

Harris Creek Baptist Church
Jonathan Pokluda
Series: Ecclesiastes
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The Search Continues

Ecclesiastes 2:1 - 23

Church! How are we doing? Let's go! Let's go! It's so good to be with you. If we haven't met, my name is JP, Jonathan Pokluda and I have the privilege and honor, honestly, of serving you in this place.

I remember when I got my first corporate job. And so, this was the job that I had my sights on. I had been pursuing. I remember, I went to that first interview. I had to go to Marshalls' first to get the tie, you know. And then I wore my best suit to the interview, which is my only suit. And uh...and so...just kind of begin in this process. It was like six interviews and I'm having friends pray. Everything, my whole world, is tied up in getting this job. And I remember when they called and they said, 'Hey you got it' and just the joy that I felt because this was the job I could do for the rest of my life. Like that's the way I thought. I was like man, if I can just get that job I'm going to stay there forever.

And so, I go over the first day of work, I put the suit on, go over to the AT&T building, which is in the midst of all the buildings downtown. Like navigating those one-way streets, finding the parking garage, parking, have my security badge, going through security, taking the elevator up to the eighth floor and somebody was there to walk me to my desk. Which was kind of in this...this cubicle farm of desks, if you will, on the eighth floor. And I go over to mine and I sit down, right. And I just, I'm like, I made it. You know, like here I am. And I'm...I'm just thinking like...what do I do now? And I'm like...that's my stapler, they got me a stapler. I got my own stapler. This is amazing!

So, I'm in sales, in business development if you will. And I have these accounts and I'm supposed to figure out how to build relationships. And there's a guy on the floor, like there's a person on the team and he's the big hitter, the heavy hitter. He's the guy that's just crushing it you know. Everybody knows and he's retiring that week. So, the week that I start is the week that he retires. And so, in that first week they said, 'Hey we have to go down to the auditorium because Mike's retiring and we're doing a little thing'. And so, we go. Everybody kind of piles over to the elevator, we get on the elevator, and we go down to the basement. And there's an auditorium down there. And it's kind of like a big Baylor classroom, if you will. Or honestly, like this, just the floor.

And Mike's on stage and they say some kind things about him, and everybody claps. And it's kind of like this semi-standing ovation. Some people are standing, some people aren't. And they give him and watch and this plaque. It's a square piece of granite with his name on it. It's kind of a cube, but a piece of it is cut out and it has his name and years of service on it and a box for him

to put his stuff in. And a guy leans over to me, and he goes “That’s an expensive watch.” I said, “Oh yeah.” I said, “Really what kind of watch?” I like watches, what kind of watch is it? He goes, “No, it cost him his marriage. He’s on number three. That cost him his children. His 27-year-old hates him.”

And it’s my first week on the job, y’all! All the wind just got sucked out of my sails. I’m like, hold on...that’s the finish line? That’s where I’m going? That’s the guy that everybody has esteemed. He did it. That’s what you want to do? Follow in his footsteps? So, I can get a watch and a rock and a box? And it just sucked all the ambition out of the moment. I was so excited and now I’m just like really?

That’s kind of what happened in here last week. Especially at the 7:00 pm service. The 7:00 pm is mostly Baylor students and young adults in Waco. And they didn’t laugh at any of the jokes last week. It wasn’t funny to them because basically all of their ambition was doused. That’s what I realized about Ecclesiastes – if you are older, Ecclesiastes can give you meaning to how you feel. You’re like, “Okay, I’m not doing it wrong. I’m on track because it kind of feels meaningless, but I’m in the rat race. I’m tired, but He says it’s okay.” Right? And you feel esteemed in that. If you’re younger, it basically says all of the things that you’ve worked so hard for and you’re about to move into are all meaningless. You’re like, really? And really, the other response is “No, not me. Not me! My great grandkids, they’re going to remember me, preacher! Okay, somebody ask them after 50 years...after I’m gone. ‘Hey, do you know your great-great-grandfather? And they’re going to know my name. They’re going to do the genealogy project and be counting my money. And there’s going to be a building with my name on it.’” And the rest of us, like oh that’s cute, that’s sweet man...you keep believing that.

