

Harris Creek Baptist Church
Jonathan Pokluda
Series: Family Matters
September 26, 2021

The Search Begins

Ecclesiastes 1

¹ **“The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:**

² **“Meaningless! Meaningless!”
says the Teacher.**

**“Utterly meaningless!
Everything is meaningless.”**

³ **What do people gain from all their labors
at which they toil under the sun?**

⁴ **Generations come and generations go,
but the earth remains forever.**

⁵ **The sun rises and the sun sets,
and hurries back to where it rises.**

⁶ **The wind blows to the south
and turns to the north;
round and round it goes,
ever returning on its course.**

⁷ **All streams flow into the sea,
yet the sea is never full.
To the place the streams come from,
there they return again.**

⁸ **All things are wearisome,
more than one can say.
The eye never has enough of seeing,
nor the ear its fill of hearing.**

⁹ **What has been will be again,
what has been done will be done again;
there is nothing new under the sun.**

¹⁰ **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.**

¹¹ **No one remembers the former generations,**

**and even those yet to come
will not be remembered
by those who follow them.**

¹² I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³ I applied my mind to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens. What a heavy burden God has laid on mankind! ¹⁴ I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

**¹⁵ What is crooked cannot be straightened;
what is lacking cannot be counted.**

¹⁶ I said to myself, “Look, I have increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge.” ¹⁷ Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.

**¹⁸ For with much wisdom comes much sorrow;
the more knowledge, the more grief.”**

Church, how are we doing? My voice is hanging on by a thread – thank you refs. But I did not sin though. Some of you...yeah...glad you are here. We are glad you are here.

I know there are a lot of you out in the lobby and when you were driving to church this morning you probably were not anticipating watching from the lobby. So, I want to thank you for serving us in here while you are being out there and hopefully you are still going to be able to get the message by way of that large screen out there. So, thank you for joining us – parents who are coming in from other places. We are glad that you get to be here and so that you continue to pray for what God is doing in and through this place here in Waco, TX, and surrounding areas.

If we haven't met my name is JP, Jonathan Pokluda. It is a privilege to serve you. We are starting a new series this morning on Ecclesiastes. There are these things in life that happen where you are trying to discern what is meaningful to you. What matters to you. And I will give you some hypotheticals and I will tell you one that is relevant to me. What matters? What really matters to me? So, one of these events is dying. So, as a pastor, you sit with people who are coming face to face with death. Sometimes they survived a loved one who has passed away or they just got that terrible news from the doctor. “Hey, you have two more months, three more months, six more months...” And I have seen now, many times, just the way that the priorities change. “Now I am going to start living for something else. I want to prioritize my time in this way. I want to prioritize my resources in this way. I want to prioritize my conversations in this way.” So, you begin to see in that moment, with that diagnosis, what really matters. Another one is if your house was one fire. Hypothetically speaking, someone says “Hey, your house is on fire.” And so,

you realize that you are safe, but you go, and you start grabbing things that matter most to you. “I don’t want this to be destroyed. Let me grab this...let me get this...” This is what really matters.

For us, I haven’t died – I am still with you – and I haven’t been in a fire, but we did move. We recently moved, I told you this a couple of weeks ago. And so, in moving you are trying to sort your things. What is going with me? But our move is interesting because we are moving into a place temporarily, for a year. So, the vast majority of our belongings went into storage, and we tried to just grab those things that matter to us in the day to day. The things that we use. Does that make sense? So, some stuff went with us in our rent house and most of our stuff went into storage – which is really just in our garage. It is stacked up. Here is our picture of our garage. That is 117 boxes, if you are curious. That is what 117 boxes looks like.

And the reason that they are so disheveled, some of them opened and whatnot, is because it did not work out perfectly. Right? I got into the day-to-day life, and I was like, “Where is my backpack?” My backpack has my computer in it. It has my outlines in it. It has my Bible in it. I need to find my backpack and I cannot find it in all of the things that we said mattered to us in the day to day. Which mean that I have to go tearing through those boxes in the garage. You can imagine this – I am opening the boxes that are taped shut. I am looking inside. They are labeled on the outside, but not one of them says backpack. Ok? Somehow that got missed.

