

## The Tragedies of Life - Ecclesiastes 4 – (8 March 2015)

Turn with me today to the book of Ecclesiastes, and in particular chapter 4. We are on this 'Life Under the Sun' series. We're looking at what life is like, apart from God under the sun. And this is really Solomon's pursuit of meaning in life. Remember the author, Solomon is now an old man. He is probably in the twilight years of his life, but he looks back at his rich and colourful life and describes to us his journey, his pursuit of meaning under the sun, apart from God. And so he now meditates and reflects it to us, as his people, as his listeners. He's the great 'Qoheleth' (Hebrew word), the preacher who gathers us to hear his wisdom. And Solomon's conclusion of his reflection for his life is a very pessimistic one, but a very realistic one. This man who has tried everything; who has achieved everything under the sun; concludes life under the sun is vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

The word 'vanity' means vapour or breath. It's something that is transitory; something that is not permanent; something that just doesn't last. And Solomon says, life apart from God, life under the sun is transient; it's meaningless; it's vain. In fact, it is vanity of the highest degree; vanity of vanities.

But he doesn't just give us his proposition, like a good debater, like a good lawyer, he presents his case. He presents it very well. In chapter 1, he tells us life is like a circle; just goes round and round and round; there is no real progress. Like the sun that rises and sets; like the waters that flows into the sea but is never full; like the winds that blow down south and then comes back up north, he says everything in life - one generation comes, one generation goes, nothing really progresses.

Then he brings us to chapter 2, about the great experiment of life. He says I'll test my heart with pleasure; I'll indulge myself in everything I want. Is that the real meaning of life? He concludes that too is vanity of vanities.

Last week in chapter 3, we looked at how he describes the mystery room of life. Everyone of us is trapped in this room called times and seasons. You go through the extremes of human experience and you can't control it. You can't control the times of laughter and the times of mourning; you can't control the times of dance and the times of labouring. He says that too is vanity. 03:14.0

Today we come to chapter 4, and he's going to go into specifics. He's going to say, well, beyond these big trends of life, I'm going to bring you to three specific situations and scenarios and show you in particular how tragic, how meaningless life is.

So today we're going to take a tour of three geographical locations. We're going to take a tour of three scenarios that you see in human life and how he continues to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt, that life under the sun; life without God in mind, is the vanity of vanities.

The first place we go to is the court of law; the hallways of justice. So if you are someone who is a rights advocate; someone who is a lawyer fighting for the oppressed, this is for you. He says, I've observed something, I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. I see unfairness; I see inequality; I see injustice; I see corruption; I see all of that done under the sun. And I look at the tears of the oppressed and how they are without people to comfort them. I look at the side of the oppressors, they are powerful; they are rich; they are influential. But on the side of those that are oppressed, there is no one to comfort them.

You know, Solomon sees unfairness and abuse in the world he lived in. It's strange you think, because Solomon is the king, he could possibly reverse a lot of oppressions, isn't it? But even for a great king like him, he realises that oppression and inequality and injustice and evil deeds are far too deep and far too widespread for even himself to reverse. So he mourns; he grieves, over the oppressions that are done under the sun. He can't change it and he goes on to say, I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive. He says it's better off dead than to be alive when you see these oppressions, all these inequalities and corruptions taking place. In fact he claims, "...better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 4:2-3, ESV) He says better still is, if you have not been born yet because of all the sorrow or the grief or the injustice that are done under the sun without God. That grieves him. Does it grieve you? 06:01.2

On the 16th of December 2012, just about 2 years ago, a story is told of this young lady - 23-year-old lady, medical student who had just been to the movies with her friend, a male friend. At about 9 p.m. they boarded a bus, about to head home. In the bus, there are 6 other men. And when they boarded the bus, the 6 men began to beat up the male friend. Thereafter each one of them one by one, proceeded to rape the 23-year-old lady, as the bus circle round and round the city of Delhi. After they had raped her, they took an iron instrument and brutally beat her up and this lady eventually died from horrific internal injuries throughout this entire ordeal. This case was well known as the 'Delhi Gang Rape' and it sparked worldwide media outcry. It reacts... the world reacts with a sense of injustice. How can anyone allow this to take place in human society? India's daughter, why? There is such a culture and understanding there that the women are not valued and I'll go to show you why they say so. And this caused outrage all across the globe.

