

DON'T GO QUIET

Starting a new series in Ecclesiastes.

It's an interesting book in the Bible, because it is more philosophical than theological.

It's written by a king in his old age whose looking back on his life.

He's not just any old dude.

He was considered the ultimate sage of his day. Kings and queens would come from all over the world to hear his knowledge and wisdom.

His wise sayings have been on the best-seller list for centuries.

He was also wealthy ... like billionaire club wealthy.

And his position and money afforded him the opportunity to try everything and search out everything.

So what does an old man say who knows it all, has done it all, and has it all?

Ecclesiastes 1:1-3

1 The word of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

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**2 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities!
All is vanity.**

**3 What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils
under the sun?**

First thoughts ... “Someone forgot to take their meds!”

**Man, we were hoping for a little chicken soup for the
soul.**

But this is more like split pea soup.

Solomon comes out swinging to grab our attention.

What is life?

Life is fragile and fleeting no matter what we do.

Now there's a comforting thought ... said no one ever.

It's not comforting, but its sobering.

**Is it better to live as an intoxicated fool by life's vanities,
or to live sober with the understanding of how quickly
it is gone?**

Our life is a “vanity of vanities.”

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In Hebrew if you used a word more than once it was to make it a superlative.

Solomon is saying, Life is the ultimate vanity!

We are born, we do some stuff (toil under the sun), then we die.

It is gone like a vapor. (poof)

And it always feels too soon.

Whether people are 8 or 80 the sentiment is always “too soon.”

And the vanity of life's shortness is amplified by what happens in life.

Everything that promises joy, happiness and meaning end up falling short.

I used to listen to this British band, Pulp.

He was feeling this:

You've got no need

But still you want

To go and book

That restaurant

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**The wine will flow
And then you'll just fly away, yeah**

**So please can I ask just why we're alive?
'Cause all that you do seems such a waste of time
And if you hang around too long you'll be a
ma-a-a-a-a-a-a-an**

**Your car can go up to a hundred and ten
You've nowhere to go but you'll go there again
And nothing ever makes no difference to a
ma-a-a-a-a-a-a-an**

We can eat at restaurants, fill our bellies,
We can drive fast cars.
We go places. Why?
B/C we get bored ... we need something to make us happy
...

We feel like we “got nowhere to go” and so we go there
again.

We chase after stuff that promises joy and meaning.

**But when we get them the joy and meaning dissipate
like a vapor.**

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Modern psychology is catching up to Solomon.

A prize winning psychologist, researcher, and author of a recent NY Times best seller, puts it this way:

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Nearly all of us buy into what I call the myths of happiness-- beliefs that certain adult achievements (marriage, kids, jobs, wealth) will make us forever happy and that certain adult failures or adversities (health problems, not having a life partner, having little money) will make us forever unhappy. This reductive understanding of happiness is culturally reinforced and continues to endure, despite overwhelming evidence that our well-being does not operate according to such black-and-white principles.

One such myth of happiness is the notion that “I’ll be happy *when* _____ (fill in the blank)... The false promise is not that achieving those dreams won’t make us happy. They almost certainly will. The problem is that these achievements---even when initially perfectly satisfying---will not make us as intensely happy (or for as long) as we believe they will. Hence, when fulfilling these goals doesn’t make us as happy as we expected, we feel there must be something wrong with us or we must be the only ones to feel this way.” - Sonja Lyubomirsky

She is scratching at what Solomon just gave us in 3 verses.

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We spend our lives chasing after things that are supposed to give us meaning and joy.

Then when we get them, we are like a 2 year old at Christmas, super excited for two seconds ... then it's "what's next???"

The thing is we don't realize we do this.

Ecclesiastes is saying, "Wake up!" // "Let me give you a bigger vision of life than how you live it."

So often we live like a horse with blinders on ...

Head forward ... living life ... small vision

We toil at work ...

Solomon is inviting us to stop and ask ourselves the deepest most unsettling question.

What is the point of life? Where am I putting my hope to make this life count?

We don't like to ask those questions b/c, if we are honest, we are afraid of what the answer might be.

So, instead of thinking about them ... we keep ourselves busy ... preoccupied from the existential crisis lurking in our hearts.

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We toil away ... hi-ho hi-ho its off to work we go ...

And when we aren't working we keep ourselves occupied with glowing screens that fill us with the vanities of news, entertainment, and social capital.

Again, like that horse with blinders on.

Most of our life is spent looking at a screen a foot from our face.

We don't broaden our vision to consider the past or the future.

We are content to live in the smallness of the present.

But Solomon is pulling us out of that drunken stupor.

We like to think our life will be different.

We will be significant, our life will have mattered for something.

My contribution will be remembered.

But we die and this earth marches on without us just fine.

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Ecclesiastes 1:4-7

**4 A generation goes, and a generation comes,
but the earth remains forever.**

**5 The sun rises, and the sun goes down,
and hastens to the place where it rises.**

**6 The wind blows to the south
and goes around to the north;
around and around goes the wind,
and on its circuits the wind returns.**

**7 All streams run to the sea,
but the sea is not full;
to the place where the streams flow,
there they flow again.**

What is this getting at?

You'll BARELY be regarded in life; you WILL be forgotten in death.

This is humbling.

People will forget you and me.

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Just like we forget those who came before us.

Why?

B/C we are so fixated on the present.

We rarely see past the iPhone in front of our face.

Think about it.

Rome had the Caesar's who were worshipped as gods.

Today no one worships them. We don't really even think about them.

All they are is a name we HAVE to remember to get a better test score.

And then the test is done and they are out of our heads and memories. (poof ... like a vapor).