So, I am just looking into the boxes, and I am about two hours into this assignment. I am going through a stack of boxes and Monica walks by and says, “I packed those. I know it is not in there.” Which is not all together that helpful because she did not tell me where it was, because it is somewhat helpful because as I am looking for it, I don’t have to look in there. So, I am now to 115 boxes instead of 117. As I go look somewhere else, she goes, “No, I packed that one. I know it is not in there.” And this is what Solomon is going to do for us over the next several weeks. He is in a search for meaning. He is trying to find the reason for living and He is going to start looking into hypothetical boxes and he is going to come face to face with you and tell you, “It is not in there. You do not need to look in there.”

He doesn’t actually tell us where it is found. He just slowly through 12 chapters tells us where it is not found. He is going to ask some of the biggest questions that all of you ask. Why are we here? Why does it matter? What am I supposed to do with my life? So, this is a series that I think we really need. So, it is Ecclesiastes. If you have your Bibles, you can turn there. We subtitled this, *The Search for Meaning* because that is what he is doing. He is searching for meaning.

Ecclesiastes is a poetic book. You have Genesis through Nehemiah, the historical books. You have Isaiah through Malachi, the prophetic books. Then right there in the middle you have the poetic books: Jobs, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon. So, this is one of those poetic books or one of the books of wisdom within the poetic books, the book of Ecclesiastes. It is 12 chapters of searching for meaning. I titled the message today, *The Search for Meaning Begins*. That is what we are talking about, the search begins as we are looking for meaning.

And as I said, the book addresses life’s biggest questions. He is going to talk about where not to search for meaning and I want to say this to you. A wise person learns from their mistakes. A wiser person learns from the mistakes of others. And so, we get to learn from the mistakes of the

wisest person who has ever lived – it is well-documented – the wisest person that has ever lived. We get to learn from his mistakes over the next several weeks together. One of the dumbest things that you can do, one of the worst things you can do, is to leave here and repeat the experiment. Does that make sense? That would be like him saying, “Hey it is not in that box” and you spending the rest of your life searching in that box, where he told you that you would not find meaning there. Repeating the experiment would be as foolish as someone pouring gasoline all over themselves and grabbing a match and saying, “Let’s see what happens.” And then you watch what happens and you go, “Oh, I got to try that at home!” That is what some of us do with this book. It is going to teach you where meaning is not found, and you are going to be tempted and leave here and look for it in those places.

Interesting things about Solomon: in 1 Kings 3 God shows up to him and says, “What do you want?” This is what all of us want to happen. For God to show up like a genie and say, “What do you want?” Like make a wish, right? And Solomon says, “I want wisdom to rule your people.” And God was pleased with that answer, that he didn’t ask for riches, that he didn’t ask for fame, that he didn’t ask for palaces, that he didn’t ask for the envy of his enemies, that he didn’t ask for women or pleasure, he didn’t ask for those things. So, what God does is He opens that spicket of worldly blessings on his life. Anything worldly that you could want this man has significantly more than you will ever have or anyone you know will ever have. It is just a fact. It is rooted in history. This guy really lived; he really was a king. We could just talk about women – he had 700 wives and 300 concubines. Concubines are like a wife, but you do not have to buy them a Valentine’s present. Truly, that is the best way for me to describe it. They don’t have the privileges that wives would have. So, he has 700 and 300, making a 1000 wife equivalents. This guy makes Hugh Hefner look like a nun. Right? If you understand who Hugh Hefner he is had 7 wives, Solomon 700. He is good looking, like Ryan Gosling. He dresses well, like Michael B. Jordan. Even Jesus says in Matthew 6, “Hey none of you are dressed as well as Solomon was.” 1,000 years later, that is when you are well-dressed, if Jesus is talking about your “drip” you are well0dressed. I am just saying man.