Two years later, two years on in 2014 year-end, there's this lady called Leslee Udwin. She's a filmmaker and she wanted to make a film out of this ordeal, this situation in India. So she went to interview one of the inmates, prisoners held on death row - Mukesh Singh. She conducted a very long interview and this is reported in BBC News just this week. She wrote, "In 16 hours of interview, Singh showed no remorse and kept expressing bewilderment that such a fuss was being made about this rape, when everyone was at it. He said, 'A decent girl won't roam around at nine o'clock at night. A girl is far more responsible for rape than a boy.' He says, 'People had a right to teach them a lesson.' And he said that a woman should have simply put up with the rape. 'When being rape, she shouldn't fight back,' Mukesh said. 'She should just be silent and allow the rape. Then they would have dropped her off after 'doing her' and only hit the boy. Now if you want to put us on the death role, the death penalty will make things even more dangerous for girls,' he claims. 'Now when they rape, they won't leave the girl like we did. They will kill her. Before, they would rape and say, 'Leave her, she won't tell anyone.' But now when they rape, especially the criminal types, they will just kill the girl. Death.' "

Leslee then tried to give him the full picture of what they had done to the girl. She said, "I had the long and shocking list of injuries the young woman had sustained, read out to him. I tried, really hard, to search for a glimmer of regret. There was absolutely none. My encounter with Singh and the 4 other rapists left me feeling like my soul had been dipped in tar, and there were no cleaning agents in the world that could remove the indelible stain. I spoke to two lawyers who had defended the murderers of the 23-year-old student at their trial, and what they said," she said, "was extremely revealing. One of them said: 'In our society, we never allow our girls to come home... come out from the house after 6:30, 7:30 or 8:30 in the evening with any unknown person. You're talking about man and woman as friends. Sorry, that doesn't have any place in our society. We have the best culture and in our culture, there is no place for a woman.' "

The other lawyer, A.P. Singh, had said in a previous televised interview: "If my daughter or sister engaged in pre-marital activities and disgraced herself and allowed herself to lose face and character by doing such things, I would most certainly take this sort of sister or daughter to my farmhouse, and in front of my entire family, I would put petrol on her and set her alight."

Leslee could only conclude, when you look into the blackest recesses of the human heart, you cannot but be depressed and deeply disappointed. She reflected what Solomon had said hundreds of years ago, thousands of years ago. I saw all the oppressions; all the inequalities; all the abuses; all the corruptions that are done under the sun and behold, I see the tears of the oppressed, there is no one to fight for them; there's no one to comfort them. On the side

of the oppressors, whole societies seemed to back them up. But no one is there to comfort those who are oppressed, and I think it's better off dead. I think it's better even not to be born into this meaningless, evil and wicked world, apart from God. There is no real meaning in life under the sun, apart from God. So he states his case in the hallways of justice. 12:21.5

But now he's going to pluck us up and bring us to another scenario. He's continuing to prove his point and he brings us now to the marketplace. The marketplace is where people are engaged and hired for work and people are put to work. So we go to this marketplace where labour is in abundance; where people are hired for work and we see that he claims then, I saw...this is what I observed in the marketplace, that there are people who toil and with skill in work. There's nothing wrong with this phrase so far, because work is a good thing. Work is given by God before man had fallen into sin. Work is a good thing. God works, man was called to work. What has made it bad is sin has made work of a different quality for a different purpose that does not glorify God. But the original intent of work is great. Nothing wrong.

However, because of sin, it is now thwarted and twisted to be selfish, self-seeking, and that's what Solomon's saw. He saw that all toil and all skill in work actually does not seek to bless others or to glorify God, but it comes from a man's envy of his neighbour. He says, I observed that people work today, not so that they can be a blessing or help to others but that they want to be the number one. They work hard so that they will not lose out; they work hard so that in this competition of life, they are seen superior than others; they have more than others. It is all about one 'upmanship'. What drives people to work so hard is so that they would have the envy of his neighbour. Why people work so hard today is so that they can afford a car. You say why do they afford a car? Not necessarily that they want that car or they need that car, but that their neighbour will come and say, "Wow! What a car!"; "You are such a lucky guy!"; "You're such a capable guy!"; "You're such a smart person!"; "You're such a resourceful person!" And that's what drives people to work hard, for the envy of his neighbour.

