

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Meaning(Less)

PART

1

TITLE

Chasing The Wind

SCRIPTURE

Ecclesiastes 1:1-18



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Yeah. Can I get a tow?

Sure. What's your location.

Where did my money go? Nevermind.

[inaudible 00:00:41].

Well, good morning Providence family. And for all of you who are guests with us, we're thrilled that you have joined us. I hope this time will be really encouraging to you. I know you need a warm hug this morning, and so turn with me to the wildly popular book of Ecclesiastes. If you have never read this book, there will be parts of it that will no doubt be puzzling to you. There's a lot of it that is hard to understand. There's a lot of it that is very poetic in how it seeks to teach us about life. And yet it is absolutely packed with wisdom.

In fact, there's five books in the Old Testament. And we call those books the wisdom books. Now, there's a lot of books but only five of them are actually put into a category called wisdom books.

In fact, the whole Old Testament is actually a story that moves from one person to the next person. That moves from one King to the next King. It begins with Adam and it moves through generations of people telling one clear connected story, bringing us to the promise that God made, and him fulfilling that promise and sending Jesus Christ to the earth.

And yet within that history, within that narrative of all those individuals of redemptive history where God is showing us what he's like, and how he's patient with us, and how he's moving through generations in order to fulfill his promise to bring a savior to you and to me. What we find is that God put within that Old Testament of the Bible, five very specific books that really seek to describe humanity moving through history.

So these books, they tell us a lot about what we feel like when we're going through hard times and good times. And there's five of them, right? There's the Psalms, and the Psalms is the song book of wisdom. There's the Proverbs, and that's the guide book of wisdom that shows us how to live. And it shows what areas of life are wise and what areas are foolish. There's the Song of Songs or the Song of Solomon. And what we find there is the guidebook for love, and sex, and fidelity, and faithfulness to one another. A key ingredient to what it feels like and what it is like to be human while we're living on this earth.

And that leaves us just two more, Job and Ecclesiastes. Now these two books are different and yet they conclude with the same life lesson. If you've ever read Job, Job is a book that actually shows us unparalleled pain. Well, in Ecclesiastes, it's written by a man who has experienced in life unparalleled pleasure. In Job, we find someone who has actually experienced unparalleled suffering. Whereas Solomon who wrote Ecclesiastes, experienced unparalleled success.

And yet each of these two books that conclude with this idea. And that is that life on this earth is broken, and our only hope is beyond the sun. Meaning that the savior of our life is not within us. He's not around us. He must come from somewhere else. There must be a rescuer that comes in order to fix everything that is broken here on the earth.

So if you have ever in your life had to choose joy, we sometimes say, "You know what?" I'm just going to choose joy. And what we mean by that is we know that God has blessed us in so many different ways, and yet there's something in front of us that is a hazard. It's a hazard to our happiness. It's a hazard to our health. There's something wrong. So in spite of not everything being right in the world, we're going to say, "But I'm going to choose joy."

If you've ever experienced or are currently experiencing just the feeling of being mildly perplexed that your life isn't working out the way that you thought that it would, that life is broken at its core. Or if you have ever or are currently experienced what the Psalms often speak about as being utterly downcast. If you're in a state currently of depression. Whether you have to choose joy or maybe you're just a little perplexed, or maybe you're absolutely and utterly downcast. What you'll find in Ecclesiastes is that it's going to lead you to say, "I get this and this gets me." What we find in Ecclesiastes, is the courage that someone had to actually write down some of the darker thoughts that we have thought

And in my 46 years, I want you to know that Ecclesiastes has been one of just a few ropes that God has thrown to me when I felt utterly perplexed. When I was in the darkest places in life. Ironically, it's Ecclesiastes, which is one of the most perplexing books in the entire Bible to lift me up.

In fact most of us, we have friends in our life to where when their name pops up on the phone, when they call us or they send us the text, or when we get to spend time with them. There's something about that name and that person. It's just a good friend. There's just comfort there. There's something about that person that when you see their name, you just form a smile.