And that’s kind of what Ecclesiastes does. It kind of sucks the ambition out of you. You’re like, well what is it for? We’re going to answer that this week. This week is really a continuation of last week. We’re in, if you’re just joining us, we’re in the book of Ecclesiastes. We’re in chapter two. If you brought your Bibles, you want to turn to chapter two. And we’re just going verse-by-verse, page-by-page, scripture for scripture through this book of Ecclesiastes. You can take notes if you want. You can write your own commentary on this book. We’ve subtitled this series Ecclesiastes, Searching for Meaning. And last week was the Search for Meaning Begins. This week is titled The Search for Meaning Continues.

Chapter one and chapter two go hand in hand. They really are a complete idea. It’s actually going to resolve this week. He’s going to resolve this experiment that he started. But then the rest of the book is really a commentary on chapter one and chapter two - a continuation of that idea. And you guys are going to see that.

And so, if you remember last week, I kind of talked about how the illustration was that I couldn’t find my backpack. We just moved. All of our life is in our garage and boxes. I’m searching for my backpack and I’m searching in a box for my backpack. My wife comes by, she packed that box, and she said “Hey it’s not in there. I know that it’s not in there. You don’t have to keep looking in there.” And we talked about how crazy that would be if I continued looking for that thing that I’m looking for in the place where somebody of wisdom said, ‘It’s not there.’ And that is the experiment of Ecclesiastes.

Solomon, King, the most powerful man in the land and who has ever lived, other than Jesus. He’s also the wisest, also the richest. He’s searching for meaning and he’s opening up boxes,

figuratively speaking. And he's saying, "It's not in there, you don't have to look in there." And we just said it would be crazy for us to continue to look in the boxes where the Holy Spirit, through Solomon, says "It's not in there."

And we looked in the box of education. And we said, "That's great you have letters behind your name, you worked so hard at that." Be careful not to find identity in that, because it will leave you devastated.

And we looked in the box of rebellion and said, "Hey, you can go to party, you can experience all of the things in the world, but's it going to leave you hung over and empty and hating life." That's what it does. You will not find meaning in there apart from God.

And that experiment is going to continue today. And this idea "under the sun" we said that's a metonymy. It's a phrase we use to describe a place that "under the sun" is the world apart from God. That phrase is really important. That's kind of how we resolved the message last week. We said, 'Hey, you're looking for meaning and you will not find meaning apart from God, disconnected from God, not in right relationship with God'.

And so just in case we don't know each other. In case you are just visiting for the first time. I will tell you up front. The way that you have a relationship with God, is by trusting in His son Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection as forgiveness of your sin's. That's the Gospel, the good news. That Jesus paid for your sins. Right? And that is good news for believers. And it is great news for unbelievers who come into relationship with God by trusting in Christ.

And so, as we move through this text, I've got five points today. Guys, I know, uh...it's crazy. They're all P's...and that's not even a stretch. Like they're really straight from the text. So, I didn't have to work that hard on the alliteration. This week, it's pretty much...just right there.

So, I'm going to go to chapter two verse one. You guys ready? You guys, okay? Good, thank you. Okay, you're ready? The rest of your guys...are you all ready? Okay. Good...good because here's why that's important. It's grind. Today, guys, if you thought last week was a beating...you're going to get hit on the chin this week, a couple times...all right...punched in the face. Take a deep breath, stay with me, okay? It's going to feel a little bit of grind. Let's go...let's go!

"I said to myself...I said to myself...I said to myself, come now I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good..." Underline that word right there...what is good. **"...But that also proved to be meaningless. Laughter I said is madness and what does pleasure accomplish? I tried cheering myself with wine and embracing folly – my mind's still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was good for people to do under the heavens during the few days of their lives."**

"What is good for people to do under the heavens during the few days of their lives". Here's what I want you to know, in verse one of chapter two he asks, "I'm trying to find out what is good". It's the Hebrew word *Tov*, and that word, *Tov*, shows up again in the last verse of this chapter. As if he's to say, I have found it or I know how to find it. And so, he's going to resolve. So, this week, we'll have more resolve than last week did because the text answers a question or at least tells us where to look. And that's good news. He's trying to find this idea of what is good under the heavens, in this life down here apart from God. And so, the first box that he wants to open, he says, 'okay, let me look in here for you this is pleasure'.

