

01-02-11a Ecclesiastes

As we turn our attention this morning to the study of the Word of God, let's begin by taking a moment to clear our minds and prepare our hearts, seek the ministry of God the Holy Spirit as we look together at the truth of God's Word. Shall we pray? Father, I thank you for the privilege and the opportunity of sharing fellowship in your Word with believers of like mind. We thank you for the environment that you have provided for us so that we have freedom, we have safety, we have privacy to pursue our calling and to seek to fulfill your purpose in our lives.

We thank you for those that have the rule over us and we ask your guiding hand upon them. We thank you for the positive progress that seems to be underway in shaping some of the major strategies and major policies that affect our national life. We pray that you'll continue to bless and protect and preserve those things that are conducive to living the Christian life in the United States of America.

We pray for your protection and your provision for those who are overseas, ministering the gospel in foreign lands, not only for those who evangelize, but also those who seek to teach your Word and to prepare pastors who can operate in indigenous ministries and operate in local churches and be self-sustaining and self-sufficient as parts of the body of Christ in those areas. We ask your blessing on us this morning as we worship together through the study of your Word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will give us insight and understanding, not only to perceive the truth of what we have before us, but also to have fruitful meditation and productive application of the things that we see.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. For our scripture reading this morning, turn with me to the book of Job.

As you know, the book of Job records the calamities that befell him, and the bulk of the book contains dialogue between Job and his four friends. In the area of chapter 13 and chapter 14, Job is responding to the initial round of comments by his friends who waited a week before they said anything because they saw that his grief was very great. And in their attempts to apply what they know of the Word of God to Job's situation, to seek to comfort him, to explain his situation, they have tried to perceive and to apply the principles of sin and discipline.

Since Job is enduring calamity and suffering, their understanding of God's Word is that that is a mark of God's displeasure, that Job has malfunctioned in some way. Job, in this section, is refuting that claim. He says in response, you look at chapter 13, my eye has seen all this, my ear has heard and understood it.

What you know, I also know. I am not inferior to you, but I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God. You forgers of lies, you're worthless physicians.

We were just talking about worthwhile physicians this morning before class. And he's not

repudiating his friends, he's not condemning them out of hand, but when it comes to being physicians to treat his particular problem, they're worthless. Oh, that you would be silent, and your wisdom, that it would be silent.

Now hear my reasoning and heed the pleadings of my lips. Will you speak wickedly or perversely for God and talk deceitfully for Him? Would you misrepresent God in your diagnosis of my ailment? Will you show partiality for Him? Will you contend for God? Will it be well when He searches you out? Or can you mock Him as one mocks a man? He will surely rebuke you if you secretly show partiality. So, in verse 12 he says, Your platitudes are proverbs of ashes, your defenses are defenses of clay.

Hold your peace with me and let me speak, then let come on me what may. And he says, you're not helping me, I need to talk to God. I know everything you know, and your diagnosis is not helpful at all.

But chapter 14 is what we want to look at, because much of what Job states in this section is related to what we're studying in Ecclesiastes chapter 1. He says in chapter 14, Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. In fact, you can look at the previous verse, the last verse of chapter 13. He's talking to God directly.

He begins in verse 20 of that chapter talking to God directly. He says, I want to talk to God, and he does. He asks God in verse 21 to withdraw his hand and let not the dread of him make Job afraid.

And he goes down in verse 25, he says, Will you frighten a leaf driven to and fro? Will you pursue dry stubble? For you write bitter things against me. Remember our Friday night study talking about the books that are kept in heaven, the book of life, which is a record of the righteousness that is accrued by faith to the account of believers in every dispensation. And Job says, You're writing bitter things against me, and you're making me inherit the iniquities of my youth.

My inheritance is going to be based on the iniquities of my youth, not the product of my faith. You're writing these bitter things against me. You're putting my feet in the stocks and watching closely all my paths.

You've set a limit for the soles of my feet. I'm under arrest. Then in verse 28, this really begins the thought of chapter 14.

Man decays like a rotten thing, like a garment that is moth-eaten. So we're back to the idea of something that doesn't last, something that's impermanent. Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.

He comes forth like a flower, but fades away. He flees like a shadow and does not continue. And do you open your eyes on such a one and bring me to judgment with yourself? Who can bring a

clean thing out of an unclean? No one.

