

Have You Found What You Are Looking For?

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[0 : 00] We'll begin our worship this evening by singing to God's praise. We're going to sing in Psalm 33 in the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 33, we're going to sing from verse 6 down to verse 11. Psalm 33, page 245 of the Psalm book, verse 6.

The heavens by the word of God did their beginning take, and by the breathing of his mouth he all their hosts did make. The waters of the seas he brings to together as an heap, and in storehouses as it were he layeth up the deep. And we sing here of God's wondrous creating power and how all belongs to him and how above all the counsel of the Lord, the word of the Lord as it says in verse 11, does stand forever sure. So we'll sing from verse 6 to verse 11 to God's praise.

verse 6. The heavens by the word of God did their beginning take, and by the breathing of his mouth he all their and how he all said may. The waters of the seas he brings together as an heap, and in storehouses as as an heap. The waters of the sea he brings together as an heap, and in storehouses as an as an heap, and in storehouses as an heap, and in storehouses as an heap. The waters of the Lord, let all the world's inhabitants tread him with one accord. For he did speak the word modern.

Christopher hurt and done it was without delay, and given this it firmly stood. Whatever He did say, atu doth the counsel bring to naught which heathen folk do take, and what the people do divide of none effect doth make.

O but the counsel of the Lord doth stand forever sure, and of his heart the purposes from age to age endure.

[3 : 32] We'll bow our heads in a word of prayer. Let us pray. Amen. Our gracious Father in heaven, we come anew to worship you this evening.

We come offering up our praise and thanksgiving to you, that you are our Lord and our God, the one who made heavens and earth as we see around us, the one who created all things for your own glory, the one who made all things through the word of your power.

And we thank you, Lord, that it is established to remain, that all that you have done by your word, it stands and endures all things.

But as we have sung in this psalm together, we are reminded that there are the counsel of man, there is the words that we offer up ourselves, the wisdom that we feel we have, and as we live in a world that's ever-changing, as it were, through the wisdom of mankind, we recognize, even as your word says, that what the people do devise, of none effect doth make.

And we thank you for that, Lord, that in a world that so swiftly and so quickly is discarding your word and your truth, and in the chaos that it brings, in the world that we see descending into more and more chaos.

[4 : 58] We thank you, Lord, that all its effects will do nothing in the midst of our generation and generations to come. There may be a sense of dismay and misdirection for many people at this time, but we know, Lord, that your counsel will stand forever, that your word will endure forever, and just as it is today, it has been in the past.

As we read your word, Lord, we see such similar days when you have given your people over to their own wisdom and their own ways. And yet, oh Lord, there have always been that time when people have returned to you and recognized and acknowledged their sins and their faults and come in repentance, Lord, acknowledging dependence upon you.

And our prayer at this time is that it may be so in our generation, that it may be so in our day, as we see, oh Lord, the failings of our world, that we would come to the word and to the one who never changes, the one who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

And so, Lord, as we live in a world where there's that search for meaning, that search for truth, and where everybody seems to have their own truth to tell, we pray, Lord, that we will hear your truth, that we will hear your wisdom, and that even this evening as we come together, that we will have

ears to hear what you will see, that we will have hearts to receive, that we will have the minds to discern, and that we will have the eyes, oh Lord, to look around us and to walk by faith through you. And we know this is only possible through your spirit. It's not of our own wisdom, it's not of our own mindset, but Lord, that you would give us faith as the gift of grace that is so precious and so freely offered by you.

[6 : 56] And so help us, Lord, each one of us, from the youngest to the oldest, no matter our situation, no matter our life's experience, no matter what we may be feeling at this time, that you will calm us in your presence, that you will still us and help to know that you are God.

So may you minister to us all, Lord, and to all who need you in different ways at this time. We thank you that you are one who hears and answers prayer. And we thank you that as we look back in our own life's experience and as we look back in the experience of our nation and even the world in which we live, that we see the power of prayer all around us.

We see places and people who, apart from prayer, would be lost. We see even in our own lives and experience, Lord, prayer answered by many, maybe even no longer with us.

But we thank you, Lord, for every prayer that is offered up in your name. Prayers past and present, Lord, and prayers still to be answered and answered into the future and into the days that lie ahead. But we thank you that in your time and in your ways, you answer prayer. And help us, Lord, to remember that we always pray that your will be done.