Let's search in pleasure for meaning. It's just...it's not there. You're not going to find it in there. He said, 'you can turn wine because I'm trying to cheer myself'. That is to use alcohol to numb myself or to send me to a place of joy, to escape my problems. But the problem with using alcohol, weed, cocaine, meth, opioids, whatever you want to turn to...your problems stay there. And while you're intoxicated, your problems grow and they're still waiting for you. And it will leave you depressed. That's what we've learned about alcohol. The way that it...if you drink it in excess, it will change your brain chemistry and actually leave you further down than when you started. So, proceed with caution. Proceed with caution. Our pleasure apart from God is meaningless.

1. Our Pleasure Apart from God is Meaningless

See, I think most of us think, well, like if it feels good, it is good. If it feels good, it must be good. That is a gross misunderstanding of life. There are lots of things that feel good momentarily that are devastating to your life. So, you can't just go through this world saying, 'well does it feel good because then it must be good'. That's...that is a wrong way of thinking about it. Drunkenness would be a great example. Ephesians 5:18 says, **“do not get drunk, but be filled with the Holy Spirit.”**

It leaves this dichotomy you're either drunk with wine or you're filled with a spirit. Proverbs 23 is continuation of this idea that as believers we do not use alcohol. You're like, "I need a glass of wine". Oh...you need? Oh...you need a glass of wine? Oh...you want to use it like Solomon. Oh...you need one. Oh...you're trying to numb yourself. Oh...it's a busy day...you need one...huh? And you use it like an aspirin to get rid of a headache. You're using it. NO! We don't use, we don't use wine or alcohol for anything other than fellowship. That we would do so to the glory of God. **“I tried laughter, but that too was madness.”** Because as much as I laughed, the sadness still comes and washes it away like a wave on the sand. So, it's not there either. There's no meaning there either. He's talking about pleasure and you're about to see that he has a harem.

How many of you have a harem? Don't raise your hand, okay. Some of you are like, "A herring...a fish?" No... no... uh... he has concubines. He has 300 of the most beautiful women in the land that exist solely to do whatever he wants to do. That's heavy. And he is miserable! And that's the reality. Searching for pleasure in all these things and he's coming up as a shell of a human being. He says, there's no meaning in pleasure.

So, he says this, verse four, **“I undertook great projects. I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kind of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees.”** He says, **“I made reservoirs.”** Last week we looked at Solomon's pools. They're still there, 3,000 years later. We talked about how you know Aquanox (pool company) did that amazing thing for you, but it's not going to be there even in 150 years. 3,000 years later Solomon's pools, that were used to water his vineyards, they're still there. He took on projects, but he says this, 'our projects apart from God are meaningless'.

2. Our Projects Apart from God is Meaningless

Now, this guy really took on projects. It's been very well documented that his palace took thirteen years to build.

Okay, we built a house once. It took 13 months to build. His place took 13 years to complete this. He has vineyards. This guy right, like you got a Fichus tree...he's got the arboretum. That's Solomon and he says it's meaningless. You're doing that little fixer-upper project. He's saying, "Hey, you're not going to find meaning there". Like building is actually up in America right now. It's kind of crazy. I mean we are building stuff out of our minds. We're all about it. Like fix stuff up. Let's stack boards on boards, make things happen. Pretend like we're Chip and Joe.

We're doing stuff over here like let's...let's go. Right? Which doesn't make any sense because construction costs are at an all-time high. So, building is at an all-time high. Construction cost is at all-time high. Why is that? Because as Americans we've gone through a pandemic, and we love to grab for that which we can control. It's like, "Hey babe, the whole world is shut down. What should we do?" Let's build a deck. If we're stuck here, we might as well put in that pool. You know, I mean that's the way we're thinking about things right now.

We have got to do something. What can I control? Let's build something. And we do this weird thing – there are turf wars in the neighborhood. Yard Wars if you will. Dad versus Dad. "My grass is greener than yours Bob. You know, you know what I mean. Like I got Zoysia, you've got Bermuda. Poor guy, we'll pray for you". Uh...you know what I mean. I see this because we can find identity in anything. Life's a competition, and we have to win. And I'm just telling you, Solomon wins. So, he goes over here, and he says, "Let me look in this one for meaning?" But it's not there. I can't find it there either.