I know it sounds odd. But when I read through the scriptures and when I turn through the Bible and when it lands and I look up and I see the word Ecclesiastes, it's like a friend. You see because it's in this book that I can remember moments in my life to where I felt like I was at the end of my rope and God actually threw me this rope to tell me that he understands and I am not alone.

What I'm trying to say is this. Is that if you will dig in with me over the next few months, I promise you, you will find treasure in Ecclesiastes that'll change the rest of your life. Treasure that'll give you purpose. It'll help you understand life. It'll give you perspective of what's happening in the world. It'll help you understand why you feel the way that you feel, even when things may be going pretty good. It'll give you hope for all your days. So I pray that you won't be scared away from content that at first glance is absolutely perplexing. So let me pray for us as we get started.

Father in heaven, we come before you today thanking you that we have the Bible in our language. We thank you for the technology that even if we can't gather right now physically or that we get to interact with you and with each other in this format in your word.

And God, we know right now that many of the freedoms that we enjoy are at least temporarily set aside in the hope that it would protect people. But we do thank you father for the freedoms that we do have, and we thank you for the people who have gone before us and for their families. As they sacrifice in order to give us these freedoms. We pray God, that you would help us to be a thankful people.

But God, the very need for a day to remember people who died to give us freedom points the fact that things on this earth are broken. The very reality of war and conflict in the world. It tells us that things are broken. So I pray as we look at Ecclesiastes, that you would serve us as only you can. That you would minister to us as only you can, that you would vindicate the honor of your great name and that you would pierce through the indifference, or the apathy, or the discouragement that now sets like a wall in front of our heart.

I pray God, that you would conquer our unbelief. And that you would stir us with hope. You would give us purpose and perspective as we become wiser through Ecclesiastes. So God, would you give me the words to say, would you help us to listen well, and learn well, and apply it well? I pray in Jesus name. Amen.

So he begins and he actually tells us that it's the words of the preacher, the son of David, the King of Jerusalem. So we know that this is Solomon. Solomon was David's son, and he became the King over Jerusalem.

So you have to understand that it's as written from somebody who's enjoyed privilege, and power, and prestige and wealth. This is somebody who has experienced life and some of the better parts of life. In fact, what we know of him with unparalleled resources.

You see early in his reign as King, God came to Solomon in grace and he said, "Solomon, I'm pleased with what's happening. Ask me anything that you wish." And the Bible tells us in 1 Kings 3:9 that Solomon answer the Lord's requests by saying, "God, will you give your servant, would you give me an understanding mind to be able to govern your people that I may discern between good and evil?"

And God was so pleased that Solomon asked for wisdom even ahead of things like wealth, or health, or peace, that God says, "Not only am I going to make you the wisest person on the earth to ever live, but I am also going to give you what you didn't ask. A long, peaceful, wealthy life. In fact, so much peace, and so much health, and so much wealth that you will literally be throughout all of history, the model of wealth, wisdom, and success. That you will be the one that's going to prove to the rest of the world that I can bless." And it's amazing what takes place. In spite of all of God's blessings that were poured out upon Solomon. The Bible tells us that he turned away from God.

You see Solomon, he really loved women. He really loved sex to be honest. So he assembled 700 wives to take care of and to meet his needs. And the Bible tells us that most of these wives that he assembled into his life and around his life were actually people from foreign countries who were worshiping foreign gods and idols. And they began to pull Solomon's heart away from the Lord, and he began to actually worship the idols and gods of other nations.

Well the Bible says that there's no such thing as peace, there's no such thing as meaning in life unless we're connected to the one true God. So when Solomon rejected God walked away, he lost his mooring. He lost his reference point for where he came from, and who he's supposed to be, and where he's going. And when he lost his reference point and his mooring, he began to drift through life. But because he was so resourced, he had so much money, he had so much wisdom. Is that what it tells us is that he went on this quest in life to find meaning apart from God. And his final conclusion in Ecclesiastes, which we're probably going to look at perhaps every single week, at least reference to it until we get to the end. At the very end of the book, this is what he says. He goes, "Now I want you to know something. All has been said. You've heard everything you need to. Here's the conclusion of the matter. Fear God and obey his commandments for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment. Even the secret ones. All our things, whether it's good or evil. Every deed, every secret thing. What that means is that everything matters."

