

True Wisdom's Benefits

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[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Billy McKillop. I'm an associate pastor here at New City, and our senior pastor is out getting a much-needed break. So we've had the guys on the bench up here.

So Pastor Oliver gave us a good word last week, and we look today at Ecclesiastes again from chapter 8 and 9. A couple Sundays ago, we spent some time thinking about our search for meaning in this present life under the sun, this fallen condition. We looked at the beginning chapter where Solomon, who many scholars believe to be the author, he begins with a question, what do you gain from all the toil that you toil under the sun in your life in this present condition? And we cheated a little bit by skipping over to the last chapter to look for the answer that he gives in chapter 12. And he says, okay, here's the end of the matter. All has been heard.

Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. So that is the way of wisdom, to fear God and to keep his commandments. And Solomon says the same thing in a little different way in Proverbs 3, 5, and 6. You probably memorized those two verses when you're in Sunday school, right? A long time ago, I memorized, trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding because you won't completely understand, right? You won't completely understand your life. In all your ways, acknowledge him because your life is in his hands and he will direct your steps. So what I'd like to do for us today is look at a section in chapters 8 and 9 where he's really emphasizing that God is in control of our lives and he commands us to do what we've been doing already this morning, to have joy. We've been singing about joy, right? The joy in the life with Christ.

We are to enjoy life. He commands that while we're able to trust in him and keep his commandments. So we'll begin with Ecclesiastes 8, verse 16, two verses in chapter 8 and then a few verses in chapter 9.

So you follow along as I read. Solomon says, when I applied my mind to true, to know wisdom and to observe the labor that is done on earth, people getting no sleep day or night. Then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all their efforts to search it out, no one can discover its meaning. Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it. So I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands. God's hands. But no one knows where the love or hate awaits them. All share a common destiny, the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not. As it is with the good, so with the sinful. As it is with those who take oaths, so with those who are afraid to take them. This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun.

[3 : 20] The same destiny overtakes all. So death, we know, is inescapable for every person. So in that sense, he's saying that all men share a common destiny. He says, the hearts of people, moreover, are full of evil and there's madness in their hearts while they live. And afterward, they join the dead.

Anyone who is among the living has hope. Even a live dog is better off than a dead lion. Solomon is such a poet. For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing.

They have no further reward and even their name is forgotten. Their love, their hate, and their jealousy have long since vanished. Never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun. And he says, go, eat your food with gladness and drink your wine with a joyful heart. For God has already approved what you do. Always be clothed in white and always anoint your head with oil. Enjoy life with your wife whom you love or your husband. All the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun. All your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. For in the realm of the dead where you are going, there's neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom. In verse 11, he says, I have seen something else under the sun. The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned, but time and chance happen to them all. Moreover, no one knows when their hour will come. As fish are caught in a cruel net or birds are taken in a snare, so people are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them. Amen. We give thanks that these are God's words to us. Amen.

The word of the Lord for us. Let's pray. Father, we come to you humbly sitting under your word. To understand it, we know requires your spirit to open our eyes and our minds, to bring illumination to our minds, to understand and to apply. Help us to understand our lives. Sometimes the seeming randomness of events in our lives. Help us to see that you as our loving Heavenly Father, that you are in control.

Our lives are in your hands, our unpredictable lives. You're pleased when we acknowledge that that is so. And you delight when we delight in the gifts that you have given to us. As we sang this morning, our treasure is Christ. Yes, our joy, our delight is Jesus alone. So forgive us for our sins, we pray, for the preacher, for his sins, and help us to learn to trust you fully and keep your commandments. Amen. Amen. Amen. You can be seated. We should also welcome the Riverside Class of 1971.

[6 : 52] They're here with us this morning. And it's really, really good to have friends that last for decades and decades, right? Last week, we had a whole bunch of folks up here that had been friends for over 60 years.

And they still were talking to one another and good friends. So bless you guys. Thank you that you came to worship with us today. Well, one of man's many problems is that we think we have more control than we really do.

Right? And here in America, we are blessed to have insurance for everything. I mean, you can have dental insurance for your dog. Right? When our family moved to South Florida, we found that we were required to have three types of insurance on our home. Homeowners, flood, and hurricane insurance, or windstorm insurance. And there's good reason for that because life during hurricane season is pretty unpredictable. In 1992, over a million people chose to get in the bumper-to-bumper traffic on the interstate and head north out of South Florida when Hurricane Andrew was approaching. And a pastor friend of mine, Mike Campbell, that I served with in Miami and his family, they were some of the ones that decided to stay back. And Mike told me later that if he ever heard the word evacuate again, he would be gone in a minute. Because during the storm, he and his wife and children, they experienced part of their roof being blown off while they huddled for hours and hours in a bedroom closet. He said, you know, leaving your neighborhood, you can imagine leaving your home and traveling about a mile away and you can't find your way back because you don't recognize anything. Everything has changed. And Mike and Karen were very thankful that they were unheard in the storm. And looking back, they were thankful that their lives were in God's hands, that God was in control. Now, we know that life can be dangerous. Life can be unpredictable. We get that. But sometimes we forget the part that God is in control in every circumstance.