That's why people give their lives to Shenton Way; that's why people give their lives to their occupation. That's what Solomon is saying. If he is to live in Singapore today, he would probably say that of us. Many of us, why you work so hard... there's nothing wrong with working hard, please don't get me wrong. But he's saying the underlying motivation is so that I may be seen superior than my neighbour. You know, I just heard from one of our friends yesterday, that in the finance sector people can earn a lot, a lot of money. Disproportionately more money than a lot of other sectors. Paid very well, paid very highly but if he is to discover that his neighbour who sits beside him in the office is earning more than he does, he will cry. You say why? You see, it's not about the money alone, it's about the envy that he

labours for. That's what drives him; that's what gives him significance and meaning in life. And Solomon says this is vanity.

Why do people work so hard? Envy, but this whole process, this whole green monster of envy just eats us up! It's fruitless; it's pointless; it's vain. Because there will always be someone more successful than you; there's always going to be a neighbour who is richer than you; there's always going to be someone who is prettier than you and if that's what you live for, it's empty. In fact it's slavery, do you realise that? You are chained to this green monster that you can't shake off. For the rest of your life, you just have to try harder and try harder so that you can be more significant; so that you can be better than someone and it is tiring; it is burdensome; it will never give you satisfaction. And Solomon says, this is vanity. 16:40.8

“The fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh.” (Ecclesiastes 4:5, ESV) Now some of us may then say, “Okay, then I don't work, I do nothing.” Solomon says that's a fool! That's not right. The problem is not that work is bad. So if you say, “I don't work”, you are a fool. Actually, the New Testament says if you don't work, you don't eat. So this fool who does nothing will just eat his flesh. The reaction against envy is not passivity, but what's the reaction? He says in verse 6, this is what you should do: “Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind.” (Ecclesiastes 4:6, ESV) He says, work hard, but work with contentment, with satisfaction, with quietness. One handful, you don't have to get two hands full to show that you are better than others.

Some of you shared this week, I heard that you are just going to finish your job, what you are needed to do and you are not going to do overly much, because you're not in the rat race of life. Remember, even if you win the rat race, you are still a... rat. I don't want to be a rat! I don't want to live my life chasing this envy. I'm just going to do my responsible part, one handful with contentment.

I ask you today, which verse describes your life? The fool who does nothing? The man who is driven by envy, who says I must have two hands full, so that I have more than my neighbour who stays next door or I have more than my relatives when I meet up with them during Chinese New Year? Or will you be someone who understands contentment and have the right priorities in your life?

Solomon tells us about this contentment and I want to highlight this phrase: ‘High Cost of Living’. Very appropriate phrase in Singapore today, don't you think? I just read this week about how Singaporeans are having a very high cost of living. Is that true in Singapore? Now no one dare to say anything. (Laughter in the congregation) Is it true in Singapore? (Response from the congregation) It is true in Singapore. I don't deny that. I don't think

anyone would deny that. It is very expensive to live in this country. But have we compounded this problem with this: cost of high living? There's a difference! High cost of living (versus) cost of high living.

You know, I'm not exactly very young and I look at the young generation - it's a very different generation. The young generation today, because of the wealth and prosperity of this nation, I think, are very used to high living. In the past, I will be very satisfied with 'Green Spot' and a 'Fanta Grape'. Wah, got 'Fanta Grape' very happy already! And the green drink or...you know what or not? Those bottled 'Fanta Grape'? (Laughter in the congregation) You all don't act like you are very young like that! (Laughter in the congregation) I'll be very happy with 'Fanta Grape'. Today, people go to Starbucks like nobody's business. Students, I mean, frankly today I buy Starbucks, I...I...first of all I don't like coffee but to pay \$5, \$6 for a drink is a little bit beyond me. But I see the students going there like nobody's business.

