

The Experiment of Life - Ecclesiastes 2 – (22 Feb 15)

And today we are looking at Ecclesiastes chapter 2 in particular. And this is a fantastic series from the Bible, because this is a series so relevant to all of us, especially to the modern man. We live in a day and age where we have virtually everything, the world, in the past never had. We have technology, we have automobiles, we have planes, we have computers. Nobody had that in the past, but the need of the human soul remains the same. The search for meaning and so Solomon, who is the author of this book, is now leading us in this journey, for the pursuit of meaning.

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When I was younger, I had the experience of many experiments, we would conduct experiments in places that look like this, the laboratory, the lab and we have chemistry, physics, biology experiments and there is one experiment that produce an amazing result that still stuck to me, all these years. Some of you may be familiar, all of you who are students, or who had just had a memory of this, remember this little chemistry experiment, where you take this black powder and you immerse it in this transparent solution, called dilute sulphuric acid, you stir it , you mix it, the solution becomes blue and and then you have to remove the excess powder, copper oxide, using a filter paper. So what you have is a dissolved copper sulphate solution and then you place it over a flame, so that you can sort of cause the water molecules to evaporate away and as you do so, as you leave it alone, what happens is this amazing crystal gets formed. This is a copper sulphate crystal. I, I love it, this really stuck to my mind, I saw something black, something transparent, comes up with something so beautiful, copper.. so I could make a jewellery out of this. Ladies, you could wear this for Chinese New Year, you know, quite cool. It's an amazing experiment with an amazing result.

In history there have been many amazing experiments as well. This is a picture of Louis Pasteur, you must be familiar with pasteurization of milk and Louis Pasteur had a challenge in his time, because in those days there was a disease called rabies, rabies. And the dogs that are infected with rabies became crazy. They are fierce, they bite and when they bite you, you can die and there was no known cure for rabies. Louis Pasteur decided to perform an experiment. He decided to extract this rabies virus that has been growing in this spinal cord of rabbits, he extracts that virus and he injected it into a young man who was just bitten by a dog infected with rabies. This young man is called Joseph Meister, the very 1st person he injected this virus into and lo and behold, the rabies disease was cured in Joseph Meister and Louis Pasteur became the 1st man to discover the use of rabies vaccine and actually when he was asked what would he like to be written on his tombstone, he simply said "Joseph Meister lives". This is his legacy and that is all because of an amazing result that came forth from an amazing experiment.

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Today, we are going to look at a man's, another man's experiment. This man lived a long time ago, and his name is Solomon. As you observed last Sunday, Solomon is a great thinker, he's a philosopher, a philosophizer if I may use it this way. He is a contemplative stage, he looks at nature and he says, life is meaningless. What do you mean? He says, one generation comes, and then one generation goes, it's back to square one. He says, the sun rises and the sun sets, it's back to its original position, the winds blow from the north to the south, but it would then return from the south to the north. The rivers flow into the seas, but they are never full. It's always back to square one and Solomon observed nature and he says, "Vanity of vanities", it is meaningless, it's frustrating, it's futile, it is all forgotten. So now, after observing nature, Solomon says I will now conduct an experiment.

And today, we are going to look at the experiment of life. He is not just going to base his teachings to us, on what he sees, he is going to personally, go into an experiment and tell you the result of it all. You see, we are all looking for the meaning of life. He doesn't see it in nature, in the cyclical nature, he is going to say, he is going to tell us if he finds it in the experiment of life. You say, what's this experiment all about? What is it for? Right in chapter 2 and verse one, he says

I said in my heart,
"Come now, I will test you with pleasure;
enjoy yourself."

(Ecclesiastes 2:1 ESV)

I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy myself." So Solomon says there is no meaning in nature, there is no meaning in this world, but, let me test it, let me test it by going into this hedonistic odyssey for pleasure. So he embarks on this journey of unbridled pleasure, being satisfied in his life. I will test you, my heart with pleasure. I want to see if meaning of life is found in enjoyment.