STORY OF CEMETERY AT FRANSCHHOEK, RSA

- oldest graveyard ever been in (1600's)
- small gravestones and really big ones.
- important people got themselves the bigger gravestones.
 - Vanity!!!
- All they were to me was a name & two dates.
- The guy could have invented the chicken sandwich for all I know!
- Whoever he was, however important he was ... all forgotten.

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The wheels of time keep turning.

We jump into this merry-go-round for a season, and then
get pulled out.

And the merry-go-round keeps going on just fine without us.

That is the vanity of life.

No matter what we do ... it's guaranteed to be forgotten.

Until someone discovers our thing and thinks they found
something new.

It's all vanity...

There isn't anything new under the sun, just forgotten
things rediscovered.

Ecclesiastes 1:8-11

8 All things are full of weariness;

a man cannot utter it;

the eye is not satisfied with seeing,

nor the ear filled with hearing.

9 What has been is what will be,

and what has been done is what will be done,

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and there is nothing new under the sun.

10 Is there a thing of which it is said,

“See, this is new”?

It has been already

in the ages before us.

11 There is no remembrance of former things,

nor will there be any remembrance

of later things yet to be

among those who come after.

We think Chic-fil-a invented the chicken sandwich.

Buuuut, chickens and bread have been around a long time.

Are you telling me in all of history, in all the places in the world ...

There wasn't some French farmer sitting in the Pyrenees that didn't have an Aha! moment??? [French equivalent]

Looking at the bread, back at the chicken, back at the bread ...

Before we get all puffed up with our new invention or new philosophy ... realize that it will be forgotten.

Whatever is celebrated in this generation will be forgotten in the next.

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Why?

B/C there will be “new” things to celebrate.

See, humans have a very short attention span.

We are like a cheap cooking pan that gets hot really fast and cools down just as quickly.

It's easy to get our interest, but its impossible to keep it.

Ecclesiastes 1:8 [Note: Make sure red text is also red on the slide]

8 All things are full of weariness;

a man cannot utter it;

the eye is not satisfied with seeing,

nor the ear filled with hearing.

We get bored with what is and are looking for the next thing to get excited about.

History has to repeat itself b/c no one is listening ... no one remembers.

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[PAUSE]

How do we get off this merry-go-round of vanity?

So how do we stop the cycle?

What can we learn?

Surely there is a life-hack to solve this riddle.

Maybe we just need more knowledge and wisdom.

This is often what people turn to in search for meaning.

Every generation sees things aren't alright.

And every generation sets out to fix it.

How?

We add knowledge to knowledge.

-- Wisdom to wisdom.

-- Progress to progress.

So every generation knows more than ever.

We see further into the universe.

We see deeper into the sub-atomic space.

We can diagnose more illness.

We can analyze more mental health problems.

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But for all that what have we solved?

Ecclesiastes 1:12-14

12 I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13 And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. 14 I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.

We are like the preacher of Ecclesiastes...

We stand in this generation still trying to crack the meaning of life.

That big question that never gets resolved.

It is like that movie Groundhog Day.

- **A man repeats the same day over. His day ends and he finds himself waking up right back where he started.**

That is what life is from one generation to the next.

Where our generation ends the next will wake up to the same existential problem.

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What do we all wake up to find?

Ecclesiastes 1:15

What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted.

This world is cruel and full of injustice and inequity.

Every generation will fight Injustice. Addictions. War.
Poverty.

Bad things will happen to good people; good things will happen to bad people.

[PAUSE]

This is meant to put us in a place of hopelessness.

We should sit here and feel the futility of our existence.

Solomon has pulled off the blinders.

Now we are seeing life in 4D / 360° ...

And it ain't good news.

We look back through history and see that it keeps repeating itself.

We look forward with no hope of that changing.

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Here is why.

This busted up world cannot be fixed by us.

We CAN'T fix what is broken and we CAN'T fill up what is lacking.

The solution has to come from outside us.

This is why the Gospel is good news.

It isn't do better, try harder. → False hope.

The solution did come from outside of us.

Jesus came from heaven.

He lived as a man.

He toiled under the sun.

He experienced the vanity that is life.

But, he also came to fix what was broken and fill up what was lacking.

Romans 8:18-24

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but

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because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved.

Jesus came to save us from the curse of sin and death.
AND one day in his kingdom ... this vanity of life will be done.

Ecclesiastes paints the picture of life under the curse of sin and death.

It is meant to rock us to our core.

This life all on its own is a merry-go-round to nowhere.

You will live far too short.

You will work far too hard.

You will gather far less than you want.

And life slips away ... it will all be gone ... and forgotten.

But with Jesus there is hope.

Life in him doesn't end at death.

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It continues on forever.

There is a way to make today continue to count into eternity.

There is a way not to be forgotten.

But it requires you to surrender your life.

You must recognize that Jesus Christ alone is your hope.

He came and is coming again.

In him there is no corruption, no futility, no vanity, no death.

Everything is meaningful.

You are remembered, you matter to him.

He hasn't forgotten you, nor will he ever forget you.

[As the band comes up]

NOT A CHRISTIAN:

- Surrender your life to him today. [confess and believe]

CHRISTIAN:

- Surrender yourself again. [confess and believe]

COMMUNION

Invitation to remember how Jesus broke the futility of life.

In its place eternal life, the fullness of life.

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It is in him.

We break the bread. Reminding that his broken body heals our brokenness. One day he will return to heal this broken world.

We drink the cup. Reminding us that his blood was shed to make a new promise.

A promise that will not prove empty.

But one that has been fulfilled and will be fulfilled on the day he returns and makes all things new.

If you aren't a Christian your next step is to put your faith in Jesus. If you do that, we would love to come with you to the table.

PRAY

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