In the past, one small popsicle, Paddlepop...haha (pastor laughing) (laughter in the congregation), 20 cents, 30 cents...wo...wo...wo...you are very happy. Today ice-cream - \$7, no problem. Our happiest days are in KFC, McDonalds; today, you must be in high-end restaurants. Now, I'm not saying all young people do that lah, but I think the young generation today is so used to it and to fuel this kind of a lifestyle, it's very hard for you just to be contented with one handful. You see, you got to keep up with your friends who go to these places. They go there and eat everyday, then I must work harder so that I can... I can finance this kind of a lifestyle. Because if I don't go with them and if I don't have the same car, if I don't have the same size house, I'm a loser. Then my friends won't come and say, "Wah, you're very capable!" They'll look down on me and I cannot tolerate that. I must live it up! I must have the high life, otherwise I lose significance. Without you knowing it, you're chasing the wind and you are slave to this obsession of envy. 21:50.4

Solomon says there is no end to all his toil. Can't catch up; can't keep up. If this is where you find your identity; if this is who you see yourself; if this is where you derive meaning and significance, this is slavery! You'll never be satisfied! You'll never be happy about life! You'll never do that. This is the vanity under the sun.

(Picture shown on screen)

This person needs no introduction. She is... (response from the congregation) McDonald?! (Laughter in the congregation) She is... Madonna! I'm sure everybody knows her. In an interview with Vogue magazine, she said, "I have an iron-will." Strong-willed lady. "And all of my will has always been to conquer some horrible feeling of inadequacy. I pushed past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being and then I get to another state and

think I'm mediocre and uninteresting, and this cycle goes over and over again and again. My drive in life..." Nothing wrong with working hard but the motivation in her life is that: "...from this horrible fear of being mediocre and that's always pushing me, pushing me because even though I've become somebody, I still have to prove I'm somebody. My struggle has never ended and it probably never will." She wants to be right at the top, one 'upmanship' and Solomon says there is no end to all his toil. It's slavery, you'll never find it.

Now, Solomon goes on. Notice in this verse he says, there is this person who has no other, either son or brother. His eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, "For whom I'm toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?" This also is vanity and an unhappy business. (Ecclesiastes 4:7-8, ESV) He says he's so obsessed, he is blinded. He's blinded to the reality that he's actually labouring for no one and for nothing. But his eyes will never be satisfied and his toils will never end. And Solomon gives these details - this person has no family, no one around, no son, no brother. You say why? Well, maybe he was never married and so on and so forth, you can talk about all these natural reasons, but could it be that Solomon is intentionally painting a picture? Have you heard of Scrooge Ebenezer? He's intentionally painting a picture of a man, whose life is driven to be on top, who's driven to have the envy of others, and he's so driven that he neglects everything else. He neglects relationships; he neglects his children; he neglects his wife; he neglects his family; he tramples over people; he blows them off so that he may get right to the top. And now he's left with no one. Met people like this? Are you someone like this? Your family? Your church mates? Your friends? No one, because you're so focused to obtain the envy of others.

You know, in the series of Ecclesiastes, we've found a few songs, like 'The wheels on the bus go round and round'. Remember that? Life is a circle. The wheels of the bus... the wheels of the life goes round and round... (Pastor singing)... the song never ends and this cycle never ends. In chapter two, we remember the song by U2, 'I still haven't found what I'm looking for', and the one by Mick Jagger, I think, Rolling Stones, 'I can't get no satisfaction'. Last week, in Ecclesiastes 3, we heard the song, 'Turn, turn, turn'. Today, there's a new song. Ecclesiastes is so relevant to the average folk today and there's a new song called 'Cats in the cradle'. Heard of this song? Heard of this song? Evan, you should know right? Where are you? How do you sing this? James... where's James? Haha...Cats in the...have you heard? Cats in the cradle and a silver spoon, (pastor singing) little boy...eh little boy blue and the man on the moon...okay, anyway, forget it! Haha... cats in the cradle...you say what...you know what? I've always heard this song but I've no clue what it means. What cat...cradle...silver spoon? Doesn't make sense to me!