[8 : 17] No matter what is going on around us, Lord, we pray your will be done. And help us to take hold of the truths of your word. Help us to lean upon them and even the ones that we so often maybe struggle to understand at different points in our own experience.

Even great words as we read in your scripture, that all things work together for good for those who love you. Lord, they are some of the most difficult words for us to understand at times when there seems to be little or no good in our experience at times.

And yet help us, Lord, to see beyond our experience and to see your ways and to see your paths and to lean upon your wisdom and your understanding, not our own.

So, Lord, teach us. Teach us to apply our hearts to wisdom. Teach us to know you. Teach us to walk closely with you. Remember, Lord, your church as it continues to witness for you.

Your people far and wide. We pray, Lord, that you will encourage and build up your people near and far. You call all your people, those who believe in you, to be those who will be witnesses for you.

[9 : 34] We are all being built up together in your kingdom. And we pray, Lord, that you will strengthen our number, that you will strengthen our faith, that you will strengthen our witness for you as a people.

We pray that for ourselves as a congregation here, that you will help us to endeavor to reach out with the gospel, to reach out to those who belong to us as a people, those who are maybe downcast and discouraged at this time, those who are lonely, those who are afraid, those who maybe no longer come out for different reasons.

Help us to come alongside and to encourage and to pray with them and to help them along the way.

We also pray, Lord, for those of our community who do not come anywhere near a church and have no interest in it, some who are even antagonistic against the faith and against religion as a whole.

We pray, Lord, that you will help us to be salt and light among all around us. Help us to speak to them lovingly and graciously, but also with that challenge in our words as well.

For we live in these final days, Lord. We live in days when we know we need the Savior. But for those who see no need of him, Lord, we pray that you will give convicting words and convincing words that they might hear.

[10 : 55] We pray, Lord, for every endeavor we have to reach out with your word through the preaching of your word, through the prayer meetings during the week, to all that is done with young and old alike during the week as well, seeking to come alongside and to encourage.

We pray your blessing on all that we seek to do. We pray your blessing far and wide upon your people, Lord, those who are mourning this day as we know there are many, even in our own congregation and in our own town here, Lord.

We pray for comfort for those who are brokenhearted at this time, even as we heard about Emma's son this morning, Lord, we continue to remember her, to pray for her and that you would uphold her and all the family at this time and their sorrow and sadness.

And far and wide, Lord, throughout our communities when there are broken hearts, we pray that you will come with your healing power and your power to bring people, even in the midst of sorrow, to be able to say, blessed be the name of the Lord.

Lord, so Lord, help us and help all who need you in different ways. Remember those who are unwell, those who are in hospital and homes. Remember our community and our people far and wide.

[12:11] Remember our nation and those who govern over us. Again, as we think of all that is going on around us, Lord, we pray for all the needs we see as a nation and as nations of the world.

And we think of all that is so much main headlines in the news and yet there are other things that go unnoticed. We think of all that's going on with people fleeing from nations where there is so much turmoil and grief only to meet with much more turmoil on their journey to try and find safety.

We know so much is being made of those crossing the channel seeking to find a new life and to seek to find new beginnings only to be met with such hostility and resistance.

And we pray for every soul, for every person, for everyone who feels lost in this world with nowhere to turn, for all who are persecuted, for all who are put down upon, for all who are made to feel useless and low and of no worth.

Lord, we pray that they will find worth in Christ, that we'll find worth in this world to go on in your strength. Lord, give us that heart of mercy, that heart to love our neighbour as ourself and to look beyond our own needs and to the needs of others.

[13:28] So teach us, Lord, we pray, and teach us by your word, by your grace and by your spirit. May your spirit move among us as a nation and as the world as a whole, Lord, to see your glory, to acknowledge it, Lord, and to be in awe of the God that you are, the one who is able to do abundantly more than all that we ask or imagine.

So we commit ourselves into your hands and all who we love and care for and all who we know in need at this time. So, Lord, bless us, we pray, bless your word to us as we sing from it and as we hear it.

May all be to your glory and build us up, we pray, in all things as we ask it with forgiveness for all our sins. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, again, sing to God's praise this time in Psalm 25 in the Sing Psalms version.