So he starts by saying

I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—
and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven
during the few days of their life.

(Ecclesiastes 2:3 ESV)

I searched with my heart how to cheer my wine, my body with wine. He probably got all the best wines from over the world, he tastes it all, he drinks it all, he intoxicates himself with this substances, hoping to cheer his body and therefore his heart and hopefully, find the meaning of life, wine and substances. Besides that

I made great works.

I built houses and planted vineyards for myself.

(Ecclesiastes 2:4 ESV)

he enjoys building things, he enjoys projects and so he goes into great works, he builds houses, not one, but many houses, he built and planted vineyards, he probably wants more wine so he planted vineyards, many of them for myself, then he goes on to say

I made myself gardens and parks,
and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.

(Ecclesiastes 2:5-6 ESV)

I made myself gardens and parks that I can enjoy the beauty, the scenery, the botanics all around. I planted them in, in them all, all kinds of fruit trees. I do not know whether he has durians, but he says all kinds. I made myself pools from which to water the forests of growing trees.

I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house.

(Ecclesiastes 2:7 ESV)

He had many servants, he probably has all his needs taken care of manicure, pedicure, hairdressing, cosmetics, I guess, he had people maybe even to help him brush his teeth when he wakes up, peel his grapes, open his mouth except chew for him. He probably has everything taken care of, he is transported in carriages, might not even need to walk if he doesn't feel like walking, he had slaves of all kinds to indulge in all pleasures and comforts to delight him.

I had also great possessions of herds and flocks,
more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.

(Ecclesiastes 2:7 ESV)

He had also great possessions of herds and flocks. In those days, these would be your Rolls-Royce and Bentleys, he has plenty of them. So many of them, so much so that there is more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. The Bible continues to say,

I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces.

(Ecclesiastes 2:8 ESV)

He had all kinds of intricate jewellery and exquisite diamonds and gold and silver,

I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man.

(Ecclesiastes 2:8 ESV)

and I got singers, both men and women. I mean, I love music, he says, I want to hear lovely music. Some of you enjoy music, many of you, and in fact probably every single one enjoys good music and if you like music you probably pay a hefty sum to go for concerts and listen to people sing. Now this guy is great, he doesn't even go to the concert, he gets the entire band. He brings the band to his house and they sing to him and he has it all, music, songs, delighting his senses. And not only that he got concubines, he got concubines to satisfy sexual lust. Remember, this is unbridled enjoyment of all kinds of pleasure. The Bible actually tells us, he has 700 wives 300 concubines and these may be some of them there. You thought Playboy was started by Hugh Hefner. Started long time ago, Solomon already has his mansion with harem of ladies, sexual parties, flowing with wine, all kinds of fine foods, servants serving him everything, lifting up all his gold and silver, priding himself in the herds and possessions, looking at the vineyards, looking at the houses looking at the great projects he has done and he says

So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.

(Ecclesiastes 2:9 ESV)

I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem, there is no one like me, no one who has enjoyed my life as I have been and whatever my eyes desired, I did not keep from them.

And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil.

(Ecclesiastes 2:10 ESV)

He had the means, he had the authority, he had all the opportunity to do everything his heart desired. You say why, did you do all that ? Back to the original test, original experiment, my experiment is this,

I said in my heart,

“Come now, I will test you with pleasure;
enjoy yourself.”

(Ecclesiastes 2:11 ESV)

I will say to my heart, come now, I'll test you with pleasure, enjoy yourself. I'm on this journey to discover if really pleasure is the answer to the meaning of life. What is the result, what's the test result, when you add copper oxide to dilute sulphuric acid, you get copper sulphate crystals. What is the result when you add Solomon to pleasure. The result he says is obvious. In fact, he starts chapter 2 with the conclusion, and then in verse 11, he also gives a conclusion. He starts by saying,

But behold, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"

(Ecclesiastes 2:1-2 ESV)

but behold this also was vanity. The word vanity means vapour, it's transitory, it's meaningless. I said of laughter, it is mad, I laughed, I had comedians, I had clowns in front of me, they make me laugh, they tell me jokes, I have a great time, but he said, this is this is crazy. He said of pleasure, what use is it? Well, there is pleasure, but he doesn't see the point. You know, when you grow up you realize, you need to ask, what's the point.

