

Life's Like That

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[0 : 0 0] chapter 1. Just while you're looking that up, there is a prayer meeting tomorrow, just to remind you at 1 o'clock in the back room there. So, that's 1 o'clock. There's also an elders meeting in the morning at 10 o'clock, if you can remember that in your prayer, that the elders, we were thinking of the elders this morning and the responsibility that we have to be close to God, to walk with God, that we might at all times be able to determine the will of God. And we need to know that very much in these days as elders. So, pray for us as we gather to discuss the affairs of the church. We're beginning a new series in the book of Ecclesiastes, 12 chapters, I do believe. We'll go through these fairly quickly. It's easy for us to be bogged down in this book. It seems to play on the one string about the futility of life, but it's good to remind ourselves of what life is all about without Christ. So, let's read together Ecclesiastes chapter 1, and tonight we're considering the first 11 verses. The words of the teacher, son of David, king of

Jerusalem, meaningless, meaningless, says the teacher, utterly meaningless, everything is meaningless. What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun? Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises and the sun sets and hurries back to where it rises. The wind blows to the south and turns to the north. Round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again. All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing. What has been will be again. What has been done will be done again? There is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, look, this is something new? It was here already, long ago. It was here before our time. No one remembers the former generations, and even those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them. We'll end our reading those cheery words in the book of Ecclesiastes as we try and make sense of life under the sun.

Ecclesiastes chapter 1, while you're looking that up, just to remind you that I've not forgotten about my week in three. There's a few folk, Dorothy is one, and I know Paul's another, who have already submitted three photographs of their week, and we won't do that every week. We'll just do it now and again, make it fresh. So maybe next week we'll ask Dorothy or Paul to share their week in three.

But if you want to do this as well, it was great when Jane did it. It lets you know something about somebody's life, what it's like, what it feels like, and it just helps you appreciate them more, their life, what they're all about. And when you pray for them, you can picture them perhaps in their week. So it's a good thing to do. And so if you still want to contribute to that, send me three pictures, and in due course, we'll get around to doing that. It's only three or four minutes. You just come up one minute on each photograph, and then we'll pray for you as well.

So it's a good thing. So I commend that to you. Let's ask for the Lord's help now as we come to His Word. Our loving Heavenly Father, we thank you for that song we've just been singing, reminding us, Lord, that this is indeed the Word of God. It's no ordinary book. And in your Word, we meet your Son.

[3 : 5 5] And Father, even in the passage that we read, Lord, though your Son is not mentioned, Lord, it very much acts as a springboard, Lord, to your Son. And Father, we do just pray that you'll help us to understand these things now as we come to your Word together. Speak to us, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. As I'm looking out at you this evening, I'm looking at your age, and I'm going to show you an image, and you can tell me what this program is. What is this program here? What was the name of that program? In fact, it's on there. Do you remember that? It was called That's Life. Yeah, that's, it was Esther Ranson. It was a program that was out in the 70s, and it was a kind of light-hearted

thing. Between the 70s and right up to 1994, it was led by Esther Ranson, and it was quite a humorous thing, looking at consumer affairs and dealing with the problems in society, maybe getting fleeced by something. And I can't remember, like, Cecil someday was a kind of funny guy with the glasses on.

He'd do these odes and these poems and things. I'm showing my age now. But they used to get between 10,000 and 15,000 letters every week, talking about aspects of life that they wanted them to deal with. There were a few things that they dealt with quite serious, maybe seatbelts in cars and for kids, and occasionally they would deal with something that was of great importance, and the government would sometimes take this on board and produce a new law on it. So, it was quite humorous looking at life and the problems of life. Here's another image which just shows things like stress, anxiety. It was basically dealing with every aspect of life, just looking at life and thinking, this is the problem of life. How do we sort these things? So, that's the series title that I've given for this series. I've simply called it That's Life. That's what the book of Ecclesiastes is all about. What is it all about?

Well, the title itself, the word Ecclesiastes, is a Greek equivalent of a Hebrew word called Koholeth or something like that. Basically, we take the word Ecclesia, the church or whatever, it's from that root. And basically, Ecclesiastes is the main speaker in the house and in God's assembly where God's people are gathered. That can be a teacher, equivalent to that would be president, speaker, professor, pundit. It's the person who has something to say. And that's what Ecclesiastes is. It simply means preacher. Most modern commentaries would just refer to the person who's writing this as the preacher who says. And really, that's what it's about. It's the official speaker of an assembly, the assembly of God's people. That's what the word Ecclesiastes means. I'll probably refer to the writer as the preacher. Now, what's it about? What is this book about? It's quite dark in many ways about life and how difficult life is. Let me read to you one of the commentators. It's just a tiny wee book. It's one of the day one public commentaries. It's such a tiny wee commentary.

