

Why We Need Ecclesiastes

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! Verse 1.

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

Vanity of vanities. All is vanity. The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of God abides forever.

In the early 1960s, questions about faith and expressions of doubt came to readers from a most surprising source. C.S. Lewis, famous among Christians for his defense of the faith, famous among us for his novels, Chronicles of Narnia novels.

[1 : 31] After walking through cancer with his wife and the death of his wife, he wrote another book titled A Grief Observed. In it, he said, talk to me about the truth of religion and I'll listen gladly.

Talk to me about the duty of religion and I'll listen submissively. But don't come talking to me about the comforts of religion, or I shall suspect that you don't understand.

He went on to say, and we quote, we have for you, when you're happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing him. If you remember yourself and turn to him with gratitude and praise, you will be, or so it feels, welcomed with open arms.

But go to him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain. And what do you find? A door slammed in your face.

And a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that silence. You may as well turn away.

[2 : 44] The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become. No doubt those who had read Mr. Lewis's other books never expected to read what they read in this book.

Never expected to read these doubts and the despair of the man who wrote mere Christianity. So too, many who love to read the Bible never expect to read what we encounter in the Bible, in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Unlike the psalmist who rejoices that he's fearfully and wonderfully made, the preacher groans, better is the person who has not yet been born.

Unlike the book of Proverbs, which promises wisdom is better than anything else, the preacher adds, be not overly righteous and don't be too wise. Unlike 1 Corinthians, which announces that nothing we do is in vain, the preacher cries out, all is in vain.

Everything is in vain. But even though much of what it says is surprising, Ecclesiastes has so much to say to us.

[4 : 04] So much of the Bible puts God and his mighty acts in the foreground, in front and center. But Ecclesiastes puts God in the background.

And puts the problems of life front and center. Regardless of how hard you work, the preacher tells us, or how wise you become, you will always be stuck in a world where everything is crooked.

Where jobs are lost, promises are broken, dreams die. Where nations rage and pain cripples.

Where good people lose and parents bury their young. Where young folks race into the future filled with expectation only to find disappointment after disappointment after disappointment.

And where folks who seem to have it all are ready to call it quits because it never satisfies. You know, if Dorothy warned Toto that we're not in Kansas anymore.

[5 : 09] The preacher warns us that we're not in Eden anymore. We're stuck in a world wrecked by the fall. This is life under the sun.

But wonderfully, the preacher is not telling us all this so that we can prepare to die. The preacher is telling us all this so that we can be prepared to live.

So that we can live under the sun. I'm going to break this out. I mean, our main point here is life is brief and broken. But in the fear of God, life under the sun is still worth living. Life is brief and broken.

But in the fear of God, life under the sun is still worth living. And so, like I said, this is going to be an overview message of this book. Trying to get at the main thing it's trying to teach us.

And we're going to break that out in three points. The first is life is brief. Life is brief. One of the main things the preacher tells us is that life is brief.

[6 : 10] Now, the book of Ecclesiastes begins, like many other books in the Old Testament, it begins, and you can look there with me, the words of the preacher. Like so many other books in the Bible, it begins by announcing its author.

The words of the preacher. Then it continues, the words of the preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Now, anyone who's had a fair amount of time reading the Old Testament assumes that the preacher must be David's son, Solomon.

A son of David, king, must be Solomon. After all, Solomon was the king. Solomon was wiser than anyone who ever lived. And went on to write the book of Proverbs and the song of Solomon.

But unlike the book of Proverbs and the song of Solomon, which you can look at 1-1 in both of those books. Unlike those two books, the preacher stopped short of saying that this is, or the book stopped short of saying that the preacher is Solomon.

Now, for years and years and years, the church assumed that the book of Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon. Almost no one believes that now. We don't really know who wrote it, but whatever the truth of the matter, I'm going to refer to the preacher as Solomon for several reasons.

[7 : 29] It's clear Solomon could have written it. It's also clear that the book is patterned after the life of Solomon, which you're going to see really quickly when we start moving through these books.

Solomon was a king who was very wise. He was also one who had many possessions and many wives that got him into trouble and discovered the emptiness of those things.

Solomon was also the preferred, the received offer by the early church. And so I don't think we should discount them until we have good reason to. And it's also clear that whoever wrote the book of Ecclesiastes led the people in worship.

