of the event. They're all coming. We just don't know when and where. They're inevitable. And the third critique of this worldview is very similar.

These events are inevitable, but they're also permanent. So again, the bottom half of verse 3. If a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie.

[ 16 : 42 ] We see trees fall down. We don't really see them pop back up. Where a tree falls, it lies. It stays there. These inevitable events are also permanent.

So we can't predict when a disaster will strike, and we can't reverse it when it comes. We can't take the rain and push it back into the clouds. We can't force the tree to stand up and to grow again. Where the tree falls, there it will lie.

John Ray expands on this verse in a poem that kind of drives home the point. He says, The preacher is pointing us back to this idea of the permanence of what happens, the natural consequence.

Life cannot be raised up again. What happens cannot be undone. Life's not like a video game. In a video game, when you go into a place where you might die, a battle scene or whatever, you save it before.

And then if you make the wrong decision, if things go poorly, it's just, oh, I'll just load up the saved game. I've lost, what, 10 minutes. But that doesn't happen in real life. Okay? So the preacher is basically saying YOLO.

[ 17 : 59 ] Any Drake fans, anybody on Twitter know? YOLO means you only live once. And somehow people keep saying it before they do crazy stuff like jump out of airplanes. Like, you only live once. Therefore, don't jump out of an airplane.

But apparently the logic is you only live once, therefore do. But anyway, the preacher is kind of taking a different tact on YOLO. And he's saying this principle of the permanence of you only live once, it should be applied not as a reason to do stupid things or to take unwise risks, but as a confession that we only get one shot at this.

And if your worldview states that everything is up to you, that every choice you make will change your future, and you only get one shot at it, that really ramps up the pressure, doesn't it?

I only have one chance to make this right, and if I mess up now, I will be messed up forever. That's a lot of pressure for us to take. So in my city, I don't know if it's the same here, but there are teenagers who are in grade nine, and they have an idea of what university they want to go to, and they feel like their life hangs in the balance every single exam that they take.

And there are teens and preteens who have to go through counseling because of burnout, because of the academic stress that's on them, because they see that they only live once, and they know where they want to go, and they know in order to go there, they need to meet this standard in whatever exam it is that they're doing.

[ 19 : 36 ] So the preacher is roundly critiquing this worldview of control, this worldview that we can control our whole lives by ourselves. He affirms that we cannot control, that we can't control it, we can't understand it, and he argues that there's an inevitability to life.

We will be dealt what we are dealt. And then there's a permanence, a consequence to what happens, that things are irreversible. Now I want you to follow the logic. If we have this life control illusion that everything is up to us, and if we actually grapple with the reality of human ignorance that we can't figure things out by ourselves, and if we grapple with the inevitability of life, and with the permanence and the consequences of what happens, it's going to destroy our ability to do anything.

And that's exactly where the preacher starts to go now. The second worldview that the preacher kind of attacks is really just a mirror of the first. You see, the flip side of the life control illusion that you can learn enough to control the future is that you can see what is going to go wrong, but you can't change it.

You're powerless to stop it. And that's a harsh reality that inevitably leads us to an action. So that's what the preacher is pointing to in verse 4.

He says, Do you get the picture here? The preacher is kind of giving us a picture of a farmer, and he's trying to figure out when is the perfect time for me to plant so that my crops grow the best that they can.

[ 21 : 18 ] And he's watching the clouds, and he's watching the wind, but it never seems like the perfect time. There always seems to be trouble on the horizon. So he never wants to go out and actually plant because he might miss the perfect time.

And it doesn't seem like it's right now. He never goes out to sow his seed. He's paralyzed by this fear that he'll go out and sow, and then disaster will come, and it'll take it all away from him.

And I get it. I mean, this makes sense to me. If your whole life depends on you and the actions that you take and what you do, if you need to figure it out, all out, or else you mess everything up, then that's a lot of pressure.

That makes it really hard to get out of the bed in the morning. Have you ever seen a movie or read a book that talks about time travel? Anybody? Two people.