[7 : 22] But I thought his commentary was quite good when he paints a picture of what Ecclesiastes is like. So let me read this to you. He says this, In June 1942, Oskar Schindler inadvertently witnessed a Nazi attack in the Krakow ghetto in Poland.

They were there to round up Jews for deportation to the death camps. They were meticulously planned, and usually the Nazis were assisted by collaborators. At the time, Schindler and his mistress were out for a pleasant horseback ride on a hilltop when the Nazi attack opened directly below them. Astonished by the Nazi ferocity, Schindler's eye was drawn to a little girl dressed in red, who alone stood out from the mass of Jews being herded onto the trains and to their death. Many years later, Schindler looked back on this event and said, Beyond this day, no thinking person could fail to see what would happen. I was now resolved to do everything in my power to defeat the system. A notorious womanizer and lover of the good life, he had amassed a fortune through bribery and corruption, exploiting every opportunity that his status as a member of the Nazi party presented. In the light of what he saw, the good life became meaningless. He went on to risk his life and spend a fortune, dying penniless, in the rescue of an estimated 1,200 Jews in the shadow of Auschwitz. When Steven Spielberg retold the story in Schindler's list, the main body of the film was shot in black and white, except for the glow of candles and the two scenes in which the girl in the red coat appeared picked out in color. If you remember, this wee girl was the only thing, it was the thing that Schindler seen. The effect was both stunning and heartbreaking as she stood out from the mass of humanity that was being herded to their death.

Later in the film, we see the girl in the red coat again, as her body, along with 10,000 Jews killed in the Nazi massacres is exhumed and burned. And the commentator says this, Ecclesiastes is life portrayed in black and white, emphasizing the captivity and destruction of the whole human race, gathered together under the shadow of death. But there is color. I like that, what the commentator says. In amongst this black and white picture that's presented in Ecclesiastes, there is color. The occasional candle flickers, and soon others begin to glow and illuminate the scene. The brightest color appears when the cameras focus upon one person vividly illuminated against the drab backdrop.

[10 : 15] Not a girl in a red coat, but God, the creator of human beings. As the camera pans away and the span of biblical history is revealed, we see that same God among the seething mass of humanity, sharing in their sufferings and death in the person of Jesus Christ. So, as we look at this, we will look at Ecclesiastes, and we will look not for a girl in a red dress, but we will look in this black

and white picture at Jesus as we encounter him. And we realize that he is the solution to the blackness that we see in the book of Ecclesiastes. Now, what is the theme of the book of Ecclesiastes? It's basically two.

Commentators say there are two main themes. The first one is this, all is vanity. That is the main theme of the book. It's how the book begins, verse 2. Meaningless, meaningless, says the teacher, utterly meaningless. Everything is meaningless. Why does he come to that conclusion? Because he's looking at life under the sun, this side of eternity, and he's looking at it at a horizontal level. And when you look at life purely on a horizontal level, without considering life above the sun, everything is meaningless. What is the point? We live, we die, and we do various things in between. But what is it all about? People need, and this is what Ecclesiastes does, it causes people to stop and consider their life. They do not take time to do this. They just are on this cycle, as we'll look at this in a minute, this never-ending cycle of trying to achieve, and what is life all about? Ecclesiastes basically says, this main theme, life under heaven is meaningless. It's only when you consider life above the sun, it makes sense. The other theme is this, enjoy your life. That is common verses, Ecclesiastes 3.22, so I saw that there was nothing better for a person to do than to enjoy their work, because that is their lot, for who can bring them to see what will happen after them? Those are the two themes.

Everything's meaningless, but enjoy your life. Enjoy whatever you have before you make the best of it. Seize the day. And those are the two kind of themes that run currently together. The two themes seem to conflict with each other. Everything's meaningless, so how can you enjoy anything if that is the case?

