

01-02-04a Ecclesiastes

Let's take a moment at the beginning of our study this morning to go to the Lord in prayer. Father, we thank you for this day, we thank you for the many ways that you have blessed us, you have protected us, provided for us, and we have not only an earthly existence, but also a heavenly existence, a heavenly home, a heavenly citizenship. We thank you for the standing that we have before you in Christ, and for the salvation that not only promises us a bright future, but also sustains us and delivers us out of this present evil age.

We thank you for the country in which we live, the freedom that we enjoy. We ask your blessing and your guidance for the leaders and leadership in various branches of our government. We pray for those who are in the military, serving at home and abroad.

We ask that you will continue to bless our nation so that the environment in which believers can learn and grow and function will be preserved. We thank you for our fellowship and for those who are a part of it, either here or away, and we pray that your Holy Spirit will give us insight and understanding as we study your word together this morning. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. For our scripture reading this morning, turn with me to Psalm 90. Psalm 90.

We have memorized the first portion of Psalm 91. These psalms are at the beginning of the fourth book of psalms. If you have a New King James, you'll see a notation with that effect at the beginning of Psalm 90.

This is ascribed to Moses. The superscription says, A prayer of Moses, the man of God. There are various categories that have been assigned to psalms by students of psalms.

They talk about individual laments, community laments, communal songs of praise, songs of assent, and so forth. This one is classified as a community lament, and you'd think, well, it's a complaint. But as we read, I think you'll see that this bears directly on our study in Ecclesiastes chapter 1. Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God. You turn man to destruction and say, Return, O children of men. For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday, when it is past, and like a watch in the night.

You carry them away like a flood, they are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass, which grows up. In the morning it flourishes and grows up.

In the evening it is cut down and withers. For we have been consumed by your anger, and by your wrath we are terrified. You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins, in the light of your countenance.

For all our days have passed away in your wrath. We finish our years like a sigh. The days of our lives are seventy years, and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow.

For it is soon cut off and we fly away. Who knows the power of your anger? For as the fear of you, so is your wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Return, O Lord, how long? And have compassion on your servants. O, satisfy us early with your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days in which you have afflicted us, the years in which we have seen evil.

Let your work appear to your servants, and your glory to their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us. Yes, establish the work of our hands.

The subject of Ecclesiastes chapter 1, in the first section following the introduction, talking about the circuit of the wind, the circuit of the sun, and the ever-flowing waters in the rivers and oceans, is a reminder of the fact that things of this life are transient. That same idea is present in Psalm 90. In Moses' song, there is a moral component that is not addressed by Solomon.

You will notice that God is in almost every phrase, every idea that's expressed in this psalm. The first word of the psalm is Lord, you have been our dwelling place. We talked about the dwelling place of the Most High in Psalm 91 when we memorized that.

This talks about eternity, before the mountains were brought forth, before the earth was formed. From everlasting to everlasting, God exists. Man is temporary, man is destroyed.

He is like grass that rises up, grows up in the morning and withers in the evening and is cut down. We have that morning and evening imagery in our Ecclesiastes passage. But what is the reason for that difference between God, who is eternal, and man made in the image of God who is temporary? Moses brings that up in verse 7. We are consumed by your anger, your wrath terrifies us.

It is our iniquities that have been set before God. Our secret sins show up in the light of his countenance. Our days pass away because of God's wrath.

Verse 9, the days of our lives might be 70 or 80 years, but their boast is only labor and sorrow, he says. Our lives are cut off and we fly away. His conclusion is, teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

This is an interesting point of view. I say interesting, I've been trying to teach the girls to find synonyms for interesting because we tend to overuse that word. Isn't that interesting? It's interesting we just say that over and over.

Why is it interesting? If you compare the viewpoint here of Moses in looking at the brevity of human life and the product, the boast in verse 10 as being labor and sorrow of the 70 or 80 years that one spends, this sounds similar to what we've seen Solomon express. But the difference is the context and the setting because in Moses' view there is a reason for this. It is the sinfulness of man.