So, he says in verse seven, **"I bought male and female slaves. I had other slaves who were born in my house. I also own more herd and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I am amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers and a harem as well – the delights of a man's heart."** And he's going to tell us that it's meaningless. Solomon had 30,000 employees. 30,000! Baylor University has 1,300 - just for comparison. Solomon, one person, employed 30,000 people. He's got a cupbearer y'all. Somebody wakes up and their lot in life is to carry his cup. That's what they do, that's their occupation. I don't know what they went to school for. I don't know if they got like a PhD in Cupbearing. But I mean, could you imagine if you had a cupbearer? Like somebody's following you around with your hydra-flask. You say, "I'm a little parched". They are like, "oh...I got you. You know here you go". Right? And they're just ready to meet every need that you have.

This guy, he's got herds of animals. You've got a golden doodle and a worthless cat. I mean, let's be honest. He has herds of animals. Let me just give you evidence of this. At one of his parties...it's been well documented...one of his parties he invited everyone. Guess what? Guess what he served? Okay, this is crazy. 22,000 cows. Not 22,000 rib eyes. 22,000 cows. I don't even know how you cook 22,000 cows. And if your mind is not blown enough, he also had 150,000 sheep. That's what he served at one of his parties. Everyone in the land was invited.

It tells us in 1 Kings 4, **"he has 12,000 horses."** People want you to know that this guy has excess. Whatever you think you have, he has more. Exponentially more. His income was a billion dollars a year in gold alone. Okay, so that's \$2,740,000.00 dollars per day! \$2,740,000.00 per day. His net worth...2.2 trillion dollars. He crashed the silver market single-handedly. We said last week he had so much that it became worthless. He's a caricature. He's a cartoon. It's like if you got together with like a bunch of miniature creatives and you just said, "Let's just come up with a guy. We'll have him married, but like super married". "How married...like...lots

of wives? 10?” “No... no... like lots”. “Oh...like 100”. “No, like lots more”. “I mean what...like 500 wives?” “Nah, double it!” “Let’s make him rich, okay.” “Like a million dollars?” “No, no, no... like...uber rich.” “Oh, okay. A billion dollars.” “No, no, like richer than anyone has ever been...ever.” “A trillion dollars?” “Double it.” “We’ll give him some horses. 12,000.”

It’s like he’s animated. The ultimate flex is in this text. Did you notice it? Dude has singers. Okay, how many of you guys have singers? You’ve got Drake’s new album. Right? He’s got Certified Lover Boy in the corner, performing for him, with Olivia and Ed Sheeran. He’s like, Ed play me a song. Coldplay, you’re on standby. Okay, go Ed do your thing. Right? That’s what’s happening in his house. That’s crazy y’all! That’s madness! That’s the ultimate flex! And he says, our possessions apart from God are meaningless.

3. Our Possessions Apart from God is Meaningless

And so, he grabs this and says, “let me look for meaning in here”. The things that I have and what I own. My trinkets and my treasures and my stuff. It’s not there. So how much is enough? Rockefeller famously said, “One more dollar.” It’s the lesson that we can’t learn, you and I. Do you know what Rockefeller was known for? It wasn’t happiness. Do you know what Bill Gates is known for? It’s not how awesome his marriage is. Do you know what Warren Buffett is known for? It’s not his charisma and joy. What they want most is available to you before you reach that back door. That’s crazy. Think about that. You can have something they can’t have before you get up to sing the last song.

And here’s what’s interesting about teaching this in Waco. There’s a part of me that thinks on this point that we get it. I think we’ve learned something, especially like if you’re from here or you’ve lived here for a long time. If you’re just passing through you probably haven’t got it yet, but if you live here right, we get it. We don’t want the rat race. We don’t want the city. We don’t want the traffic. We don’t want the smog. We don’t want all the people, the hustle and the bustle, the things and stuff. We’ll visit there sometime, but no we kind of figured out we like it a little slower and we’re not going to try to play that game. We know there’s not life there. So, you have got to think about what is it here? What if one day I had that deer lease? Or if I owned the lease? If I had the ranch. I want the tractor and the truck. Maybe get it lifted. You know just in case I get stuck on 84 in traffic. Whatever that “thing” is, right. Let’s figure it out.