The word translated, the preacher there, now depending on your Bible, it may say something different, but the word translated preacher comes from the word congregation or assembly in Hebrew.

So the author, what he's saying by saying the words of the preacher, he's saying this is not so much a teacher in a classroom as it is a preacher in a church, do you see? And the context is emphasized in our Bibles in the way it titles this book as Ecclesiastes.

[8 : 35] Now Ecclesiastes comes from the word Ecclesia, which is the main word for church in the New Testament. So it's underlying this idea that whoever this person, this author was, it was someone who led the people in the worship of God.

The book of Ecclesiastes is a sermon. That's going to take us 18 weeks or so to break out all it has to say to us. But what exactly are the words of the preacher all about?

Now the book of Ecclesiastes is one of the five books of wisdom in the Old Testament. The Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. Each of these books teach us to be wise.

But each of them teach us to be wise in a different way. And they also say it in a different way. One pastor, Zach Eswine, puts it very well when he says, wisdom books are roads less traveled.

That means we don't read them often. The Song of Songs is like a back road brothel to us. Job is like a long stretch of desert road with no night light and no gas stations or rest stops for miles.

[9 : 46] People can get stuck out there with no help. If you've ever read Job, you know. Ecclesiastes is like a crazed man downtown. He smells like he hasn't bathed, looked like it too.

And as we pass by, he won't stop glaring at us and beckoning to us that our lives are built on illusions and that we're all going to die.

Meanwhile, we usually like our visits to the Psalms except for the ones that we feel we need to rewrite or edit because of how uncomfortably raw the emotions are. I think, put a little bit humorously, I think that's about right.

Ecclesiastes comes off like a crazy man downtown. I mean, he smells, he's staring, and he's sounding off about crazy things. Well, one of the main things these words of the preacher seeking to teach us is that life is brief.

In his memoir, the well-known atheist Christopher Hitchens quoted a poet who said, the fear of death distresses me. Now, I say well-known atheist because he was part of the new atheist that arose a number of years ago.

[10 : 55] Mr. Hitchens, he quoted this poet. He said, the fear of death distresses me. Mr. Hitchens went on to comment, I would not trust anyone who had not felt like that.

That the fear of death distresses me. I know what he means. I think you probably know what he means and so does the preacher. Perhaps more than anything else, the preacher is distressed about death.

The preacher is haunted by death. The preacher is obsessed, if we could say it that way, with death. He tells us again and again, life is brief because we're all gonna die.

Just two places. Chapter three, for everything, there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die.

In a way, like he says it in so many other places, chapter nine, it's the same for all. Since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and to the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice.

[12 : 08] This is an evil in all that is done under the sun. There's that word, phrase again, that the same event happens to all.

Everyone dies. Happy Mother's Day, you know? It's the word of God, you know? The good and the evil, the righteous, the unrighteous, the rich and the poor, those who work hard and those who waste their life, they all die.

The first way the book of Ecclesiastes teaches us how to be wise is it reminds us that we're all gonna die. In his famous book, Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, I don't know how many millions of copies it's sold, Stephen Covey tells us to imagine that you're at a funeral.

Now we've likely all been to a funeral. He says, imagine you're there. He encourages you to close your eyes. I don't know how you can read and close your eyes, but he asks you to imagine this.

The folks gathering outside the church, he says, have that sober, sad look on their face. They've been crying. Some are still wiping away their tears.

[13 : 21] You, however, begin to make your way inside the sanctuary where you find a seat. You pull out the program and you notice four people have been slotted to stand up to speak.

One is a close family member of yours. Would a delight to see them on the list. Another is a close friend of yours. The third is someone you've worked with for a long time.

The last is someone with whom you attended church for years. As you continue to read the program, you realize the funeral you're attending is yours.

So Mr. Covey asks, what are they going to say? As they tell others about the meaning of your life, what are they going to say?

What kind of son or daughter, father or mother, brother or sister will their words describe? What kind of friend will they talk about? What a provoking way to consider the measure of our lives.

[14 : 45] Well, Mr. Covey takes us to a funeral to help us realize we still have time to change what people are going to say about us. But the preacher takes us to a funeral to help us face the harsh realities of death.

The preacher warns life is brief. Life is but a breath. You know what happens when you blow out a candle? How long does the puff of smoke last?