Last night, I was with my kids and they were chasing bubbles. We were at some place and there was another kid who took out the bubbles and he was playing, my kids were chasing, he has so much fun, but as an adult, I stand there and asked, what's the point? I mean, is it fun chasing bubbles, I guess so. But you know what kept me from enjoying that, the question what's the point?

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Solomon is a wise man. He kept his wisdom, even though he enjoyed the pleasures and he asked what's the point. He says

Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

(Ecclesiastes 2:11 ESV)

I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, he says, all was vanity and a striving after the wind. It is trying to catch wind, it's pointless, useless, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun. So here is a man who lived life to the edge. This is the super high life, he has maxed it out, he is going the whole 9 yards and he tells you, after he has enjoyed all the women, the wine, the food, the pleasures, he says, this ain't it folks.

Two, three years ago, I would bring my son regularly for cycling, that was before Universal Studios came on alright, I would bring my son regularly for cycling and we would go East Coast Park. I mean, this is one of the best places to cycle in my opinion. And, and we will cycle somewhere from around

the old McDonald's eastwards as far as you can, going west is not so much fun, there's nothing much to see. So we like to go eastwards towards the Changi airport. As we rented it for one hour, 2 hours and we will cycle, it's not easy to cycle because, I'll get those bikes where there is a seat in front of me, the child seat. He sits in front, and my, my legs ka kui kui (colloquial for legs spread apart) not easy to pedal, it is difficult to pedal. But anyway, we will, will do that and I loved it with him because he enjoys it and I am talking with him, as we cycle, what we see and it, it's fun and we always come to this part where you have to make a sort of a big turn and because we have gone there so many times, I realized that this big detour, is because of a golf course and I thought to myself, what a waste of time to always go around the golf course, there must be a shorter way. So one fine day I decided, Shawn, let daddy teach you a lesson or two, about trying to be creative and so I and we thought so. I said let's try another track, go off the cycling track and go to my own track and make a shortcut, so that we can get to where we want to go to faster, and we can go further this time.

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So that's what we did, we got off the cycling track and we went on this road that nobody goes. My son at four years old kept asking, daddy, are we going the wrong way? I said, Shawn, no, we're not going the wrong way. Daddy, are you going the wrong way and ever so often he keeps asking and I said, Shawn you got to trust me, I know what I'm doing, we are going the right way. He kept asking, I was frustrated, but I just went on and I said Shawn, you just got to trust daddy, I know the right way. And 10 minutes went by, 15 minutes went by, 30 minutes went by, it doesn't seem so right way, but nevertheless, I pressed on and eventually we hit the expressway. (Laughter in the congregation)

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It's like, oh no, there's no way you can cycle anymore, unless you want to bang into the car and at that point of time, I got to turn around and said Shawn, daddy is sorry. I think we have gone the wrong way. I turned back and on a journey towards this expressway, he was saying, are we lost, on his way back, he keeps nagging me and says, papa why you keep saying trust me, trust me, when you do not know the way. (Laughter in the congregation). I was nagged by him the whole time, but it was a very painful U-turn, went a long way and then it is very painful to turn back and to start where you had started, but it took me, took me all the way to convince myself, there is no way. All the way before that, he has already sowed that seed or thought, maybe it's the wrong way. Yes, it crossed my mind, but I never will accept it, until I go right up to the end. The Chinese have a saying, "Your heart will not give up until you arrive at the Yellow River". That was what happened to me.

