

Examination, Exhaustion, Striving After Wind

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- [0 : 0 0] One of the classes I took in university was a class on ancient Greek philosophers, and that was a pretty interesting one.
- And don't come up to me asking me afterwards all sorts of questions about Parmenides and stuff, because I can't remember half or even three quarters of what I learned there. But one guy I do remember was a guy named Heraclitus of Ephesus, and he was my favorite, even though we've got only little fragments of him, because he just had all these really colorful things to say, many of them colorful insults that he directed at his contemporaries.
- And so whenever you're reading this 2,500-year-old guy slinging insults at his contemporaries, it leaves a lasting impression on you. And one of his proverbial statements was this statement, those who seek gold dig up much earth but find little.
- Those who seek gold dig up much earth but find little. And then another fragment of a saying from Heraclitus explains what he meant by that. Much learning does not teach insight. Much learning does not teach insight.
- Just because you've acquired and accumulated a large amount of knowledge doesn't mean you understand. What Heraclitus is saying is that it's impossible to do that, to spend your life accumulating enormous amounts of knowledge.
- [1 : 2 4] It's possible to obsess yourself over finding a meaning, a purpose, a structure to life and to the universe. It is possible to run yourself ragged, trying to figure out how you can find lasting gain in a world, in a world in which your death undoes everything that you ever accomplished.
- That you might still come away from it all with nothing of value other than a perpetual splitting headache from it all. To put it in the words of a wise man we've come to know, in Ecclesiastes chapter 1 we've read, for in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.
- These are words from the book of Ecclesiastes, and that's a book that has stuck out like a sore thumb out of the other 65 books of the Bible.
- Because most of the words of the book of Ecclesiastes, they come from a man who identifies himself as the preacher or the teacher, depending on which English translation that you're reading from.
- And this preacher begins the book of Ecclesiastes with this question. What does man gain by the toil at which he toils under the sun? What does man gain?
- [2 : 4 2] In other words, is there any lasting gain, anything that we can hang on to that makes all of our efforts, that makes all of our frustration, that makes all of our suffering in this life worthwhile? Is there anything that we can call the good life?
- Anything that will never let us down, that can never be taken away from us? And the preacher summarizes the results of his search for last to gain. He summarizes the results of his search for the good life with these words.
- Vanity of vanities, says the preacher. Vanity of vanities. All is vanity. And that word vanity appears over and over and over throughout the book of Ecclesiastes.

The funny thing is it's notoriously difficult to translate. Maybe your English translation uses the word futile. Maybe it uses the word meaningless. The word literally means a vapor.

All human activity, every attempt at lasting gain, every effort to find the good life, is a vapor. It's a mist.

[3 : 50] It seems to be substantial. The things that we are holding on to and clinging on to and craving after and trying to get for ourselves, they seem to be substantial.

They seem to be solid. They seem to be permanent. But in a few minutes' time, it evaporates away. And a vapor, not only is something insubstantial and fleeting, it's something that obscures the landscape around you.

We've all driven through a fog before where you can't see the road in front of you. You can't see all of the natural beauty around you, the mountains around you.

A vapor obscures it all until the wind comes and clears it away. And so it is with all of our busyness, with all of our activity, with all of our efforts to grasp the world around us. In chapter one, the preacher writes, I have seen everything that is done under the sun.

And behold, all is vanity. All is a vapor. And striving after wind. Everything done in this world, everything that is done on a level that human beings can see, can feel, can experience, can measure, all of that is vanity.

[5 : 00] It is all a vapor. It is all striving after wind. It is all chasing something that you can't hold onto. And that slips through your fingers as you try to grasp it.

Those who seek gold dig up much earth, but find little. Now over the summer, we've listened as the preacher has deconstructed what we might call the counterfeit good life.

A counterfeit. And this counterfeit takes many forms. We often seek the good life, as offered by human effort and insight, as offered by independence and achievement, as offered by empty religious rituals and words, as offered by acquiring and consuming wealth, as offered by indulging in pleasure and scandal, as offered by extravagant piety and mastery of life, as offered by political scheming and seizing justice, as offered by constructing a certain and guaranteed future, exercising wisdom and caution, postponing our opportunities for joy.