Since his days are determined, the number of his months is with you. You have appointed his limits so that he cannot pass. Look away from him that he may rest until, like a hired man, he finishes his day.

And you'll recall the imagery we've already seen of the sunrise and the sunset that apportions the limits of earthly life for human beings. For there is hope for a tree if it is cut down that it will sprout again and that its tender shoots will not cease. Though its root may grow old in the earth and its stump may die in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant.

How many times have you seen this happen? When we first moved to Claremore, actually out in the sticks beyond Claremore back in 1967, 1968, along in there, the first year that we moved there in the fall, just as school was starting. And in the spring, it was my mom's birthday. Her birthday is in April.

And we were out in the country and there's a lot of freedom out there. And my mom had mentioned, as spring was starting, that she really liked redbud trees. Well, we were traipsing through the woods exploring and having a big time and I found a little redbud tree that was small enough that I could dig up.

And so I dug it up and for her birthday I planted it in the yard, the south end of our house. Well, the tree did pretty well for a few years, but then I think I maybe cut the roots too short or something. It couldn't sustain itself.

I was 10 or 11 at the time. And the tree died. And I felt really bad about it because I wanted it to be something for my mom that would last.

But the roots were still alive. And my dad went ahead and cut the dead tree off at the base and thought no more about it. But the tree sprouted back up from the roots and it is still there to this day, 33 years after the fact, the tree is still there, having sprung up from its own roots.

We had a tree out here in the back that the tree guy came by and said, well, you want to have your limbs trimmed and so forth? And we said, no, they're doing okay. And he said, well, how about these trees you've got growing in your yard? He said, if you look at the trunk of them, they're not going to last. They're going to die.

Well, sure enough, the one in the middle of our backyard, it looked like someone had weed eaten and cut the bark and cut the outside rim right at the grass level. And sure enough, we had a strong wind and the tree just snapped off and was down in the yard. So we cut it up from firewood and thought no more about it.

Well, it sprung up from the roots. And then my brother visited and his dog, and it's a great dog, I

love his dog, but she saw this struggling tree and nodded off down to about a foot above the ground. It had this ragged appearance and I thought, well, that's it for that tree.

Well, it has sprung up again. It's because there's life in the roots. This is what Job is talking about.

There's hope for a tree. Some trees, it's very hard to kill. They'll spring back up.

In fact, some things that you try to get rid of keep springing up, even when you don't want them to. There were jungles in our front yard that someone had planted in a row when we first moved to Claremore, these yellow things that come up. And it was my job to mow the yard and mow the bank, and there were some in the side yard.

And I mowed those things down every year, and they just kept coming up and coming up. But there are a few of them that still, 30-odd years, I don't know how long before we moved there, they were planted. They still spring up every spring.

You just can't kill them. The tender shoots will not cease, though the root may grow old in the earth, and the stump may die in the ground. At the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant.

But in verse 10 he says, Man dies and is laid away. Indeed, he breathes his last, and where is he? Well, in the Old Testament days, the idea of resurrection was present, but it was far distant. It was so vague, there was that hope.

And Job is one of the Old Testament saints who talks about the fact that he knows that his Redeemer lives, and he is going to stand and see him on the last day. But that last day is so far in the future that what happens between them? Job says, When a man dies and you lay him away, where is he? Well, we know from our study that that's a hard question to answer when you're thinking in terms of time as we perceive it, because contrary to popular opinion, from the human perspective, you really don't go anywhere. It's a strange question to ask, where are all the people that have died? They're not floating around in heaven in disembodied souls.

They're not in temporary bodies. From our point of view, they're not anywhere. We exist in a piece of time in which they don't exist.

It doesn't mean that they've ceased or that they've been annihilated. It just means that their existence doesn't pertain to this patch of time that we're in. It's only people who are alive who are alive in this particular piece of time.

When they died, they went straight forward to their resurrection. Absent from the body, face to face with the Lord is what the Bible teaches. Well, when are you face to face with the Lord? It's at your resurrection.

That's what Paul said. The dead in Christ will rise first. If they were floating around in

disembodied souls, why on earth would they need to rise? They would return with him.

But they don't return with him. They rise to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. I know that's metaphysical.