It is the fallen nature, the corruption that entered the world back in Adam's day and has come all the way through the generations. It is the anger and wrath of God against sin that limits a man's days. He says in verse 11, who knows the power of your anger? For just like the fear of you, so is your wrath.

The magnitude of respect or awe for God in His glory is comparable to the measurement of the awe and wonder at God's wrath. Whether it's the positive attributes or the negative attributes, when you think about how great God is, what His creative power and His loving kindness and so forth, well, it is equally great. People like to have a God that's, if you think about positive as being in the black and negative as being in the red, a lot of us, even today in the church, have a view of God where we see 100% of the positive side of the ledger, the black, and we think, well, God does occasionally get angry.

We think about maybe 10 or 20% of His negative. If somebody's really, really, really, really bad, well, God might move over into the red and be angry and have discipline. And Moses says, you've got to take all 100% of the negative.

You've got to go all the way to minus 100 in the red ink, just like you go to the positive 100 in the positive ink. And just as much as you appreciate God's grace and greatness and creative power, you have to allow for His anger, His wrath, and His destructive power. He's balanced.

He is just as able to destroy as He is to create. Who knows the power of your anger? As the fear of you, so is your wrath. So teach us to number our days.

This is a familiar passage, this verse 12. Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom. But what does it really mean to number our days? I think about my time at the Naval Academy.

I think about my time in Okinawa where you know that a certain day is coming and I knew the date of first class graduation every day of the school year for four years. It was one of the things that Midshipman memorized. It was posted on the boards.

Cleaves had to know the days until certain events, until Christmas leave, until second class ring dance, until first class graduation. There were four numbers that you could ask and probably still can ask any Cleave at any time and they can tell you the number of days until first class graduation. And Cleaves knew the number of days until the hat would come off the top of the monument and there would be no more Cleaves.

In Okinawa, everyone knows their rotation date. It's different now. I think units only stay there for six months, but we used to go there for a year tour.

Accompany tours could be as long as three years in Okinawa. And you could ask any Marine, especially in the last six months, and they could tell you the number of days until that flight was going to leave and bring them back to the States. So when you know, this is the point, when you know the termination date, when you know that there's an actual date coming, people who are engaged and their wedding date is drawing near, someone who is in a pregnancy and the doctor has said, this is when we think your baby is going to arrive, people can count the days.

They number the days and know the length of each one and what they have to get through or what they're looking forward to. We don't know the day of our death. We don't know the day of our departure, whether it's death or the rapture.

So it's much more difficult for us to number our days and treat each one as precious. And we have to learn that. And so this prayer of Moses says, teach us to number our days.

Teach us to treat the days as though there was very little time left to make the most of the time. And he says, redeem the time or redeeming the time because the days are evil. It is hard, if you just leave the days to themselves, the product is going to be evil.

It takes watchfulness. It takes prayer. It takes effort to redeem the time.

If it's not redeemed, it's going to remain a part of the evil calendar that we're all functioning under. The Lord died to rescue us, deliver us out of this present evil age. Well, how do you redeem the time? How do you number the days in a profitable way? It is by gaining a heart of wisdom.

And this is where we find an apparent conflict as we think about the content of Ecclesiastes because Solomon says, well, it doesn't seem that wisdom does much. A superficial reading of Ecclesiastes seems to indicate that, well, the rich man and the poor man, the wise man and the fool all go to the same place. That wisdom doesn't really accomplish much.

Yet Moses says the numbering of days, the redeeming of the time, is related to gaining a heart of wisdom. What's the point of numbering your days and realizing that the time is short? If it's all a vapor, if it's all transient, then what good does a heart of wisdom do you if everyone all ultimately goes to the same place, the wise man and the fool? Well, Moses thinks that there is some value. But you will notice that everything in Moses' song here is related to the existence of God.