Just all of these things that we've run into and more besides, the preacher has piece by piece dismantled the false hopes, the misleading dreams of human civilization in general.

And in particular, of our own town, the town of Squamish. We've seen how all the things that people are running after, frantically pursuing here, just evaporate away and leave you with nothing in the end.

[6 : 32] And the purpose of the book of Ecclesiastes is to deconstruct. This book is a deconstructor. It is here as a wrecking ball to tear down the counterfeit promises made to us by teachers and advertisers and friends and neighbors.

And it does that quite successfully. But the book of Ecclesiastes isn't all negative because you and I, we've seen glimmers of light here in this book.

We've seen rays of light breaking through that vapor that surrounds us. And today we're going to see how this vapor is cleared away from our lives. Ecclesiastes is going to point us in a direction that leads us to the good life.

It's going to show us where we can go to find the good life that we all long for. So what we're going to do is we're going to read what we might call a postscript to the book.

Last week we saw in Ecclesiastes chapter 12 verse 8 that the final words of this preacher were the same as his first. In Ecclesiastes chapter 12 verse 8 the preacher wrote vanity of vanities says the preacher all is vanity.

[7 : 44] He ends the book the same way he began. And now we turn to an individual who in all the way back in chapter 1 verse 1 introduced the words of the preacher and now he's going to end them with a postscript.

And we learn that this man is passing on these words of the preacher and he's passing them on to his own son. And you're going to find out what this father is saying about the preacher's words beginning in Ecclesiastes chapter 12 verse 9.

Now if you're using one of the blue Bibles that our ushers handed to you that's on page 559 Ecclesiastes chapter 12 and I'll read verses 9 through 14. Besides being wise the preacher also taught the people knowledge weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care.

The preacher sought to find words of delight and uprightly he wrote words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings.

They are given by one shepherd. My son beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

[8 : 59] The end of the matter all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man for God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing whether good or evil.

This is the word of the Lord. Now this father begins his postscript in verse 9 not by rejecting the words of the preacher or correcting them but by affirming them.

Right? A number of Christians and this includes some commentators a number of them have read the words of the preacher in Ecclesiastes and they're deeply troubled by them because it seems so dark because it seems so different from the rest of the words of scripture because it seems to on the surface seems to contradict some things about our faith about our belief.

They're troubling words and they're troubling because they voice the doubts and the fears and the concerns that we have in our own hearts. They're honest and they're authentic and because they reject our simplistic answers about the world.

Some of them are words of darkness and despair. Some scholars even argue that this postscript is just an attempt to dress up the words of the preacher and he's just saying look this preacher guy here's an object lesson look what happens when you abandon your study of the Bible you become a worldly person and then everything is terrible.

[10 : 25] Right? You're just going to end up depressed and miserable. But this father he doesn't respond that way instead he has words only of praise. He has positive words of praise for the preacher.

First of all you see in verse 9 he praises the preacher for the effort of gathering wisdom. So he praises him for the effort of gathering wisdom. He calls him wise.

And he's not only wise but he makes his wisdom accessible to all the people by teaching it to them. Besides being wise the preacher also taught the people knowledge.

Now I've been around a few professors a few scholars a few researchers and if you can find someone who understands who is wise who is extremely knowledgeable and is also at the same time able to explain what he knows or what she knows to your everyday person to what my high school English teacher would call Joe Bag of Donuts.

If you can explain quantum physics to Joe Bag of Donuts you're a very very very wise person. I remember my seminary days trying to wrap my head around all sorts of technical phrases like the noetic effects of sin words like transubstantiation infalapsarianism right?