A lot of people struggle with it. If you want to use the old, it's kind of like when your children first start looking around at the universe and they see the sun rise and the sun set. You don't necessarily go into a big discussion of the solar system and that the sun is not actually rising, the earth is rotating.

You just say, yeah, fine, the sun, for their purposes, it's moving, it rises and it sets. Even here in Ecclesiastes, that's the view that we have. We don't get into astronomy and the movement of the heavenly bodies.

We just say, look, the sun rises, the sun sets, and Solomon says the sun hastens back to the place where it rose. Well, in literal physics terms, the sun doesn't hasten anywhere. It's the rotation of the earth that causes the sun to rise.

But it's a working understanding that is useful. We don't have to get into the more advanced. In the same thing, if you want to think about your deceased loved ones as being face to face with the Lord, fine, I do.

Because from their point of view, they are. And I just need to catch up with them. But I know that they are not currently... It's not a question to ask, because they haven't... I won't get into all that, but suffice it to say that when a man dies and is laid away, Job says he breathes his last.

Where is he? Well, that's a good question. Do you want to really get into the nature of time and the nature of existence and the fact that God and the angels exist outside of time and that we, when we're not time-bound, exist outside of time? Those who have died now are outside of time and they're going to re-enter it at their resurrection. And so, it's perfectly legitimate to say that they are with the Lord because their next conscious perception after they died is with the Lord.

But if you struggle with that, then think of it the old way. That's fine. As water disappears from the sea and a river becomes parched and dries up... Notice some of the same vocabulary, the same imagery that we find in Ecclesiastes with reference to human life.

Job uses it here. Water disappears from the sea, a river becomes parched and dries up, so a man lies down and does not rise. What happens to the water in a river? Why does it become parched and dry up? Because it's not renewed.

The water that was in the river runs down to the sea and some of it evaporates and so forth, but it's not replenished. So, man lies down, and notice, man lies down and does not rise until the heavens are no more. Until the heavens are no more.

Until something changes with regard to the normal progress of time, man is going to lie down and not rise up. They will not awake nor be roused from their sleep. Now, what do you want to say about this passage? Is Job not believing in resurrection? Is he saying, well, the heavens are eternal, and so man's going to lie down and never rise up? It's this same Job that talks about resurrection.

I know that I will see him from my flesh on the last day. I know that my Redeemer lives. Job knows that he's going to be resurrected, so why does he say what he says here? Because Job understands the same thing that we do.

That once a man lies down for the rest of this normal coil of time, he's not going to rise up. He's going to rise up on the last day, when the heavens change. When are the heavens going to change? It's at the beginning of the millennial kingdom.

Oh, that you would hide me in the grave and conceal me until your wrath is passed. Literally, in verse 13, it says, that you would conceal me until your wrath returns. God's wrath issues forth for a time, and then it returns to him.

That you would appoint me a set time and remember me. Just go ahead and put me in the grave now and bring me back when the time of wrath has passed. And this is Job saying, I don't really see the point in continuing my life in this fashion.

Just hide me in the grave until the time of wrath is over, until that new heavens comes and those who are in the dust arise. And Job knows what lies beyond the resurrection, that it's the millennial kingdom, that it is the time of plenty and prosperity. He knows the things that the patriarchs knew.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who dwelt in tents, waiting for that city whose founder and builder is God, it tells us in Hebrews chapter 11. If a man dies, shall he live? All the days of my hard service, I will wait until my change comes. Well, what sort of a change is that? Is it just a change into death? Or is it the change that comes at death and the resurrection that immediately follows it? You shall call and I will answer you.

You shall desire the work of your hands. What's he talking about in verse 15? Job knows he's going to sleep in the dust. And from a human perspective, God is going to call.

Remember what Jesus says? The day is coming when God is going to speak and all those who sleep in the dust shall awake. Daniel chapter 12, verse 1, 2, and 3, long in there. Job knows these things hundreds of years before Daniel, almost 2,000 years before Christ.

There is a time when God is going to desire the work of his hands and he's going to bring it back. For now you number my steps, but do not watch over my sin. My transgression is sealed up in a bag and you cover my iniquity.

Notice it hasn't been dealt with. It hasn't been expunged. It hasn't been eradicated.

