

“Life is Absurd... Now What?” // Ecclesiastes 1–12 // *Full of Nothing 2*

(Ecclesiastes 12:13–14; 10:1–15; 7:15–20)

Introduction:

Open your Bible to Ecclesiastes 12...

A few years ago, I heard a **report of an incident that occurred up on Lake Michigan** (it was reported on a radio talk show I was listening to—not sure if it is true, but it went **something like this**) –

A man purchases a **brand-new Lincoln Navigator** with monthly payments of nearly \$600. He’s had it less than a week and he and a friend take it duck hunting in winter when all the lakes in Michigan are frozen. So, they load up the new Navigator with his **guns and trusty black Labrador retriever**.

They drive out onto the middle of this huge iced-over lake, and they want to make some kind of a natural landing area for the ducks, an area for the decoys to float on.

Now, this has **got to be a huge area**, large enough to look like something a wandering duck would fly down and land on. So, it is going to take a little more effort than an ice hole drill.

So, **out of the back of the new Navigator genius #1 pulls out a stick of dynamite** with a short, 40-second fuse. He’s afraid, however, that if he puts the dynamite on the ice, lights the fuse and run, he runs the risk of slipping on the ice trying to get away from it, so he lights the 40-second fuse and throws the dynamite as far as he can.

Now, do you remember what else I told you they had brought with them? A Black Lab RETRIEVER. *Who loves to chase things thrown by the honor.*

So the dog takes off and captures the stick of dynamite with the burning 40-second fuse about the time it hits the ice.

Now comes the sad part of the story—The two men yell, scream, wave their arms to tell the dog to drop the dynamite. Well, the **dog thinks the men are cheering him on** and keeps coming. So, **one of the guys panics**, grabs the shotgun and shoots the dog. He didn’t want to, of course, but he didn’t know what else to do!

The shotgun was loaded, however, with **light scattershot designed** for bringing down a small flying bird, *hardly big enough to stop a Black Lab*.

The dog stops for a moment, stunned and slightly confused, but continues on.

The guy shoots him a second time and this time the dog, still standing, is now terrified, thinking his owner has gone insane.

So, **he takes off to find cover**, and the only cover he can spot is under the brand-new Navigator. **10 seconds later all that is left** is a gigantic hole in the middle of the lake and these two idiots standing there holding the shotgun.

The best part: The insurance company said that sinking a vehicle in a lake by illegal use of explosives is not covered by their policy. And the man had not made even the first of those \$600 a month payments!¹

¹ Mostly likely this is a myth. I have no idea if it is based on an actual occurrence.

The point: A lot of people **live foolishly**, without giving **much forethought** to how their actions are going to **affect their future**.

Now, you **may not have done something *that stupid***—but the author(s) of Ecclesiastes wants you to stop and think about the decisions you are making, and to encourage you to view life from the perspective of where your decisions are going to lead.

Last week we saw that the majority of Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon—a man with endless wealth, wisdom, women, power, and a list of accomplishments anybody would be proud of—and how he explained that in spite of those life felt like hevel—which literally means “vapor,” or “smoke.”

- **It’s like a cloud**; it looks so solid and substantive from the outside, but when you press into it you find out it is full of nothing.
- (I told you how disappointed I was as a kid the first time I was in an airplane and we passed through a cloud...?)
- **This is what most of life is like**, Solomon said.
- **(Trying to get our creative team to design T-shirts that say, “What the hevel?”** Conversation starter... how many would buy?)

Solomon identifies 3 things in particular that disappoint: (1) The pursuit of pleasure and power, (2) wisdom (at least, as a way of ensuring success in life), and (3) worldly justice.

Now, there is a 2nd voice in **Ecclesiastes, an Editor**, who breaks into Solomon’s monologue from time to time, sometimes affirming, sometimes correcting what Solomon says. He makes clear:

- **Pleasure and power are good things**—they are created by God for our enjoyment, **but if you depend** on them for happiness you’ll be disappointed.
- **Wisdom is good**—**God gives us a whole book of Proverbs full of wisdom**, but even wise living does not guarantee smooth sailing or a prosperous life.

- **Worldly justice structures are good**—they are gifts of God, and we should always fight for worldly justice, but as many of you know, worldly justice will often let you down.