But when you take those two things together, they sum up the book in this way, which is basically this, fear God in order to turn a vain, empty life into a meaningful life, which will in turn enjoy God's gifts. I think it's really only a Christian that can really enjoy the world and the plants and the animals and everything. We can really appreciate God's handiwork. We can see who's behind. It's only really, as a Christian, we can make sense of even the hurt and the disasters of life. And that's basically what's happening here. Ecclesiastes asks the question, how can we know God and true happiness and meaning to life?

It asks that question basically all the way. But it doesn't really answer it. It's really only when you look at Jesus and as he fleshes out and answers a lot of the issues that Ecclesiastes brings up, that things begin to make sense. It basically leaves us hungering to know God. That it's a good book to give to a non-Christian and to chat to a non-Christian about. What do you think about those 11 verses?

[14 : 08] What do you think about life and the universe? What's it all about? To have a conversation like that with somebody really is very special. I discovered just last week there, my brother was doing the holiday club. He's down in Dumfries and I have a friend there. And he happened to just send me a picture during the week and he just says, do you know this couple? And I went, I certainly know them. I used to work with this guy as an engineer and his wife is a Christian. He's not a Christian.

When she was marrying him, I used to say to him, she shouldn't be marrying you. You're not a Christian. And we used to have great conversations together. Well, he told me and it thrilled me so much. He's now become a Christian and I never knew this. This was about 20 odd years ago. And he said, I was instrumental in leading him to the Lord. And you just never know. And Ecclesiastes causes people to ask big questions. So it's a good book to, so one of the reasons why I'm doing this, because I'm looking around every single one of you are Christians. I know that. And I'm thinking, it's good to ask these questions and to take them away and think, maybe the Lord will give me an opportunity to challenge folk to get to talk to them about life. So Ecclesiastes causes us to examine our life and to cause us to hunger after God, after meaning, after purpose, what's it all about.

It prepares the way for the Savior and it prepares the way for the gospel in every way. And one of the commentators, he quotes Francis Schaeffer. And Francis Schaeffer, an American theologian and philosopher, was asked, if he had one hour on a train with a non-Christian, how would he use it to talk about the gospel? He said he would spend 45 to 50 minutes on the negative, showing them the real dilemma, showing them the plight and the failure of humanity.

And then he would spend 10 or 15 minutes telling them the gospel. Because he says, unless we see a need of the gospel, the gospel is not good news. It's only when you see the blackness of

humanity and of the world today, then the gospel becomes good news. Because without the gospel, we have no love and purpose and hope. We are lost. But in the gospel, we have the love of God, the love of Christ, the purpose and hope. And that's what we're going to look at. So this is what the preacher here is trying to do. The person that doesn't have God in their life, life is meaningless. But when God comes into her life, life has a point. The word meaningless is found 39 times in Ecclesiastes. God is mentioned 40 times. I quite like that. One more. God is for every word of meaningless, God is mentioned as well.

Now, how is it put together? Ecclesiastes basically consists of four sermons, each one with two themes, futility, but also hope as well. The natural conclusion as you read this, that the author of this book is Solomon. It's mentioned at the start, the teacher, the son of David, king of Israel. And it's said that he was writing towards the end of his life. He was wealthy. He experienced everything there was in life. If anybody was well quoted to speak about the futility of life, it's one thing, if somebody's had money, you want to listen to that person if he says money can't bring you happiness because he's had money. When somebody's went through everything. So he's certainly well qualified in that way. But a lot of evangelical commentators are not so convinced that it was Solomon who's written this. The style, the language that's used would suggest perhaps a later date. We don't know.

[18:16] Also, the knowledge of Greek and the ancient Near East and the wisdom material wouldn't have existed during Solomon's time. It's further complicated by some folk believing that it's a work of various authors. It's not just one author. And it's like a narrator who's taking the things of Solomon and putting them together in a later time. So it could either be Solomon or it could be someone else wanting to present this famous king's tragic downfall as a cautionary tale to the world.

It's not worth getting hung up on whether it was Solomon or whatever, whether how it was all pieced together. It doesn't affect the contents of the book, the contents we believe to be scriptural and so forth. But I will probably refer to Solomon as the preacher. There's probably Solomon, but we keep an open mind on that as well. The preacher, like Solomon, very much had great wisdom, studied the meaning of life, and came to various conclusions. And that is what we'll look at.