[11 : 48] Now there's a reason these terms exist they're technical terms they just basically serve as shorthand so you don't have to explain what you mean in like paragraph length every single time you bring up a concept so you need things like that but sometimes jargon like that locks people out of the conversation it locks people out who don't know all of the in words who don't know all of the lingo for those of you who became believers maybe as an adult and you walked into a church and you started hearing Christians throwing around words and phrases like justification and grace and things like that and you're like what are they talking about?

you know how that feels to be on the outside to not really understand what's going on it's difficult to explain complex things in a simple way if you want to experience that for yourselves try sitting down with one of our six year old children that's here in our church and try to explain to them how your car engine works in a way that a six year old can understand do you know how a car engine works?

can you explain in the way that an adult can understand? that's hard enough the preacher is determined that he is going to write his words in a way that isn't just for these top level scholars that isn't just for the elite for the academics he's going to write his words in a way that you and I can understand he's weighed he's studied he's arranged he's arranged his writings with great care the father tells his son in verse 10 the preacher sought to find words of delight and uprightly he wrote words of truth what he's saying is that the preacher is writing once again in a manner that's completely opposite of the typical academic if you've ever read any sort of research or academic paper you know it's just like a massive snooze fest I mean I upgraded my phone's operating system this week and it's like you know it comes up with that screen read the terms and conditions right and you need like a lawyer to help you navigate through this thing we all just hit you know the small lie that everybody tells

I have read the terms and conditions you know in just advance when you haven't read it all because it's so hard to understand Ecclesiastes isn't like that it isn't this treatise that's filled with jargon that's dull and that's irrelevant his words are not only accessible but they're beautiful and they're true they're words that are well crafted and they're true they're true for everyone they're not just these personal truths that people in our culture like to write articles about things that are you know maybe true for me true in my own experience maybe not true for you which means that they could very well be completely useless the preacher is writing things that are accessible and beautiful and he's writing about things that are true and that are experienced by all human beings and I've noticed this over the last few months I've had a number of different opportunities to talk about the book of Ecclesiastes with people who never do read the

Bible who never spend time reading the Bible who have very little knowledge of the Christian faith I haven't even once had somebody shake their head and disagree with me when I present to them what the preacher is saying every single time their eyes light up because what the preacher does is he puts into words their doubts their fears their questions that they didn't know how to express the preacher puts them into words that are accessible and beautiful and true so I think Ecclesiastes is a terrific way to train us and how we can speak to people who don't know Jesus Christ who don't know the gospel who don't know God's words if you want to have a meaningful and satisfying conversation about who we are about the world we live in about the God who made it Ecclesiastes shows you how to do it and so this father praises the preacher in verses 9 and 10 for his effort of gathering wisdom and then he tells his son in verses 11 and 12 the results of gathering wisdom there's two results he talks about two results of gathering wisdom there's a good result but then there's also a bad result there's a good result and a bad result of gathering wisdom the good result is in verse 11 the words of the wise are like goads and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings they are given by one shepherd so what this father is doing here is he is explaining how the teachings of wise people work what they're good for and he's especially explaining how the book of

[16 : 42] Ecclesiastes works so what he's doing is he's painting a picture for us he's putting us in the scene the setting and so here's the setting we're out in a field we've got a shepherd and we've got his sheep and the shepherd has decided he needs his herd of sheep to move maybe move on to a better pasture maybe move on to some place where they can drink water maybe a storm's coming for whatever reason he needs his sheep to move now I personally haven't spent a lot of time with sheep I don't know if any of you have my understanding from people that know sheep a lot better than I do is that not only are sheep not very bright they can be pretty stubborn at times they don't want to cooperate if they get their mind that they're not going to move it can be difficult to get them to move so if you're an Israelite shepherd and you know Israelite shepherds didn't have sheep dogs so if you're an Israelite shepherd what do you do about it well what you do is you take a stick and you drive a nail into that stick and then you take the stick that you call a goat and you poke you poke at the sheep