We could talk about money. He has more money that Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, Bernard Arnault, and Bill Gates combined. They don’t come close to his 2.2 trillion-dollar net worth. You can go to secular websites today, websites that deny the resurrection or Christianity, and they would tell you...you could ask “who was the wealthiest person that ever lived?” And they would tell you King Solomon was. King Solomon was the wealthiest person who has ever lived. His gardens...his gardens...he created pools to water his gardens that now, 3,000 years after his life, you can go seem them and they are still there. Look at this image from Google Maps. This is the Solomon’s Pools, that is what he used to water his vineyards. Those are still there, that is cute that you have a swimming pool. 3,000 years from now it will not be there. 1,000 years from now, a couple 100 years from now your pool will not be there. 3,000 years and you can still go see his pool – he is the most powerful person in the world at this time. More powerful than the President of the U.S.A. He single handedly crafts the silver market. He had so much silver in his personal collection it became the equivalent of rocks. He crashed it. And the dumbest thing that you can do is to repeat the experiment, The greatest thing you can do with this text is to learn from it: who God is and what He desires for your life.

As I move through this text, I have three points. They are all alliterations like a good Baptist preacher. We will talk about the rut we are stuck in, how we will be remembered, and where our reason and rebellion get us. King Solomon wrote this, the vast majority of scholarship agrees. Some say he didn't, but it was written about his life. Regardless, Solomon is the subject written about 1,000 years before Jesus Christ shows up on the scene, so about 1,000 B.C.

Ecclesiastes 1:1, **“The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:”** it tells you who is about to speak. That word for teacher is Kohelet, it means something like a philosophy professor. Because a good teacher explains. A good teacher answers questions. This book will not answer your questions! It will just ask them. Everybody has that friend that just asks all the questions, “Well what about... Why are we here? Well, why, well why, well why?” We all have that friend or an 8-year-old, right? Either one – they are asking those questions. Interesting that the title Ecclesiastes means the same thing, the teacher. Just like here, the teacher is who is saying this, and he uses the democratic method – he is questioning everything. And this is what he says, **““Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.”** Welcome to Harris Creek. **“What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun?”** This verse is key to understanding the rest of the chapters.

Where it says, **“What do they gain?”** That word gain is referenced in this book 10 times and it translates literally profit. What do they profit? At the end of their life what is their excess? What can they take with them? What did they gain from their 76, or whatever, years on this earth? What do they have to show for it? And then when he says on this earth he says, **“under the sun”**. That phrase “under the sun” is in this book 28 times and it is a metonymy. Does anyone know what a metonymy is? A metonymy is a phrase to describe a place. So, like if I said, “I love high school football.” and I might say it like this, “I love the Friday Night Lights.” And I am not talking about the show then you would know that I was talking about high school football – that is metonymy – Friday Night Lights. If I said, “I am going to Silicone Valley.” You know where I am going to go, but not because I told you the literal name of the geography. I described it with a phrase. Or like, “Waco has a church on every corner. We are a part of the Bible Belt.” Those are metonymies. So, when he says “under the sun” he is describing a place. He is describing the world. That is important to understand as we move in because he is going to tell us where meaning is found. Or better said, where it is not found 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.” What he shows you is 2nd grade science class, the water cycle. And what he says is the streams run into the ocean and the sun evaporates the sea into the clouds and the clouds move over the mountains and rain down. And the streams run back into the ocean and evaporate into the sky, and it runs down. And the earth turns about a thousand miles an hour as it orbits around the sun. The sun comes up and the sun goes down. And the sun comes up and the sun goes down. And as it turns the wind blows to the south and it turns to the north. And it does it all over again.

1. *We are in a rut of relentless repetition.*

My first point, we are in a rut of relentless repetition. You can see the gears of a clock, if you have ever opened the inside of a clock, you will see the gears turning. Spinning like planets around our solar system -day after day after year after decade after century after millennium. It is like gears in the solar system. And the teeth on those gears will grind you up. They will chew you up in them. I am so glad you are here.

It looks like this: Kindergarten, 1st Grade, 2nd Grade, 3rd Grade, 4th Grade, 5th Grade, 6th Grade, 7th Grade, 8th Grade, 1st period, 2nd period, 3rd period, 4th period, 5th period, 6th period, 7th period, 8th period, 9th Grade, Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer, sun goes up, sun comes down, sun goes up, sun comes down. This repetition, this is where you are stuck. All the way through college and then the real rat race starts. Because the sun comes up, you wake up, you go to work, sun goes down, you go to bed. Sun comes up, you wake up, you go to work, sun goes down, you go to bed. And then the weekend and then Monday and the sun comes up and the sun comes down. Sun goes up and sun goes down. Right?