Solomon admits that his perspective only takes into account how things look ***under the sun*** (a phrase he repeats all throughout the book, which means how things look without the perspective of God), and **the Editor throughout** the book brings back in heaven’s perspective.

- **Imagine this book as a stage play... 2 voices**. One monologue by Solomon. **Spotlight** shifts over to a narrator who evaluates.
- **Solomon may be both voices!**

Some of you asked last week, “Well, how do you know when the Editor is speaking and when it is just old, crunk Solomon?”

- **In most places it is obvious**, especially after you get the gist of the book’s message. **The Editor is the one** who tends to draw conclusions.
- **It doesn’t really matter**—because you can still discern the bigger point of the whole book.

So, I’m going to walk through a number of these conclusions, and consider how we ought to live in light of them.

1. Seek the God who is above the hevel*

We’ll start this week where we left off last week: “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.” (12:13–14)

At the end of the book, the Editor takes us back over the sun. He says that while it is true that **you may not be able to tell** just by looking around that there is a Sovereign, righteous judge over the sun, who

will reward good and punish evil, the **rest of the Bible** assures you that there is.

- **Ecclesiastes**, I told you, is **not the only book** in the Bible.
- **And the coming of Jesus in particular proves to us** that there is a God over the sun who has not forgotten the world and will one day settle all accounts.

Ecclesiastes' point, I explained last week, is not to turn you into an atheist. You're not supposed to read it and say, "*None of life makes sense. There is no God!*"

Rather, it is to turn you into a humbler theist.

- He's saying, "You need to **put up your simplistic theories** about God: *If I do this or that my life will be nothing but smooth sailing*."
- And **look instead to a God bigger than the hevel**; a God who has promised to redeem us from the hevel, and who even loved us enough that he entered into the hevel we had created for ourselves and absorbed its effects in his own body when he died on a cross, and who now pursues his perfectly good plan for us with unrelenting faithfulness, **even if**, as was the case with Job, what he's doing at a particular moment eludes you.
- The book of Job shows you that **God is always doing something in your life**, you may just not have the perspective to be able to see it, because you are under the sun.
- It's **like John Piper** says, "At any given point God is pursuing about 10,000 different things in your life and you are probably aware of about 3 of them."

2. Devote yourself to pursuing wisdom

Let's go now to chapter 10–11, where Ecclesiastes really starts to get practical...

10:2 A wise person's heart goes to the right, but a fool's heart to the left. (This is not a political statement, btw though I know some of you may immediately go post that to your Facebook wall).

"Right" in the ancient world meant skillful (right-handed); **"left" connoted ineptness** or clumsiness.²

- I know that's offensive to you southpaws out there, but that's just how it was in the ancient world.

His point HERE is that yes, life is not foolproof, but **wisdom will still lead you more often to skill and success** in life than foolishness will.

Pursuing wisdom, therefore **shouldn't be an afterthought you add to your life**, like a garnish on a finished meal, or religious perfume you spray onto your life. It should be the very foundation of your life.³

A recurring theme here at TSC: Know the Scriptures. Know them until they become the very fabric of your life. Until it is the dominant, shaping force in your **relationships**, your **career**, your **self-image**. When life cuts you, you bleed God's word.

And ruthlessly root out areas of inconsistency. Look at what he else he says in that verse: **Dead flies make a perfumer's oil stink, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor. (10:1)**

- Here you have this beautiful perfume with dead flies in it, and it is disgusting, not attractive.
- Or to **update the analogy**. Finding a few singed hairs in a delicious crème brulee ruins the whole thing.
- **In the same way**, a few ignored areas of sin and foolishness can ruin your life!
- We saw that in **Solomon's life, didn't we?** He never dealt with little areas of inconsistency and sin early in his life and later they harvested in his complete destruction.

It's why we tell you to get in a **small group**. The best discipleship, we believe, happens not in rows (where you sit and listen to me), but

² CSB Study Bible, note on Ecc 10:2

³ Walter Kaiser, *Ecclesiastes: Total Life* (ch. 4)

circles, where other believers can help you apply the Scriptures to areas of your life.

- I've compared it to **air war and ground war**... every week I **carpet bomb** you with the gospel. That's an important part of our strategy. But you need ground troops—friends who can help you apply a promise of the gospel where you don't believe it, point out a blind spot, etc.
- Next week is **Group Link—take advantage!**

3. Live by wisdom and *take a risk**

Ch. 11 now: ⁴One who watches the wind will not sow, and the one who looks at the clouds will not reap...