But before he brings us and gives us this gold at the very end of his letter, he shows us what he learned in his quest to find meaning apart from God. He's going to tell us some life lessons. And he's going to tell us and show us different pursuits that he attempted in order to find meaning that all proved to be dead ends.

Here in chapter one what we find is actually just some life lessons and one pursuit that proved to be a dead end. So because the text is longer, instead of reading it all at one time, I'm going to read a section and make a point. Read a section and make a point. So look with me at Ecclesiastes chapter one starting in verse one, we're going to read three verses. He says the words of, "The preacher, the son of David, King of Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the preacher, vanity of vanities. All is vanity. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?"

What we learn here is what he learned. And that is the life under the sun is empty. The word vanity there can also be translated emptiness or meaningless. It's interesting that in Hebrew language and in the Bible, in order to add emphasis, you simply double the word. So for example, there was this amazing temple that God gave to the people said, "This is how you build it. This is how you construct it. And this is what each piece means." And there is a place there was called a Holy place. But then there was another place where God's glory actually resided, and they called it the Holy of Holies. In other words, they doubled the word in order to make it superlative in order to add emphasis.

So what we find here in verse two is that Solomon not only doubles the word vanity, he actually stacks the word in one verse five times in order to make one point crystal clear. And that is that this world in which we live is cotton candy kind of empty.

Now we've all had cotton candy, and of course it tastes good. It's sweet. We all know that it's sweet. It looks amazing though. It looks like it's going to be so filling. In fact, we forget the last time that we ate it, that literally about halfway through you really just get a feeling in your mouth of just this dried sugar. And it's really not all that wonderful. And yet we continue to look at it, and we continue to expect it to be able to deliver a pleasure that it was never intended or capable of delivering. And this is the reality of the world. He says everything that around, all of it is vain. All of it is empty. All of it is meaningless.

Now I know what you're probably thinking. And I would encourage that instead of simply dismissing him as this grumpy old man, I would encourage you to listen to yourself. Listen to some of the words that come out of your mouth. You see in our day and age, we don't use the phrase all is vanity, when we walk around and we see broken things.

Now the equivalent today of all is vanity is, "What's the use now?" Have you ever said that? Have you ever walked around and something happened, something was broken? And all of a sudden you wasted an entire day in futility and you said, "What's the use? Why did I do that?" You see, this is the cry of a student who actually studies and yet still fails the test. This is the cry of an athlete who gets injured on the field then goes through tremendous grueling therapy in order to get back to the field, only to be re-injured upon his return. What's the use?

This is the cry perhaps that many of us right now as parents are saying when we're trying to relearn geometry in order to be able to teach it to our children. What is the use? Be honest with the kids. Sign, co-sign. Never used it ever. It's the cry honestly of a man, we've had people within Providence that this has happened. Is they work, and they work, and they work. And then all of a sudden they have plans for retirement, and different plans of what they're going to do during that time in the very first week. Very first week of retirement, they're diagnosed with cancer.

There's a lot of people in life. Maybe you have something right now. Perhaps you are in sales and you tried to sell something all week long this last week. You sold nothing. And the yield of all of the effort would have been the same as if you had done nothing at all. This is what he's saying. He's saying, "I'm looking around the world and everything that I'm searching and everything I'm learning. And what I'm finding is everything's like cotton candy. It looks so appealing, and yet really it's just blown up sugar." He says, "What does man gain by all the toil under the sun?"

Now this is perhaps the most important master key that I can give you that's found in chapter one that's going to guide us throughout the rest of Ecclesiastics. You're going to find as we go through that, he's going to write the phrase under the sun 29 times in 12 chapters. This is really important. And it's really important you understand exactly what it means because you're going to get to the place in the book when you're reading something and he's going to say something, and it's not going to make any sense to you unless you understand what he means by under the sun.

You see sometimes you and I, we just imagine that it means, "That means life on earth." It's not quite what it means. What it actually means is life on earth where there is no God. Where there's no rescuer coming. Where there's no justice in the end. Where there's no hope, and no heaven, and no deliverance, and no divine purpose for why we're alive.