I mean not really hard but you sort of gently give them a nudge nudge nudge and before you go to that sheep it was happy it's comfortable just sitting down staying where it is getting some sleep whatever and the pricking of the goat makes the sheep uncomfortable the sheep gets up to its feet and it moves and pretty soon the whole herd is moving with it as you start poking them all and the writings of the wise are like that the writings of the wise poke at us and prick us they shake us up they make us think they make us uncomfortable the book of ecclesiastes is a goad that is aimed at people who have gotten comfortable who have gotten content who have gotten complacent with their lives who are just going along with the rat race who are going along with the culture who are not doing a lot of thinking about what's happening in their lives and what they are living for ecclesiastes is a sharp stick that is meant to get the attention of people who are busy pursuing a life of false promises that is going to lead to no lasting gain and the sharp stick sort of pokes them back towards the right path and this goad is given by one shepherd the father says now who is the one shepherd well it's an indirect reference to God to the giver of all wisdom all wisdom especially the wisdom of ecclesiastes comes from God himself

God is the one who has taken that stick and has driven a nail into it and is poking you and me with it we're the sheep and he's unsettling us he is challenging us to stop and to reflect carefully on our lives to change our ways to seize the opportunities that he has given us to embrace the good life that he wants for you and me that's the good thing about wisdom here's the problem you and I can pursue knowledge can pursue information can pursue wisdom can read all these writings we can even read the Bible this way in order to accumulate knowledge because we think that knowledge is going to help us gain control of our lives that's going to put us in a position of control that's going to make things work out better for us we might try to intellectually grasp the whole universe around us we might try to read all of the theology and all the philosophy that we can get our hands and our eyes on we might try scouring the scriptures trying to dig up every last little gold nugget that we can get out of it so that we can extract gain out of this world so we can learn how the world works and then grasp it so we can get money or pleasure or power or a sense of significance for ourselves we can crave wisdom for what we think it is going to give us

I've met people who love to just read and read and read and they consume all these philosophical works all these religious writings all these scientific studies all these self-help books and this endless endless endless treadmill to make sense out of their lives I've seen Christians who have fallen into that trap too puffing themselves up with theological knowledge that would be helpful but they're doing it while neglecting the harder task of love that builds up one another but those who seek gold dig up much earth but find little much learning does not teach insight as the father tells his son in verse 12 my son beware of anything beyond these of making many books there is no end and much study is a weariness of the flesh so it's not wrong it's not wrong to pursue these academic studies in fact it couldn't be quite helpful but to pursue them with the expectation that they are going to provide for you the answers that you are looking for that is only going to lead you on that endless exhausting treadmill that will wear you down it is possible to accumulate large amounts of knowledge and not understand

Jesus of Nazareth once warned the religious leaders of his day the religious leaders of Israel in Matthew chapter 14 people who studied the Old Testament extensively and he said you will indeed hear but never understand and you will indeed see but never perceive in other words it is possible to gather all of that data to accumulate endless quantities of knowledge we have in our society this feeding frenzy we glut ourselves on more and more and more information and life hacks and political news stories Instagram photos cat videos list of ways to make your life better and so on and so on and so on and so on we consume and consume and consume and consume information at an enormous pace and we do this because we crave the knowledge that we think is going to unlock the mysteries of life for us that is going to deliver to us the good life that's going to fix everything but this father is offering his son the words of the preacher to remind him this the good life is not gained by grasping all of life's mysteries for ourselves the good life is not gained by grasping all of life's mysteries for ourselves because when you do that it is an endless futile quest it is striving after wind it is frantic wandering around in a vapor in a fog and instead the father presents his son with a better alternative there is a better way in verses 13 and 14 this father writes to his son the end of the matter all has been heard fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man for God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing whether good or evil so when he writes here the end of the matter all has been heard what this father is telling his son is this his son has all the information that he needs to live the good life this son already has what he needs to live the good life his son can go on reading and studying and acquiring and accumulating more but what he gains from here on out won't get him any closer to his goal it won't get him any farther at grasping life under the son and gaining from it it won't get him the good life a son has already been given all he needs to hear and now it is time to act on it so his father tells him what to do fear God and keep his commandments now to fear God that's something that is a phrase that gets thrown around