What can I find identity in here? And I think if we’re honest, you just want to be comfortable. You want to work hard so you don’t have to work. It’s an interesting paradigm. Like we want to work hard so we can be lazy. We want to get to that place where we no longer have to work. So, we grind it out right now. He says there’s no meaning in there. You won’t find it there.

Verse 9, **“I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me and all this my wisdom stayed with me. I denied myself nothing my eyes desired. I refused my heart no pleasure.”** Wow! **“My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward from all my toil.”** Verse 10, written 3,000 years ago, has something interesting happening here. I want to bring your attention to it. It has two American ideologies put in one verse. Two worldviews right here. Let me show you.

“I denied myself nothing my eyes desired. I refused my heart no pleasure.” Is that not the...he’s saying...I did whatever I wanted to do. Is that not the essence of liberalism? I just want the freedom to do whatever I want to do. If I need health care, you better provide me with health

care. If I don't want to pay for college, you should pay for college. I want to be able to do whatever I want to do. That's kind of the spirit of liberalism. A political ideology in our land and right now if you're like cheering and you want to stand up and yell...let me read this to you.

“My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil.” As if to say, I worked hard for it. It is mine so I can do with it as I please. Is that not the essence of conservatism? I worked...it's my work. No, I worked for what I have and so it's mine and so I can do with it as I please. And both of those ideologies are lacking a biblical worldview, which is everything belongs to God. I steward it and so I share with those in need for His glory, right?

This is the right view...we're His servants. **“Yet, when I surveyed all that, my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.”** And the theme is repeated. I'm coming up empty. It's all meaningless under the sun...meaningless under the heavens. It's like grasping for a vapor trying to chase the wind. I'm trying to hug the wind and keep it, but I can't. I'm coming and right about now you, it should be an eye roll moment and your heart should be tired. And you should be like, gosh, I get it Solomon. I'm tapping out God. Come on, bring some joy! And you're supposed to feel that way. It's a literary device to bring you to a place of despair. Because he's saying, “Man guys...listen. Listen...look...you can grow over here, and you can grab for all the power you want, but it's meaningless.

Let me show you why I say power. Because he says, **“I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me.”** He's trying to lull you to sleep with your own ambition. You see that? He's trying to lull you to sleep with your own ambition under the sun. So, if it feels like a beating, it's supposed to. That's the point. He says our power apart from God is meaningless.

4. Our Power Apart from God is Meaningless

I think some of us are just like, “Man, if I just had more authority. If you just listen to me. Why don't you let me lead? You're supposed to submit. Hey, come here employees. Guys. Man, what... Didn't I already say? If these guys would just listen to me. If I just had authority. If I just had more power. If they just looked up at me. If I just had my boss's job, then I'd be happy.” We said a wise man learns from their mistakes, but a wiser person learns from the mistakes of others.

So, we have to learn to correct our thinking. And we don't have to just learn from Solomon. We have like a plethora of people we can learn from. We could learn from the GOAT, Tom Brady. Right? You guys...you remember the 60-minute interview. It's every preacher's dream. We've probably put it before you a few times. There he is, three super bowl rings, multiple MVP's, he's married to the supermodel of all supermodels, Victoria's Secret Supermodel: Gisele. He's got everything and the interviewer says, “How do you feel?” And he says, “There has to be something else.” And we're like, we know...we know. He's like, “I can't find it under the sun.” We're like we know Tom, we know. He's the GOAT! How much longer is he going to be the GOAT...how much longer? Right? And now he's doubled it and he has six rings and four MVP's. And he still has a supermodel wife. And he's still searching for meaning.

We could learn from Russell Brand. That's an actor if you don't know him. He said, ‘you can't make yourself happy with the acquisition of material objects or even through romance.’

You could learn from Jim Carrey. He said, ‘everybody should get rich and famous and do whatever they dreamed of doing so that they can see that it’s not the answer.’ That’s the Dumb and Dumber guy.