When he says under the sun, what it means is, "If all that our eyes can currently see is all there is." And if you can understand that, that when he says that he's not saying just being alive. He's saying if it were true that our days were carried out on this earth and there was no God, no revelation, no Bible. There was no rescuer who was to come and indeed has already come in the person of Jesus Christ. "If all that we know in life is all that there is," he says, "Then what is the profit of all of our toil?" We are born and we begin to accumulate things. We first accumulate strength and height. And then we accumulate knowledge, and then we accumulate friends. And then maybe even because we love one another, family, or wife, or a husband, and then children. We have friends, we have church family, then we have a job and we then accumulate a expertise in something. And then maybe money and then possessions. And then he says, "But if this is all that there is, we die and leave it all. And it was all for nought." This is what he means. "If there is no God, if there's no revelation from God, if there's no rescuer coming from heaven beyond the sun coming to us under the sun. Then verse two is right, everything is meaningless."

"But if there is a God, and if there is a rescuer, and there is divine revelation that gives us divine purpose for living. And if there is the judgment seat of Christ waiting us. And everything that we have done in the body, things seen and things unseen will be judged by his perfect eyes. Then don't you see that there is meaning in everything that we're doing?"

So he begins by saying, "If it's true, this is all there is, you need to understand that this is very empty." Well he goes on in verse four he says, "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 around to the North. Around and around goes to 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."

So he begins in verse four and he says that a generation goes and a generation comes. What he's going to teach us here is this, is that life under the sun is exhausting. It's exhausting. Is he after having the privilege to enjoy the rivers, and the mountains here on the earth for a period of time? The earth says to us when one generation is passing, "Hey, thanks for coming. Now leave all your stuff at the door at the same time that it's welcoming the next generation."

You go to a hospital today and there are people in one generation who are dying, and there are people in another generation who are being born. And the earth is welcoming both and saying goodbye.

The earth is constantly, what it says, is it looks like it's just always here and it's always saying hello to one generation and goodbye to another generation. And he says that this cycle, it seems like it's just endless. And he says, "And I look around nature and as I've observed different things in nature, I've noticed that this silly cycle, I can see it taking place in things that God created on the earth." He says, "I look at the sun and I say you know what, every day I wake up and it rises over there and it sets over there. Then I go to sleep. And you know what? It's as if it did nothing because it just comes up over there again." And he says that, "I'm sitting there and I feel the breeze on this side of my face. And it's blowing from over here and it's moving over here. And then suddenly for apparent no reason at all, it seems like that the wind just shifts and it actually returns from where it came from." And he says, "And I look at the streams and I look at the rivers. And I see the water. It just continues to pass in this direction and yet where it goes, it never fills anything up. And where it comes from, it never empties."

You see what he's saying is this. Is that there are these clues in the earth where this cycle is taking place. And it points us to the cycle of life. You see life very much is like a treadmill. I know many of us, it's been a while since we've been on a treadmill. And that's no insult. I can't see you. So I'm sure that you're really healthy right now. But a treadmill is something, if you look at this one, it's almost as if a whole generation gets on a treadmill and we all have choices. There's some people and they want to run fast, and some people want to run slow. Some treadmills, they have the option to where you can actually increase resistance or actually make it really, really flat. And then some treadmills, I mean they're really nice. You get a screen on the top of it and you can say, "Do I want to run in Yellowstone today or do I want to run in the Grand Canyon today?" Because some people, they're not content with monotony.

They need adventure. And yet isn't it true that we run, and run, and run, and run? We get exhausted and sweaty, and then we step off to the very place where we got on. And this is what he's saying.

We get a haircut, not that long. All of a sudden we need another one. We spend hours doing laundry. We think you know what, every stitch of clothing in the entire house is now clean. And then all of a sudden your children, they take all their dirty clothes that have been hidden underneath their beds and they drop them into the laundry room. And then everything that's clean will be dirty in a week. It's a remarkable thing how life is this treadmill. In fact, even our days. I know that there's some of us and we're real creative on how we



spend our time. But for the most part, we kind of go through the same routine in the morning and throughout the day. We wake up, maybe we get coffee, maybe we read, exercise.