- Here you have a farmer who never sows his seed because he is so scared the weather will not cooperate. "What if it doesn't rain? What if there is a sandstorm? An earthquake? Meteor shower."

Throughout Ecclesiastes, the writer acknowledges that we can't control things, and there is nothing in life guarantees success—not great skill, careful planning, or even righteous living. (9:11)⁴

- You have to embrace that, and ⁶In the morning sow your seed, and at evening do not let your hand rest, because you don't know which will succeed, whether one or the other. (11:4–6)

IOW, "Don't let the **uncertainty of life** and the **possibility of failure** paralyze you!"

- (There's probably about **half of you need to hear this** because you struggle with paralyzing fear.

⁴ ⁷Yet no one knows what will happen because who can tell him what will happen? ⁸No one has authority over the wind to restrain it, and there is no authority over the day of death... Again I saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, or the battle to the strong, or bread to the wise, or riches to the discerning, or favor to the skillful; rather, time and chance happen to all of them." (8:7–8; 9:11) Two people make the exact same life decisions: one ends up a billionaire; the other ends up poor! Not even righteous living guarantees success: "In my futile life I have seen everything: someone righteous perishes in spite of his righteousness, and someone wicked lives long in spite of his evil." (7:15)

- **The other half of you struggle with impulse control** and you need go back and meditate on what I said in the previous point—that you need friends in your life who will warn you when you are about to do something impulsive and stupid)

But, there are some of you who, because of the uncertainty in life, never get going in life. You never become what you could be.

- **Solomon is saying** that at some point you just have to put it out there, because you can never move forward until you take a risk, and **even in the midst of uncertainty,** you can trust God, who promises to take care of you even in failure!
- I know people at our church who have made an investment... They did due diligence, prayed about it, tithed on their returns... and it didn't turn out.
- That doesn't mean that they did something wrong or God forgot them.
- **Just that in this level of a world** that's how things work out sometimes, but **you can trust** that as long as you are seeking to obey God, his promises to take care of you will always overshadow your life, and **even in failure** his goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life.

So, **live by wisdom**, that's all you can do—and take appropriate risks, and trust that God will take care of you in success or failure...

Which leads to maybe the most confusing verse in Ecclesiastes...

4. Don't be 'overly' religious

7:16 – Don't be excessively righteous, and don't be overly wise. Why should you wear yourself out? (This verse is so awesome!) On the other hand, For the one who fears God still ends up with a little of both wisdom and foolishness. (7:16–18)

- Now, is he **telling you there to balance a little wisdom** with a little sin?
- **No.** See how he is talking about one who "fears God"? And **no one who fears God** would ever deliberately tolerate sin in their lives.

What he means is that we should not obsess about getting ourselves into a state of spiritual perfection because we think then and only then can we guarantee God's blessing and success in our lives.

- This is **foolish for two reasons:**
 - **First, you can be perfect** and still have things go wrong—as with Job, or even with Jesus.
 - **Second, no one on earth can actually be sinless**, and the wise person recognizes (thankfully) God does not his condition his acceptance of us or blessing of us on our perfection.
- You see, there are a lot of people who **every time something bad happens** they are like “What did I do wrong? What was God punishing me for?” That’s being overly righteous.
 - E.g. “Anointing the back of the car”
- I realized this week that I have been **excessively religious** because every time I pray I **obsess about the motives** in my heart. *“Oh, if I don’t pray with all the right motives God won’t hear me.”*
 - **I’m reading a book right now with our staff** called *A Praying Life*, and the author points out that when Jesus taught about prayer, he told us to come like children. The **stories he tells of adults praying** are when adults act like children (importunate widow, etc).
 - When **my children want something** from me, they don’t obsess about they “why” or analyze their motives—
 - **My kids don’t say**, “Dad, I want to ask you for this, but I can’t get my heart into a pure state to ask with the right motives.”
 - No, they just tell me what they need, repeatedly. “No” is just a piece of useless information to them and an invitation to ask me again in 10 minutes.
 - The author says: *“Often, when we try to pray, we are immediately confronted with how unspiritual we are... in contrast, children never get frozen by their selfishness. They come just as they are, totally self-absorbed. How do little children ask? They just say what is on their minds. They have no awareness of what is appropriate or inappropriate... (When Jesus commands us to pray this way,) this isn’t just a random*

observation about how parents respond to little children. This is the (heart of the) gospel.”