A few more. So when someone goes back in time, what's the warning that they always get first? Don't mess things up. Exactly. And we talk about the butterfly effect. So if you step on a butterfly, that might cause a chain reaction of events, and suddenly you never existed in the first place.

[ 22 : 24 ] And you go back, and you just fade out of existence. I don't know exactly what happens, because newflash time travel isn't actually real. But anyway, if it was, I don't think that I could handle going back in time, because I couldn't handle the idea that any small little mistake that I made would totally change my future.

But then if I believe this life control illusion that I can control my future, it's the exact same problem. Because any mistake that I make now changes what my future is supposed to be.

If my future is entirely up to me, and I make a mistake today, that means that I will never hit that future that I am supposed to have. It's a ton of pressure for us to have on ourselves.

Okay? So this is what the preacher is pointing out here. He's saying that this worldview, this idea, will eventually lead you to not do anything. It's too much pressure on you, and it'll lead you to just cower in fear.

So what's the answer? How do we face life in the face, in the reality of human ignorance? Well, the preacher addresses this at the beginning of our passage, in verses 1 and 2, and then at the end.

[ 23 : 35 ] So let's look at verses 1 and 2. Cast your bread upon the waters, for you'll find it after many days. Give a portion to seven or even to eight, for you know not what disasters may happen on earth.

Now scholars kind of debate what exactly this first, or both of these really, are talking about. There's two main ideas. Either the preacher is talking about trade, or he's talking about philanthropy, giving to others.

So cast your bread on the waters. It could mean send your ships out, send your ships full of grain out, and send them out to trade. Or it could mean give to others, give bread to others.

And in either case, if you're sending out your ships, then eventually the monies of your trade will come back to you, and you'll receive more by sending them out than you would have by hoarding it. Or if you're giving generously to others, then you will eventually, the world will benefit from that.

But it doesn't really matter which one he's talking about. I think that he's purposely vague and is kind of talking about both of them. But the same principle applies. You have to give up control. You have to give up control.

[ 24 : 43 ] Because when you're sending your goods out onto the ocean, you're sending them to the unknown. You're sending them that, sure, they could reach the port and you could make a ton of money from what you sent out.

Or a storm could rise and sink your ships. You could give to somebody, but you don't know if they're going to use that for good. You don't know if you're ever going to benefit that, if your society's ever going to benefit from helping that person out.

You're taking a risk. And that's the preacher's point. Give a portion to seven or even to eight, for you know not what disaster may happen on earth. Again, he might be talking about give generously to many different people.

Or he might just be talking about if you're sending your goods out on a ship, spread it out between other ones. So if one ship sinks, then at least you have other ones. Sort of diversify your portfolio or don't put all your eggs in the same basket type of idea.

Same principle applies here that you, regardless of which one or if he's talking about both of those, is he's saying you still need to risk. So he's encouraging us to risk.

[ 25 : 47 ] The worldview being communicated is the same. We don't know what the future is, but that it's okay to risk. So whether casting bread is shipping goods or giving to others, we have no way of knowing if that investment is going to pay off or if we'll end up losing it.

And the preacher is urging us in both of these parables to give up control. This brings to mind to me Jesus' parable of the talents.

Are you familiar with that parable that Jesus gives? If you're not, Jesus tells a story of a master, and the master represents God in this case. And he is about to go on a long journey.

And before he does, he gathers three of his servants and he gives them talents, which is money. It doesn't mean like just things that they can do, but actual weight of money. And to one he gives five talents.

To one he gives two talents. And to one he gives one talent. And then the master goes away. And while he's away, the man who was given the five talents, he takes it and he risks it and he invests it. And he ends up making five more talents.

[ 26 : 46 ] And so he has ten. And when the master returns, he says, well done, good and faithful servant. And the servant who had two talents, he did the same thing. He didn't wager them.

That sounds like he bet. He risked them and he invested. And he also was able to double his talents. So he had four. And when the master returned, he said, well done, good and faithful servant.