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Solomon knows that the heart of men will not give up until it has gone right to the end and so he tries everything and he turns back and he says to you, trust me, there's nothing in the end. You see, not

every one of us have the means to go right to the end. But here is, someone who has gone all the way there, he comes back and tells you there is nothing there. You thought there is meaning, there is joy, in having more Bentleys and more Rolls-Royces, in having more wines and zeros in your bank account, in having all kinds of pleasure in this world, but I tell you, there's nothing there.

I suggest to you that's why poverty is so deceptive, you know the whole, large parts of the world is stricken with poverty. Poverty is not only sad, it is also very deceptive. You say why? Because, poverty allows us to believe a lie that I will be happier if I just have more. Solomon says, it's a lie, I have everything, but it's not the answer. You know people are searching for the meaning of life, all the time. This is a picture of people who go to Singapore Pools, a familiar sight, teo bey pio (colloquial for hit the lottery). This is a time when people hope that they will strike it isn't it, wah, I got the winning combination. So what if you have the winning combination. So that I earn the money, I get the money. So what if you have the money, so that I will be happy.

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They are there for the search of meaning in life. They are ,they are all there, searching for the meaning of life. But Solomon has already gotten this, Solomon is so rich he can pay everyone the full prize and he still has a lot of money and he comes back and tells you, that's not the answer.

You might be familiar with sex drugs and rock 'n roll, wow, what a combination. Why do people go for sex, drugs and rock 'n roll. I mean this is so popular, that is known as, it is a song by itself. There's a movie called name after this, why do people go for sex, drugs and rock 'n roll, pleasure, nothing different from Solomon. He had sex, he had wine, he had music, he had everything and he tells you, it ain't it. There are so many rock stars, people who follow the rock star lifestyle of sex, drugs and rock 'n roll, but they die. You know why they die, you know why they kill themselves ? Very simple, they have exhausted all these pleasures that they could get. It's like taking opium, there is a tolerance level, you need more and more and more and more to get the same level of satisfaction and when you have gotten all that, they are still not satisfied, you know what they do, they turn to the extreme of seeking pain, sadomasochism, and you know what happens after that, when you experience pleasure to its max, you have gone to pain on the other extreme, the only sensible thing for you left to do, is to kill yourself. Why do people do that? I thought pleasure will be the answer, no, it's a frustrating journey of chasing and striving after the wind. Solomon has seen it all.

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Brad Pitt is a man, famous today, I'm sure, every single one of you must have heard of his name. In one of the movies, Fight Club, he was interviewed by Rolling Stones magazine and in essence, this is what he has to say about his life.

“Man, I know all these things are supposed to seem important to us—the car, the condo, our version of success. But if that’s the case, why is the general feeling out there reflecting more impotence and isolation and desperation and loneliness? If you ask me, I say toss all this—we gotta find something else. Because all I know is that at this point in time, we are heading for a dead end, a numbing of the soul, a complete atrophy of the spiritual being. And I don’t want that.

I don’t have those answers yet. The emphasis now is on success and personal gain. I’m sitting in it, and I’m telling you, that’s not it. I’m the guy who’s got everything. I know. But I’m telling you, once you’ve got everything, then you’re just left with yourself. I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again: it doesn’t help you sleep any better, and you don’t wake up any better because of it.”

That’s not the answer, not for Solomon, not for Brad Pitt. You say, aah, who is this Brad Pitt, I don’t want to listen to him, then let’s think about the Christian thinker, another man, CS Lewis, he says,

“No matter how hard I tried through pleasure to forget the fact I had nothing to live for and nothing means anything, it broke through.”

He says, I want to numb myself, to believe pleasure is all there is to it. But no matter how hard I tried to numb myself, there’s this aching, gnawing feeling and understanding, that this ain’t it, it broke through.

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So, what Solomon says, is not unique only to him. Many people have experienced and gone on this journey that I’ve gone on, cycling in East Coast Park, just don’t believe it. We just don’t believe, you say, just a bit more, just a bit more, just a bit more, they’ll be light at the end of the tunnel. Here is Solomon got all the way to the end of the tunnel and it is a dead end.

Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

(Ecclesiastes 2:11 ESV)

It is all vanity and a striving after the wind. So this is his experiment, his findings in his experiment, but Solomon is a good scientist. He doesn’t just stop at the obvious, he begins to think about the findings, he begins to think about the conclusion he has gotten and so he says to himself, well, alright, maybe it’s not pleasure, how about the opposite end. Pleasure is foolish, it’s mad, it’s pointless, but let’s, let’s think about the opposite end of meaning and wisdom and knowledge.

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And so this is what he did. In verse 12. He says,

So I turned to consider wisdom
and madness and folly. For what can the man do who comes after the king?
Only what has already been done.

(Ecclesiastes 2:12 ESV)

So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly because what can a man do who comes after the king, he is saying a very simple reality, I've already gone to the max, no one can exceed my experiment, so if that is definitely a no go, let's consider wisdom now. And it looks very positive because he says

Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness. The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness.

(Ecclesiastes 2:13-14 ESV)

Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness, the wise person has eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. So he says there's some benefit and advantage of wisdom over folly. There is, there is no doubt about that. But then he says,

Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness. The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness.

And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them.

(Ecclesiastes 2:13-14 ESV)

And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them. You say, what event ?

Then I said in my heart, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?" And I said in my heart that this also is vanity. For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool!

(Ecclesiastes 2:15-16 ESV)

Then I said in my heart, what happens to the fool will happen to me, also. Why then, have I been so very wise and I said in my heart that this also is vanity for the wise, as of the fool, there is no enduring

remembrance, seeing that in the days to come, all will have long been long forgotten, how the wise dies, just like the fool. You know one reality of life, everybody dies. You know what's the death rate in Singapore? Hundred percent, I just checked it one hour earlier. (Laughter in the congregation)

Everybody dies, you either die a fool or you die a wise man, but you still die and Solomon says, this is so ridiculous. Yes, there is some advantage in wisdom, but you still die and so he says

So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

(Ecclesiastes 2:17 ESV)

So, I hated life. It's not this, it is not that, it's frustrating because what is done under the sun was grievous to me for all is vanity and a striving after the wind. You know, this pursuit for wisdom and knowledge is so relevant to Singapore today, especially if you have kids, agree? Because when you go to Chinese New Year, recently, 1st of all, they will ask you, are you married, then they will ask you, how many kids you have, then they will ask you, which school your child goes to and they will ask you, how did he do in PSLE and O Levels and A Levels. Isn't that the normal thing? And Singapore is so wrapped up with academic pursuits because we measure one another by your PSLE and your O Levels and your A Levels, wah how many, how much you score, 10 A1s. Wah, your son, very good aah, then father feels great, the mother feels shiok (an expression of satisfaction in Singapore colloquialism).

How did your son do in O Levels? 9 F9's. You don't want to go visiting, you want to stay at home. It matters a lot today, but let me tell you, whether you got 9F9's or, or 10 A1's you both die. (Laughter in the congregation). What's the point, you both die and that's the logic, the reasoning of Solomon in the grand scheme of things, of course, children. I am not saying, don't study, parents please don't misinterpret this, but I'm saying if you want to achieve academic success and trust in it to be the meaning and purpose of your life, it is meaningless because you will die, that's not the point.

Solomon is frustrated, not only because people die, but he goes on to say, oh sorry this is a great verse, not verse, quote you must read,

"The problem with the rat race
is that even if you win,
you're still a rat."

Even if you are a top scholar, you will still die. So what's the point. So Solomon now has a 2nd problem, he says, so what if I'm rich, so what if I am wealthy, the problem is this, I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and who knows whether he'll be wise or a fool. Wah, I accumulate so much. You know what's going to happen to your money, you know what's going to happen to all your

stuff you have accumulated, you are going to leave it to someone who you do not know how he is going to handle, all that he inherits. And this is the problem with (quotes a Chinese phrase), like the businesses, the legacies that have been passed from generations, it is usually gone by the 3rd generation, (quotes a Chinese proverb, which means from rags to riches and back again in three generations). That's the Chinese saying, wealth doesn't go beyond three generations.