- This is **what Solomon is hinting at.** See what he says in the next verse? **“There is certainly no one righteous on the earth who never sins.” (7:20).** IOW, God knows that you are sinful.
- And, good news! He saved you in that state, and in that state told you to approach him with all your junk and your messed-up heart with the confidence that a child approaches a parent.
- Quit trying to become something you are not and just trust in God’s fatherly grace over your life.

Related to this...

5. Lay down your Messiah complex

“This is good for a man: Eat well, drink a good glass of wine, accept his position in life, and enjoy his work whatever his job may be, for however long the Lord may let him live.” Ecc 5:18, NLT

The Lord **has a job for you.** He intends for you to do that, and then **enjoy your life along the way** as you do it.

(This is another thing that will not apply to all of you... there are exactly 17% of you who need to hear this—realize, of course, that 84.2% of all statistics are made up on the spot)

But 17% of us live with a Messiah complex, where we feel like, “How can I ever relax, or enjoy life, or take a vacation, when there’s so much to do?”

- **Wesley’s** paintings on the wall, the “blood of the poor.” Obsessing about the quality of the water.
- **There was a time in my Christian life when I felt like every cause had to be mine...** I constantly felt guilty, like I was not doing enough...
- I had to realize that not everything that comes from heaven had my name on it!

God does have something for you to do. (That's what the other **83% of you need to hear**). Figure it out, do that well and do it and be happy.

Don't go through life as if the responsibility for all of it rested on you—enjoy your life!

I've always loved **Psalm 50:12–15**, "If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and all its fullness are mine... Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High." (i.e. your obligations toward me).

- **1 Peter**, "Those that teach, be devoted to teaching, those called to fostering, do that..."⁵ Generosity.

6. Find happiness in the present, not the future*

A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and enjoy their work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? (2:24–26)*

- We **discussed this last week**, but Solomon tells us that happiness is only something that can be experienced in the present, but **most of us live** as if it is something we hope to obtain in the future, or something we mourn that we left behind in the past.

One of my **favorite authors** who explained this was **Pascal, 18th century French Philosopher**. In the *Pensees* he said,

We seem never to be able to be happy with the present. Either we yearn for the future and wish it would hurry up and get here, or we mourn the past and wish it had had not flown by so quickly.

He says, "Are not all of your thoughts occupied with the past or the future?"

⁵ God doesn't need you. **Psalm 50:12–15**, "If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and all its fullness are mine... Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High. (i.e. your obligations toward me) God had something for you to do: figure out what God wants from you and do that well! Acts 1 (Do nothing)

We scarcely ever think about the present, for it is mostly painful to us. We conceal it from our sight, because it troubles us. And if it happens to be pleasing to us, we only focus on the pain of it slipping away.

Most of the time, we only think of the present to plan for our future. The present is never our end. The present is our means; the future alone is our end.

So, we never live, we only hope to live someday. Because we are always preparing to be happy, we never are so."⁶

"Pascal, 18th century French Philosopher, confuses me..." OK, Andy Bernard, *The Office*, "I wish there were a way you could know you were living in the good ol' days before they pass you by."

And **here's the lesson**: If you're not happy now, it's not some change of circumstance that will make you happy. Happiness is a gift God gives to you in the present.

Don't think if you're not happy and content now that you're going to get to some level or new circumstance and then be happy.

- I think of the **Forbes CEO** I often quote...
 - **6 figures**
 - When I'm **married**
 - If you're **not happy now**, you **won't be happy then!**

The stuff in your life that really brings happiness is in your life now—friendship, good food, family, the beauties of nature.

- I had a moment **last year** where this really became real to me: **(Presidency of the SBC)**. My wife and I discussed while reading Ecclesiastes, and she counseled me: "If you think doing this will increase your quality of life, your happiness... you are wrong."

⁶ Pascal Pensees. Lightly edited for clarity.