We're going to sing from the beginning of the Psalm down to the verse marked 9. Psalm 25 is on page 29 of the Psalm books. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul, I trust in you continually.

Do not let me be put to shame nor let my foes gloat over me. No one who sets their hope in you will ever suffer such disgrace, but those who act with treachery, humiliating shame will face.

[14:57] We'll sing from verse 1 to 9 to God's praise and we stand to sing. O Lord, I lift my soul, I trust in you continually.

Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my foes gloat over me.

No one who sets its open year will ever suffer such disgrace.

God, O Lord, we are with treachery, humiliating shame will face.

O Lord, reveal to me your way, and all your paths help me to know.

[16:26] Direct and guide me in your truth. Instruct me in the way to come.

You are my Savior and my God. All day I hold in you, my Lord.

Remember, Lord, your love and grace, which from the sages you have shown.

Do not recall my sins of youth or my rebellious, evil ways.

Remember me in your great love for you, O Lord, are good always.

[17:50] Because the Lord is just and good, He shows His path to all who stray.

He guides the meek in waters strife and teaches them His holy way.

Amen. We're going to read together now in the Old Testament in the book of Ecclesiastes.

We're going to read chapter 1 together. Ecclesiastes chapter 1. You can read the whole of this chapter together.

Psalms, Proverbs, and the book of Ecclesiastes. The words of the preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the preacher.

[19:00] Vanity of vanities. All is vanity. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever.

The sun rises and the sun goes down and hastens to the place where it rises. The wind blows to the south and goes round to the north. Round and round goes the wind and on its circuits the wind

returns.

All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full. To the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. All things are full of weariness.

A man cannot utter it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done.

There is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, see, this is new. It has been already in the ages before us.

[20 : 04] There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of latter things yet to be among those who come after. I, the preacher, have been king over Israel and Jerusalem.

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. Behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.

What is crooked cannot be made straight.

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

My heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceive this also is but a striving after wind.

[21 : 08] For in much wisdom wisdom is much vexation and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow. And so on. May God bless that reading from his word.

Before we turn back to that passage, we're going to read again, sing again to God's praise in Psalm 49. And let's sing Psalms, page 64 of the Psalm book.

Psalm 49. We're going to sing from verse 1 to verse 10. The psalmist begins by saying to us, listen to me all you peoples, all who in the whole world dwell, low and high, both rich and needy.

Hear the message I will tell. This is a psalm that reminds us of the need to listen, to seek wisdom, to find that with God and especially when it comes to our life.

And to the fact as it says in verse 10 that we all can see life ending, wise and foolish, all will die.

There's this sense of looking ahead in our lives and wondering what is life all about?

[22 : 15] But it says to redeem, a life is costly, none, sufficient price can pay. We know that we cannot save ourselves. But as we come to praise God in these words, we remember too that there is a Redeemer, one who lives, who is the Lord Jesus Christ and that we can put our trust in Him for life now and for eternal life.

So we come to sing verse 1 to 10 of this psalm. Listen to me, all you peoples, all who in the whole world dwell.

Lo and high, both rich and needy, hear the message I will tell.

I will speak with understanding, wisdom from the heart I'll preach.

I will listen to a proverb, tickets with the harp I will teach.

[23 : 40] Why should I fear days of evil when the wicked have me in those who boast of their possessions by their trust wealth in wealth they sin?

There is no one who is able to redeem a soul from death.

None can pay to God the ransom to prolong another's breath.

To redeem a life which costly none sufficient price can pay so that one should live the mortal be forever only day.

For we all can see life ending, wise and foolish all will die.

[25 : 13] they must leave their wealth to others. None can death see magnified.

We can turn back together to our reading in Ecclesiastes chapter 1.

We read again at the beginning of the chapter these words. The words of the preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanities.

What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? A generation goes and a generation comes but the earth remains forever.

And so it goes on. As you hear these words and as you hear them read and as you read them again there you begin to think well this word keeps appearing here, vanity of vanity, all is vanity.

[26 : 17] You're thinking what is the point of all that's being said here? The preacher as he's called here, Solomon is one who's gathering people around to tell them through his experience of life what his own take on life is.