Campbell Morgan says this, summarizing Solomon's outlook. He says, This man had been living through all these experiences under the sun, concerned with nothing above the sun. Until there came a moment which he had seen the whole of life, and there was something over the sun. It was only as a man takes account of that which is over the sun, as well as that which is under the sun, that things under the sun is seen in their true light. Isn't that what you try and get folk to do? There is life above the sun. There is life beyond this. And our task is to put a stone in people, sure, isn't it? To get them to think, this life is not all there is. So, and that's what Ecclesiastes exposes the mad quest to find satisfaction in knowledge and pleasure and work and fame and sex and whatever. The mad quest to find pleasure in these things, and it cannot be achieved.

We're not wired to do this. It's like a good pair of spectacles to see things as they really are. They are a great pair of spectacles, the book of Ecclesiastes, to listen to the preacher and his evaluation of life under the sun. Also points to the futility of life, as I said, without God, whereas the words of Jesus, and we will consider his words briefly this evening, are very different.

You study the scriptures diligently because you think in them you have eternal life. These are the very scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. Jesus is all about bringing life, meaning to life, and purpose to life. So, I want to look at four things very briefly this evening. I want to pick out four main things in this passage, and in these first. I want us to look at them from Solomon's or from the preacher's perspective, but also from Jesus' perspective on the same topic, the same thing. First of all then, sequence.

[21:39] There is a, the preacher here looks at a sequence, actually a better word is cycle. Sequence is just something that follows after each other. He looks at creation. He looks at life, and he basically says, this is the way the world is. From verse 5 to 7, he uses three examples that mirror human experience, and these are, he looks at three natural cycles, and he compares them to human life. He compares the sun to a track runner, who basically comes out the blocks, and it runs a lap, and then finishes. It goes back in a circle. It starts, and goes back to where it started. I mean, it's very refreshing, isn't it? I mean, I know where we live in Musselboro. We know where the sun rises, and every night it sets at the harbor, and we go, it's got to be a good sunset tonight, and you get amazing sunsets in Scotland.

You really do. But he's looked at the sun and says, there it goes, there it goes, and then it's back again. He looks at the wind, a lot of activity, but nothing changes. From east to west, north to south, and the whole thing just blowing. There's a sense of monotony, and then the oceans as well. All these streams running into the sea, but the sea never gets full. It's just, he's looking at life, the natural cycles, a lot of activity, sun and wind and water, but nothing really changes. It's just the same.

thing. I know when I do, and go on a walk, I never like going on a linear walk. I like to go on a circular walk. I never like to walk and walk back the same way I've come. I like to see something new, and this cycle of life, it's basically, it's the way everything have been created, this cycle. So, you see, even in our creation, a car is created, it looks shiny and new, you hope it's going to last for years and years, it begins to rust and decay. The very clothes you have, the food you buy, the loaf that you buy, and you realize it's out of date, and you're only halfway through it. And life is like that. No matter what is created, what is made, it has given birth, as it were, but it naturally decays. The whole world is in this cycle, and our lives are like this. They come and go. Verse 4, generations come and generations go. So, he likens this to life. Yes, a whole generation will come, and it will go. James said this, you remember, what is your life? It's a mist.

[24 : 18] It appears for a little while, and then just vanishes. And we ask the question, what is the point? Olympic athletes are trying to live their life, their sporting life, and leave a mark.

They want to, I watched a wee bit of the golf, and Tommy Fleetwood putting or whatever to win a gold medal, and he got a silver. But you could see he was crestfallen, because it's not a gold. Who remembers the guy in second place? Nobody. You want the gold medal. And you see folks standing sometimes in the bronze medal, thrilled that have left a mark. I'm taking a medal home. Others, because they're not in the highest platform, they've not really left their mark. And this is what life is like. We try and leave a mark, and yet the Bible tells us that our life is on this circle as well. Genesis 3, right at the very beginning of the Bible, by the sweat of your brow, you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken, for dust you are, and to dust you will return. And people need to hear this. You are formed of the dust. You will live a whole life, a circular life. You may achieve things. You might win the shot putting or whatever, but you will eventually end up where you started. You were created from the dust. To the dust you will return. And the preacher knows this. Like, nature goes round in circles, so does us. And there's nothing new, he says. The conclusion is this, is there's nothing new. What has been, verse 9, will be again. It's been done, will be done again. There's nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, look, this is something new? It's already been long ago, and so forth. In other words, he sees life as this never-ending treadmill, a circle of events with no rhyme or reason. We can feel this in life, the frustration of, I mean, I'm clinging on to every day in the summer. I'm dreading out. They look out, and I go, that's nine o'clock, and it's getting dark. It was ten o'clock, and you're wanting winter just to keep away. Just, it's too early. We've no had a summer. Can you just hold off a bit? But it's like this.