- It will just **make you less happy** by making you busier—adding more stress and complexity.
 - All the stuff you need to be happy you already have—marriage, family, friends, your financial needs are met...
 - She had this **great statement on fame**, “Fame is making yourself accessible to a bunch of people you don’t really care about at the expense of those that you do!” – **Veronica Greear, Spiritual Adviser to J.D. Greear** My quality of life is better when I am available to you that I care about (most of you).
 - **Now, we concluded that there might be Great Commission reasons** to do something like that for a season, and if so, **we should embrace** the sacrifice joyfully, but if it is to increase my happiness in life, that’s a fool’s errand.
- **You see, I fear that many of you will look around as you get older and realize you gave away the greatest moments** of your life to get to some elusive future that didn’t deliver what it offered.
 - **Solomon says** God alone can give happiness. Happiness is not found in some future condition, it’s only found in the present.
 - **And if you are not happy now**, don’t look to some change in circumstance that will make you happy, look to your relationship to God because that is the key to happiness in whatever circumstances you are in!
 - The Apostle Paul said, “**Godliness with contentment is great gain.**” (**1 Tim 6:6**) The greatest gain God can give you is not more stuff, but contentment and the ability to enjoy what you have.
 - **Alexander the Great** is said to have died unhappy, wishing for *another* world to conquer! **Rockefeller**: one more dime! That’s a miserable way to live.

7. Embrace and enjoy the ‘seasons’ of life*

Perhaps the most famous passage in Ecclesiastes is **chapter 3**: There is an occasion for everything, and a time for every activity under

heaven: ² a time to give birth and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot; a time to search and a time to count as lost; a time to keep and a time to throw away; ⁷ a time to be silent and a time to speak; ⁸ a time for war and a time for peace.

What does the worker gain from his struggles? (in context, this means ‘struggling against the changing of these seasons’) I have seen the task that God has given the children of Adam to keep them occupied. God has made everything appropriate in its time. (3:1–11)

God’s assignment of life to us includes various seasons.

Wisdom means embracing each one appropriately. Foolishness resists the process, and tries to hang on to some season and not let it go.

For example, the fool resists aging. God has not designed life in a way where you hold on to your youth forever.

- **You have a chapter of it**—it’s a **fun chapter**—where your life is characterized by youth and vigor and beauty and strength;
- **And then a chapter where the primary contribution** you make should be through your care and wisdom, specifically through loving and nurturing the next generation.
- **I sometimes mourn the loss of youth...**
 - I wake up in the morning sore and all I did the night before was sleep. Evidently going from this position (vertical) to this position (horizontal) was enough to wear me out.
 - I used to be able to eat whatever I wanted. I could drink a 2-liter bottle of full-sugar Mt. Dew right before bed time and sleep like a baby and never gain a pound. Now I **look at a Fig Newton** wrongly and I put on a love handle.
 - Unfortunately, I feel like my youthfulness was wasted on me when I was young. I had all this energy and time and didn’t know the best way to use it. (Now that I have some perspective I’d love to go back and live that chapter differently.)

- **But I can't.** And now I need to focus on the new chapter God has given me.
- **In heaven, I'll have the wisdom** of an old man and the vigor of a younger one.
- **Many of you can't let go of your youth**, you see, because that represents for you the only way to happiness.
 - So, you spend hours every week in the gym, spa and salon tanning it, tweaking it, tattin' it, puffin' it, tuckin' it, liftin' it, twistin' it, colorin' it, rockin' it.
 - All the while ignoring the fact that these are gaining you increasingly diminishing returns, and you gonna die in a few years.⁷
 - That's a **fool's errand.**
 - **Happiness is in embracing** the chapter you are in, using it profitably and being faithful in it.
- **Men do this in their mid 50's...** they mourn the loss of their youthfulness so they buy a convertible BMW, wear Ice-Man aviators, unbutton their shirts down to their navels and hit on girls in their 20's and make everyone want to throw up.
 - There's **few things more pathetic than a man in his 50's** who won't let go of the previous chapter of his life and embrace the one he's in.
 - God has a good purpose for you in this chapter—you can be an incredible blessing to others, and has lots of joys for you in this chapter—new types of joys—if you'll embrace the present and let go of the past.
- There is **a time, Solomon says, to embrace retirement** and use that for God's glory and not try to hang on to your relevance in the game.
- **There's a time to let go of your past.** Doesn't it just amaze you how many self-storage places there are? Every time I see new construction... For God's sake, let go of your junk
 - **Don't pay \$90/mo** to store up stuff because you think you can't let it go because you feel like if you do all your connection to real happiness will go with it.
 - **There's a time to let it go.**
- **There is a time to grow up**—many of you college students will squander some of the most important years of your life because you don't want to grow up—you want to remain a middle-school adolescent with no responsibility who parties all night and acts like a self-centered moron who is taken care of by mom and dad.
- **There is a time to take responsibility**—to quit living in your parents' basement playing video games and become the adult God wants you to be.
 - I read this week that the **new adolescent age range** in our country is 11–30.
 - Your high school years were great. Let them go. There's nothing more pathetic than being in a stage where you won't let go of the previous one.
- **And there is a time to let go of someone**, he says.
- Some of you have **a past romance you need to let go** of. You had this relationship you thought was going somewhere and it didn't, and you think that happiness can only be found back there, with them.
 - **God has a whole life in front of you**—happiness is not back there with the one you lost, but in the present with what God has for you now!
- Some of you have lost someone to death, and **I know life feels like** it is going to be miserable without them, and you need to mourn them... But some of you feel like happiness can only be found back there, with them.
 - But God has other things for you in life, other people for you to love and bless. You'll be reunited with that one you lost in the future—God has a season for that, too; but you can't be a help to the people in your present if you are captive to the past.
 - **There is a time to let go...**
- His point: God has ordained seasons. Enjoy each one.