God is eternal. Man's life here is temporary. But he says in verse 13, have compassion on your servants.

Satisfy us early with your mercy that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days which have afflicted us, the years in which we have seen evil. Let your

work appear to your servants and your glory to their children.

Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us and establish the work of our hands for us. Take what starts out being transient and temporary and make it permanent. And he repeats that.

Establish the work of our hands for us. Yes, establish the work of our hands. There has to be a way to take the temporary and make it permanent.

We saw this movie from Disney called Dinosaurs. And it's been about a week ago. And so I can't remember the exact quote.

But if you manage to get all the way to the end of that movie, it's interesting from a computer point of view because the dinosaurs are all, in fact most of the movie is either computer generated or it's a mixture of real scenery and the computer generated animals move in front of it. But at the very end of the movie, this is one of these standard stories where there is a crisis and there is a journey and the dinosaurs have to leave one place and go to their utopia, to the birthing place or the nesting place, whatever it is, that's in their distant memory. They've been living in one spot and they want to return to the birthing grounds.

And I don't think I'm giving anything away by saying at the end they finally get there. But during the journey, you find out who the good guys are and who the bad guys are. Naturally the adults are all clueless and need help and the young ones are going to help them find a way.

This is a classic Disney theme where the parents don't know anything and the kids have to do all the work. But you get to the end and then as they zoom out, so to speak, it's as though the point of view or the camera is receding up on a helicopter and you see them all in this happy utopian place. It draws back and you start to see the river and the circle of life and they're trying to come to a big grand conclusion.

And a narrator, this lady, starts talking and she says, I'm paraphrasing here, but she says, we don't know where the journey is going to take us and we don't know where we are in it and how much time is left to us. But we can only hope that our passing will be remembered, that our time here will be remembered. And it just struck me because just that morning we've been studying Ecclesiastes where Solomon says there's no remembrance.

The next generation is going to come up and not remember anything. But the big hope, and this is a secular humanist, in fact it's almost a Hindu point of view, a lot of the New Age Oprah Winfrey point of view of life is the Eastern mystic point of view. And that basically says, well, the most you can hope for is that you make a difference during your passing and that somebody will remember.

You see this in the desire to build monuments and the desire to be remembered and to have a foundation that will give grants or an award in your name or a building that's got your name on it

or something. People who have accomplished financial things and reached a degree of success there want to use their money to try to immortalize themselves. Some people try to immortalize themselves in their offspring who will carry their name forward.

And the idea is, well, because you're going to pass and be gone, what you want to do is leave a mark. You want to be remembered. Moses doesn't say that there is some accomplishment that man can attain that will establish the work of his hands.

God has to establish the work of our hands for it to last and be remembered. Let your work appear to your servants and your glory to their children. And do you notice the turnabout in verse 16 and 17? He talks about after the boast of 70 or 80 years of life in verse 10 being only labor and sorrow, when you get to verse 15 he says, make us glad according to the days you have afflicted us, the years where we have seen evil.

We want a balance. We've had affliction and evil. We want a compensating time of gladness.

Well, he said that the 70 or 80 years, we finish our years like a sign. So when is this compensation going to take place? Well, Moses knows it's going to be after. It's like the last verse of Psalm 23.

Goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. La'olam, unto the ages in Hebrew. The phrase we're going to see this morning.

Let your work appear to your servants and your glory to their children. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us. So he starts out saying, let your work appear.

If we can see God's work, that's what opens the door to our work being established. When the work of the Lord appears to this generation and to their children, that is what creates the potential for the work of man's hands to be established. God's work comes first.

Let your work appear to your servants. Let your glory appear to their children. This is something that can go from generation to generation.

Then the beauty of the Lord our God will be upon us. God can establish the work of our hands, and that repetition at the end of verse 17 is highly significant. It is possible for your work to survive you when God establishes it.

And this is an exceedingly important perspective. You don't find it very often in the Old Testament, but this fragment from Moses survives here in the hymn book of Israel. And when you come back to Ecclesiastes chapter 1, keep this idea in mind.