There are often times in our own experience when we maybe spend a bit of time reflecting reflecting in life, reflecting on our past experience, maybe looking back or for some maybe over many years looking back on where we've been and things we've done and people we've known, all of these kinds of things.

We look back on all of these things that we've experienced in the past. past. And maybe we do it in many kinds of situations. Perhaps for some people it's walking around the town here.

Maybe you're walking around the streets of Stornaby, maybe you're walking out in the castle grounds and as you're looking around you're seeing things that used to be and things that have changed.

So much has changed in this town when you think of these words in verse 4, a generation goes and a generation comes. You walk around and you think of people who used to be and who are no more, other people who are coming into the town, you're seeing shops that have closed down and places that there used to be, all kinds of things that have changed all around us.

[27 : 42] I find that myself when I go back to the west side and I go back to Shabbos and walk around the village there and you walk in the street where I grew up and you see changes that have taken place.

You see places where one's house is stood and the house is no longer there. You see other places where there was an open field and now there's a house built there.

Things have changed, things have moved on. But so often when we reflect on these things, we reflect in a way where we think of people.

And I think that's probably what strikes me most as I look back over the years and as I look back over where I grew up and people I've known over the years and many of them who are no longer there.

You start to reflect on people who you once used to hear talking or maybe once you dismissed what they were saying and now the theme in your heart is if only they were here and I could hear them again.

[28 : 46] If only I could hear them once more just to ask them some questions, to glean some wisdom from them. If only I listened more closely to what they were saying to me.

And we often have this maybe regret in our hearts or this longing in our hearts if only we could listen once more. The stories they had, the experiences that they went through, what would they make of the world today and life today, we could learn so much from them.

Well here in Ecclesiastes there's a sense, of that. There's a sense of this gathering around. As we sang there in Psalm 49, Psalm is saying, listen to me all you peoples, come and hear what I will tell. Here is Solomon, the preacher in this book, who is saying to the people, come and gather round, come and listen to what I'm saying to you.

Because he is speaking, he's speaking to our people, he's speaking to ourselves this evening. And there's a sense where he's speaking into an ever-changing world, an ever-changing people, both in his own day and in our day today as well.

[30 : 04] He's saying, come, come and listen to what I am saying. And as we hear these words, vanity of vanities, all is vanity, we maybe begin to think, well, what's he saying to us?

He doesn't seem to be encouraging us very much with these words, it just seems to be saying to us, well, what's the point in it all? It's maybe just what many of us are maybe feeling in our day and age just now.

We're wondering what's happening in our world and what's the point in it all? Well, there is a point in what he's saying. And he's really reminding us of two things.

As you read through this chapter in the book of Ecclesiastes, you're reminded of two things that he describes. He's saying there is this life as you look at it under the sun.

It's one phrase he uses, under the sun. And there's another phrase that he uses, and it's life under heaven. And there's a distinction between the two.

[31 : 04] And it's an understanding that distinction that we begin to see that there is meaning in what he is saying. So there's a sense here where things are always changing and yet not changing.

There was a Frenchman by the name John Baptiste Alphonse Carr who once said back in 1849, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

The more things change, the more they stay the same. And that's the sense of what the preacher here in Ecclesiastes is saying.

While a lot of big things change or appear to be changing in our eyes, a lot of things seem to be happening around us, the real situation, the important situation is that nothing has changed much at all.

As he says there in verse 9, there is nothing new under the sun. And you think when Ecclesiastes was written all these thousands of years ago, here we are now and we're still in that same situation. [32 : 12] There's nothing new under the sun. So what is he getting at here? In the sense of nothing changes, it stays the same. What's he getting at when everything else seems to be changing around us?

It's a search for meaning. It's a search for purpose in our lives. It's a search for what is life all about? How do we understand the world in which we live? And this is something in the preacher's day here, as in our own day, and every generation, a search for meaning, a search for wisdom, a search for progress, a search for making our lives better, but nothing seems to be changing. Many things change, but at the root of our lives is the truth that nothing ever changes. others. So here we have this scene in Ecclesiastes where the preacher Solomon gathers the people round and he's saying, listen to this, listen to my experience of life, and listen to what I am telling you that you may find wisdom and find meaning and purpose in your life.