You go into your house, there's dirty dishes. I'm obsessed, as I talk with bulbs and light bulbs. I just hate dirty dishes as well. But I know the next day, there's going to be more dirty dishes. There's always dirty dishes. Something sitting in the sink that needs to be done. Dirty clothes. The grass that's needing cut.

[26 : 55] You'll just cut it. You think it's great. You know, in a week's time, boom, it's going to need cut again. Work as well. Getting up early, catching the bus on a Monday morning. Same people, see the same things, same bus number. Off you go. Dinner, you work hard. You get the bus. You're back home. Off at the same time. People get set their watch by you. It's so routine. And then you get your dinner. Then there's the dishes to be done. Then you go to bed. Then you do the thing again and again. And everybody lives their life in this circle. And that's what you say. And there's a sequence. What is there to life? And that's what it's like for most people. But like the pop group Queen and Freddie Mercury, people do want to break free. They want, I wish I could have more. What is the point? We've come back to, it's been quite depressing coming back to Musselburgh again after being away for 13 years, six years in, seven years in Derbyshire, about six years in London. The same people doing the same job, walking the same dog. And I'm thinking, boy, at least we've lived a wee bit. What on earth have you guys been doing? Driving the same car. And I thought, and there's people we know that they've lived their whole life in a two mile radius. That freaks me out. I can't cope with that.

That just stick me in the box just now. I just can't cope. I like to think, let me live. Let me see something. At least travel. Go around it. Go to Millport. Do something. And I'm amazed. Derbyshire was the same. We used to say to folk, have you ever moved? Oh yeah, I moved up to Sheffield. Sheffield was half an hour away. That's all that they've been their whole life. They studied at Sheffield and they come back to live in Chesterfield. And that was their life. Some people do that. Just the same thing the whole time. Most of us are like that. Even if we travel, we're on this never-ending cycle and we want to break free. But when Jesus came, something very different happened.

Creation now began to be a wee bit more meaningful. It was never God's purpose when he created us that we would find meaning and purpose purely in creation, in creation itself. Romans 8 says this, for the creation was subject to frustration. If there's one word that should sum up everybody's life, it's frustration. Long grass, dirty dishes, late buses, rain. Life is just full of frustration, if we're honest. Creation was subject to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into freedom and glory of the children of God. In other words, the sea would never be full. Natural creation, in the way life is without God, there is never ever going to be satisfaction for people. It was never designed that way. God designed it that we only find our satisfaction, meaning purpose and hope, in Him, our love from Him. Only God can bring satisfaction to our life. And as we study the Gospel of John, a major theme in the Gospel of John is life. Life, you will find the word life many times through John's Gospel. I am the way, the truth, and the life. In Him is life, John says, right at the very beginning, John 1 verse 4, in Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. He comes to bring light and to make sense of life and to give us purpose and hope. I have come, he says, John 10 10, that they may have life and have it to the full. He is the giver of life, John 5 21. For just as the

[30 : 55] Father raises the dead, gives them life, so the Son gives life to whom He is pleased to give it. Ultimately, there's eternal life. You believe in Him, you have eternal life. It is, this is, this is, blows it, the switches in Ecclesiastes. Eternal life, eternal purpose, a new heaven, a new earth, new things new. I'm making all things new. Jesus brings in a new kingdom, a new life, a new covenant, and into the old death cycle of meaningless existence, He comes to bring new life.

I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will never die. But it's also new life, meaningful life, meaningful life now. It is not just life beyond the grave. It's not just, life is not meant to be boring. We, here are two images, if you could stick one up, Phil.

This is how most Christians choose to live their life when they become Christians. We, we think, I don't mind going on knees. These are quite good. They, they bob up and down. They go round and round. We know where we're going. And I don't mind the occasional wee thing. Agnes, didn't you feel that? That's great, isn't it? And we got a wee thrill. Whoa. And round you go.