But then what we do is we get cleaned up and we go and do whatever we're going to do that morning. Whether it's work, or school, or the children, whatever it is. And then all of a sudden it's time to eat. and then we go back to some more activity and then we want to eat again. Then we come home, watch TV, go to sleep. Wake up, repeat. Every now and then we throw something unique in there, we throw a vacation. But if you think about your normal day, we call it my typical bedtime. I typically rise. I typically eat lunch at this time. We typically eat dinner at this time. I typically go to this place. I typically do this, read this.

The Bible tells us that this just continues to happen. But here's the deal. We may not be getting very far from where we started, and yet we are getting very tired doing it. And that's what verse eight says. He says, "All things are full of weariness and a man cannot utter it." And what does that mean? It is what it means. It means that words fail to express how weariness tends to outpace our progress.

I know that we've made progress in different things, but isn't it amazing how many times you come home after a futile day, someone asks you, "Hey, how was your day?" "Man, I don't know." "What'd you do in it?" "I don't really know, but I am absolutely exhausted.: Sometimes we can't even categorize why we're tired, and yet we feel that we're tired. at the end of verse eight says that like eyes and ears that continue to receive and never fill up, our strivings on this earth continue until our treadmill stops.

Then he moves on. So let's read starting at verse nine. He says, "What has been is what will be and what has been done is what will be done again. There's nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said seen as is new, it has already been in the ages before us. There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after."

What he's teaching here is that life under the sun is recurring. It's repeating. And it's not just repeating at the micro level. It's repeating at the macro level, at the generational level. This is what I mean. He says, "What has been done is what will be, what has been done is what's going to happen again. There's nothing new under the sun." There's nothing new.

Have you ever noticed though, how every single generation, they all begin wildly optimistic about their problem solving capabilities. They look at the world and they say, "You know what, we have finally arrived. The generation to fix all of this has arrived. So all of you older people, you need to step aside. Because we have ideas, we have new methods. We have some things that are going to fix what we see that you guys broke."

And because every generation sleeps through history class, every generation thinks that their ideas are innovative. But they're not. It's just the return of the boomerang. Now you know what a boomerang is. It's a piece of wood that's cut in a certain way. And you throw it, it makes a circle, and it comes back to you. And this is the reality what he's saying. This is what life is like. One generation tries something. And then they get tired of that because that hasn't fixed the world. So they take it and they throw it. And it begins its course. It takes a while, but it begins its course. And while it's in the air, that generation dies.

The next generation gets on the treadmill. They look up and they see all the problems in the world. And all of a sudden they see something, what's the solution? And they look around and all of a sudden they catch the boomerang and they go, "I've got a creative idea." But it's not so creative. It's just recycled. And it's recycled from ideas that have been tried and found wanting. So he says, "Is there anything of which it is said, see this as new?" I mean think about it. We brought the mullet back, we brought socialism back, bell bottoms are back. It's all back. And one day, we'll throw whatever it is and we'll pass. And a future generation will catch it and go, "Hey, I got an innovative idea."

He says that the things that, he says there's no remembrance of former things normal, nor will there be any remembrance among those who come after. What does that mean? It means that we have already forgotten what our grandparents had tried, and our grandchildren will forget what we are trying. And as one generation exit the treadmill, the next gets on and says, "We're here. We have ideas, and we can fix this thing." Solomon says this is futile and empty. And then he concludes verse 12, he says, "I the preacher have been king over Israel and Jerusalem. And I applied my heart to seek and search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven." Here and he says, "I went on a quest to find meaning in life." He goes, "It's an unhappy business that God has given to the children [inaudible 00:31:42] to be busy with. I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold all is vanity is striving after wind. What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted.

"I said in my heart I have acquired great wisdom surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me. And 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 perceived that this also is but a striving after wind. For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge, increases sorrow."

What we learn here is that life under the sun is puzzling. It's confusing. He says, "With all the resources that I had is King. I had good health and I had plenty of money. So I set out in order to figure out what's happening in the world." And it says in verse 17 that he applies his heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. The highs and the lows of culture. He knows what it's like to eat at a fancy restaurant, and a not so fancy restaurant.