Listening to not just the word that he is speaking, but the word as it is, the word of God and the word of wisdom that he is saying to us.

[33 : 43] Is it all just in vain, all that we are doing in our search for meaning, or is there meaning in it all? Have we found what we're looking for?

That's the question tonight. And there are three ways I want us to reflect on this question as we think of our search for what we're looking for. The first is this reflecting on life.

Then there's a sense of reviewing all that is going on. And then thirdly, we see the sense of renewing our outlook on things.

So the first thing is reflecting. Reflecting on things. And going into this chapter, indeed, into this book, you see Solomon here.

He's very much in reflective mood. good. He's looking at various aspects of his life, life in general. But what's his outlook? And it begins with this theme that just seems to run through Ecclesiastes as a whole.

[34 : 51] It's almost saying, it doesn't take you long to start thinking, well, what's the point in anything at all? Everything just seems to be in vain. Everything is vanity of vanities or meaningless, meaningless, as another translation puts it.

It's like, what is this purpose? Whatever he describes, it seems to be linked to this phrase, it's all vain, it's all vanity of vanities, as you see in verse 2.

And you have that at the beginning of the book, and it seems to just run right through it. But he's using it in a way that brings us back to think, well, what is the point?

What is he actually getting at here? And perhaps for ourselves this evening is the kind of situation that we're in. Maybe in your own life just now, you're at that point in life where you're beginning to reflect and to think, what is my life?

What is the purpose? What is it that I am doing with my life? What is the point in it all? And maybe you're coming to this conclusion as well. It's vanity of vanities.

[36 : 00] It all just seems to be in vain. But as he's saying to us here, it's about perspective. And what Solomon is doing here is he leads us into his world and looking at it, here he is as an older man looking back and reflecting on his life and we're to listen to his words of wisdom.

And he uses this phrase initially, which is under the sun. In verse three, what does a man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

He's looking at life here from a perspective where we're just looking around ourselves. We're looking at it on a horizontal plane, if you like.

We're looking at life and just thinking, my life just seems to be the same day in, day out. And as you read these words that he is saying here, vanity, vanity, says the preacher, you think to yourself, well, what kind of man was Solomon?

This must be someone who had hit rock bottom. This must be someone who's lost everything in life, failed in everything. He must be someone who's almost broke and homeless and just has nothing to enjoy in life.

[37 : 21] And yet it couldn't be further from the truth. When you look at Solomon's life, you just have to turn over to the next chapter. In chapter 2, verse 4, and you read there the words that he gives to us there, which reminds us his life was a grand life.

He says in verse 4, I made great works, I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made myself gardens and parks and planted in them all kinds of fruit, trees.

I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. I brought male and female slaves, and slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.

I had silver and gold and treasure of kings. He had all of these things. This is not someone who has hit rock bottom. This is not someone who is broke and homeless.

This is someone who has everything that the world has to offer. Yet, looking at it on this horizontal plane, this under the sun plane, he's saying it's vanity, vanity of vanities, meaningless, meaningless.

[38 : 36] What's the challenge? He's getting at there. He's reminding us that if our only focus is on what is in this world, and what we have day by day in this world and what we're living for on this horizontal plane, under the sun, just in this world, then it is all in vain.

You can have everything that this world offers and yet have nothing. You think of someone of the wealth of Solomon, you think of it in today's terms, you're thinking of someone maybe like Elon Musk, and all the billions that he has, he doesn't know what to do with it.

But under the sun, is there any joy in it all? There's still a search for more, because it's all vanity of vanities. There are two billionaires in the computing industry.

One is Bill Gates, a billionaire businessman who was behind Microsoft. The other was a friend of his who passed away in 2011, Steve Job, who was behind Apple.

Both of them were billionaires, more money than they could do anything with, and yet for what? Steve Job, he passed away at a relatively young age, and at the time of his death, Bill Gates said this, it reminds you that you've got to pick important stuff, because you only have a limited time.

[40 : 15] And yet in those words that are saying, well, what is life? He's still looking at things under the sun, under this level, this horizontal plane. We've got to pick the important stuff, but what is the important stuff?

We've only got a limited time, but what are we doing with our time? So there's questions, but there's unanswered questions that Bill Gates had.