Well, this song is written by the wife of... the lyrics of this song is written by the wife of Harry Chapin. This is a hit song, by the way. During its time, it went all the way to number one. So

I've featured a lot of number one songs for you. 'Turn, turn, turn', 'Cats in the cradle' and this song describes how a man is so focused on his career, on paying the bills that he neglected his son and the son one day would say to him, 'Daddy one day...' or the father realised one day his son would just be like me. And when Harry sang this song, he was scared because he realised that could happen between himself and his son.

Look at the lyrics, it says:

My child arrived just the other day  
He came to the world in the usual way  
But there were planes to catch and bills to pay  
He learned to walk while I was away  
And he was talking before I knew it, and as he grew  
He'd say "I'm gonna be like you dad  
You know I'm gonna be like you"

And the cat's in the cradle and the...these are the riddles, you see, these are the poems they would read, that the child would read.

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon  
Little boy blue and the man on the moon.  
When are you coming home dad?  
(Read to me these things)  
I don't know when, (he says) but we'll get together then son  
You know we'll have a good time then

So this poem...this chorus repeats over and over again, but now the son is ten.

My son turned ten just the other day  
He said, "Thanks for the ball, Dad, come on let's play  
Can you teach me to throw (baseball)," I said, "Not today  
(Why?) I got a lot to do," he said, "That's ok"  
And he walked away but his smile never dimmed  
And said, "I'm gonna be like him, yeah  
You know I'm gonna be like him."

The cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon  
Little boy blue and the man on the moon...

Well he's now a college grad.



Well, he came home from college just the other day  
So much like a man I just had to say  
(He's all grown up now)  
"Son, I'm proud of you, can you sit for a while?"  
He shook his head and said with a smile  
"What I'd really like, Dad, is to borrow your car keys  
See you later. Can I have them please?"

Now the father is old and retiring...retired.

I've long since retired, my son's moved away  
I called him up just the other day  
I said, "I'd like to see you if you don't mind"  
He said, "I'd love to, Dad, If I can find the time  
You see my new job's a hassle and kids have the flu  
But it's sure nice talking to you, Dad  
It's been sure nice talking to you"

And as I hung up the phone, it occurred to me  
My little boy has just grown up to be just like me  
My boy was just like me

His drive to earn and to progress in his career has meant that this person has no other... no son, no brother, and yet there is no end to all his toil. Is this worth it? Is this really what life is about? No! Solomon says. But that's what I see everywhere. That's where I see in the marketplace. That's where I see people work in the finance sector, healthcare sector, in the office; those who are managers; those who are technicians. I see that everywhere. They work so that they can afford something, so that the neighbour would envy them. But that is vanity! It is slavery. It is misery. You know who's the real loser? This man.

Solomon goes on to say he's a real loser, you know why? Because he lost relationships and...and relationships are the best things. He goes on to say, under the sun two people are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. They share the labour, it's effective, it works well, but you choose to do it on your own. Now if you are alone, if you fall...but if you have both of them, if one falls, the other would lift up his fellow but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him - a threefold cord is not quickly broken.  
(Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, ESV)

Solomon in these quick four verses is explaining and describing the blessings, the benefits of having relationships, but this is not what this man driven by envy, obsessed with being the superior person enjoys. He can't have it, because he's chasing after the wind. And Solomon saw everything there, and says this is vanity. He goes right to the heart of the issue. So he has brought us to the hallways of justice. He brings us to the marketplace of toil and actually, the place to satisfy your envy.

And some of us may say, "Well Solomon, that's not fair. You are telling us about the meaningless of life because you're giving us people who are bullied, oppressed and people who don't have things. How about people who are already there? They have a life worth living." Solomon says, alright, for the last scenario, follow me, not to the courts of justice where people are oppressed; follow me not to the marketplace where people have to work so hard to satisfy the lust of envy. But follow me to the palace; follow me to the top; follow me to the best place this world can offer. And he tells a story in verses 13 to 16.