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Solomon says this and I think there's a sense of irony to what he says because Solomon has as far as we know, one son. Amazing, he has a problem with fertility (Laughter in the congregation) 700 wives, 300 concubines, one son. This one is the only hope. And Solomon's son, after he passed away, took office, what a brilliant guy he is, 1st day of office, managed to split the nation. I mean, it was, I said it in jest, he is a absolute fool, absolute fool. Maybe Solomon already knew it, and to him, it's frustrating.

I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity.

(Ecclesiastes 2:18-19 ESV)

So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.

(Ecclesiastes 2:20-21 ESV)

This is vain. This is empty. This is meaningless. So he despaired over all the toil of his labors under the sun and he says this also is vanity and a great evil. What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun for all his days are full of sorrow and his work is a vexation, even in the night, his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.

What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.

(Ecclesiastes 2:22-23 ESV)

Brad Pitt like, right? This guy really needs an antidepressant actually, this is a very depressing view of life under the sun.

This experiment is beautifully conducted with the best of environments, ideal environments and the answer is unequivocal, it's clear, there's nothing there. Then let's consider wisdom. There's also nothing there. It is vain, so what you do.

So after the results, after the reflection, Solomon now gives you his recommendation. He says in verse 24 and verse 25.

There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

(Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 ESV)

There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also I saw is from the hand of God, first time we read that in Ecclesiastes, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment.

This may look very puzzling to us verse 24, there's nothing better for a person, than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment, I thought Solomon, you are weird, are you saying that well, let's just give up and go seek pleasure? No, he didn't write 20 over verses just to bring you back to say, let's live in pleasure. That's the meaning of, no, he didn't. Then Solomon, is it that I should live a Spartan life, I give up everything, I, I wear tattered clothes, I eat nothing but bread and drink nothing but tap water, I stay under the overhead bridge, is that what life should be, because Jesus came into this world, and he had nowhere to lay his head? Is that what Christianity is about? No, not that, he says enjoy this life. Wow, can a Christian enjoy life? You feel a bit guilty right, hearing that? Don't you? No, not sure? Can you, LoHei enjoy or not? Hah, ha ha ha, everybody hehehaha, eat all the bak kua (colloquial for BBQ meat) you want, then you suffer here. We, we, we all are made as humans, man. As far as I can understand in the Scriptures, Solomon here is not saying live a Spartan kind of a life, but he says enjoy it and it's biblical. The Bible says in 1st Timothy, chapter 6, that God is the one who gives us richly all things to enjoy. That's why He gives you colours, don't you appreciate colours, beautiful right? That's why He gives you beautiful scenery, He gives you all kinds of animals, He gives you all kinds of plants, that's why He gives you all kinds of food. How boring if every day you can only eat potato. I mean, the whole world just feeds on potato, it's okay, I mean, you will survive, you won't die, but not very enjoyable.

So he as to that, kang kong and mangoes and durians and then He gives you shabu shabu, and sashimi, wow we have such a variety to, enjoy. It is not wrong to enjoy, but it is wrong to worship it. It is wrong to have these things as your ultimate things. It is wrong to have them as the real meaning of life. So Solomon here is not saying, go enjoy life as if it's your meaning in life. Neither is he saying, give up everything and suffer a Spartan life. But he's saying, come right to the biblical balance of enjoying the things God has given to you, but remembering in all these things, they are to point you back to the

kindness and the goodness of God, they are from the hand of God. That is what it is all about, that in all this world, that in all these enjoyments, we remember life is not really just under the sun, it is above the sun. It should bring us back to God what He has given to us.