It's sealed up. Job knows an amazing amount about the plan and purpose of God. He knows that in the age in which he lives, sin has not been permanently dealt with.

It's sealed up. It's put in a bag. It's saved for later.

It's covered over. But as a mountain falls and crumbles away, and as a rock is moved from its place, as water wears away stones, and as torrents wash away the soil of the earth, we're back to the rivers flowing down to the sea, washing away the soil. So you destroy the hope of man.

You prevail forever against him and he passes on. You change his countenance and send him away. You change his appearance.

There's nothing like looking at photographs. It's not until these last 100 or 150 years that we've really been able to document the change that takes place in human appearance from youth to old age. And it's just plum depressing, isn't it? You feel the same inside, but you see pictures of yourself when you were young.

And, of course, the older we get, there's older people who will be listening to me who are going to say, you haven't seen nothing yet. But I look at pictures of my forebears and it's hard to recognize them when they're very young. You're used to seeing them when they're old.

But there is a change that takes place as we go through this life. We are worn down. As the streams flow down to the sea, it wears us away.

You change his countenance and then send him away. His sons come to honor and he does not know it. They're brought low and he does not perceive it.

Whatever happens to the generations that follow us, we're not there to see it. His flesh will be in pain over it and his soul will mourn over it. Why is that? Because we know what's going to happen.

We know that there's people who hesitate to even bring children into the world in our generation because they say, you know, there used to be the threat of nuclear holocaust, which is just as real as it ever was, but people like to console themselves with the assumption that the Cold War is over and therefore nuclear holocaust is unlikely. There's just as many weapons as there ever have been. There are just as many little red buttons and fanatical people wanting to run around and push them.

Saddam Hussein has nuclear weapons under construction. Despite all the best efforts of the United Nations and the peacekeeping forces and the inspection teams, the man has got the radioactive material. He's got the engineers.

He's got the laboratories. He's played the shell game and shuffled it around. But he and the

Chinese and India and Pakistan and all these others, they've got nukes, tactical nukes.

Some of them are going to be able to stick a rocket underneath them and launch them a long distance. And we know that nuclear warfare is going to take place on the surface of the earth. That's what the prophetic scriptures talk about during the 70th week.

It is going to happen. That's why you have a third of the earth being wasted and the sun being darkened and the moon turned to blood and so forth. It's the sting in the scorpion's tail and the devastation that is documented and foretold in the scripture as a result of nuclear warfare.

So it's coming. And all of these people who are saying peace and safety are going to find destruction coming upon them if they're not believers. So we know that there are going to be hard times, that every human being is subject to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

And so you mourn over what your children are going to face if you're a parent. But Job is musing at this time. He's talking about the span of human life.

Man's days are few and full of trouble. There is a lot of grief associated with being alive. And we wear down no matter how much blessing, how much prosperity we enjoy.

The rivers are still eroding and we're still wearing away. Our countenance is changing little by little every day. And we're transient.

We're temporary residents of the enduring earth. That's the thought. But you'll notice that Job, even as he thinks these thoughts, still has God in mind.

And he knows that God is in control of this. And he appeals to God. Hide me in the grave.

Don't let me see all of this misery. Just bring me out when it's over. Have you ever had that thought? I had that thought right before I went to the Navy.

I thought, wouldn't it be great if I could just wake up at the end of that four years with my commission in my hand and my gold bars and have the memory of having been there, but just not actually have to go through it. That God would just jump me forward. Probably too much Star Trek.

But that I could just... You know how they do these time leaps, quantum leap and that? You find yourself in the future and you remember the past, but you didn't actually have to go through it. I had that thought because I just was not relishing the prospect of enduring everything that was to come. But I made it through and Job did as well.

But there are times when we look at life and we realize that it's transient. We realize that it's full of trouble. We think, you know, it's just not worth it.

Job says, I don't think it's worth it to continue on. I just want to hide in the grave until God's wrath

returns and then he can bring me out and I will stand and see my Redeemer on the last day. But when someone is hidden away in the earth, you don't know where they are.

They're not having to put up with all the diffugalties that are going on here. So this is a good passage to look at as a parallel, as another commentary on the brevity of life, the transience and the misery and toil that are involved. What I'd like to do now is return to Ecclesiastes 1. And I hope you will forgive me for lingering a little here at the beginning because there is so much preconception about Ecclesiastes.

