

Finding Meaning

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

The worse the vacation,... the longer you can enjoy telling the story!

Sometimes the value of our days isn't what it seemed at the time

"Show me, Lord, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is.

You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you.

Everyone is but a breath, even those who seem secure." *Psalm 39:5*

Give us wisdom. And help us find true meaning in our lives



Reading the Bible



Mark Isaiah Job & Ecclesiastes

Challenges of Job & Ecclesiastes: Mix of God-honoring and God-dishonoring words

Job: God's revelation at start and end

Ecclesiastes: narrator at start and end

Rich rewards for making the extra effort

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

1-2: A shocking beginning!

3-4: Every generation deals with the same things ... and we're surprised by it!

5-7: In nature: lots of activity, but no progress

8: In all the words, and vision, and sounds...we still want more, but nothing really changes

9-10: "Nothing changes the fundamental facts of the human condition"

11: We struggle to remember our own ancestors

And their hopes and dreams and struggles and accomplishments

For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it *Rom. 8:20*

A story to explain the human condition

The first brothers

Abel: Pleasing to God

Cain: Just implied dissatisfaction

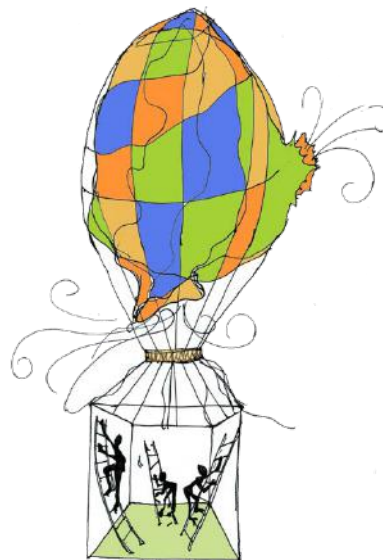
Angry at Abel (envy)

Killed Abel and lied to God

Cain: Lived a full life; 7 generations listed

Abel: died without offspring ☐ like a mist

Abel = vapor or breath = vanity



The Big Idea

All our efforts for good

eventually get washed away and forgotten

We work so hard to matter, each in our own way

Yet we are tied to a sinking balloon. The "whole show" and all its parts

"For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God." *Romans 8:20-21*

except when we are known by God

"Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." *John 17:3*

Application

Admit the futility of life not tied to God

All that we accomplish will someday be lost

No one will care or even know that we existed

Even humanity will end

Yet we keep working to...

satisfy our desires → they never are

please people → they always want more

please ourselves → we always need more

improve humanity → it always needs more

help people → they always need more

“Do not wear yourself out to get rich; do not trust your own cleverness.

Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings

and fly off to the sky like an eagle.” *Proverbs 23:4-5*

“The more things change, the more they stay the same.”

This is the first step in being “liberated from a bondage to decay”

The second and final step...

Find our meaning in God

“Apart from you I have no good thing” *Psalms 16:2*

Only what is blessed by God will matter

The tiniest amount of money plus God’s blessing is more than the greatest human riches

“Liberated from the bondage to decay...and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.” *Romans 8*

“Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” *John 17:3*

This is the invitation for our lives

This is the invitation for every moment

Reflection Questions for later today or this week...

1. Where do you feel the meaninglessness of life?
2. Where are you tempted to keep climbing the ladders in the sinking balloon? That is, what keeps pulling you into the weariness of trying of putting your hope in something that is guaranteed to fail?
3. What does it look like to admit the futility of life not tied to God?
4. Read John 17:3 again. What does Jesus mean by saying that eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ? What does that look like in your life?
5. How should this affect how we go about human activities?

Conversation Starter

The ancient poet said: “Meaningless! Meaningless! Everything is meaningless!” Do you agree? Where do you wrestle with the meaninglessness of life? Where do you find meaning?