When God's work appears to the generations in Israel, to them and to their children, that's when it's going to be possible. When they number their days and realize, come to the realization that Solomon is expressing, that life is transient, and there is a need to rise above the mundane, to

rise out of the transient and the temporal, to not just be the grass that grows up in the morning and is cut down in the evening. Something has to last.

And this is a desire or an instinct in every human heart. Nobody wants to just be here and gone. Everyone wants to find something permanent, find something lasting.

Most of the religions and cults of the world reach beyond time. You have those who believe in reincarnation, you have those who believe in karma, and you're going to come back. They take this idea of a cycle and say, well, your son is going to rise again.

You were a Shirley MacLaine and thinking that they've had all these previous lives and so forth. The idea is always to try to find something beyond the sunrise and the sunset. This is what distinguishes us from the animals.

No matter how intelligent an animal is, they don't think about eternity. However sophisticated they become, you can talk about dolphins or apes or what was I watching, bears. There was a bear trainer on the other night saying that he thought bears were as smart as the higher order apes.

That they are extremely intelligent and you see shows about dolphins and so forth. You can get the smartest animals you want. One thing that they never evidence, Coco, the signing ape and all that, they don't ever talk about the meaning of life or going beyond life.

That's a uniquely human consciousness. But it is universal and that's why there is an internal component in virtually all religions. Even the scientists who have a non-spiritual view of the universe tend to think in terms of energy, that your energy goes to rejoin the energy of the universe and that there may be some sort of consciousness that survives.

You go into the great collective somewhere. So this is the arena in which we are functioning in terms of ideas. So if you turn with me now back to Ecclesiastes, chapter one, let's read once again the opening salvo that Solomon fires here after introducing himself as the son of David, king in Jerusalem, Kohelet, the assembler, the one who is calling together those who are in a position to think and meditate on these truths.

And he begins in verse two and it says in the English, Vanity of vanities, says the preacher. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. We've addressed that doubling of the noun, that Havel, Havelin.

I may initially have spelled this for you as H-E-B-E-L. Actually it occurs that way sometimes, but it's H-A-B-E-L, Havel. And then the second, the plural is Havelin, H-A-B-A-L-I-N, Havel, Havelin.

And this Abel or Havel is where Abel's name came from and it immediately introduces to us the idea of being transient. Its root meaning is vapor or breath. And in continuing to work and look up passages and meditate on the idea expressed in this word, I think, and we talked about the intersection of the metaphor, what is it about breath or vapor that Solomon has in view when he uses it here.

And I gave you the idea of insubstantial or transient. Probably the easiest way to translate this is just to say here and gone. When he says the ultimate vapor, the doubling meaning the ultimate or the highest expression of something, it's the ultimate impermanence.

Ultimate impermanence. Here and gone. All is here and gone.

Verse three, what is the profit to a man in all his toil which he toils under the sun? A generation, and I've gone back and I'm going to give you my literal translation because there are some vocabulary words here that help us read the subtext. Remembering that Solomon is the wisest man who ever lived in Old Testament days, you would expect that when he writes something one way or the other, it's going to be operating on a lot of levels. Scripture always does that, but in Solomon's case, every word and every sentence has not occurred by accident.

It's constructed with malice of forethought. So I think we have to pay close attention to the structure, the vocabulary. Every word has been chosen carefully and we're reaching up from where we are to understand a very advanced expression of wisdom and of thought.

So in verse three, he says, what is the profit to a man in all his toil which he toils under the sun? And I mentioned that that word for profit is yitron. It only occurs here in this book. It is an economic term.

When you subtract the expenses from the gross income and you arrive at your net, that's yitron. That's what's left over after everything is reckoned. And we had that amal word for labor.

This is the work in which you engage. It has the idea of the effort that is put forth. What is the profit from all of his toil in which he toils under the sun, all of his labor, his effort that he exerts under the sun? Then in verse four, I want to clarify a little bit the translation here.