Maybe that's ourselves, too. We say at times, we've got to get our priorities right. We've only got a limited time, as the psalm said, which we sang. We can all see life ending, it's passing us by, but for what purpose?

We reflect on all of these things, but our perspective is looking at things under the sun, with this world in mind, and the conclusion is it's all vanity.

We're looking at things in the wrong way. Life under the sun, no matter how much we might have, or even how little we've got, we are still in the same position, that there is nothing new under the sun.

[41 : 35] It is a life apart from God, a life without a relationship with God, without a relationship with his son.

It's not an eternal perspective we're looking at, it's just the temporary perspective of here, just our days here and that is it, and yet it all seems so meaningless.

Life under the sun is a preacher's way of talking, here about a life lived apart from God. A sad life, no matter how much we have.

Verse 3 here is so similar to Mark 8, 36, where it says, For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

That's Mark 8, 36, and verse 3 here says, What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

[42 : 38] What do we gain if we lose our soul? So we're looking at here things, we're looking at it in a way where we want to come and think about what God is saying to us.

We're looking at our life. We're looking at what God is saying to us. But he's saying, don't just look under the sun.

Because if you're reflecting on your life in that way, you've got to see that there is more. There's more to life than that. And if we're looking under the sun, we're looking in the wrong place.

And that's why the second thing we see here is a sense of reviewing things. Now, reflecting is maybe more looking back.

But reviewing it is looking now more in the present. Okay, we're looking back and we're seeing all of these things, all of these experiences in our life, everything that's changing and yet nothing's changing as it were.

[43 : 46] We still don't have this sense of meaning and purpose in our life. Well, then he starts to give us a sense of reviewing. What does life look like under the sun?

That's what we see in verse 4 to verse 11. Here he's looking at things as if to say, you see all these things going on around you. And you could come to this conclusion, you could almost describe it as we're living life in this cycle.

You could almost describe it as if you're in the hamster's wheel, if you like. If you've ever seen a hamster in a cage, they go on the wheel, running around, their little feet are going flat out, but where are they going?

Nowhere. The wheel's just going round and round and round. No progress is being made. And that's so much of life under the sun, as it were.

We seem to be making progress, we seem to be going so fast, and yet, at the end, we're going nowhere. And how does he describe it here?

[44 : 50] He describes it in verse 4, as a generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. People come and people go.

You think even of our own surroundings. How many people have been and sat in these pews who are no longer here? How many are here now who in a number of years will not be here?

Another generation will come. We pray another generation will fill this place. But it's this idea that our time comes, our time goes.

In verse 5, he's talking about it almost on a daily basis. The sun rises, the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises. There's this sense of day after day, there's the same things going on.

Then verse 6, he talks about the wind. The wind blows to the south and goes round to the north. Round and round goes the wind, and on its circuits, the wind returns.

[45 : 53] So you've got this idea of the wind, as we know only too well here. The gales come, the gales go. Week by week, month by month, we see the weather changing all the time.

The snow that came in the last few days is now disappearing. Where did it come from? Where did it go? There's this idea that things are just always moving. Verse 7 is one of these ones that you just pause and think about what it's saying.

All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full. You think of rivers round about our own island, all running into the sea.

You think about great rivers in this world, the Amazon, the Nile, the Elbe, there's so many of them. All these mighty rivers running into the sea, and yet the sea, it's not full.

what's going on. It's the cycle that runs into the sea, it goes up into the air, comes back in rain, and so the cycle goes on.

[46 : 56] There's this idea that there's always this continuity in life, but it's always staying the same. If you've ever seen the film Groundhog Day, it's this kind of idea where every day the alarm clock goes.

He gets up, he lives his day, he goes to bed and he gets up the next day, it's exactly the same. Every generation, we think we've found answers to all the questions of life.

We think we're making progress all the time, and yet we're not making any progress at all. Look at verse 10 there, which says, Is there a thing of which it is said, see, this is new.

And you think of all the discoveries made in our own days, you know, the last 20, 30 years, how many things have been invented? So it's this idea that there's nothing new, the internet's new, there's lots of new things in that sense, but it's this idea that is it really progress?

There is nothing that is new in that sense. It has been already in the ages before us. People will say, this is the answer to all of life's trouble.