We have heard for so long, we've read the King James Translation that says vanity, vanity, all is vanity. We've heard all of our lives, I certainly have, that these are the musings and the mental calculations of a man who is jaded. He looks at life and is all dispirited and is looking at it from a human viewpoint saying pointless, pointless, waste of time, waste of time.

If we don't readjust our thinking here at the beginning and understand the introduction to this book, it is going to be a hopeless tangle trying to get through the rest of it. And there is nothing like reading the commentaries. And I've got about six.

I will tell you that I have worked as hard on the study of Ecclesiastes as I have on anything I have ever done. It's been as hard as when I did my two exegeticals in Ephesians for seminary, for a grade, a short exegetical and long exegetical where you translate every word and do all of the parsings and do the research and read the readings and go to countless commentaries and try to exhaust all the resources available to get your best understanding. And with limitations on time and energy and being able to stay awake, and I can't seem to stay up as long as I used to, I find my brain doesn't work well if I don't get some sleep.

I used to be able to run on virtually no sleep, but I have noticed in the last few years that the thing is wearing down. The rivers are taking all the soil into the sea and I can't do what I used to do and I can't stay up as long. So in the time that is available to me, I have really been laboring with pick and shovel in Ecclesiastes because it is a reach up for us to this very rich book full of wisdom.

So again, I ask your patience because this first section, verses 3-11, this is the map of the book. This is the key to knowing what subject is being addressed and what the answers are going to be as they come up in the remaining chapters. And we have spent some time here in these verses and we are going to spend just a little bit more before we go forward.

There is nothing like having a false assumption to screw up your interpretation of a book. This is what happened with Romans. You remember our investigations or our excavations in the book of Romans.

Romans is assumed to be a book about salvation, about soteriology, the plight of man and the work of Christ in saving us. And that is addressed in the book. It is an important component of what is in the book.

But the subject of Romans is not salvation. The subject of Romans is righteousness by faith for believers. If it has been a few months since you thought about Romans or if you haven't gone through that study yet, let me remind you, the book of Romans, everybody uses the Romans Road.

You go to classes on evangelism and they say they use the Romans Road, Romans 6.23, Romans 3.23, the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal... See there, I am slurring my words. I need more sleep. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Well, Friday night we spent a whole lesson on the phrase eternal life. What does it mean? And we came to realize as we look at passage after passage that eternal life is not a technical term that always means deliverance from the lake of fire. And guess what? In Romans 3.23, if you look at the context in Romans 3, we are not talking about eternal salvation from the lake of fire.

The wages of sin is death, operational death, lack of righteousness, no fruit. You are like a plant that has withered up branches that don't produce any leaves and don't produce any fruit. The gift of God is eternal life.

We can produce fruit. And that is a hard concept. And if you don't spend time laboring with your pick and shovel, somebody will hear me say that that has not been through our Roman study and say, that doesn't make any sense to me.

That doesn't sound right. He is just twisting those words to suit his theology. We have to go to the words of Scripture and build our theology out of those words.

And I promise you, people who go to Romans and see in it salvation have developed an evangelical theology. That is what we call ourselves, evangelicals. Well, evangel, it is the gospel that we exist to evangelize.

And we flatten and push everything into an evangelical view of Scripture. We spent untold lessons going through Romans and seeing that Paul is addressing the brothers who are in Rome, the brethren. He is talking to believers.

And he says, you don't have any excuse for not understanding these things. What may be known of God is visible. Don't be throwing rocks at the unbelievers who don't even believe in God, he says in chapter 2, because you yourself are doing the very same thing when you pay no attention to what God is saying.

He is rebuking and addressing believers. And he says in chapter 2, there is a judgment coming. And those who by faith and patience pursue their understanding, God is going to grant eternal life.

Well now, when does eternal life, deliverance from the lake of fire, depend on endurance and patience? It doesn't. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and that kind of deliverance comes. That eternal life that is talked about in Romans chapter 2 is the same eternal life that we are talking about in Luke chapter 10, when the lawyer comes to Jesus and says, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Paul talks about it in Romans 2. Romans is a book for believers and it is righteousness by faith.