When you become a Christian, we like this. It is safe. We know where we're going. We're around there and we'll probably get off the bit we get on and our family will be there. When you become a Christian, that is boring. That is not the way the Christian life is meant to be. It's like this other image.

It's supposed to be that. That is the Christian life. The Christian life is meant to be scary. It's a Christian, it's a life you live by faith. You're not to live by seeing what's around the corner. I love theme rides, but I always dread going on it for the first time. Because although I analyze it and I look at it, it goes up and round and then round about. Then there's a left and then there's a right. And I try and anticipate it. But you just forget it. You're just done. It's a white knuckle ride. And you come off either saying, I'm never doing that again, or wow, that was great.

[33 : 08] And you're back in the queue again. But that is a Christian life. The Christian life is not meant to be safe and sedate and boring. And if you're sitting thinking, well, Monday, I'm a Christian.

It's just boring, isn't it? Life has just gone round. Somewhere or another, we've jumped on the carousel. We don't mean the occasional wee bob up and down, but as long as it stays like that, that is scary. A life that's lived by faith, Lord, I don't know what's happening. Help me.

It's not boring. It's never meant to be boring. So there may be a sequence to your life, but it's not meant to be that. It's meant to be that. It's meant to be scarier. And when I became a Christian, suddenly I never lived. And you were the same. Before you became a Christian, you never lived by faith. You just, you'd achieve different by the strength of your own hand. Suddenly you become vulnerable. The Lord puts you into difficult situations. He tests your faith. That is scary.

That is difficult. It can be messy. It can reduce you to tears. It can make you fearful and anxious. That is a Christian life. You are with God in this life. And it is not this boring, endless, achieving nothing. Secondly, the writer, the preacher says, talks about slogging. That's the second one. He talks about not only is life this boring, tedious thing. It is hard work. He says this in verse 3. What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil? Look at the words labor and toil.

[34 : 40] Life for the preacher is not just a bit boring, getting nowhere, meaningless. It's actually hard work to go nowhere. They put a lot of effort into trying to find happiness, fulfillment, meaning, and purpose.

Living in London, you're right at the cutting edge of people's thinking. I was amazed that they were just bored. They were always trying to come up with something new, a pop-up shop that would sell something that nobody else has got, and folk would queue up just because it was new. Look at what I've got.

If you've not got one of these, I've got two of these. And the food as well. They would play with their food. I was always amazed that maybe you do this. When we go out for a meal, we've paid for it. We are finishing the meal. We're not leaving a pizza half eaten and off they go and their drink's still there. I feel like just sitting down and finishing that. Just a waste. A lot of hard work for what?

What are they achieving at the end of it all? Hard, hard work. And people are working harder than ever. When I was in electronics, you couldn't take your work home. There was no such a thing as a mobile phone, never mind a laptop. You go on the train nowadays, certainly in London, they'll work. [35 : 56] The minute they're on the tube, boom, laptop up. They're still working. They're laptop and they're on the phone walking up the street. They never switch off. Hard, hard work for what? In our street where we lived, Crichton Avenue, it was called Big Boulevard Trees. Looked so good. They had employed people to do their ironing for them. They had made, they had this, that, and the other. And I'm thinking they are busting their gut just to have this big four or five million pound house. But they've no time to spend with their family. They don't spend time in the garden. They were never in the garden.

Lucille and I were in the garden all the time. The gardens were deserted. You would never see them in it. And they're working for what? Why are they working? When do they say, I've had enough, I'm fully happy, I'll just take it easy? They never do. And it is futile. There's hard work for what?

But Jesus knows that this is the case as well. He knows that's how people live. So he came and he had something to say to those who labor and toil. He says in Mark 8, what good is it for someone to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul? In other words, what are you working towards? When Jesus comes and when you are converted, you're not only saved, but you now have a purpose, a purpose in life. It's not to make money. It's not to run after more material things and so forth.

I remember feeling this when I was converted. I lived my life for the weekend. That was all I lived for. Worked hard. Didn't matter. I got to party at the weekend. Once I became a Christian, I had a new purpose. I had a savior who deserved to be served. If I was going to work hard, if I had any energy, the best energy would be for him and to serve him in the local church or just witnessing or whatever that is. Jesus says to people of his day, do not store up for yourself treasure on earth where moth and rust destroy, where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourself treasure in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy, where thieves do not break in and steal. Then he says in John 6, do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God has placed his seal of approval. For Jesus, there is a toil which achieves nothing. That's what Ecclesiastes is saying. What's the point of the hard work? And Jesus says, most of us are doing this. Don't just work for stuff that's going to perish and doesn't benefit, but there is a work that is meaningful, a work that has purpose, and that is working for the Lord.