You see it. You smell it. But in a few moments, it disappears. And the preacher says, that's what you're like. That's your life.

A puff of smoke that leaves a fragrance for a few seconds. As real and important and powerful as you feel right now, you're going to die very soon is what the preacher says.

And when you die, everything you live for, all your possessions, all your money are going to be left behind and worse still, after you're gone, no one's going to remember you. Now they might for a few years and they're just going to be like, what was the great granddad's name?

[15 : 45] I don't know. Whatever. They're not going to know. How often do you think about death? The preacher says you must. To be wise in life under the sun is to look death in the eye.

point two, life is broken. Life is broken. One of the other main things the preacher tells us is that life is broken.

Life is not just brief, the preacher warns. Good news. Life is broken too. Look in verse two. He says, vanity of vanities. Says the preacher, vanity of vanities. This is this crazy man downtown.

All is vanity. You know, after the title of the words of the preacher, the first words the preacher says is all is vanity. In fact, 38 times the preacher tells us that life is vanity.

This is the preacher's motto. This is the preacher's main message. This is his main points that life is vanity. And he says it's vanity of vanities in the same way that holy of holies is the most holy place.

[17 : 00] And song of songs is the best love song ever written. Well, he's saying life is vanity of vanities because it could not get more vain than what life is.

In fact, the preacher concludes all of his teaching in the same way. Verse 12, 8, vanity of vanities says the preacher. All is vanity. So the introduction and the conclusion and the main point of the preacher's message is all is vanity.

So it begs the question, what does vanity mean? This is the Hebrew word hevel. It's often translated breath in the Old Testament, particularly in Psalms.

So, Psalm 39, 5, all mankind is a mere breath. Man is like a breath on 144. His days are like a passing shadow.

So that aligns with what the preacher's saying about brief, and yet, I would argue, accepting one instance, I don't think the translation of hevel in Ecclesiastes is breath.

[18 : 22] Breath's not his main point. Actually, the meaning is, if I could be quite honest, it's difficult. Depending on your translation, it might be meaningless or absurd or senseless or vanity, obviously.

It might be any number of things. Six, seven popular translations of this word. But I think, it seems to me, that the best meaning, the best meaning of this word in my mind and my understanding of reading about this is futile.

Life is futile. Now, I'm going to explain what futile means, but life is futile. I think the idea of this book is the focus of everyone's life under the sun is on what you can get out.

Right? If it's just life under the sun, we're just focused on what we can get out, whether it's riches or happiness or success or approval or pleasure or whatever, we're all focused on what we can get out.

And so, throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, the preacher asks us again and again, what can you gain? What does a man gain? Look in verse three. What does a man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

[19 : 24] Now, that question is repeated. What does he get out? What does he take home? What's the payout for life under the sun? And he's saying it's nothing because life is futile.

There's no payout. It just slips through your fingers. There's nothing. And so, the preacher pushes us to see that everything in our lives is broken. He calls vanity or futile all our work, all the fruit of our work, all our pleasures, all our lives, all our youthful ambitions, all our successes, all our wealth, all our desires, all our laughter, all our popularity and praise, all our dreams, all our future plans, all of it is vanity.

All of it is broken. What does he mean by that? He means all of it will fail in the end. All of it will fail to deliver. All of it will fail to give us what we want. All of it will fail to pay off.

Everything is futile. Everything is senseless. Everything is unproductive and unprofitable. Richard Belcher says there may be some things in this life that had limited value, which he points out, and there may be, well, the preacher points out as we'll see.

There may be some things in this life that can be recommended, but ultimately, even these things fall short so that the preacher concludes everything is senseless. Everything is vanity.

[20 : 55] Everything ultimately does not deliver. Now, all this might sound like the ravings of a madman, and you're ready to cut it out of your Bible, but I want you to see that this truth is actually very comforting and clarifying.

It is oddly comforting. Have you ever thrown your hands up? Have you ever thrown in the towel? Have you ever been frustrated that your hard work goes unnoticed or your careful studying goes unrepay?

Have you ever been so discouraged when another friendship slips through your fingers? Have you ever felt that sacrifices of motherhood are not paying off at all? Well, you've discovered what's true of everything under the sun.

You're living east of Eden. You're living in the world of Genesis 3. You're living in a world broken and made mad by the fall, and a big part of being wise is learning how to navigate this world.