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And then Solomon, concludes chapter 2, by saying

For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

(Ecclesiastes 2:26 ESV)

for the one who pleases Him, God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, there is blessing from God. Sure, but to the sinner, He has given the business of gathering and collecting only to give to the one who pleases God. Amazing verse, now this does not of course, you must understand Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, Job, they are in the poetic genre of Scripture, they are not like epistles where it is promises and statements of fact, they are general observations of life. And so, in this general observation of life, Solomon is saying, I realized that the sinners, those who don't know God, they work very hard, they gather a lot of money, they can become very rich, but ultimately their wealth would go to the Christian. That's what he is saying, not always true as if it's like a promise, but it's a general observation Solomon has and he says this is also vanity. What's the point if you do not know God.

Time stamp in audio 0:35:55.3.

What an amazing experiment Solomon performed and learned from. You realize through his experiment, life is not about pleasure. I say to you today, life is not about how many BMWs you have, in the garage, it's not about the bottles of wine you keep in your cellar. It's not about how big your house is, how many zeros are in your bank account, how many women you slept around with, what kind of drugs you have experimented with. Try it, but you'll always end up where Solomon has gone because Solomon has gone all to the end and like copper oxide and sulphuric acid, it's always going to produce copper sulphate crystals, you're just going to experience the vanity of life. Enjoy life, but they are not the real source of meaning. But it is so hard for the modern man to believe this isn't it? We live in a day and age, instead of actually running away from this philosophy, we are going to go more and more into this philosophy. That's what Paul says

But understand this that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, and disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,

heartless, unappeasable, and slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, and swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God

(2 Timothy 3:1-4 ESV)

Understand that in the last days, we live in the last days folks, from the day Jesus was taken, we are already in the last days, and it has been on for some 2000 years, it will get worse and worse. What would get worse? People will be more and more lovers of themselves, of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, don't you see that today already, social networks, and everything else, and ultimately, people become lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. Nothing wrong with pleasure. But when you love pleasure above God, that's where it goes wrong. Where pleasure now has its hooks on your heart, that's where it goes wrong.

Time stamp in audio 0:37:52.3.

Solomon says, don't do that, sin has deceived you to believe pleasure is the answer, it's not, it's not, I've tried it, I have done it all, it's not. God alone is the answer. I end with this very interesting snippet in the Bible in Acts 17, Paul has been traveling, preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he has gone to all the major, all the major center of the world, he has gone to the religious center in Ephesus, he's gone to the business center in Corinth and now he arrives at the philosophical center of the world, Greece, Athens and he is at this place called Mars Hill and gathered there, were people who were philosophers. They were the great thinkers of their time and they were the Epicurean and the Stoic philosophers. What is Epicurean? Epicurean is a way of thinking, after their original founder Epicurus who believes that the meaning of life is about seeking and enjoying pleasure. That's why today we have this English word Epicurean lifestyle and so on, and then the Stoics are in my opinion, the diametrically opposite group of people. These are people who, who believe in the suffering of hardships and pains, they stoically bear through life that way. They believe hardship is the lot of life. So they are very different people, the Epicureans say it is about enjoyment. The Stoics say it's about tolerance and they were gathered when Paul was preaching about Jesus.

Time stamp in audio 0:39:33.5.

Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babbling wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

(Acts 17:18 ESV)

Some say who or what does this babbling, this (speaks a Chinese idiom that describes a person who talks gibberish) guy wish to say, others said, he seems to be a preacher of some foreign divinities, some strange God. Why, because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." So Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined him and believed

(Acts 17:32-34 ESV)

Now, when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. Hah, what a ridiculous guy, talking about some Jesus, some Jewish man, some carpenter, who was nailed and rose again. What a joke! But then there are others who will say Paul, we want to hear more, we want to know more. And so Paul went out from their midst but some men joined him and believed. There is this whole world out there, who are either Epicureans or Stoics. You go to your office, there are Epicureans, there are Stoics. You go to your family, there are Epicureans, and there are Stoics. Everybody is living for something, everybody is searching for something. I tell you what you're searching for, it's not the answer. These Epicureans at Mars Hill has been talking about Epicureanism for a long time. The Stoics has been talking about stoicism for a long time, but they have not found the answer.