⁷ Adapted from Craig Groeschel

- Some of the **best parenting advice I've heard** was this: *Enjoy every season of your child's life and don't get caught looking ahead to the next one or clinging to the previous one.*
- **Embrace that the seasons change** and enjoy them.

Conclusion (MUSIC)

Well, let's end by coming back to where we started... "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil." (12:13–14)

- His last lesson, the one that overshadows all of them, is **never forget the one you are going to have to stand in front of God** and give an account.
- Wisdom begins here...
 - **Pascal:** Human race nowhere shows its insanity more than in how it deals with death: monster. Very quickly strike back up the band!
 - For all of human history, the death rate has held steady at 100%
- Wisdom is living in light of the judgment you are going to face
 - Moses said, "So teach us to number our days, that we might apply our hearts to seek wisdom." Ps 90:12
 - "Teach us to think about death, so that we might learn how to live."
 - "Know how to count your days, and then make your days count!"
- Interestingly, both **Jesus** (Luke 12:16–21) and **Paul** (1 Cor 15:32) **quote Solomon's teaching in Ecclesiastes** that the best we can do in life is eat, drink and be happy and confront that as woefully insufficient as a total view of life.
 - **Jesus said it is the fool who only focuses on eating, drinking, and being merry and forgets about judgment.**
 - **Paul said, "If Jesus didn't rise from the dead** we should only seek to be happy in this life. But if he did rise from the dead

we can embrace sacrifice joyfully knowing we have eternal joy waiting and that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

- **The author of Ecclesiastes ends the book reminding you** that there is **more to life than what you see under the sun**, and that there is a judgment day coming.
- **Thinking about that day, honestly, should scare the unbeliever** and bring great comfort to the believer, BECAUSE...
 - **For the unbeliever, it means everything you lived** for in life was futile; you've lost it all and have nothing—absolutely nothing—to enjoy in eternity.
 - **For the believer, however, it means that all we lost in the hevel** will be regained and we will experience perfect joy forever in the presence of the one who said, "In my presence is... (Ps. 16:11)
 - **I've heard it said, "For the unbeliever, this world is closest thing to heaven you will ever experience. For the believer, this world is the closest thing to hell you will ever experience."**
 - For the unbeliever, the Judgment Day means the end of goodness; for the believer, it means the end of pain.
- **When it is all said and done**, the writer of Ecclesiastes wants to bring us **face to face** with the absurdity of life in the face of *the certainty of death*; **not to lead us to despair**, but to urge us to seek a hope that death can't take away.

Have you **found that hope**? Are you **prepared to stand before God**?
Are you prepared for life **over the sun**—for the life after this life?

You can be.

- It is **appointed unto man once to die** and after that the judgment
- On that day, we'll be **held to account for every sinful deed** we've ever committed.
 - And that is a **terrifying day, because** none of us will meet the standard required to enter heaven.
- But the gospel is that **God loved you so much** that he sent Jesus to absorb your penalty in your place on the cross, and offers you

eternal life if you will surrender your life to him and receive his
free offer of salvation.

- **Have you done that?** If not, you can do it right now... BOW FOR
PRAYER