And I will tell you a publisher came to me, this is not a plug it is important, and said, “Hey we want you to write a book. What do you want to write on? You can write on anything you want to.” And I as I thought and prayed about that the first book that I ever wrote, that was published, I wanted to write the answer to the question of all of these young adults. The fresh from grad school, fresh from college, coming into my office with tears running down their face asking, “Is this all there is? Is this why I really went to school for my entire life? Just to work to make somebody rich, the people at the top of the pyramid scheme called corporate America. They get their pockets fat and I just wake up and go to work and go home and go to bed? Is this all there is!?” So, I wrote 12 chapters of yes.

Because then you have kids, and the sun goes up and you wake up and you pack lunches and you become an Uber driver. And then you go to work yourself, only to be an Uber driver again to go home to clean the house, to mow the lawn, the sun goes down, you go to bed, and then you die. And this is the cycle that we are stuck in! So, listen, some of you came in today or you are watching right now, and you know, you feel, this low hum of despair in your life. And you are like why? Why can I not find joy? Why can I not find happiness? Why can I not find meaning? And I would just say, because you are looking for it in the wrong places. You are searching in the wrong boxes! It is not there! It is not there.

Generations come and generations go, but the grinder remains. You become worm food. Are you tracking? The greatest apex predator there is, the earthworm, because the earthworm eats lions, tigers, and bears. Oh my! And he will eat you. Welcome to Harris Creek.

“The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing.” He is saying that we are always looking for something new. We turn the corner, and we are trying to find something new. **“What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.”** And you might think, “No man, there are new things all the time. Like we can

build a new house and live in a new school or go to a new school.” And he is saying that we are ants in an ant farm. Have you ever seen this? It is this window that the ants live in, and they go and dig a tunnel. They will move one piece of sand behind them and another piece of grain of sand behind them and they dig a hole. And thy say, “Look! A new hole.” And you are looking through the side thinking no, it is just like your old hole right beside the new hole. You are just doing what all the other ants before you did. There is nothing new. And you say, “Wait, wait! There is something new, the iPhone 13. And I would say, “They just moved the camera and made it faster. That is the iPhone 12. Right?” We have been communicating for decades and centuries and millennium past.

He says, **“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.”** Let me prove it to you. You are going to hear right now, in our culture, all the time “unprecedented”. Unprecedented! Unprecedented pandemic! Have you ever heard of the Bubonic Plague? 200 million people died. Ok? The Spanish Flu, the Yellow Fever, Cholera, Black Plague? It is just new to us! You will hear, “Unprecedented division. Unprecedented division in our country. In our nation’s history this is unprecedented division.” There was this thing in the 1860s where we were walking around with Muskets shooting each other. Ok? I do not think it is unprecedented...it is just new to us! That is how we see the world. If it is new to us, it must be brand new – never happened before.

“No one remembers the former generations, and even those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them.” This is important. It is important. How many of you know the names of your grandparents? (Audience is to raise their hands.) How many of you know the names of your grandparents? Ok, thank you. That is a lot. How many of you know the names of their grandparents? (Audience is to share by raising hands.) Not their parents, but their grandparents. Ok. That is a whole lot less of you. Your kid’s kids, they may know your name. Their kids will not. Your kid’s kids, they may do that project where they have to draw the tree and in their entire existence of 76 years on this earth, they might ask two questions about you because they needed it for a grade. Their kids won’t! They won’t! They won’t even know your name. They will eb sitting in a sermon 50 years from now and someone will say, “Do you know your grandparents?” And they will raise their hands. And then someone will say, “Do you know your grandparents’ grandparents?” And they will not know you. That is, you in the story by the way. That is your role. It is super heavy on one hand, but it is incredibly liberating on the other.