[38 : 43] That is living your life for the Lord. Paul says, for me to live is Christ, and as a result, to die is gain. When you live for Christ, dying is gain. When you live for self, dying is not gain. It's not the same way. But when you live for Christ, it is gain. Again, 1 Corinthians 15 says this, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move. You always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. You're not wasting time.

You're not, well, look at, I used to cut hedges. I mean, I was obsessed in Northern Ireland with a hedge. I used to have a spirit level cutting this. My neighbor was, it was beat your neighbor.

I loved these hedges. It took me a whole day cutting these, and I'd come back, and they'd go out almost with tweezers, as a wee bit. And a couple of months later, all the work's finished, and I'm back.

Twice a year I had to do this, do this. And I think, why am I doing this? It's just the same thing, achieving nothing. Working that hedge didn't really, it brought some satisfaction for a wee bit. Working for the Lord is always beneficial, always beneficial. The Bible talks about rewards. The Son of Man is going to come in His Father's glory, then He will reward each person according to what He has done. There is a work for us to do, and the Lord sees, and this will benefit Him, and it benefits us. And then in Revelation 14, write this, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit. They will rest from their labor, and their deeds will follow them. Ecclesiastes is basically painting this black and white picture of what is the point of it all? What are we achieving? What is the end goal? Nothing. It comes, it goes, whereas our work in the Lord is not in vain. Our work is worthwhile. Thirdly, significance.

[40 : 54] Significance. For the preacher, life is not just a futile circle of events, and work is meaningless. We, oneself, are insignificant because of that. What are we doing? What are we achieving? We're not winning gold medals that we'll talk about 100 years later, as they do for Eric Liddell. The thing about Eric Liddell is it's the glory of God. That's why we're mentioning him this morning. It's not because he was a great Scotsman. He's a great Christian. That is why, and we give glory to God for him. For the preacher, the phrase often seen on gravestones, in loving memory, simply isn't going to happen. That's what he says in verse 11. No one remembers the former generations. Even those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them. My mom was a fine Christian woman. She became a Christian later on in life, and I think there was a psalm in her grave that says, talking about the Lord receiving her in glory. But we've hardly ever visited the grave since she died. I say that maybe to my shame. I don't know. I remember we said to his family, don't come visit the grave. There's no point. I'm not actually there. You're just wasting your time. It's an extreme, but that's what he says. Don't waste your time. I'm not here. You're just going to make yourself miserable looking at a tombstone.

We will eventually be forgotten. If I die tomorrow, my daughters and my wife will bawl their eyes out, the rest of my family. Over a period of time, that will wane. They'll be the last to stop crying, hopefully. But my daughter might say, she's expecting a wee boy. Might come and say, there's your granddad's grave. Is he going to bring his son and his son and his son? Not at all. It'll happen for a wee bit. And we'll go, well, there's a wee part. Next there'll be weeds and everything around the gravestone, and nobody's really going to bother. And we need to realize that we're not as important as we think we are. And that's what Ecclesiastes is telling us. Nobody's going to remember you. The generation will come and they'll go, John, who? Like that guy. And we are to live a life, therefore. We need some kind of meaning and some kind of significance. And only the Lord can give us not only meaning to life, but significance. Significance. And the thing is, when you become a Christian, you get a name. One of the greatest names is just to take the name of a Christian. I'm a Christian. I'm a follower of Christ. Do you ever thrill at that? There are people who wouldn't call themselves Christian. Sometimes we can be ashamed. Oh, I heard you're a Christian. Yeah, yeah, that's me. But it's something to wear with great pride. But let me remind you of Revelation 21, 27. Nothing impure, speaking of heaven, will enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. I remember when Lucille, she became a prefect in the school that I was in after me. We weren't courting it at that time. And she used to go in the prefect room, and I can't remember it, but she used to see my name carved there. I must have carved it in something. John Lowry was here, kind of thing. And she goes, I remember. She was attracted to me, she always said at that time. And she goes, I could see your name. I remember seeing your name, John. And I used to think that was great. My name was carved in Blantyre High Primary, secondary school, in the prefect room. I had arrived, my name was carved in the prefect room. Tonight, my name was written in the Lamb's book of life. How many people can say that?