He said, "Better was a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king, who no longer knew how to take advice. For he went from prison to the throne, though in his own kingdom he had been born poor. I saw all the living who move about under the sun, along with that youth who was to stand in the King's place. There was no end of all the people, all of whom he led." (Ecclesiastes 4:13-16, ESV)

The story is a simple one. There's a king who has been successful in life but now he is aged and he has become foolish. He doesn't know how to take advice. In Chinese we call that 老糊涂 (Lao Hu Tu) (Mandarin words meaning old and muddle-headed). That happens to many people, by the way. Get old, you lose sharpness, no matter how glorious, how wise, how intelligent you are, you'll come a time where you just lose it. So, another man comes into the picture. A young guy. A young guy who is born poor; a young guy who somehow is in prison, but he's wise. And this young man works his way up from rags to riches; goes all the way to the top to replace this old foolish king. And now he is really successful because there was no end of all the people, all of whom he led. He would lead the kingdom. And he said this is what life is all about, isn't it? But Solomon says, yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. He's not going to have lasting popularity and acceptance and surely he says, this also is vanity and a striving after the wind. He says he would slip into oblivion. He would be forgotten. If popularity and acceptance is what you live for, it will slip from your hand like vapour that you try to grasp. It is a chasing after the wind.

Winston Churchill was once asked, "Sir, doesn't it thrill you that whenever you have a political speech, this hall is always filled to overflowing?" He says, "Yes, but I always

remember too, that instead, if instead of a political speech, I was going to be hanged, this hall will be filled, twice over.” Popularity is transient, doesn't last.

So Solomon in his palace, reviews his life experiences. He scans the various scenarios of life. He goes to the courts; he goes to the marketplace; he thinks about his palace. He says it is all vanity, don't you think? There's so much oppression in this world and it grieves us.

By the way, I tell you something about yourself, you long for justice; you long for it; every culture longs for justice; every human heart cannot tolerate injustice. You can't. You want perfect fairness and righteousness. That's why today we talk about karma and retribution - some cultures. That's why people, they adore people like 包青天 (Bao Qing Tian), 包拯 (Bao Zheng) (Mandarin name of a judge who served during the Song Dynasty in ancient China and is respected as the symbol of justice), wah 公正廉明 (Gong Zheng Lian Ming) (Mandarin words meaning fair and incorruptible). Good Hero. That's why we cheer William Wilberforce who abolished slavery because deep in the hearts of men, we are not for oppression and abuse, and in unfairness and inequality. There is the sense of justice, but there is none in this world, he says. I see oppression, this world is empty, under the sun.

Solomon not only sees oppression, he sees obsession. Look at what drives and fuel this whole world. Not a gracious desire to bless but a selfish desire to be number one, and that is vain! Actually what it does is that it destroys the person; it isolates the person; it kills community. People will do all things possible to get on top of their neighbour. They gossip, they slander, they pulled the other person down so that they may get up and he ends up like Scrooge Ebenezer. No one around him. Solomon says, that is foolish! It's vanity! And then Solomon says, not only do I see oppression and obsession, I see oblivion. People forget all that you've done anyway, so what's the point?

My point is, life under the sun is vanity of vanities. All is vanity. And so in this look at chapter 4, Solomon reviews the various tragedies of life. And as I thought about this passage, as I thought about the message here, I...there is a natural longing in my soul that says, “Lord, Thy kingdom come.” Really, that's what I thought. That's what I pray, “Lord, Your kingdom come.” You know, we...we sometimes don't understand this prayer in Matthew 6 - Thy kingdom come. You say why? This is a very good world. Many of us don't long for that kingdom because all we see in this world is ice cream and cars and money and holidays at Bali. That's all we see. Superficial thinking.

This man, Solomon thought about life. He sees oppression; he sees empty obsessions; he sees ultimate oblivion and he says this is tragic. And if you really think about it, you'd say, “Lord, Your kingdom come.” Because deep in my heart I long for perfect righteousness this

world cannot give. Deep in my heart I long for perfect love and self security that I've never experienced. Deep in my heart I long for lasting significance this world cannot provide. So Lord, I don't want this life under the sun. I want your kingdom. Life in the Son. S-O-N - Jesus Christ.

