

Everything is Meaningless (Ecclesiastes 1:1-18)

The words of the Preacher, the son of David, the King in Jerusalem: “Meaningless, meaningless, says the Preacher, all is meaningless.” All things are wearisome...”

How about THAT for some “uplifting words”?? ☺: everything is meaningless... all is wearisome. Wow. Why would such words be found in the Bible?

Because the Bible doesn’t hide the truth. **Because** this is how many people felt when King Solomon wrote these words. **Because** this is how many people feel today.

How many of you are TIRED of COVID? How many of you are TIRED of all that COVID has forced upon us? How many of you are TIRED of living like this? How many people around us use the words of Ecclesiastes chapter 3 to describe their life today: *meaningless & wearisome*?

The Book of Ecclesiastes was written by King Solomon makes us look at life APART FROM A FAITH RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. [Recall today’s children’s message: “*what do you get when you take ‘God’ out of ‘good’?* GOOD – GOD = 0.] Apart from a living trust in the true God, you get: **nothing... zero... zilch...** “meaninglessness”. Solomon is trying to get us to look at life from the standpoint of an unbeliever... to “walk in their shoes” as it were.

The most famous song of singer Peggy Lee is entitled “*Is That All There Is?*”

A woman looks back at some significant events in her life: the loss of everything in a house fire... attending a circus with her dad... having her heart broken by a boy... and finally looking to the day of her own death. And what is her pronouncement? Peggy Lee sings: “*Is that all there is? Is that all there is? If that’s all there is my friends, then let’s keep dancing. Let’s break out the booze and have a ball, if that’s all there is.*”

There you have it. It’s pretty clear. If you take God “out of the equation”, the best that can be said in the face of life’s heartbreaks & life’s end is this: “get drunk, dance & have a party”. [Elsewhere in the Book Ecclesiastes, Solomon puts it this way as a philosophy of life apart from God: “***Eat drink and be merry for tomorrow you die.***”]

Christians approach life from the standpoint of faith in Jesus. He gives us: meaning and purpose to life... His strength in our struggles... forgiveness for our sins & failures... and the assurance that when this short life is over an eternity in heaven is just beginning. But in this Book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon **makes us see life** from another direction.

He says in chapter 1 verse 14: “***I have seen all the works done under the sun, and behold – all is meaningless & striving after the wind.***” “Under the sun” is a phrase repeated again & again in this book. It refers to a view of life APART FROM GOD.

-2- Solomon says this kind of life is finally meaningless... just chasing after the wind. In her song Peggy Lee says life is finally so meaningless & death so hopeless that the only solution is to get drunk & dance.

Some of you (as have I) have attended funerals or memorial services at which there was little or absolutely NO mention of God, Jesus, forgiveness, or heaven. What CAN an unbeliever say in face of death? What hope is there? What comfort for the family?

On the night of my high school graduation, the father of one of my friends suddenly died. His funeral was the next week in a public meeting hall. With God taken out of the picture, all that was said was the man was a hard worker... made lots of money... had a nice home, cars & boat. Then we were told – the bar is open, “the food & drinks are on Bob” (the name of the deceased). Peggy Lee could have sung-***“if that’s all there is, let’s keep dancing...break out the booze... if that’s all there is.”***

Solomon would have said--- THAT kind of thinking & living... “under the sun”... apart from God is finally: meaningless. It’s quite interesting that the Hebrew word for meaningless is **hevel** – which means “a mere breath” (whoooooo)... that is a fleeting & non-lasting moment in time.

William Shakespeare described it this way in his play Macbeth: *“Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor actor that struts and frets his brief hour upon the stage and then is heard no more; it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”*

If you want “labels” for what we’ve been talking about today, here they are: **Nihilism & Epicureanism**. Nihilism says: What’s the use. It’s all meaningless. Epicureanism says: Eat, drink & be merry, that’s all there is. [These are the things we have heard today from Solomon & Peggy Lee.]

Why are we talking about these things in these on-going, no-end-in-sight days of COVID? To MAKE us see life & death through the eyes of an unbeliever. NOT to judge or condemn them... but to understand them better & love them & humbly show them a better way... God’s way.

[And--- **this message is good for each of US** when we forget God & believe the devil’s lies that all is meaningless & wearisome.]

St. Augustine said this: *“The heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee O God.”* Jesus tells us in Matthew 11:28 – ***“Come unto me you who are weary & heavy burdened & I will give you rest.”*** Jesus is our rest and the true rest & strength for anyone who comes humbly to Him.

Jesus tells us in John 10:10 – ***“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they might have life and have it abundantly.”***

-3- By His cross & empty grave Jesus destroyed the thieves of sin, death & devil. His sacrificial death & victorious resurrection is God's powerful declaration that the empty philosophies of Nihilism & Epicureanism will NEVER have the last word.

Jesus tells us in John 11:25 – ***"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies."*** Oh – here is the sure and eternal hope YOU have dear Christian believer: THIS brief life is NOT all there is. Jesus' resurrection is our resurrection victory.

My parents were right when they told me when I was a boy: *"The older you get, Steven, the quicker time flies."* At age 66 I see that clearly now. But I & you believer can ALSO see clearly that our 60 or 70 or 80 or 90 or even 100 years here are but an appetizer, an hors d'oeuvre to the MAIN COURSE of life eternal with our Lord in heaven.

This life CAN be tough. This life CAN have heartaches. This life CAN be hard to figure out. These "COVID days" are a clear reminder.

But the cross & empty tomb of Jesus proclaim that you & I are in God's strong & loving hands. When we are faced with life's seeming meaningless & difficult moments we say in humble faith: *"I may not know what the future holds, but I know WHO holds the future."*

St. Paul says much the same thing in 1 Corinthians 13:12. He compares what we know now in this life to what we will know in heaven. In the face of life's mysteries, Paul says: ***"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully..."***

In the face of life's mysteries, Genesis 50:20 tells us ***"Man meant this for evil, but God can bring good out of evil."***

+ *"Meaningless, meaningless, all is meaningless??"* NO Solomon, not at all.

+ Your song is wrong, Peggy Lee – THIS short life & boozing & dancing is NOT *"all there is."*

We are in God's powerful & loving hands.

We pray, dear Lord, help us to better trust You and better understand the *Peggy Lees* of this world **so we all can sing a new song...** a new song like:

"Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling." **INJ, amen.**