This is where Ecclesiastes is so helpful. Ecclesiastes is focused on the exceptions. Now, if you ever tried to learn a new language, it helps you appreciate the fact that you learn English at a young age because it's a very difficult language to learn.

[22 : 19] And if you're learning the rules of grammar, it's helpful to learn that I comes before E. It helps you spell believe or grieve. You can impress your parents and teachers with your spelling. But before long, your teacher says, but there are some exceptions to the rule.

So she expands the rule to something I learned when I was in school. I becomes before E except after C and sometimes Y. But still, that's not all either.

One meme puts it very well. I comes before E except after C. And when your foreign neighbors, Keith and Heidi, seize their eight counterfeit heifer slaves from feisty, caffeinated, weightlifters of average height in a heist.

Weird. So that's the rule. Just tuck that away. Ecclesiastes, guys, is about exceptions to the rule.

If Proverbs is the rule, Ecclesiastes are the exceptions. Look, Proverbs 8, 11 says, the house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish.

[23 : 29] Ecclesiastes 7, 15 says, there's a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness. And there's a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evil doing. So, so what, so, so what, Proverbs says, if you're righteous, you'll be blessed, the hand of the diligent will rule, but Ecclesiastes says, not so fast.

I've seen a righteous man who perishes. I've seen a man die by his diligent work. So, what, what Ecclesiastes is saying, life has not gone sideways when you suffer.

Life has always been sideways. sideways. This side of the garden. Second, the truth is clarifying.

Everyone under the sun is stuck in this broken, maddening world. We're all here together. Everyone's here together. Ecclesiastes opens our eyes to see our neighbors differently.

They too are trying to navigate a broken, maddening world. They're not just sinners like we are. They're sufferers like we are. They're disappointed, disheartened, disillusioned.

[24 : 44] They have a past. They have scars. They're tired of living under the sun. Sometimes our evangelism boils down to little more than come over here and I'll show you what life's really about.

But informed by Ecclesiastes, perhaps evangelism should include a lot more of tell me where it hurts. Tell me what happens. Yesterday I began reading I think it's called Born to Run, which is Bruce Springsteen's memoir or biography or something.

Autobiography. And he reads it to you if you get it on Audible, which is totally cool. I was struck by this. He was talking about his childhood and how he lived with his grandparents.

It's just incredible. Jersey boy living underneath the steeple of the Catholic church next by, talking about hiding and living with his grandparents in this house with no central heat. And then his grandmother, the matriarch, died.

He said in the morning, and I quote, my mother checked on my grandmother and she was still. When I came home from school that day, I think he was about seven or eight at that point, my world collapsed.

[26 : 05] Tears, griefs were not enough. I wanted death. I wanted to join her. Even as a teenager, I could not imagine a world without her in it.

There was a black hole, an Armageddon. nothing meant anything. Life was drained. My existence went black.

The world was a fraud, a shadow of itself. Everyone you meet, every day of your life has a black hole.

Everyone has a time they've said nothing matters. Which changes the way we live in this world.

Sometimes we Christians connect so above the pain of this world, but Ecclesiastes tells us to look it in the eyes so that we can be truly human actually and truly help those around us.

[27 : 19] So, what do we do? Life is brief and broken. How do we live in this broken, maddening world?

How do we do this thing called life? And it's precisely here that I think many non-Christians Christians misstep with this book. Many non-Christian scholars say Ecclesiastes teaches us that there's no meaning in life.

Meaningless, meaningless, all is meaningless with the NIV translation for years. They say Ecclesiastes is just the musing of a cynic, of a skeptic, of someone who has turned away from God.

Ecclesiastes is just a story of someone who's looked hard for meaning in life and found nothing and so they say there's nothing helpful in this book. They say cut it out. There's nothing helpful in this book is what they say.

Many say it. Many Christians misstep though as well and say, so if the, a non-Christian say Ecclesiastes teaches us there's no meaning in life.

[28 : 27] Christians say Ecclesiastes teaches there's only meaning in the next life. So they go to the other side. Ecclesiastes teaches us there's only meaning in the next life.

We can see this in Thomas Akempis, the most widely published book on spirituality, the imitation of Christ. And look what he says, Vanity of vanities, we know that's from Ecclesiastes 1.2, actually, Vanity of vanities and all is vanity except to love God and serve Him alone.