And what he says is that, “My very first pursuit was education. I thought if I could just learn enough, if I could understand what’s happening in the world enough that I will be able to find answers to be able to fix what I see.” You know, we’re a pretty educated city. There’s a lot of people at Providence who are pretty educated. We value it, we pay for it, we esteem it. You would think that in our day and age that if Solomon was here, somebody who has been as intentional to grow in wisdom as he, that he would add his voice to the resounding wave that says if we could just know enough, that we could fix everything.

You see, Solomon was a pretty amazing guy. In fact, you can read in 1 Kings chapter four, I just took a few parts of this. But he says, look, this guy Solomon, he spoke 3,000 Proverbs. Actually it goes on and he says and he knew all kinds of things about the beasts of the field, and trees, and animals and all kinds of things. And he says that all people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon. This was an educated person. And in the end when we would assume that Solomon would stand in front and say, “Education is the key,” he concludes and he says, “It’s a striving after the wind.” Means I’m like chasing the wind, trying to know enough. Now he’s not saying that education is worthless. He’s saying education is limited, in particular if it’s not rightly directed.

And this is why. At first people who are educated, they simply cannot fix everything they learned that’s broken. That’s what he says in verse 15 what is crooked cannot be made straight. There are a lot of educated people who said, “You know what, that is crooked. And yet they do not have the ability to straighten what is crooked.” We know this because anthropologists can define racism, but they cannot fix it.

And he goes on and he says there’s another problem, and that is that educated people learn more about what to grieve. You see this in verse 18, “For in much wisdom is much vexation. And he who increases knowledge, increases sorrow.”

Ever been to the Holocaust Museum? Here’s a picture of a part of it. This is enormous area of shoes from Jewish people that were massacred. You go to the Holocaust Museum, and you know what happens? You learn something. And in learning something you feel more sorrow. You see in this world, the more you know that is broken, sometimes the heavier life becomes. And if this is all that there is, then it all becomes very puzzling.

So what do we do with this? Just a few applications here from chapter one. The first is I would encourage you to take comfort in knowing that you, that we are not alone. You see, if it feels to you like you’re constantly fouling off the pitches, it feels like there’s opportunities that are coming into your life over and over and over again, and you just, you’re like, “All right, this one’s the one.” And you just take a real swing at it and you keep barely missing. And yet it appears to you that everyone else in the whole world seems to be hitting daily home runs. This book tells you that you’re not alone.

Fact is, is that everybody is barely missing the pitch. Life is broken for everybody. And you say, “Well, wait a minute. How is this so comforting to anybody?” I look at my own life and I can tell you that I have literally endured seasons of darkness. I have endured times and days where I’m absolutely exhausted and I look at the work of my life and I think, “Why am I tired? What did I do? What did I accomplish or what did I finish?” I see futility, and weakness, and weariness. You say, “Well, how is this encouraging, just knowing someone else’s suffering?” No, no, no. It’s not just that it’s comforting, that we’re not alone. What’s most comforting is that God almighty is affirming the futility of life under the sun, and he does so by recording it and preserving it in his word for all time so that we know that he understands.

You see, he is the only one who can fix these things. And just imagine a God, the only God who has the power to fix everything if he didn’t understand. That would be discouraging. But you can be assured that God almighty, who created you, and who loves you, and who’s given us his word has reinforced to each one of us that he understands what we are going through. Indeed, that he even sent his son to live in this world to experience what we are going through. So I want you to know wherever you’re at, you’re not alone. You’re not alone.

Second thing I think would be good for us to consider applying to our life is let’s trust Christ who came to rescue us. You see, the story of the Bible is in some ways complex because it’s long, but actually it’s very simple. There’s four parts to the whole story of the Bible. There’s creation where God made everything for us to have very real relationship with him. He created us in his image for us to know him, and know peace, and know meaning in being connected to him. The second part is there’s this thing called the fall where we rebelled against God. We declared independence. And in our independence, we lost all sense of meaning. And then there’s the third part, which is redemption. Where God promised to redeem, eventually sent Christ, and now he’s seeking to get word out to all the people in the world that a rescuer has come from beyond the sun, under the sun, in order to rescue us and bring us to heaven.