[44 : 43] There'll be scrolls. I used to watch Andy Murray and stuff, and I thought, it must be great walking out to center court and seeing all these names, and your name is there. That must be, or on a trophy, your name is there. But nothing compares to this. In the Lamb's book of life, your name is in there.

That's better than a name that somebody might look 50 years in Wester Hills. You were a member here. Ah, look at that when somebody's doing the research of your life. This is amazing. Your name's written in the Lamb's book of life. You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God. That is who we are. Ecclesiastes doesn't tell us that, but it prepares for Jesus, who then comes and says, I will give you meaning. I will give you purpose. I will give you hope. I will give you significance. It really is something very special. Well done, you good and faithful servant. That's better than Princess Anne on the rowers coming up with a gold medal and putting it around them. I understood she could ask. People can ask, who do you want to give medals to? She chose to give, I'd like to give medals to the rowers. She doesn't know if Britain were going to win, but it was a sport she was interested in. I would like to do that. And that's what she got to do. The women won the rowing.

Boom. I thought, that must be great. Britain, there you. Well done, guys. I was waiting on her high-fiving them, but she had the same cheery face throughout all the nations. And I thought, oh, that's your own country. You know, give them a big hug or something. There's your medal. But this is better, to hear from the lips of Jesus, well done, you good and faithful servant. You've been faithful in a few things. I will put you in charge of men. Come share in your master's happiness. Their rowers didn't go back to Buckingham Palace. They went back to wherever they came from.

We get to share in our master's happiness. We are given a name. We are significant tonight.

Thirdly, or fourthly, lastly, and with us I'm finished. Boy, look at the time. Five past seven.

[46 : 52] Anyway, satisfied. Mick Jagger, I can't get no satisfaction. Christians, we can. Verse eight, all things are wearisome. More than one can say that I never has enough of seeing, that you never has enough of hearing. And that's why he says, verse two, everything's meaningless. But Jesus comes.

I have come that John may have life and have it to the full, that we might have full life. You remember when the disciples were arrested and they were dragged before people? It says, they were arrested, the apostles, and put them in a public jail. But during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. Remember what the angel said? Go stand in the temple courts, he said, and tell the people all about this new life. I forgot that. The angel said they were arrested, the door's a door. Go and tell them about this new life. There is a new life that you have. Jesus brings new life, a life that can satisfy. Jesus says, whoever drinks this water will be thirsty again.

But whoever drinks the water that I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life. It's possible to know, even in the midst of difficulties, even in the humdrum of life, great joy, great peace, great satisfaction. So here, the preacher, right at the start, wants us to consider life under the sun. He concludes, life under the sun, without life above the sun, is utterly meaningless. A never-ending cycle, getting nowhere, hard work, what's the point? But in Christ, we have significance. He's come to give us life, to give us a name, to give us a purpose, hope, and meaning. And we can know even satisfaction, even in an impoverished state, even in these days, all because of his son. May the Lord encourage us in these things. I apologize for going over it. I must have been enjoying myself too much. I had no idea that was the time. What a great God. What a great gospel. Do you feel special tonight? Maybe you come in, it was wet. You feel a bit damp, the weather, the winter's coming. Boy, we have purpose. We have hope.

We are special. Let's stand and we'll sing, God has spoken by his prophets. I think this is the first time I've sung this during my time here. Usually we sing this before the sermon, but let's use it to close this evening. If you know this thing. Our loving Heavenly Father, we thank you for your Word. And tonight, Lord, we want to thank you for the book of Ecclesiastes. Lord, for it causes us and wants us to run to Jesus. Lord, he is the only one who can give us life and meaning and purpose and hope and all these things, Lord, that we were created to need and to desire. Lord, we thank you that you've opened our eyes and shown us the futility of life under the sun without your son.

[50 : 06] And Father, we pray, Heavenly Father, that we might really embrace, Lord, this teaching. Embrace, Lord, the teaching of Jesus and come to him afresh and to live a life worthy of him, a life that will count and will last forever, that we will hear well done. You good and faithful servant, enter in to the joy of the Lord. Help us to work and to toil for him. We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Thank you, folks. Amen. .
. Amen. Amen.
Amen.