[25 : 25] I think that's a phrase that so often Christians let alone people who don't aren't around the Bible aren't around church much even people who are don't really have a good grasp on what that means it's because it's so difficult to pin down what that means it's not to fearing God is not something that's easily defined it's actually more easily I find expressed in images to fear God we talked about a few weeks ago it's that similar visceral sense as when you hike to the top of the chief and then you stand at the edge and the closer you get to the edge the greater the more awe inspiring the more awesome your view is and yet at the same time the more fear because it is dangerous something that is vaster in power in scope in significance than you are that is what fear is it's to understand in a visceral level that God is powerful that he is God and that I am not it's to behold your creator to experience him in awe and wonder and several times in the scriptures including Psalm 111 which we read at the beginning of the service and a couple times in the Proverbs you'll read words similar to what you might find in Proverbs chapter 9 the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is in sight the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom the knowledge of the Holy One is in sight now how can that be true how can this sense of the fear of the Lord the sense of the awesome power and presence of God not just an intellectual understanding but something that hits you on your whole being from your head to your toe how can that serve as the beginning of wisdom the foundation and the source of wisdom well this is something that we talked about a few weeks back

I borrowed an illustration from the preacher John Piper and he talked about how fearing God it's like your life the world from your perspective is like the solar system and at the center you can put a number of different things maybe you put a family member maybe you put a friend someone you love maybe you put the popular kids at school maybe you put money there or sex or power or technology something there that becomes the controlling dominating influence in your life and everything else orbits around that the problem is that all the other things if the wrong things in the center all the other things go out of whack all the other things start colliding with one another hitting one another things go spinning off into space it turns into a wreck into a mess and what the fear of the Lord means is that you have God at the center of the solar system he is the sun in the center of your life and in his incredible gravity holds everything together his awesome majesty and power and everything circles around it in harmony all the other things find their proper place all your relationships find their proper place your use of money finds its proper place human sexuality finds its proper place our desire for power and influence finds its proper place when God and his gravity are at the center it's hard to communicate this in the English language but when the father writes in verse 13 that you and I are to fear God his emphasis here is not in the word fear it's actually on the word God it is God that you must fear what he's implying is that there are alternatives the alternative to fearing God is not that you're a fearless person every person in this room you fear something or someone that is the way we are made to be it is natural and you can't escape that you will never not fear something or someone the question is who or what do you fear who or what is at the center controlling you ordering your life with its own version of wisdom will it be that family member that friend that lover the popular kids at school the money the sex the power the only way to overcome the peer pressure to overcome your hunger for love and for approval from people the only way to overcome your craving for more and more of the things you want the only way to fight that fear is with a greater fear the fear of the Lord God you fight fear with fear and this fear is what causes you and me to keep his commandments the father is telling his son you have the knowledge that you need and it is time to respond to it it is time now to embrace the good life of wisdom a life of harmony with God's right expectations a life that leads you and me to flourish in our relationships with other people and with God the life that guides us towards the commandments that guide us toward the good life of enjoying what God has given to us that God has given these commandments to you and me for our good now it's possible to read this verse to read verse 13 if you're reading it together with verse 14 it's possible to view this as an order that's been given with a threat in other words the father is giving his son a threat if he fails

to obey this order maybe you see this and you see this charge to fear God and keep his commandments and you see in verse 14 that if you don't God is going to punish you for God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing whether good or evil now that's true God does reward the righteous and punish the wicked that is I mean not hard to find that theme in the Bible you just do a little bit you just flip open your Bible and you'll find that theme all over the place right this is something that's true God expects you and me to behave in ways that are good and right he expects you and me to affirm what is true he expects you and me to love one another and to love him with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength his laws are clearly defined expectations for us which is a good thing worst thing is to be in a relationship where the expectations aren't clear God makes his expectations clear and if he did not judge us on the basis of his commandments he would not be a God who is good and just he would be something less but even though this truth is taught in other scriptures