You could learn from Brad Pitt. You guys know Brad? I’ll just read to you something he said. “I know all these things are supposed to seem important to us, the car, the condo. Our version of success. But if that’s the case, why is the general feeling out there reflecting more impotence? Which is like no power and isolation and desperation and loneliness.” Let me read you those four again: impotence, isolation, desperation, and loneliness. “That’s what I feel like I have. Anybody want a cup of that? If you ask me, I say toss all this. We have got to find something else. The emphasis now is on success and personal gain. I’m sitting in it and I’m telling you that’s not it. I’m the guy who’s got everything. I know I’ve said it before, and I’ll say it again. It doesn’t help you sleep any better and you don’t wake up any better because of it.”

And I’m telling you the rich are infinitely better off than the poor. Because while the poor thinks money will make them happy, the rich know better. And the most miserable people that I’ve ever met are the rich that don’t know better. They’re still saying one more dollar. “Hey man, your wife left you.” One more dollar. “Hey, I think you’re missing out on the world. You can’t even take a vacation.” One more dollar. I think there’s a part of all of our hearts that just wants to be able to do what we want to do, when we want to do it. I just want to do what I want to do, whenever I want to do it. Can I tell you I’ve met people who can do whatever they want to do, when they want to do it? And it almost always is a sidewalk to mental illness. Almost 100% of the time.

I used to watch this show way back in the day. *My Super Sweet 16*. Anybody seen that? Anybody, all right. Some of us...you don’t have to raise your hand. I’ll just out myself, you can live in quietness. *My Super Sweet 16*. It’s just these people who turn 16 and they have these amazing over-the-top birthday parties. And you can just tell that their parent just, I mean they like mortgage the house, and do all the things to get them the Ferrari for their birthday. Or whatever it is like, just over the top. And even back then, in the tiny little wisdom that I had, I remember thinking this isn’t going to go well for them.

It would be interesting to fast forward and grab all those super sweet 16’s and do a post-production. Just to see what they’re doing now. What hospital they’re in now. What medication they’re on now. You know, how much joy and happiness they’re experiencing now or the lack thereof, because it doesn’t go well for anybody. I’m trying to tell you, Solomon’s trying to tell you, the Holy Spirit is trying to tell you that it doesn’t work out. We’re being duped man. We keep trying to run the experiment when he tells us you’re not going to find it there.

And so, he goes on, verses 12 -16, and he talks about education and rebellion. We talked about this last week. He looks in here and he says, man, I’ve gained wisdom. And then he goes, I went over here, and I just lived the dream. I snorted the lines; I partied my brains out and both of them end up in the same place. Somebody digs a hole, puts them in a box and they drop them in it. Welcome to Harris Creek, we’re glad you’re here.

Verse 17, **“So I hated life,”** That is heavy. That is heavy. **“...because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. I hated all things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish?”**

Anyone know who came after Solomon? Truett grads or anybody might know who is the next king? Somebody? Rehoboam – wise or foolish? Here’s all my stuff Rehoboam, you fool, take it. That’s what happens. It’s prophetic, right? What we’re reading.

“Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. So, my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. For a person may labor with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, and then they must leave all they own to another who has not toiled for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun? All their days their work is grief and pain, even at night their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless.”

This was written 3,000 years ago. **“What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun? All their days their work is grief and pain, even at night their minds do not rest.”** Anybody ever had a season of sleeplessness? You can’t turn it off. Or you go home from work and your mind is still at work? And it’s like, “Hey...hey dad!” And you’re still solving the problems and making the deals and the cells, and you can’t stop. You can’t pull yourself out of it. You can’t turn it off. You don’t know. It’s like you ran so hard and fast and now you can’t stop running and you lay down. It’s like, all right, I got to go to bed. I got to go to sleep! I have got a big day tomorrow, but you can’t turn it off. And you wake up at 3:00 a.m. and all the problems of the world just meet you right there for you to solve them. He’s talking about that. He’s talking about his profession. He says, “Maybe it’s here. Maybe it’s in my work and my toil. Maybe I can find something of meaning here.” There is no true meaning found there – nothing more than a plaque or a watch. He says our profession apart from God is meaningless.

