

MEANINGFULL, PART IV

ECCLESIASTES 2:17-26



INTRODUCTION

- Have each group member explain the hardest task they ever completed. It could be a project while on the job, challenge that pushed them to their physical limits, or anything else!

SERMON REVIEW

- Have you ever worked hard on something, only to be disappointed when it doesn't pay off?
- Solomon goes so far as to say that all toil, all "doing" is meaningless.
- Toil is continuous work, exhausting labor, or arduous striving.
- Too often we define ourselves by our work, and we let work determine the way we live.
- In Ecclesiastes 2:17-26, Solomon observes that death comes to all. And those that remain will inherit what you achieved.
- Work can only have meaning when it is done in connection with God (verse 24).
- We can't just do things, then hope or pretend that they were for God.
- If we really want to find this life of meaning, we need to...
- *Know God* (Matthew 7, Psalm 46:10). If we do not know the heart of God, then we cannot do what pleases him. Self must not be at the center of all we do, because it will consume us. All we do must be an outflow of our communion with Christ.
- *Rely on God* (Proverbs 3, Ecc 2:24-26). We tend to look to our education, experience, peers, etc. God has to be the first and only thing we depend on for wisdom, direction, meaning.
- *Stay on Mission*. Live life for the purposes of God! And that is not primarily a question of what he has called us to do, but who he has called to become. Our identity cannot be determined by what we do; rather, we must find out who we truly are in Christ, and (as a result) live in accordance with his design and intent.

DISCUSSION

- The word "toil" is not used in everyday conversations. To help us understand Solomon's point, let's describe what toil (continuous work, exhausting labor, or arduous striving) looks like in contemporary society, perhaps even in your own life!
- Look at Ecclesiastes 2:22-23. Has toil ever caused you anxiety, pain, or sleeplessness? If so, describe what that was like.
- Why do we assume that completing tasks will bring us satisfaction?
- How does our work become so intertwined with our identity?

- How does Solomon's tone change in Ecclesiastes 2:24-25? According to the passage, what makes the difference between meaningless toil and meaningful work?
- Read Matthew 7:21-23. How is it possible to work "for God" without truly doing that which he desires? How can "godly things" become toilsome?
- Practically speaking, how can we choose to be still before God in a world that's constantly running (which is to say, toiling)?
- How does knowing God change the way we identify ourselves and relate to others?
- Read Colossians 3:22-24 (keeping Ecclesiastes 2 in mind). How does Scripture urge us to approach our work?
- Again, practically speaking, how can you put Jesus Christ at the center of your work, labor, or striving in the days and weeks ahead?

CHALLENGE

- Implement a new discipline that will reinforce your effort to put Jesus Christ at the center of your work. This could be a prayer repeated during your commute to the office, a verse written and taped to your computer, a daily goal to serve and bless at least one peer, or any number of things!

CLOSING PRAYER