I don't really think that's the angle the father is taking here and the reason is because of this phrase in verse 14 every secret thing there's that line there where he says God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing so we have to ask why is he bringing that into here is he talking about this idea that you know God is going to judge you and he's going to judge all those little hidden things that you're not telling people and that's true that is a theme in other passages of scripture but that really has not come up much at all in the book of Ecclesiastes but there's another theme that has another theme relating to hiddenness that is all over the book of Ecclesiastes this idea that there are things hidden from human sight for example in chapter 6 the preacher asks for who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life which he passes like a shadow for who can tell man what will be after him under the sun then in chapter 8 he writes

I saw all the work of God that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun however much man may toil in seeking he will not find it out even though a wise man claims to know he cannot find it out there is much about this world there is much about what happens in this world including things other people do to you including things that happen to you including ways that you've suffered and including ways you see suffering in this world take place and we don't understand it we can't figure it out we can't get our minds around it we can't grasp it things don't make sense we could find a dozen other verses in Ecclesiastes with a similar theme what is hidden is what the preacher calls in chapter 7 the scheme of things the scheme of things the order the structure the framework of the universe what's hidden is the reason behind all of the events in your life you don't know the answers that will make it all make sense you don't know why you were rejected by that person what was what all that was for what all that was about you don't know why such and such a person died and what happened and what good that did you don't know why things are happening in the world we don't understand what is going on we don't understand why this evil person seems to be doing so well while this good person seems to be suffering so much we don't get it what the preacher is saying here is that it is

[35 : 21] God he is the one who will judge and assess everything that happens God is the one who understands and sees every secret thing and knows why it is happening and knows why he has either brought it to pass or allowed it to pass the good life is not gained by grasping all of life's mysteries for ourselves because they are hidden from us we are not meant to know them Deuteronomy chapter 29 Moses tells the people of Israel something very similar he says the secret things belong to the Lord our God he's referring to all of the events that actually happen in the world things that we don't always understand and don't always make sense to us he says the secret things belong to the Lord our God but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever that we may do all the words of this law we talked a few months ago in the journey class about this distinction between God's sovereign will the things that come to pass and the reasons that they come to pass what actually happens in this world and on the other hand his moral will what he tells us to do we're responsible to know

God's commandments his law his moral will what is good and right it's not our place to know his sovereign will what is going to happen six months from now what the future holds for you and me why things happen the way they do all the time this is what the father is telling his son in Ecclesiastes chapter 12 he's saying that there is a rhyme and reason for everything that happens but those are the secret things that belong to the Lord as for you and me it's not our place to obsess over them you don't have to obsess over them you can let it go the good life is not gained by grasping all of life's mysteries for ourselves instead we are told this the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever that we may do all the words of this law in other words God has given you he has already given you what you need to know in the scriptures through the preacher through the words of a father to a son

God has told us fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man and my translation inserts that word duty you have to do something with this in order to translate it into English because if you tried to translate it literally word for word it wouldn't make any sense to an English reader some translations put it in other ways this is the duty of all mankind this applies to every person or this is man's all maybe you could put it this way this is all of man this is all that we are meant for if you want to know what your life mission is maybe you're wondering that like what am I here for like what specific task am I here to do what am I on this earth for what is what is my mission what is supposed to be my goal in life what does God want me to do the answer is right here that is your place and that is my place that is our allotment to fear

God and to keep his commandments not only is that your place and your allotment that is what it means to be fully human that is everything that human beings were made to do we are not meant you and I are not meant to grasp everything in life and to gain from it we are meant to enjoy what God has given to embrace our responsibilities that he has given to you and me right here right now to seize our opportunities for good right here right now to entrust life's mysteries to God the good life is found in a diligent trust in our sovereign God the good life is found in a diligent trust in our sovereign God you and I think it's not enough just to be told that we need a picture we need to see what that looks like in real life and we have that we know what it looks like to live the good life to fear God and keep his commandments because we've been given in the

New Testament the books of Matthew Mark Luke and John and in these four biographies we read the story of Jesus of Nazareth we read the story of God's chosen Messiah Jesus Christ he is the son of God he is 100% God and at the same time he is also 100% human in fact some people think of that as meaning that Jesus Christ is somehow less human than you or I are far from it Jesus Christ is more fully human than anyone who has ever lived he is everything that a human being was meant to be Jesus is perfectly wise perfectly loving perfectly good and he feared God his father perfectly we know this because hundreds of years before Jesus even came to earth the prophet Isaiah wrote about God's coming Messiah in Isaiah chapter 11 he wrote there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of