Because right now, everybody take a deep breath. Now exhale. You do not have to be remembered; it is ok. You can stop striving because you are not going to. If you get your name on buildings, those building will topple...like your swimming pool. It is going to be fine. Our routine will not be remembered.

2. Our routine will not be remembered.

So, not only is it meaningless but it will also not be remembered. Nothing is forever. You know this, nothing is forever. Right? There are permanent markers – PERMANENT – but then you have the magic eraser. I know that some of you are still working on that. Super glue - SUPER GLUE – never coming apart. Praise God, it is not so super otherwise my hands would still be

stuck together. Vows, no... Forever? No. Even if you make it to the finish line, there is no marriage in heaven. A perm? Short for permanent, praise God it is not! Diamonds are not forever. That name you wrote in the concrete when you were in the 7th grade, it is not forever.

Every week I write my sermon notes on a white board. The entire message starts on a white board. We come together and we work on the message for hours. Ultimately, where we are going to start, where we are going to go, interpretive challenges in the texts, coming up with points. All of this ends up on the white board as this picture of a story that we are going to take you on through the text. Anybody who teaches up here goes through that same process. Then at the end of that meeting we take a picture on a phone and then someone comes behind and erases it. Because when I walk in there the next week, it is no longer there. This is a picture of our lives. That we are putting things on the white board: who we are, our hometown, a Life Map, we grew up here, went to school here, worked here. Here are our children, there are their names. Here is our golden retriever – or 2021 – our Golden Doodle. Here it is, this is the picture. And then one day you are going to come in a room like this, but you will be wheeled in or carried in by six people. And those that are still alive who are close to you will come around you and they will say some kind things about you. But make no mistake about it, it was something on their calendar that they felt they needed to be at. And they will leave here, and they will get in a row of cars. And they will drive to a plot of land where they dug a hole, and they will place you in it. Right?

At the end of this race, you will get a rock with your name on it that no one visits. That is the truth. That is the truth, that we have to feel that. It is as if they were to walk up to that white board and just erase it for someone else to draw on it after you.

Entire civilizations have been forgotten. Our family, rather Monica and I, go to Mexico every year. That is a place that we retreat to. We went there on our honeymoon, and we have gone there every year since. I love it! And when I go, I try to visit the Mayan Ruins. I really enjoy that aspect of Mexico's history. That there is this entire civilization that has been wiped out, they are not there anymore. In one of the ruins, one of my favorites, is called the Ek Balam. And the reasons it is one of my favorites is because it was only recently discovered. So, in recent history did they find this entire city. This city with grocery stores and schools. These giant pyramids – much bigger than this room – were completely hidden for centuries by the jungle. No one knew that it was there. Vines had just grown over it and people – even Google Satellite – did not pick up on it. They did not know it was there. And now they have uncovered this and there is this huge city that exist that you can go and visit. It is these people that have been forgotten. And you say, “No, wait. They haven't been forgotten because you can go visit it.” Make no mistake about it, the jungle will cover it again. And the very rocks that built those pyramids will disintegrate into sand. This city, that once was thriving with so many people, will be forgotten and so will ours. So will ours.

Don't you understand? Centuries from now people are going to be looking at Waco and they will be like, “Those are silos? What did they use those for? Oh, like communicating with aliens?” They will be looking at it like it was Stone Henge. “Communicating with aliens? No. It is where you went to buy candles and stuff.” They are like, “In silos!? Grain silos?” They will be trying to make sense of something that is very normal to us, because we are gone.

“I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. I applied my mind to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens.” Let me say this right here...up until right now it has just been set up for the experiment. Now we are going into the experiment. He is starting to open boxes. Ok? **“What a heavy burden God has laid on mankind!”** Why would He do that? Why would He lay this heavy burden on us? So that we would seek Him, and we would find Him. **“I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind. What is crooked cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted.”** He is talking about creation and nature, and he is saying that our greatest reason cannot fix that which is lacking in nature.

“I said to myself, “Look, I have increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge.” Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.” The word that is repeated here 28 times is the word meaningless. That is the Hebrew word Hevel. And Hevel literally translates into our language a smoke or a vapor. It is to grab in your hand, to grip, smoke. As he starts this experiment, he says this is what you are doing if you continue to search in the boxes from which I have searched. You are grabbing smoke. You are trying to possess vapor.