But we had to spend a lot of time reorienting our understanding and shaking off the barnacles and the encrusted traditions of our forebears. Well, the same thing is true in Ecclesiastes. And I want to show you a few things that I could spend 10 times as much time as we are going to spend in chapter 1. So be grateful that it is only 10% of what we could spend.

But every word. Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. And I tell you, the longer I look at this book, I feel like going back and starting it all over again because it is so intensely packed.

It is so rich that literally every word Solomon uses is worth a lesson. And I am, I will tell you, I am struggling. I am probably operating a little over my head to even tackle this book.

But we are going to give it a go. So here we are in chapter 1 of Ecclesiastes. And we know that the superscription, the authorship is given to us in verse 1. The words of Kohelet, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

This is like, we just went to the book fair yesterday and you look at these books and you look at the cover, you see the title and you see the author. Many people were there browsing looking for particular authors. They had little notebooks saying which of their books do I have and it reminded me of looking for Statesman albums.

Which ones do I have and which ones do I need? And so people would look and they would check the cover because on the cover is the author's name. They would say, oh here is one by Jackie Collins that I don't have. Or here is one by Le Carre or here is one by John Grisham that I don't have.

And so people would pick those up. Well, this is the authorship, the words of Kohelet, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. That's what's on the cover.

Now here is the title or the subject and it's Havel Havelim, says Kohelet. Havel Havelim, all is Havel. It's impermanent, it's transient, it's here and gone.

It's short term. And we spent some time on that word because there's a lot of negative baggage attached to this Havel in the translation vanity that should not be there. He is not saying that it is worthless.

He's not saying it's a waste of time. He's saying it's transient and impermanent. And that's the

subject.

If we don't understand the subject of the book, how are we ever going to understand what he says as we go forward? He's saying it is like a vapor. Vapor can be a good thing. People buy vaporizers to put vapor into the air.

Vapor is what gives us clouds. It gives us a break from sunshine. It produces rain.

Vapor is the dew in the morning that waters plant life when you don't have rain. There's a lot of things you can say about vapor that are good, but vapor doesn't last. And this is the baggage that this word carries.

It is impermanent. It's transient. It doesn't last.

And we get engaged in efforts every day. We get up. We dress ourselves.

We put on our faces. We do our hygiene. We go forth.

We get our coffee. We stoke the fires with some sort of breakfast. We go out and we tackle the day's schedule.

Some people carry organizers. Some people keep it in their head. Some people put it on their computer.

But everybody has a schedule. Everybody has places to be, things to do. Well, this looks substantial.

And we look back on what we've done at the end of the day and we say, I got the whole house cleaned up. I earned another portion of my paycheck. I hit my marks.

I showed up when I was supposed to be. I got my appointments. But Solomon is standing back from that and saying, we can get involved and think that we're really doing substantial things, but if you step back and look at it, it's all a vapor.

Why? Why can he say that everything is impermanent, transient, temporary? Well, this is what verses 3 through 11 document. And in verse 3, he says, what profit does a man have? And this word, Yitron, has the idea of what is left over when you subtract expenses from gross? What is the net? What is the permanent thing that you carry away? What is permanent from all of a man's labor which he labors under the sun or the toil in which he toils under the sun? And this word for toil is Amal and it has the idea of the intensity of effort, the intensity of labor, the calories that you burn, the effort that you put forth. There are many words for labor in Hebrew and we have two or three of them in this passage.

But this one has the idea of this is all of the flailing of arms and legs that you're doing here. The things that wear you out. What do you have left over that lasts? Think back to, most of us are old

enough to think back ten years and still remember what was going on.

This is the year 2001. Let's think about 1991. This is in the second of the last year of George Bush Sr.'s presidency.

If you can remember that far back, 1991. Where were you? What were you doing? Think about the dishes that were washed, the laundry that was done, the car you were driving at the time and the maintenance that it required. Think about what job you had, the place where you lived and keeping it clean, the clothes that you had at the time, the shoes you had at the time.

Ten years ago, we had days that are just as full as they are today. What do you have that's permanent from those days ten years ago? What can you look at and say, this is what I have as a result of that. Did you buy something with a paycheck that has lasted ten years? Maybe.

Do you have clothing that you might have had ten years ago? Maybe. But ten years from now, will you still have the TV set or the stereo or the pair of shoes Things that we do that we think are so important and that fill our day, if you step back and look at it in the long term, it's all transient. It's here and gone.