This is the greatest wisdom, to seek the kingdom of heaven through contempt of the world. That is the dominant understanding of Ecclesiastes in the history of church.

And so, many people over the history of the church who read Ecclesiastes, called up Megan Church, Siri did. So, many people over the history of the church who have read Ecclesiastes said the only thing that matters is what you do for God.

So, go to the desert. Go to the monastery. Swear off everything else. Be a missionary. Only one life which will soon be passed.

[29 : 41] Only what's done for Christ will last. Right? Right? I don't think so. According to Ecclesiastes.

Point three, life is beautiful. Life is brief. Life is broken. But life is breathtakingly beautiful.

The final thing the preacher says again and again is that life is beautiful. The preacher does not just say life is brief and broken. He adds, life is beautiful. He does not teach us that there's no meaning in life.

The preacher does not tell us there's only meaning in the next life. The preacher teaches us something different. The preacher teaches us that there are glimpses of meaning in this life and it is found in what one author calls the shafts of light breaking periodically through the cloud.

So he says the meaning of life especially as you read it in this book is these shafts of light that break through the cloud. Listen to Derek Kidner who says it like this.

[30 : 52] Without these shafts of light the book would simply preach despair which is what vanity of vanities all is vanity sounds like or at best a mere whistling in the dark.

But with them it is saying that the abyss of final vanity is the destination of every road but one. Every road but one.

So we find it through these shafts of light. What are these shafts of light? The first one I think is God is sovereign. God is sovereign. Life is broken but life is not spiraling out of control.

Life is not unfolding according to chance or fate or a set plan. Life is unfolding according to the mysterious plan of our great God. Perhaps one of the only chapters of Ecclesiastes that you've heard read says it like this.

Ecclesiastes 3 for there's a season and a time for every matter under the sun. The birds made it famous. We won't read that whole section. He says after that I have seen that the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with.

[32 : 03] He has made everything beautiful in its time and he has put eternity into man's heart yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

Ecclesiastes is helping us relinquish or throw off the illusion that we're in control of our lives. You know when I was young or younger my kids were younger we'd go to the grocery store and they always wanted that the cart with the car in the front.

You know like two seater coupe in the front of the cart. They wanted to hop in there and immediately sort of beep in the horn and turn in this way and they felt so powerful.

So in control as they were directing the cart along with the direction that I was pushing it. I look at Ecclesiastes just saying you're just like that kid in the cart.

You may think you have control there's time for every season under heaven because God has established it. So take a deep breath is what Ecclesiastes is actually saying there is meaning in this life and it is not through you holding on to it.

[33 : 16] All this pain and pleasure is under control but God is not just sovereign God is generous. What he says he said it right there in Ecclesiastes 3 God is given he said it 10 times at least he emphasizes that God is given.

The preacher references how God gives. God gives food and drink friends and work laughter and dancing harvest and feasting money and possessions peace and joy again and again throughout the book of Ecclesiastes these shafts of light are breaking in where it's drawing attention to what God is giving.

Yes this world is so crooked and it's so sideways and it's so distressing and disappointing and depressing but there's shafts of light there's shafts coming in every day these shafts of light.

Ecclesiastes 9 says go eat your bread with joy and drink your grape juice with a merry heart for God is already approved of what you do.

Enjoy life with your wife whom you love all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun because this is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun whatever your hand finds to do do it with all your might for there's no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom and shield to which you are going.

[34 : 41] The message of Ecclesiastes is God is sovereign take a breath God is but it's also God is generous take a look around so it's not saying just live for the next life that's not the message of Ecclesiastes just take in all that God has given right now in this life life is broken and brief but God continually gives stubborn good gifts the beauty of brilliant sunsets and star filled nights the sound of waves crashing on the shoreline and the rush of distant mountain streams the harmony of symphonies and the pulsing of a kick drum the smell of spring and honeysuckle honeysuckle the cedar and pine the inviting aroma of a home cooked meal the taste of sweet tea and cookies and thick cut bacon and well cooked beef the touch of clean sheets in a warm blanket the clasp of a chubby palm of a toddler's hand a hug from a dear friend a tender kiss from your spouse all these are gifts of God for joy but there's joy there's precious shafts of joy breaking in so God is sovereign take a breath