That's why Jesus came, folks. Jesus came to usher in God's kingdom; Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil; Jesus came to reverse all this sin-ravaged world has to offer and that's why He says, "Thy kingdom come." How does He do it? What has Jesus done to be able to give us the right life? The real life, the life that we are all made for and longing for. How can He do that? He can give it to us because He personally experienced all these tragedies, as it were. He personally suffered injustice. He personally submitted and gave up His entire glory. He was willing to be forgotten. He was willing to be rejected. He suffered it all. He paid the price. 40:34.6

See Isaiah tells us, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted..." Why? Why did He go through all that? For us. He went through injustice at the kangaroo court before Pontius Pilate. He was accused of crimes He has never done; He was crucified even though He is the only righteous person; He bore our sins when He had none. "He was oppressed, he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, like a sheep that was before its shearer, He's silent. He opened not his mouth. By oppression and (unfair) judgment, he was taken away, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth." (Isaiah 53: 7-9, ESV)

Yet it was the will of the Lord. It was the will of the Father to crush Him; by His stripes, then we are healed. "...he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt," Jesus did all that for you, for He had no guilt of His own. "He shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul, he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities." (Isaiah 53: 10-11, ESV)

This is how Jesus did it, folks. He suffered for you; He suffered for me. So that we may now be freed from life under the sun, and find the real life in the Son - Jesus Christ. This is the mystery of life, trapped in this world of gross corruption and sin, we may despair and eventually look up, and thank Him for the gift of Jesus Christ. Would you today come to Jesus? Let's bow for a word of prayer together. 42:45.9

The amazing grace of God in Jesus Christ. The world was made perfect; it was a world of perfection. There was no corruption; there will not be the possibility of inequality or abuse. Everybody would have wonderful fellowship and security in who they are before God.

Everything would make sense, everything will be significant. It was the world that God had made. But sin entered in and ruin it all. And God could have just left us on our own; God could have just damn all of humanity to hell. But He didn't.

In His love and in His grace, He decided that all these grieve, and all these oppressions would be bore by His only Son. The glorious God who made the heavens and the world - Jesus Christ would now be the silent lamb that is led before the slaughter. He had no sin on His own; He didn't need to suffer, but He was oppressed and bruised for our forgiveness. This is Jesus Christ. This is the Good News of the Bible, folks, that when we are sinful and wicked and hopeless and helpless, He came to die for you.

My friends, the salvation He gives to you is not one that is cheap. It is costly, it cost Him His life. Can your heart remain unmoved and unchanged in the light of this Good News of Jesus Christ? Can you continue in your ways and said I will still live in my sin and even if I go to hell, I will still continue in my ways? How can you do that when you hear of God's love in the Bible? How could you do that when you look at what the Bible talks so accurately about our life? How empty, how futile it is.

My friends, don't fight God today. But surrender yourself to His love. Would you today acknowledge that you're a sinner? Turn from your sin and believe in Jesus Christ alone? He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. I plead with you this morning. This is about your soul. This is about eternity. We are not gathered here just to pass time, we are gathered here because your soul matters to God. He loves you. So would you come to Jesus and be saved?

My friends, I want to speak to you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, I too want to speak to you because you know, we live in a country where there's a high cost of living. Drives us mad, isn't it? But are you paying the cost of high living? You say, I must have this; I must have that; I must buy this; I must buy that; otherwise I'm not significant; otherwise I'm left out of the way. My friend, that's a lie the devil tells you. Your identity is not found in your address, or in the size of the car you drive, or the number of properties you have. It's all going to pass away. Your identity is firmly found in Jesus, your Saviour.

The Gospel, my friends, can set you free from the green monster of envy. Look to Jesus. He gave His all and you will have His all. So why spend this life chasing after shadows? Why spend this life trying to be somebody when you are already somebody in God's eyes? Let the Gospel free you today. Let it free you today. Soak in His love, remember His grace. Look to the cross, let Jesus be your all in all.

Father, this morning we are humbled before You. Thankful for Your words. Words that this world will never tell us; truth that this world will conspire to hide from us. But thank you there is light, as the Word of God is declared this morning. May Your Spirit continue to so take these words and work in our hearts. Help us to live by faith; to make the right choices in life that will honour You; that will really lead us into the abundant life that You have so desired.

Today, we thank you dear God, that when there is vanity in life under the sun, there is beautiful abundant life in Jesus Christ, Your Son. Teach us to be wise, lead us on the way everlasting. Bless your people, everyone gathered here in this room this morning, we asked and pray in Jesus' name. Amen.