Literally this says, a generation walks. This is halak, H-A-L-A-K. And this is used in the literal sense for putting one foot in front of another, walking down a road.

It is also used in a more, in an idea type of way for going forth. So this, a generation goes forth, literally walks. And a generation goes in.

This is from the Hebrew word bo, B-O. The verb means to come in or go in. So you find that military terminology later on talking about the kings who sometimes he says, Solomon when he was praying to God and he says, I am young and I don't know how to go out and come in before this people when he's asking for wisdom.

And the idea of going out and coming in has to do with going forth to battle. Well going forth in that particular case is yatsah. But here, go forth is walk, halak.

And go in or come in is bo. So a generation goes forth, it walks out and it walks in. It goes out, it

comes in.

And the earth stands still unto the ages. The word translated forever in Hebrew is a phrase, it's lat olam. Just like it was in Psalm 90.

Lat olam. Lat means to or unto. Olam is the ages.

Unto the ages. And this is a little bit something we have to take into account sometimes because we translate it forever and we think well this is everlasting. But in the Hebrew mind, lat olam means out so far that you can't see the end.

It doesn't have a technical meaning of it is never going to end, there is no end. Unto the ages means for practical purposes you don't know when it's going to end. And people have stumbled over this because God will promise David a son sitting on his throne forever and you say well, there is not a son of David sitting on the throne now and after the thousand year millennial reign of Christ he is going to turn the kingdom over to the father and technically speaking there won't be a son of David sitting on the throne of Israel.

So how can you say forever? Well when we think of forever we think to future infinity. But lat olam means unto the ages. It means perpetually, it doesn't necessarily mean well, do you mean that my salvation might come to an end sometime down the road if it says I'm saved forever? Well, not necessarily.

Lat olam doesn't mean that there is an end or there isn't an end. It means you can't see the end. It's just so far out there it's over the horizon.

And so you go to other passages to find out that you can't just go to lat olam and say that something has no end nor can you say that it has an end. It just means the end is not in view. It seems to be perpetual.

The earth, the generation goes in. The earth stands still unto the ages. We know that eventually there's going to be a new heaven and a new earth.

The earth won't be here forever. So the earth is going to stand beyond any time that we're going to be able to see from this point of view. And in verse 5, the sun rises and the sun goes.

And literally it says unto its place panting it rises again. It sounds like an odd phrase but this is what it says. The sun rises and the sun goes and unto its place panting it rises again.

The panting is a real literal translation of this word but it has the idea of racing to a place when you hurry or you go swiftly you wind up getting out of breath. And so this is a word that was used for hurrying or hastening but it literally means panting. It's like the sun's tongue is hanging.

By the time it gets back to the place where it rises. But in verse 5 you have the same verb for

going or going in that you had up in verse 4 for the generation. We said a generation goes forth, it walks walks forth, walks out and a generation goes in and I told you that verb was bow.

The sun rises. It doesn't walk obviously and you have the verb here for rise but then it says the sun goes in literally it's the same word bow. And then to its place meaning its rising place it pants, panting it goes there panting and then it rises again so it's going to start over.