And then there’s the fourth part, it’s the very end. It’s called restoration. Where one day is the God almighty is going to make all things new. That we’re going to enjoy a perfect relationship with him. And with that perfect relationship will come perfect understanding of meaning and hope, peace and joy. It’s all coming because of Christ.

And you see every single book in the Bible is specifically intended by God to point to one of these sections. In order to add color and to tell a part of that story in detail. What Ecclesiastes has specifically written and placed within the scriptures in order to re-feel the dramatic and devastating effects of the fall.

Just imagine if we didn’t know that there was creation. We didn’t know that there was redemption. We didn’t know that there was restoration coming. If all we knew was under the sun the fall, Ecclesiastes says, “This is what it would be like.”

But the good news is we do have the Bible, the whole Bible that tells us the whole story. This is that God almighty promised a rescuer that would come behind beyond the sun. And he indeed he did. And when Jesus came to this earth while he was here, he looked around at people and he said, "I want you to know something, that something greater than Solomon is here." You see, Solomon could inform us, but he could not fix us. He could figure a few things out, but he couldn't forgive. But Jesus came in power. He lived without sin. He died on a cross, and he rose from the dead in order to bring everyone who trust in him to heaven beyond the earth.

You notice that two times Solomon says in verse 13 and verse 17, "I applied my heart." And the word heart there, it means inner being. This is my emotions, my senses, my mind, my heart, my will. Everything, I was aiming for it. See, there's another sense that's necessary for us to understand in order to be delivered and to experience hope. It's more than just what we can touch, and taste, and see, and feel. And it's the sense called faith.

Faith where we place our faith in Jesus Christ who rose from the dead. We confess we can't save ourselves, but he is the savior, that he did come. The Bible says that if you'll trust in him, the rescuer of it all, that he'll forgive you of your sin. He'll transform your life. And he will restore you one day perfectly as whole.

And I urge you to do that today. In fact if we can help with that, if you'd like to have a conversation today with somebody about trusting Jesus Christ, what it means, and how to do it, you can send us a text. PBC1 and send it to 313131. We would find it our joy to talk to you even this afternoon.

The last thing for those of us who know Christ, I think is important is let's live on earth with our heart in heaven. You see, we now know that what we see with our eyes on the earth, it's not all that there is. There is a God, and there is a rescuer, and there is heaven, and there is purpose for living. So Colossians 3:2 says, "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth." I want to urge you, Providence family, to orient your life so that God is the backdrop of it all. So let's take education as the last example. He looked and he says, "I believe education may be the cure. Maybe I can learn enough." And he says, "You know what? I couldn't learn enough to fix everything. And yet education still is a value when it's pointed in the right direction." Let me illustrate.

You see, only when education points to God. To his creativity, to his order. You see, when you study biology, or when you study botany, or when you study engineering, you see what's happening in the world that's true. You have to understand it is God who created it to be true. Only when education points to God does it find its purpose and does it give us gladness. Which is why in the early days of Harvard University, every student was told these words. "Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ, which is eternal life. And therefore lay Christ the bottom as the only foundation of all sound knowledge."

You see, when learning and education is divorced from God, it only creates more fog and pride. But when our learning is pointed to enjoying God, suddenly education becomes a tool for our joy. So Providence, let's learn, and read, and study, and continue to learn to love the one who created it all. So let me pray.

Father in heaven, we thank you for your grace. And I pray now father, as we seek to respond to you, we know that our life can only find meaning if it is built on you. So as we consider these perplexing ideas, I pray that you would simplify each one of them. And help our minds and hearts to be able to understand and internalize them. Would you build our faith? Would you build our understanding? Would you give us hope for those that are discouraged today, downcast, even depressed? God, would you pierce through that darkness with the light of your word that tells us that the word Jesus Christ came from heaven to earth in order to rescue us from this darkness?

So give us hope. We love you. We're so thankful that we have the privilege now. Not only to give, but to sing. And we do so in response to what you've said. We pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen.



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