But the servant who had one talent, he was afraid of losing it. He was even afraid of lending it out for interest. And so he wrapped it up and he probably dug a hole somewhere and drew a map and he hid it.

And when the master came back, he said, here master, I have it. I kept it safe for you. And the master replies, you wicked and slothful servant.

And he sends him out into the outer darkness. Wicked and slothful. That's a little bit of overkill, isn't it? Like, why not? You didn't do what I asked, man. But wicked and slothful, it seems like a bit of overkill.

[ 27 : 46 ] And I think what Jesus is driving at here is this control mindset in our hearts that is demonstrated by this hoarding, by not being willing to risk what God has given us.

So in the parable and in our lives, that control mindset is driven by a deep distrust of God's sovereignty that is manifested by an acute fear of risk.

I'll say that again. And so in the parable and in our lives, that action is often driven by a deep distrust of God's sovereignty that's manifested by an acute fear of risk.

So with the two proverbs in verses one and two, the preacher is telling us to give up control. To give up control. And then he circles back to this idea in verse six. Verse six says, In the morning sow your seed and at evening withhold not your hand for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.

So what's he saying here? He's clearly contrasting that man in verse four who wouldn't go out and sow. Didn't know if he should go in the morning or the evening. And the preacher's saying go both times. Go sow in the morning.

[ 28 : 59 ] Go sow in the evening. Even if you're not certain it's the best time, still go out and work in the field. He's saying if you don't know if it will be better to sow your seed in the morning or in the evening, do both.

In other words, work hard. He's exhorting his readers not to give in either to the fear of failure or to the false promise of God-like success from being able to figure everything out.

Rather, when faced with the reality of the limits of human wisdom, the preacher is urging us to work hard and to give up control. But how can we do that?

If we buy into the life control illusion, the idea that we can control our lives with knowledge, then giving up control and working hard are nearly impossible to do.

What power can we draw from in order to enable us to work hard and to give up control? Well, the preacher doesn't exactly tell us. That's kind of a theme in Ecclesiastes until near the end.

[ 29 : 57 ] But he does give us clues. He gives us clues both here in this passage and then at the end of the book. So the first clue is that history has an end point.

So remember the parable of the talents that Jesus told? The motivating factor for the servants was that the master was going to return. And this is a theme that the preacher alludes to as well in the very last line of his sermon.

If you look at chapter 12, I'll put it on the screen too, but chapter 12, the next chapter, verse 14, the preacher says, for God will bring every good deed, sorry, every deed into judgment with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

So he's saying at the end of history that history is moving towards this judgment of God. Now, why does it matter if history has an end point? Why does it matter if the master will return?

Simply this, if there's no meaning in our future and if there's no meaning in our past, then there can't be meaning in our present. If this means nothing and this means nothing, then the middle has to mean nothing if we have any intellectual honesty at all.

[ 31 : 04 ] We can't come from nothing and go to nothing and yet be something in between. So we can't work hard and take risk and create meaning if there isn't any meaning to be created there.

So there's a young adult novelist named John Green and he wrote a book called The Fault in Our Stars that tells the love story of two teenagers who are both diagnosed with terminal cancer.

Maybe you've seen the movie. It was on Netflix for a little bit. And there's one scene where they're struggling over the meaning of life in a cancer support group and one of them says this, there will come a time when all of us are dead, all of us.

There will come a time when there are no human beings remaining to remember that anyone ever existed or that our species ever did anything. There'll be no one left to remember Aristotle or Cleopatra, let alone you.

Everything that we did and built and wrote and thought and discovered will be forgotten. And all of this will have been for naught. Maybe that time is coming soon and maybe it's millions of years away.

[ 32 : 06 ] But even if we survive the collapse of our son, we will not survive forever. There was a time before organisms experience consciousness and there will be a time after. And if the inevitability of human oblivion worries you, I encourage you to ignore it.

That's what everyone else does. What they're saying is you might be a great humanitarian, you might be a genocidal maniac, you might be the world's fastest person or you might run like an elephant smells, which is poorly.