5. Our Profession Apart from God is Meaningless

You got to hear me on this. I meet so many people... “Hey, I’m trying to figure out what I was made to do, you know. What kind of work was I wired up for? What’s my thing, you know? I just don’t know if this is my thing. I got go find my thing, you know. So, I took the personality test and I’m trying to figure out where do my gifts and talents meet the needs. And I want a job that fulfills me.” You will not find a job that fulfills you under the sun. It doesn’t exist and it’s actually a new question. Nobody was asking that 200 years ago. But you’re still trying to find joy and contentment in your work. And you won’t find it there because of Genesis chapter three He says, **“...because sin entered the world now you will work, and it will fight against you.”**

And maybe you’re like, “Oh, not me. I love my job!” I bet it’s new. I mean I talk to those people all the time. They’ll say, “Dude, I found it. I found the job. It’s amazing! Just started! Got it!” High-fives! It’s incredible! “Oh, I love it so much! My boss is so great and they like don’t even care if I work! It’s incredible!” And then you talk to him six-weeks later. “Man, so how’s it going?” “I quit man. That job that was a grind man.” And you’re going to go from place to place trying to find the one that makes you happier. It doesn’t exist guys.

Do you think Solomon’s cupbearer was like, “Man am I doing the right thing?” He wakes up and he’s exercising the old hands, making sure he can do it right. He says, “Here you go sir.” Right? That’s his lot in life. Somebody’s got to do the grind. Somebody has to take out the trash. Somebody has to clean the toilets. It’s not a “Was I made to do this?” No! It is that we do this to the glory of God. That’s the reality.

Paul was a tentmaker. Okay, I don't know if Paul was ever like, "Hey am I uniquely gifted to make tents so that I can..." No, he just funded the ministry y'all. That's what it did. He wasn't basing his job on the enneagram. He did not say, "I'm eight and so I wonder if it's tents or something else". No! He made the tents because that was the opportunity in front of him, to advance the gospel and build the kingdom.

I bet he made really great tents because he knew a really great God. And your great-great grandfather never once, I guarantee you, they never one-single time in their entire life thought "Am I doing the right thing? Was I really made to plow these fields?" No, they just farmed because their Dad farmed. And his Dad farmed. That's a new problem. The more opportunities we have, the more we struggle to find contentment. And I'm telling you, your profession apart from God is meaningless.

And so, what does it all end up to? Let's go to verse 24. We're out of time, but here's a little bit of hope for you before you go. **"A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? To the person who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge, and happiness, but to the sinner He gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind."**

That last part is meaningless, but before that there's this huge left turn. There's this 180 that happens in just one line. He says, "Who can find satisfaction in their own toil? This too I see is from the hand of God." There's a break in the rhythm of this meaningless, this is meaningless, this is meaningless. There's one who finds satisfaction in their work and that is a gift from God. And from God they receive wisdom and from God they receive happiness. There's this new thing that's happening here. I don't want you to miss it because this is the application today. It's so important that whatever you do, anything you do, you can actually do for His glory. And that's 1 Corinthians 10:31, **"so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."**

Okay, so let me explain this. I need glasses. Without them, I'm nearsighted. I cannot see far. I can't see past the sun. And so, when I take these glasses off you guys are just like a blurry swath of colors. Right now, I can't see who you are. There's no one I recognize without my glasses on. And without my glasses I look in education and rebellion under the sun and I can't see. But when I begin to think okay, can I do it to the glory of God. Right? Can I do it to the glory of God, this changes everything, because I can put on my glasses and with that, I gain perspective. And I can say, okay, pleasure yes. I can experience pleasure to the glory of God. Intimacy in my marriage makes God's heart glad. Laughing with friends and fellowship, when the topic is of God, it brings Him great joy.

We talked about wine. On Wednesday night the LeRow's brought over a brand-new bottle from Valley Mill's Vineyard. And we gathered around the island and the six of us shared it. And I got out a croissant and I blessed it and we took communion right there. And we reflected on the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. And I think God looked at that moment and I think it made His heart glad. We're not sitting there thinking, "Man, how far can we push the envelope? I'm just trying to feel something. Let me get a little buzzed." No!

Our focus is on the others. How are you doing? How have you been? Last night I was at a block party and all the neighbors came and I'm trying to redeem that moment. For those that I don't know I would ask, "Hey, do you know God? Do you have a relationship with Christ? Let's talk. How are you doing?" And when you do it, you see it through that lens. Right? It gives you an incredible purpose. Right? And when you say, I want to make my yard beautiful to the glory of God. While you're out there mowing it and you're fertilizing you say, "God, you made the grass, you made it grow, and you did that God. This is a gift from you because every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of Heavenly lights. I know this is from you and for you."