Then in verse 6 literally this says going forth which is the same verb halak walking but now it's in the participle form going forth unto the south and turning around unto the north turning turning the wind is going forth and that's your word walking again halak and upon turning it returns so the word for turning there occurs five times in verse 6 and the the verb there is savav S-A-V-A-V or S-A-B-A-B if you understand that those are soft B's and being a participle it's sovev so you have the wind going forth unto the south halak turning around sovev and it's repeated sovev sovev turning turning and this has the idea of perpetual motion when you have a participle repeated this way turning turning it means it's just constantly turning some translations have even said whirling but I don't think whirling is the idea here it's not like a dust devil or a tornado it's a circuit it's constantly turning so you have sovev three times in the space of five words here and turning around to the north turning turning the wind is going forth and you have halak again also in the participle form all of these are participles this is the idea of constant movement going forth turning turning going forth upon turning the wind returns then in verse 7 in your English it says all the rivers flow but guess what the verb is here all the rivers are walking halak going forth all the rivers are going forth to the sea but the sea is not filled then literally to the place where the rivers are going forth and that's halak again to the place where the rivers are going forth there they return to go forth halak so you can see how tightly woven this is because the verbs tie all of these things back to the generation that walks the generation that goes forth the generation goes forth the generation goes in the sun rises and it goes in and to its place it hastens its panting and it rises again so in verse 5 the rising and the going in those are cal stem Q-A-L the cal stem is your normal declarative it would be similar to an aorist in Greek in the sense that it's referring to an action that took place at a particular point you don't have the idea that the sun is constantly rising the way that you have the streams flowing or the wind blowing it refers to a specific action sort of wrapped up in a ball the sun rises well once it rises it's finished rising and you'll notice there's no reference to the sun shining it doesn't say the sun is shining and shining and then he goes down and comes back and then he's shining and shining for the sun the reference is to when the sun arises and when the sun sets the beginning and end point it doesn't make any reference to shemesh you have the rivers flowing all day long the wind blowing all day long but it doesn't talk about the sun shining all day long it talks about the beginning and ending points so this is the more you look at this especially if you can see it in Hebrew or can see the ties between these various words the more amazing these statements are because he's talking about the generation going forth and a generation going in and the idea is the beginning and the end of the generation going forth with halak and so it goes halak often has the idea of looking at the inception of the action you say well when would you use halak and when would you use bo and when would you

use some other word for moving around well halak has the idea of going forth it is kind of like an ingressive heiress if you remember your ingressive constative and culminative heiress the ingressive heiress talks about an action from the standpoint of its beginning the constative talks about the action in its duration constant is the idea culminative heiress talks about the action with a view toward its finishing up its culmination well halak many times when it's used has its emphasis on the beginning of the action began to walk began to go forth means to walk but has the idea of going forth that's when you began to walk and so it's great because halak in verse 4 has the idea of the generation coming into being and going forth and doing their walking so it covers the if you were using this of the sun it would be the rising and the shining all day long idea and then the coming in the bo part talks about the end then when you get to the sun in verse 5 it's emphasizing the rising and the setting and then it hastens and rises again you don't really talk even about the night time you ignore the night and just talk about the rising and the setting of the sun then in verse 6 you have this constant action of the wind and all of these you have 1,2,3,4,5,6 participles that talk about the duration this is all emphasis on the middle parts it's not talking about when the wind began to blow or when the wind stopped blowing and it doesn't even tell you where the wind begins and ends it says well kind of in the north and kind of in the south but it's whirling, whirling, turning, turning all the time and after it's turned then the wind returns and blows again onto the south and turns back to the north so verse 6 with the wind talks about the that middle portion the duration the rivers are going forth to the sea but the sea is not filled to the place where the rivers are going forth walking, halak there they return to go forth again so once again you have the idea of duration but now instead of a singular the sun has been singular the wind has been singular now you have streams which are plural and each of these statements is an aspect of the generations all of this goes back to verse 4 it's not just talking about well look around you in nature these are metaphoric ways of talking about the generations when you talk about the sun rising and setting this is the beginning and ending of your time on earth time is measured by the sun go back to Genesis 1 when God created the greater light to serve, to measure for signs and times and seasons and days and years this is associated with the measurement of time here's your beginning here's your birthday look at an obituary what do they have? born July 4th, 1900 died August 17th, 1985 you have a beginning and ending time so that's one aspect and yet as people die others are being born you have the idea that there is something of a balance when people die in any given day the number of people who are born in any given day as soon as somebody's light goes out another light is rising another sun is rising so that's an aspect of the generations in verse 6 with the wind what does the wind do? how do you know it's there? you can't see it remember the translation at least in John 3 where Jesus is talking to Nicodemus about the wind and he says you hear the sound of it but you don't know where it comes from and where it's going and every other place in the New Testament is translated as spirit but the idea is you can't see the wind the only reason you know it's there is you feel it and you see its effects you see what it does while it's there you see the clothes flapping on the clothesline you see the trees' leaves rippling you see the wheat in the field rippling you see gum wrappers and things blowing down the road well, here's another aspect of a generation while a