[48 : 15] This is the answers that we need for today, and yet there's nothing new under the sun. Our needs have not changed.

Our greatest need has not changed. As we review our life, we can think, okay, we seem to have made progress, but reality is we're no further on than any other generation in the past, because we

cannot make any difference to our eternal situation by ourselves.

Again, we go back to the psalm we sung, to redeem my life is costly, none sufficient price can pay. Even in the search for renewed youth and keeping ourselves alive as long as possible, and all of these things that people long for in this world, we cannot.

Every generation has looked at ways to keep ourselves going, to keep ourselves alive, to save ourselves, as it were, for eternity, but there's nothing new under the sun.

The answer hasn't changed. Our greatest need as we look in life, as we think of what we're looking for in this world, as we think of what we're searching for, it's not something new, it's something that has always been.

[49 : 43] It's been there since the beginning. It's there in Solomon's day, it's here in our day, it will remain forever. And what is it? Well, it's based on the word of God.

It is only God who can make a difference in our life. It is only God through his son, Christ Jesus who can save our soul.

And so as we think of living our life and things under the sun, when everything seems to be in vain, no endeavor, no achievement, no possession under the sun can give purpose and meaning and fulfillment in life.

That's what the preacher is telling us here. If you want to live life under the sun, if you want to live life apart from God, you're just going to carry on, as it were, in the hamster's wheel, everything just going round and round and nothing is changing.

Perhaps that's the way you feel in life just now. You get up in the morning, you live your day, you go to bed, and day after day, so much just seems to be the same.

[50 : 59] And you've come to the conclusion, what's the point? Is it all in vain? Well, without Christ it is.

But what the preacher here is telling us is that there is a gospel, that there is good news, that there is hope that makes a difference.

So that as we reflect on life looking back, as we review where we are at present, we want to come to that point where we think, well, what can change? What needs to change in our life?

That's what we see thirdly here, that sense of renewing. It's about looking at things in a different perspective. Seeing things not just on this world's horizon, but beyond.

And looking beyond the things that are under the sun to how he describes it as under heaven.

That's what you see in verse 13.

[52 : 06] I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that was done under heaven. This is to look at things in a different way, to look beyond the things of this world.

In our search for meaning, we've got to look beyond the wisdom of man and look to the wisdom of God. So how is your search in life going?

How is your search in life for meaning and purpose? Where are you at with it? In 1987, a band called You Too, they released a song, the title, I Still Haven't Found, What I'm Looking For.

And the song was all about the sense of a search going on in life. And no matter where they looked, no matter what they found in this world, there was a sense, I still haven't found what I'm looking for. And perhaps that's how you feel today. Perhaps that's the way you've been living your life for a long time, knowing that there's got to be more to life, knowing that there's got to be more of a meaning and a purpose in life than this, the life under the sun.

[53 : 33] There's got to be more but you still haven't found what you're looking for. Well, the preacher here tells us, just like every generation seeks an answer, thankfully there's an answer to be found in the gospel.

The more things change, the more they stay the same. And what is it that stays the same for us? Well, the word of God stands forever.

1 Peter verse 24 says, for all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.

There is wisdom to be found in the word of God. He tells us to look above the sun. We're looking beyond the horizon of this world, of everything being under the sun, and instead seeing things done under heaven.

Seeing the God who created the heavens and the earth and made us in this image. Everything in this world is incapable of satisfying our deepest and our greatest need, of our soul's satisfaction, of our soul's salvation.

[55 : 00] salvation. And the preacher here in old age looking back over life, his ridges, his wisdom, and all that he has, is vanity without God. It's all in vain apart from God.

And today, if you're searching for meaning apart from looking to Christ, you'll never find what you're looking for. Your song will always be, I still haven't found what I'm looking for.

There will always be that missing link. And what are we encouraged to do? We are encouraged to come and listen to the wisdom of God's word.

We are encouraged to come and find meaning in God's word and purpose. That in Jesus Christ there is life. And in him there is life eternal.

As I said at the start, we can all regret people we would have loved to listen to today who we didn't listen to in the past. To be able to hear the wisdom of a generation gone or a people who we knew so well but didn't listen to what they were telling us.

[56 : 12] Well, the preacher here is saying, listen to me, all you people. Come and listen to what I will tell. And that is God's word speaking to us.