God is generous take a look around and wonderfully on this side of the cross the lines go even further the realities are more and more precious the sovereignty of God is not something we fear the sovereignty of God is the comfort because the God who is sovereign is our father he's the one who directs all things for our good and for his glory for his purposes the generosity of God becomes more precious too the many gifts are not just free gifts out there falling down the rain falls on the just and unjust but for us it's not just that the free gifts are precious blood bought gifts they're gifts for those who don't deserve gifts they're gifts for those who deserve only wrath and judgment so what do we deserve nothing but Ecclesiastes says these shafts of light are coming again and again as Dustin wonderfully said the greatest gift of all is the gift of free life through Jesus Christ our Lord that we have and so the non-Christian they're only they're only gifts but for the Christian they're taste of another world yet to come they're shafts of light because heaven can't stay contained in heaven it's just bursting it to say there's another world if you'll hold on there's another world so the preacher beloved is not saying there's no meaning in life and wonderfully no the preacher is not saying there's only meaning in the next life the preacher is not teaching us to wait until we die merely the preacher is not teaching us how to die merely the preacher is teaching us how to live

I think this guy even Ian Proven puts it very well he says in focusing our attention on this life rather than the next the book contributes to the correction of an all too frequent imbalance throughout the ages in Christian thinking which has sometimes presented Christianity as if it were more a matter of waiting for something than a matter of living some time ago I read a story really provoked me about a man going to hear an author named Chaim Potock speak now I've never heard of Chaim Potock until this story but he's a novelist who's written quite a few books gained popularity Chaim talked of growing up and how he wanted to be a writer from an early age even in his elementary years he wanted to be a writer he felt God had put his mind on words and he set his heart on it and even as a child his mom said

Chaim I know you want to be a writer but I want you to be a brain surgeon you'll make a lot of money and you'll help people you'll help keep people from dying and he said no mama I want to be a writer and he just tells a story that again and again throughout his life you know he'd go away for a little bit go on vacation or something like come back his mom would say Chaim I know you want to be a writer but I have an idea for your life I have something you can help people not die Chaim and he just this kept going on he went to college and began to get into journalism and get into writing and began to take that as his major and these exchanges kept going and more and more Chaim I have a plan for you I have a better idea for you this can help you can help people not die I know you don't want to be a writer but this is better you can be a brain surgeon and you can help people from not dying finally he exploded mama I don't want to keep people from dying I want to show them how to live that's what the preacher wants to do for you and me yes he wants us to look death in the eye yes he wants to plan our funeral so to speak but more than that he wants to teach us how to live how to live in this crooked world this back breaking world for Christ so the preacher is not preparing you to die he's preparing you to live life under the sun right now

J.I. Packer says it like this Ecclesiastes is one of the Old Testament five wisdom books it has been said that Psalms teach us how to worship Proverbs how to behave Job how to suffer Song of Solomon how to love Ecclesiastes how to live life is brief and broken but in the fear of God life is so worth living with all the pain it's so worth living so now it's up to you what will you do some of you on the verge of giving up under disillusionment discouragement concluding life is pointless I remember as a seventh grader planning my funeral preparing to commit suicide listing out pallbearers some of you may have done that this week

[41 : 35] I want you to listen that's not what the preacher has for you sometimes it's not that vivid sometimes just a low grade despair I'm just going to move through life avoiding putting my heart into anything anymore at risk of it getting damaged again or will you just endure will you just anticipate the next life will you be one of those Christians that's so great at talking about heaven and yet a grump to hang out with from day to day and a poor tipper will you be something different will you hide in a holy huddle or you live full tilt fearing God giving thanks for his good gifts and working unto him until you drop dead that's what

I want to do I'll die with my boots on and my heart full of joy may God help us this wonderful book Father in heaven we thank you for the privilege of sitting under your words we offer our lives to you our hearts to you sincerely and completely we are not playing games we don't want to play games anymore I pray right now that you would help us to take in fully this wonderful message and this wonderful book I pray that you would guard anyone who is on the brink of depression and despair and all the temptations that come with that I pray you'd open our eyes wide to the world around us and the neighbors around us who are still carrying the scars let us have a word in season to this world not merely one that promises eternal life in the next but one that tells of a God who still gives gifts most especially the gift of his son we thank you we praise you give to you again our lives completely in Jesus name amen amen