[40 : 53] Jesse that's Jesus ancestor and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him the spirit of wisdom and understanding the spirit of counsel and might the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord and his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord Jesus trusted God his father and he feared God his father and delighted in it and delighted and enjoyed God his father even when events around him didn't seem to make sense regardless of the circumstances in his life early in Jesus ministry his cousin John encountered an incredible amount of suffering John was ridiculed and rejected by the religious leaders and then King Herod had him put into prison and from this dungeon John sent some of his disciples to Jesus in

Matthew chapter 11 we read about that and the message that he asked his disciples to deliver to Jesus was are you the one who is to come or shall we look for another even John's beginning to doubt beginning to question what's going on I don't understand what is happening because Jesus didn't seem to be doing the things that the Messiah was supposed to be doing he wasn't overthrowing the religious establishment or the royal court of Herod or the tyranny of the Roman Empire he wasn't getting John out of prison he wasn't overthrowing the corrupt religious establishment and like many of Jesus disciples John was confused he was wondering is his suffering serving any purpose at all does his life have meaning does his life have direction and Jesus after reassuring John and denouncing the towns they refused to listen to the message of John and Jesus Jesus prays this to God his father in Matthew chapter 11 I thank you father

Lord of heaven and earth that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children yes father for such was your gracious will all things have been handed over to me by my father and no one knows the son except the father and no one knows the father except the son and anyone to whom the son chooses to reveal him come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light it is a heavy yoke it is a heavy burden to run yourself ragged with studying and learning and accumulating information to try to find out what your life is all about and what is going on and what is happening and where do you go next and what to do it's begging for a nervous breakdown this is not the good life to fear

God and keep his commandments this is the good life because the good life is found in a diligent trust in our sovereign God why do we work hard why do we keep his commandments because we trust that God is in complete control that God will bring everything into judgment according to his right assessment of good and evil not the assessment of good and evil that we make up for ourselves according to his assessment the right assessment of good and evil and so the good life is not this life of grim drudgery it's not this life of heavy burdens that's what we often associate keeping God's commandments with somehow this grim drudgery no far from it it's a life of joyful work as you and I empowered by God's spirit strengthened by our fellow yoke bearer Jesus Christ we trust the gracious will of our

God in heaven our father we trust that we you know the truth is that we see less than 1% of what God is doing in our lives and in our world this past week I saw a news story and since Kyle talked about used a physics illustration a couple weeks ago I feel like I've got carte blanche to just talk about physics whenever I want now and I saw this news story about the European space agency was going to produce this new map of the Milky way the galaxy that we're all a part of and it was going to be a thousand times more detailed than any map that had ever come out before of the Milky Way and I was like wow this is going to have an amazing amount of detail and show us some amazing things about our galaxy right it's just going to be so complete and then the article explained that this map was going to contain we maybe see one percent of what

[46 : 25] God is doing every once in a while you can see the good that comes out of a difficult situation out of suffering out of hardship out of the world that doesn't seem to make sense I guarantee you even when you see the good that comes out of that you're only seeing that one percent there is so much going on that is hidden from us to live the good life is not to worry about that but simply to believe in Jesus Christ to embrace him as God's chosen king to believe that Jesus lived that good life and he lived it on our behalf the way that we have failed to live up to that commandment that call to love God and to love one another Jesus did that on our behalf and he died on our behalf paid the price for our sin for our failure to live as we ought and he rose again to new life and he extends that life that good life empowered by the

Holy Spirit that resurrection life to you and to me and to all who believe in him so that we would know the good life that the preacher longed for the good life that you and I long for with all of our hearts the good life is not gained by grasping all of life's mysteries for ourselves the good life is found in a diligent trust in our sovereign God let's let's pray let's pray to him let's pray to him