And you build that house and you put that cedar beam in your living room, and you think, "I wonder how many of our students are going to pray under this cedar beam? Because we're going to host every Harris Creek event we can. And we're going to put the pool in the backyard so that they can come over and laugh and play. It's going to be a great place to fellowship." Twenty-eight families here use their house to host those events and I think God looks down on that and smiles.

I'm not trying to give you justification for the lake house, but if you want a lake house and you can afford a lake house, build the lake house to the glory of God. But if you build it for yourself, it's going to leave you devastated and you're going to be like every other depressed person with the lake house. But you build it to share it? That's the point of possessions.

When we have things that we can enjoy, do you know what it means to enjoy something. It's utility. You can't enjoy anything that you don't use. So, anything in a safe and anything collecting dust in your garage, you do not enjoy. Matter of fact. But the things that you have that you can share, that you can give away, that you can bring people in, and you can talk about things that matter 200 years from now and 200 billion years from now, only those things do you enjoy. The other stuff you should give it away. You would be better off giving it away. It may be the most enjoyment you ever get from it. And that's a Christian biblical worldview. That is the lens with which we should see things through.

And so, some of you, you're a manager. You have people working for you. You own a company, and you have employees. How many of those employees have you led to Christ? How many times are you having conversations that will matter 200 years from now? Because God, He distributes the power, and He gave it to you for Him and for no other reason. There is no other reason you have influence other than to make much of God. The people that use their influence to make much of them, they end up sick. You tell me I'm wrong! I'll be right up here afterwards. I'll be right here. I'm going to be standing right here, you walk up to me and say, "Hey, I know somebody that uses all their power for themselves and they're not sick." I'd love it. I'd love to hear the story. I'll stop saying, I'll stop saying it. But I'm telling you...God didn't make the world that way. It doesn't work, it doesn't work without Him.

And so, when you see your profession through that lens it's Titus 2:10, "**we work hard so that the teachings of Christ our Savior are attractive.**" Right? That's why we work, that's why we toil, because the Gospel has always moved on commerce. I can say I want to go to Afghanistan to share Jesus; they're not going to let me in. But if I say I want to go to Afghanistan because I want to build companies and employ your people, Taliban might be like okay, let's talk. Right?

So, God gave you work to do for Him. There really is nothing else that matters. Let me just read this line to you.

Every decision matters in as much as it impacts eternity and to the extent that it doesn't, it does not matter at all.

So, we have to go through the moments with the right lens, the right perspective. Knowing that there's no meaning under the sun apart from God. The only way that we will find meaning in any moment; in any purchase; in any conversation; in any place that we visit; is if we see it rightfully, attached to God. That's the difference. Maybe the biggest thing that's working against us is you've been in church your whole life and you've never met anyone that does that.

I pray that this place would be different. That everyone would do this. I'm going to stop right there. I'm way out of time. I got like three more stories I could tell you, but I'm just going to let that sit right there. Maybe as we sing this song, maybe you just need to stay where you're at and beg the Lord to give you that perspective.

To say, "God, would you do that in my heart? Would you change my eyes? Would you change my focus? Would you change my perspective? Why am I wasting my life focused on me? I've always said that I believe in you, but why do I do things based on how they impact me?"

Let me pray that you would.

"Father, we just need your help. We're really nearsighted. We're really nearsighted. Sometimes, it feels God, like we can only see the things under the sun. It's like anything beyond the sun, we reach out to you, and we try to talk to you, but it feels like you're not there. And you feel far. As if we're just down here trying to buy stuff and have stuff and use stuff and make a bigger name for ourselves. Lord, we just need your help. Right now, would your Holy Spirit just do a work in this place? Would you give us heart surgery and eye surgery? Help us to see right. Would you help us to see right? It's such a privilege to know you God. Thank you that you just introduced yourself to us and you've given us the promise of eternal life, help us to live for that. Help us to not get so swept up in this world that we think we have to make a bigger name for ourselves here. Would you do that? In Jesus name, Amen.