generation is on the earth they're moving stuff around they're pushing stuff to and fro it's a force and it's constant, there's a bustle it's like an anthill moving to the south, turning around to the north turning, turning, the wind is going forth walking upon turning, it turns again there's a constant melee and bustle of activity in any human generation you see all kinds of if you've seen these time-lapse photography where they're building a building or they're making a road or something and they've got a camera in one spot and you just see all of this rapid movement and history in fast motion and you see the rise and fall here's something growing up and withering here's a little flower opening up in that time-lapse well, here's a generation doing all of these things and it's all about what takes place in the middle when you see the wind then in verse 7 all of the rivers, and now instead of talking about a single generation or a single life now you're talking about the streams we go to the plural for the first time the rivers are walking to the sea they have different paths they go through different country their water is flowing the sea is never filled it doesn't fill and back up and change the streams the water is cycling to the place where the rivers are going forth there they return back to the springs, back to the source and they return and this imagery of the river tells us something else about the generation about people and their lives there are many different courses through life you're going to have rich and poor you're going to have wise and foolish you're going to have short and long some streams originate very near the sea and they just have a very short course others are like the Nile or the Ganges or the Amazon where they're famous for their length but they all end up in the same place and they never accomplish a purpose you think, well these streams are flowing they're moving that water down there to fill up the sea but the sea is never full the streams have to keep running and the sea is never full and the water seems to go back and begin over so as they pass through all of these various courses and all of these different lengths and some have waterfalls and some move underground for a while some of them have carved out deep rifts like the Grand Canyon others of them are very shallow and wide all different characteristics but they all end up in the same place and this is talking about the fact that even though lives seem to be different and seem to be various and you look at the mighty Mississippi or the mighty Missouri and other big rivers and you think, well look at this Colorado River and these rushing waters and all look how it's cut this canyon this is a mighty powerful river but that water ends up in the sea and disappears and there's other water coming from the source and flowing down and you get the idea that there's nothing unique even though there are all of these different ones the water as it flows there's going to be other water flowing that same path none of it is ever going to do something unusual and fill up the sea it's transient it is impermanent it's temporary and even the variation in paths is sort of a constant and is repeatable and is repeated every time a fresh gallon of water comes in but it's comparing between rivers and between streams and you say well look there's variety but in a way there's a sameness to the variety then you get to verse 8 and this is fascinating because the vocabulary here the New American Standard for example says all things are wearisome man is not able to tell it let me find my New King James which I didn't have open here we go in verse 8 in the New King James it says all things are full of labor man cannot express it but the word translated things in verse 8 is dabar D-A-B-A-R and it's in the plural and it has an article so it says