“For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.” Blessed are the naïve, for they do not know what is going on. Blessed are the naïve, for they do not know what is going on. Because when you start peeling back the layers, you start to see death and disease and decay and despair and sorrow and heartbreak and breakups and sadness and things that do not last forever under the sun.

Let me say this really quick here. Ecclesiastes is a challenging book to teach because it repeats itself. It cycles. He says ideas and then he goes back and revisits them. So, we will not expound on everything. Sometimes you will have to stay with us. If you miss a week you can go on the Harris Creek App and catch up. You can go on the website and catch up. This is Week 1, but in chapter 2 he says this, **“Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom and also madness and folly. What more can a King’s successor do than what has already been done?”** Again, he is going to come back to these ideas. In this text, my third and final point...

3. Our reason and rebellion are ridiculous.

And the way that he got to that conclusion is that he explored two paths. The first one is that I want to go learn everything that I can learn. I am going to run these experiments. I am going to be formerly educated. And here in Waco we value formal education, because at the center of our city is a great University. It has benefitted so many of us, so many of you. Some of you are employed there and your entire job, your career path, is rooted in helping people be educated. So, we value that. And I will say this...to train the mind, to sharpen the mind, is a great thing. To want to have a sharper mind...I have heard it said, “The Holy Spirit has an affinity for the trained mind.” To sharpen your mind is great thing. To make your mind an idol will leave you in the deepest darkest despair you can ever consider. DO you understand? Because your mind too, is stuck in the gears. It too will fade, and you will not only not remember where you put your car

keys, but you will forget that you have a car. Or what kind of car it is. You will forget the names of your children and you will not recognize them. When you make your mind an idol, there is a despair that sits under that that is so incredibly deep and dark and heavy. It is good to sharpen it, do not worship it.

Here is what he is saying, “I did it right! I learned lots. I excelled in school. I got the diploma. I read. I was promoted. I had the corner office. I was summa cum laude. I became the king! My education afforded me the ability to be the most powerful person in the land! And what I have to say about that is that it is meaningless. It left me wanting.” Some of you, you are here, and you know. You are like, “Man, I am so smart, but nobody wants to be around me because I know it all. And I really thought they were going to appreciate somebody that knew it all, but it just doesn’t seem like they do.” You are getting to that last quarter of life, and you become intolerable to the people around you because you know better than everyone else. And the things that you fed yourself, that you paid so much money and so much time to get it, have now actually cost you.

He says, “I rebelled! I partied. I participated in orgies and drugs and sex. I hit Scruffs on the weekend and then I went to Showtime over on LaSalle. I partied on barges on Lake Waco, and I took shots at Crickets and drank all of the drafts that they had to offer. And what I want you to know is it is meaningless. It left me with a hangover, hugging a toilet, wanting more. And what is worse is that I got stuck in it. Wash, rinse, repeat. I actually looked forward to that which was going to poison me, so that my body would reject it so that on Friday or Thursday I could do it all over again. Sin robs you of creativity. You get stuck in that relentless cycle. It is a constant, “Oh man! This is going to be amazing. \$130 bar tab and a hangover – that is life! Yeah!” And I speak from experience. Let me just say that. In this city I got arrested right across the street from the Ferrell Center. I have seen the inside of the Hwy 6 jail. I have looked for life in alcohol, in party scenes, in drugs, in sex. I ran that side of the experiment.

Some of you, you ran the education experiment. You are here. You are like, “Man I have Doctorates on Doctorates. I have so many letters behind my name it is like the alphabet sitting there in my signature.” And both of them, Solomon is telling you, are meaningless. He is comparing the two. He is pitting the valedictorian against that president of their sorority/fraternity. And they are fighting. Some of you are like, “Can you be both?” You were both. You excelled in both of those things. I know that you are here. You partied hard and somehow made the grade. You are that smart! And it is still meaningless.