Paul came and told them, the answer is in Jesus and his resurrection, because it is only Jesus who could pay for our sins, die for us, save us from our misery and bring us back to God for whom we are made. The real meaning of life is found in being reunited with the Maker of our life, God Himself, there's only One who is the way, the truth and the life, the Lord Jesus Christ. He died, He rose again and He is the answer.

My friends, the world is so enamoured with self-salvation isn't it? Oh, the meaning of life, I must do this to find meaning, I must do that to find meaning, I tell you, the Gospel is not about self-salvation, it is about God's gift of salvation. You don't have to do anything. Jesus paid it all, repent and believe and that's the meaning of life.

I found that way. Many in this room has found that way. I pray this morning, you will find that way. U turn, the Shawn is calling out to you, it's a dead end, you're lost, you are lost, you are lost, don't waste your time going to the dead end. First of all, most of us can't and you may spend the rest of your life just going to this dead end route, but turn back, because Jesus says, I'm the Way, the Truth and the Life. May God bless each one of you today. Let's bow for a word of prayer together.

Time stamp in audio 0:42:53.4.

What mercy from God to give us the book of Ecclesiastes, right in the middle of the Bible. You say, why, because it has a very relevant message for us, don't you think? If you were to just drop the Bible

on the table and it flops right open, it may just open in the middle, in Ecclesiastes, and that is the message from God to us today. What is your life about? I can tell you what it is going to be about, it's always going to be a pursuit. Your life is always going to be on a search, but what are you searching for, where are you looking for the answer. Spare yourself, my friends, spare yourself the agony of years gone by, of wasting time in places that would never yield fruitful results. Don't go to that dead end. Someone has already been there and he comes back to report to you, it is vanity. Life is about enjoying the pleasures and remembering the Giver, God and He's the One you need today, He is the One you need to return to today. He is the One your heart has been searching for today.

So, what do I need to do, what can I do to come back to God. I say, first of all, Jesus has done it all. Jesus the Son of God has come down some 2000 years ago, to die on the cross, to pay for your sins and what you need today is to humbly turn from your sin and believe in Jesus, His Son. Remember what He has promised, I'm come that they might have life and life more abundantly. I'm the Good Shepherd and the Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep, Jesus laid down His life for you, would you come to Him. Right here, right now, would you pray in your heart, God save me help me.

My brothers and sisters in Christ. I speak now to you, dear Christian brothers, sisters. This is not a message for the unsaved alone, because Solomon experimented when he was a believer. He knew God, but there is this doubt and suspicion in him, that led him to this blind pursuit. And maybe, you're on that same path as well isn't it. You have known Jesus, but you feel that you need something more. You need more sex, you need more money, you need more alcohol, you need more success, you need more money, you need more possessions in this world, you think that these things will satisfy you. Believe it, and hear it not from me, but from Solomon folks, all is vanity, but life is in God. Be pure in your devotion to Jesus. Be sincere in your pursuit of Him and you realize the One who is living in you, is always the One you have been searching for.

Time stamp in audio 0:46:46.4.

Father, would You break these chains of bondage in our lives. Dispel the myths and the deceptions that have been cast over us, open our eyes to see reality, reality that is so distinctly different from what the world tells us, cause us to be wise in Your Word, cause us to walk in the path of righteousness. Deliver Your church today from worldliness, from self and make us see the supreme splendour of Jesus Christ Your Son. May we be satisfied with a glimpse of His glory, may Him, may Jesus be Who we live for. Bless Your church today. Bless all our friends gathered here, this maybe the first time, the only time you hear of the good news of Jesus Christ dying for us. Lord help them to turn and to believe. May they come to You, honouring You, serving You. We thank You. We pray all this now in Jesus Name, Amen.