all which is K-A-L all and then and the D-B-R pattern there that's from dabar and the im is plural of course so it says all ha dabarim well dabar is the verb that means to speak to say to tell and it is often translated word sometimes it's translated word sometimes it's translated thing because things existed in the telling you would tell someone things and so these things that are told sometimes it's the actual thing and sometimes it's the words but you could easily translate this all words are laborsome a man is not able to speak and you'll notice in your New King James it is in italics because it's not in the Hebrew and I would submit to you that rather than all things are full of labor verse 8 could be well translated all words are laborsome man cannot speak a man cannot speak it's ish going back to ish and isha in the first chapters of Genesis it's the generic word for man there's no article it's a man all words are laborsome a man is not able to speak in looking at this he's not saying all things are full of toil and laborsome he doesn't express this all words are laborsome a man is not able to speak then he goes on in verse 8 to say the eye is not satisfied and in your English it says not satisfied with seeing nor the ear filled with hearing but these are actually infinitives with is not there these are infinitive constructs in Hebrew so the definition would be the eye is not satisfied to see and the ear is not filled to hear just seeing what it can see doesn't satisfy the eye just hearing what it can hear doesn't fill the ear you see the subtle shift in idea there instead of saying the eye is not satisfied with seeing nor the ear filled with hearing you get the idea well you can never see enough or you can never hear enough you see people use this verse and talk about pornography and they say well people get hooked on pornography men typically get hooked on pornography no matter how much of it they look at well they always want to see more and no matter how much if you love music no matter how much beautiful music you hear you always want to hear more but I don't think that's the idea here I think what he's saying is the eye is not satisfied to see you can see all you want to see but it doesn't satisfy you can see more than you're able to see is the idea the eye is not satisfied to see no matter how much you look at it isn't that you never get tired of looking it's that looking at everything doesn't satisfy you say there's got to be more there's got to be something more than what I'm seeing there's got to be more to this than meets the eye is a phrase we have well there's more to him than meets the eye there's more to her than meets the eye and this is the idea the eye is not satisfied to see you look around you're looking for meaning you're looking for an answer and what you see with your physical eye the sights that come in through the eye gate don't satisfy the eye the ear as it's hearing and listening isn't filled it doesn't get sated it doesn't get satisfied or filled with what it hears and he returns to that idea that which has been is what will be that which is done is what will be done and that's identical to my translation that which has been is that which will be that which has been done is that which will be done and there is nothing new under the sun so with all of the blowing and all of the flowing and all of the rising and setting that takes place in each generation all of the hearing and all of the seeing nobody has found the answer to this puzzle what is the prophet what is the Yitron to a man what is the Yitron to the sun people have done what the wind does blowing hither and yon covering all of the landscape people have flowed down all of the different paths that a stream can take one comes up and sets like the sun another rises and sets like the sun all of the people all of the thousands and millions

of people searching over the landscape flowing over the landscape no matter what you try they have all been tried before how can you take the impermanent and make it permanent how can you gain a prophet under the sun and what Solomon is saying he is not saying everything is vain and empty he is saying nobody has found the answer the eye has never found that for which it is really looking the ear has not heard that for which it was really listening in all of the generations of people under the sun when I see this phrase under the sun I think of a terrarium they make these terrariums and it is a closed environment they put a half a globe a clear plexiglass dome over something and seal it they had a great big one they tried to get people to live in out west what was it solarium or something they made a great big geodesic dome and they tried to seal it off and put it in a windowsill where they have got plants and algae and little snails and things and completely isolated from the rest of the environment this is supposed to be self-contained and the plants produce enough oxygen for the animals the animals produce enough carbon dioxide for the plants there is enough moisture in there to water everything and it evaporates and condenses and it is all self-contained this to me is the idea from under the sun this that takes place under the sun is in this earthly life on this earth within the parameters that God has circumscribed humanity in the generations the time that is allocated the environment there is a lot going on that we can't see that we can't hear angels talk to each other God talks to them that dome the cone of silence we can't hear what goes on outside of it and this is what Solomon is talking about all of this hurrying and scurrying about under the dome no one has found out how to satisfy the eye how to fill the ear how to find the prophet because that is what the eye and the ear are looking for and listening for where is the prophet from this labor that takes place under the sun what is the permanent value well let's pause here and take our break because when we come back we are going to move forward and see what Solomon how Solomon continues this idea and this investigation because he is better equipped than anyone that has ever been if there was ever a wind that blew if there was ever a river that flowed if there was ever a sun that rose that had the potential to find the answer to this question Solomon is it there has never been anyone like him before in wisdom, in resources he is like the ultimate man he is the super man and if anyone under the sun can find out where the Yitron is it is going to be Solomon that is what we will pick up when we return