It says I must live for something beyond myself. Some of you, you are here, and you squeaked into church on a Sunday morning, but you know that in your heart of hearts you believe that when you die the lights just go out. This really all there is. And you feel a deep despair right now. And to you, what I want you to hear me say is, “You should. You should. If this is all there is then what are we doing?” If you know my God...if you know the one true God...then this is just a commercial of heaven. The greatest moments here are just commercials for where we will be in His presence forever and ever and ever and ever.

But if you do not know that one true God, through His son Jesus Christ, then this is the only heaven you will ever sense. The one with death, disease, sickness, and sorrow. It is the only flavor of heaven you will ever experience. And so, I plead with you to know Him!

In summary, we are in a rut of relentless repetition; our routine will not be remembered; and our reason and rebellion are ridiculous. For centuries Greek philosophers would sit outside the city and ask a question. “What is the logos of life?” This what they would ask. The Greek word logos, “What is the logos of life?” Now if you have been in Sunday School long, or church long, you know that word logos translates word. But it also translates reason. That is why they are asking this. They were asking, for centuries, what is the logos of life. They are trying to figure it out. So, you can imagine...they are asking what you ask. Every person asks this! Everyone asks this question – “Why am I here?” “What am I doing?” “What is the point of it all?” “Am I doing it the right way?” “What is the logos of life?” So, you can imagine God in His kindness to offer the clarity in John 1:1 – **“In the beginning was the logos (Word), and the logos (Word) was with God and the logos (Word) was God.”** He is talking about Jesus.

He goes on to say that the logos became flesh and made His dwelling among us. He is telling you something really important! You are not going to find meaning separate and apart from Jesus. You just will not! Like a fish was made for water, the only purpose that you will be able to find is through the Son. You will not find it under the S U N. Do you hear me? The Atheist would say about you, “Your faith is a crutch. The only reason you have religion is to find purpose here. That you cannot find purpose here without your faith.” To that last statement, what I would say “Mr. Atheist, you are absolutely correct.” The moral atheist makes no sense to me. “Well, I just want to make the world a better place.” Why?? And who gets to decide what “better” means. Is better drenching it in gasoline and lighting it on fire. Why is that not better? Why do you get decide what is better? It seems there is another place, beyond the sun, and I am telling you that you will only find meaning there.

And so, as I am looking for my backpack, you can imagine that if Monica says, “Hey it is not in that box. It is not in that box. It is not in that box either. In fact, your backpack is not in here. It is not in this storage container.” How foolish would I be to continue to spend hours and days to keep looking for it in that storage container. That is what Solomon is doing. He is saying, “You are looking for meaning under the sun, in the earth. You are not going to find it there. The only place you are going to find it is beyond the sun. Outside the sun.” It is not in that storage container; it is past it. So, you and I might be like, “Well great – let’s go see it. Ah, you cannot go yet. You can’t go there yet, but you can talk to someone who is there. Anytime you want, it is called prayer. You cannot go where meaning is found, but there is a book that has been written about it. You can read it and study it and learn to live according to it. You can find why you are here and how to live here. God was so kind that all of the meaning that is found in that storage container has been documented in a book and given to you.

You cannot go where meaning is found yet, but you can circle up with others who are looking for meaning in the same way that you are. They too have found where it is, and you can gather with them in these things we call churches. You can yoke yourself to them. They can remind you, repeatedly, that it will not be found in your education. It will not be found in your rebellion

– that is the first place we will look today as we tear through these boxes. You don't need to look in those two boxes. (There are boxes on stage that say rebellion and education.) Any eternal significance will not be found there. Make sure that is not who you are...make sure there is something that marks you beyond those things.

Let me pray that you would.

Father would you help us believe that, know that to be true. Would you stir in our hearts direction and reason and help us not to get to the bottom of any box and see that it is empty and keep looking. Help us to not keep searching in areas you have told us to not search for meaning. Would you fill our hearts with hope? Would you fill our hearts with peace? Would you fill our hearts with faith? And God as we sing, I know that you gave us our vocal cords that the Father, Son, and Spirit tuned us as musical instruments to sing of your glory. Lord, help us to redeem that which the enemy has tried to steal. To sing of the hope that we have, to sing now and to sing forever. Amen.