Think about 100 years ago. We had great-grandparents that were scurrying about doing their labors. Where are their clothes? Where are the things that were purchased with their money? All of the things that filled their day.

Where is the permanent value? Do you know anything about your great-grandparents? We're lucky to know their names. Do you know their birth date? Do you know their personality? Do you know if they had a sense of humor? Do you know what their occupation was or where they were living exactly 100 years ago in 1901? Something filled their day. Something drove them just like we are driven.

What's left? Where is the etrone? Where is the profit from all of the toil which they toiled under the sun between their birth and their death? If time were to go forward another 100 years, it won't. But if it did, we might have great-grandchildren that were looking back at us asking the very same question. Do they even know us? What's the long-term benefit? Then we have verse 4. One generation goes forth.

Another generation comes in. The earth stands unto the ages. Olam.

The sun also rises and the sun goes down and pants or hastens to the place where it rose. And that goes down is literally go in. It matches with the generation going in up in verse 4. These verses are like links in a chain.

There is a word repeated in each one from the previous one. The wind goes forth and actually going forth toward the south and turning around to the north, that first mention of the wind in

verse 6 is not actually there. There's only one ruach in the whole verse.

And it's the second mention there. And that's literally going forth toward the south and turning about to the north. And that going forth is the same word as the generation going forth.

It says passes away, but it's actually going forth. It's halak. We talked about that.

All of these are tied together. It comes again on its circuit. All the rivers go forth, halak, to the sea.

Yet the sea is not full to the place from which the rivers go forth, halak. There they return again. All things are full of labor.

And this is not the same word for labor that we had up in verse 3. This is yagea. And this is a word that we'll explore a little bit more. Man cannot express it literally.

This is talking more about words than things. The word here is dabar, dabar, which is the word for word. And this word cannot even be spoken.

The eye is not satisfied with seeing. The ear is not filled with hearing. That which has been is what will be.

That which has been done is what will be done. There is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, see, this is new? We need to straighten out the translation of verse 10 a little bit this morning.

It has already been in ancient times before us. There is no remembrance of former things nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come by those who will come after. Well, we've talked about some of the vocabulary here.

We've seen the halak that runs through all of this and ties it all back. And each of these is a metaphor talking about human life. There is a perfectly good word for futility in Hebrew.

If Solomon had wanted to say that this was all futile, that because it repeats, that because former things come again and there is no remembrance and that it's all futile, he would have used the word shav. And that word, for example, is found in Psalm 89.47. Psalm 89.47. This is a psalm. Psalm 89 is a contemplation of Ethan the Ezraite.

And he is talking about the fact that even though God has made promises to David about an enduring throne and a legacy of prosperity and authority, he says, you've turned back the edge of our sword. The crown of David has been profaned and cast to the ground. And then in verse 46, he says, How long, Lord? Will you hide yourself forever? Will your wrath burn like fire? Remember how short my time is.

For what futility have you created all the children of men? This is not havel, what transience, what impermanence have you created. This is shav. This is futility.

This is, is it all just a waste of time? This is what Ethan is asking. Remember how short my time is. Is my time here going to be short and futile? Is it all going to be pointless? Because you've made this promise and I don't see the fulfillment of it? What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave? Lord, where are your former loving-kindnesses which you swore to David in your truth? Remember, Lord, the reproach of your servants, how I bear in my bosom the reproaches of all the peoples.

With which your enemies have reproached, O Lord, with which they have reproached the footsteps of your anointed. It goes back to what we saw Job saying. Is it all going to be pointless? Well, there's a good word for futility.

And if that's what Solomon was getting at, this is the word he could have used. But it's not. So what we want to come to understand is if it is the impermanence that is being addressed and not futility, then what are we saying about impermanence and is there a way to make our time count? Is there a way that we can, in a hundred years, in ten years, find that the time we spent was not wasted, that it was redeemed, that there's something eternal that was purchased with that time, something lasting that goes beyond the rising and the setting of the sun, beyond the running of the rivers, beyond the blowing of the wind? Well, we know that there is and we're going to come back and see a little bit more about what Solomon has to say on this subject when we come back from our break.

Let's pause here.