And speaking to us tonight as well. Speaking to us, to say to us, come and listen to what this word says. Your search for meaning, you find it here.

That God sent his son into this world, that you might have life, he says, and life in abundance, life to the full.

There's an author called Jack Higgins. He's written millions of books, sold millions of books around the world, some of them made into films, TV series.

Well, he was once asked a question, he was asked a question, what would you have liked to have known when you were a boy? This was his answer. He said, I would have loved to have known that when you get to the top, there's nothing there.

[57 : 21] He was looking at things on the level under the sun. in all of his search for wisdom and meaning and success, he was on this journey as he saw it, but he said sadly that when you get to the top, there's nothing there.

That's when we see things under the sun. But when we see things under heaven, when we see things with an eternal perspective, we see that there is much more meaning and direction for us. For where does it bring us as we think of reaching, as we think of our goal? We're not going to say like Jack Higgins, there's nothing at the top. We just think of the book, Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan, where you read there of Christian on his journey.

His journey to rid himself of this great burden on his back, and the different directions that he went along that journey. And yet the last part of the journey, as he's ascending up this hill, as he's making his way up this hill, and he stands before the cross, that is where he begins to realize that under heaven there is purpose.

It's not that there's nothing at the top, but for the Christian there is everything. And what Christian found was that as he came to the cross, his burden was loosed.

[59 : 02] It fell off his back. It tumbled away, never to be seen again. And Christian said, as it says, with a merry heart, he said, he hath given me rest by his sorrow and life by his death.

There is something at the top for the Christian to see, and that is Christ, the one we were hearing of this morning, the man in the middle, the man on the middle cross, the one who we search and we should be searching for to find meaning in life.

We find it in him as we come to the cross. don't come to the point where you wish you could listen and no longer you can hear that word, no longer hear that voice, but listen to the preacher as he is speaking to you.

What is there to gain by toiling under the sun? It's all vanity of vanities, grace, but there is meaning found in the voice of God, in the voice of his son that says come, come and I will give you rest.

When you reach that top and you see it is all there, it is all done, it is finished by him. when you skip right forward to the end of the book of Ecclesiastes into chapter 12 and verse 13, it says this, the end of the matter, all has been heard, fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man.

[61 : 01] There is purpose. It all seems so vain on our search and we think to ourselves, I still haven't found what I'm looking for.

Well, it is found in this as a preacher says, fear God and keep his commandments. Listen, to his word, for this is the whole duty of man.

Don't keep yourself trapped in the hamster's wheel where everything just seems to be going round and round the same all the time. Instead, reach out, reach out to Christ and he is the one who we can come to and find rest and find meaning and find purpose and find life and life to the full as he offers to us as we come to him.

Let us hear what the word of God says. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that with you there is a word that is unchanging and unchangeable, a wisdom that is not the wisdom of this world that is new with each passing generation, but a wisdom that remains the same down through every generation.

There is nothing new under the sun. So, Lord, help us to see our purpose, to find our meaning and to search for you, Lord, while we have that opportunity, to seek the Lord while he is to be found, to call upon him while he is near.

[62 : 46] Teach us in all these things and help us to see that it is not all in vain, that with Christ there is life and life to the full. So, we ask it all for his glory, with the forgiveness of our sin.

Amen. We're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 33. The Psalm we began with. Psalm 33, page 246. of the Psalm books. We're going to sing verse 18 down to the end of the Psalm.

Psalm 33 at verse 18. Behold on those that do him fear, the Lord hath set his eye, even those who on his mercy do with confidence rely.

We'll sing from 18 down to the end of the Psalm to God's praise. hold on those that do him fear, the Lord does set his eye.

[64 : 01] In those who on his mercy do, in those who on his mercy do, with confidence rely.

from death to free their soul in death, life unto them to yield, our soul doth wait upon the Lord, our soul doth wait upon the Lord, he is our help and shield, saith in his holy name we trust, our heart shall joy for thee,

Lord, let thy mercy be on us, Lord, let thy mercy be on us, as we do hope in thee.

After the benediction, I'll go to the main door, we'll close with a benediction. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, rest upon and abide with you all, no one forevermore.

Amen. God but Thank you.