But in the end, nothing you do will make a lasting difference. And nobody will even be around to remember you. Which means that unless there's a God and there's an eternity, nothing you do will have any lasting meaning at all.

There are really only two options for us to deal with this. Either we ignore the complete meaninglessness of life or we recognize the emptiness of life and we can't get out of the bed in the morning.

So if this is our worldview, that we were from nothing and we're heading to nothing, there's only those two options. We ignore it or we're so pushed down by the weight of it that we can't get out of the bed in the morning.

[ 33 : 21 ] But the preacher is pointing us that there is a direction we're going. History has an end point. Not only does it have an end point, but it also has a director. Again, this reemphasizes this idea of purpose.

History isn't only marching towards this place, but it's being guided there. It's being guided forward by a director. And we see this more clearly in verse 5.

Right after the preacher talks about there's so much stuff that we don't know about, he says, So you do not know the work of God who makes everything.

So he's saying God is involved in our lives and he makes everything. Not even that he just made it to begin with, but he continues to be involved and he makes everything. And he makes it even more clear, the preacher does, at the end of the book, in the very last verse, sorry, second last verse, chapter 12, verse 13.

The end of the matter, all that has been heard, fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. The preacher is saying, we don't know what is going on here.

[ 34 : 26 ] Humans, we can't understand, but he does. God does. He knows. He designed us. He designed this that we're in and he designed us for this.

So the best thing is, if you want meaning, is to go to him. The best thing is, if you want purpose, is to go to him. And paradoxically, the best thing is, if you want control, to give up your control and to go to him because he's the only one who knows what's going on and he's shaping the world for himself.

Now it's all well and good to have a director, but it's still only freeing if we know that we can trust him. So how can we give up control and work hard, even if history has a director, if we can't trust him, if we can't trust God?

Well, the preacher knew he could trust God, but we know even more than he did. We know things about God that the preacher didn't know. And the ultimate reason that we know that we can trust God is because we can look at the life of Jesus.

Here's a man, the eternal king, the one who the whole world was about. In the book of John, they call him the word. And in Greek philosophy, that word, the logos, is the organizing principle of life.

[ 35 : 34 ] Not only the knowledge, but everything that the world was about is about Jesus. He was the word, the knowledge, the wisdom. He was in absolute control, but he willingly gave up all control.

He willingly became like a sheep led to slaughter. When they arrested him, he did nothing. At his trial, he said nothing. On the cross, they taunted him and they said, take control of your life and save yourself.

And he did nothing. Why? Because he couldn't do anything? No. Because he was in our place and he was dying for our sins. That he willingly gave up control in order to show us that he was still in control and that he loved us and cared for us.

Here's the gospel. The gospel is that Jesus Christ came and lost control of his life so that you could know that everything is under control. He pushed ahead so that you could follow.

Let me quote Tim Keller here. You are never going to be able to take your mitts off your life and admit you don't have control until you see him losing all control to save you. Why did the eternal become mortal like a puff of air that could be snuffed out?

[ 36 : 45 ] The eternal became mortal so that we mortals could become eternal. So that we could know sorry, so we could last. Sin was eating out our insides like fire but Jesus put the fire out.

So don't we want to be able to face the inevitability of life? Don't we want to be able to face the reality that we don't know everything? That we can't control everything? The reality of human ignorance.

The only way we can do that is by looking to the cross of Christ. To boast in nothing but the love of Christ. And then we'll be able to face anything. Then we'll be able to handle suffering.

Then we'll be able to know that we don't have to be in control. Because you know that you're not in control but he is in control. He lost all control for me.

You'll take your money and you'll spend it on other people. You'll take your time and you'll spend it on other people. Don't we want to be people like that? Don't we want to be people who don't look at life as something to control but willingly give up our control and work hard.

[ 37 : 48 ] The kind of people that we want to have in our communities, in our schools, in our neighborhoods. The kind of people who look to Jesus to see what he has done for us. Let's pray.