Even in the midst of the storm, he calls us to trust in him and his word in every circumstance. And in Ecclesiastes, Solomon is reminding us that when we trust in God and his word, we enjoy the benefits of true wisdom. You know, what are some of the benefits that we get from trusting in God and following his word, the benefits of wisdom? One benefit is knowing that these two realities, that though life is unpredictable, we can rest in the fact that our lives are in his hands.

Another benefit of true wisdom that Solomon shares with us is that we can know that God wants us to live our lives to the fullest. He wants us to enjoy life while we're keeping his commandments.

[9 : 58] The wise person understands that life is unpredictable, but God is in control. So your life is in his hands. He's got it. If you're trusting in him, even if you are not a believer in Christ, common grace says your life is still in his hands. God is in control of every molecule in the universe.

And Solomon, he's a realist. He's a poet. He's an artist, right? Because he's written the Proverbs and the Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes. But he's a realist. And he says, life under the sun is brief. It's unpredictable. Sometimes it's downright painful. And in the end, we all die.

You know, just like the rain, death falls on the just and the unjust. None of us will escape it unless Jesus returns before it's our time, before our number is called. And while we live, no one can determine whether we'll have a pleasant life or a life full of adversity, right? We don't know what tomorrow holds. But what's the rest of it? We know who holds tomorrow, right? We don't know what the future holds. In the first few verses of chapter 9, he reminds us again of the vanity or the vapor-like nature of life. If you've ever lived in a cold climate, or maybe Chattanooga doesn't get that cold in the wintertime, but you go outside and you just breathe and your breath, you can see your breath. And then it's gone. That's really what he's, the picture that he's trying to present, a vanity of vanities. He uses this word 28 times in these chapters, that life is that brief. It just, it's here and it's gone. It disappears. He talks about the certainty of death, the sadness of death, and sometimes the suddenness of death. He says the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, or to the religious and the irreligious. If we had hope only in this life under the sun, like the reality of death would be so depressing, we wouldn't even want to talk about it. We'd want to cut Ecclesiastes out of the Bible and all those other passages that talk about death.

Let's just get rid of those. From an earthly perspective, you know, there's hope if you're alive, but once you're dead, all is lost. He says after one dies, there's no knowledge, no memory, no wages, no emotion, and no portion any longer. In fact, a poor mangy dog that is alive is better off than a powerful lion that is dead. But for God's people who trust in him, Solomon acknowledges that our lives are ultimately in his hands. Chapter 9, verse 1, he says, all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God. And we remember the Heidelberg Catechism question one that maybe we learned as children, and I think we have it on the screen. Let me ask you this question. Oh, Christian, what is your only comfort in life and in death? And you can answer with me, all right? Let's answer this. That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen. Right? If we remember that one question and answer, we're good in a lot of respects, right? We will have a benefit of wisdom. I'm not my own. I'm not my own God. God is God. We can't know all that He knows and all that He's doing with us. Solomon says, no one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all their efforts to search it out, no one can discover its meaning.

[14:04] Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend all the reality in an unpredictable fallen world. So we have many advances in science today, and we can certainly learn, learn, and science can help us better track hurricanes, for example, how to better protect ourselves, how to understand a lot about our world. But we'll never come to fully understand storms or, you know, where exactly they'll make landfall, much less the deeper questions of life, like, why are we even here? You know? Why do storms have to happen? What is the purpose for all of my labor?

What happens to us when we die? No, we won't find all those answers from a study, an academic study of science without the favor of God gifting us with repentance and faith and humility. We'd all be lost.

We'd be like the nihilist who believes that life is meaningless and rejects all religious and moral principles. Try to have a conversation or a debate with somebody like that. Or we'd become a hedonist.

Just life is all about pleasure. Let's enjoy it because tomorrow we're going to die. Or an escapist. I don't want to talk about it, you know. I don't want to think about it. The well-known physicist Stephen Hawking, he died about five years ago. He was a professing atheist who, throughout his life, he put a lot of faith in science. And he's quoted in a Time Magazine article as saying this. He says, God is the name people give to the reason we're here. But I think the reason is the laws of physics rather than someone with whom one can have a personal relationship. Before we understand science, it's natural to believe that God created the universe. But now science offers a more convincing explanation. What I meant by saying we would know the mind of God is we would know everything that God would know if there were a God, which there isn't. I'm an atheist.

I think Hawking was saying that the more we come to understand the world through scientific study, the more we would become like God, if there were a God. Sadly, Stephen Hawking, he wasn't granted true wisdom, the benefits of true wisdom to know a personal God who is in control of the universe, was in control of his life, who has us in his hands, who commands us to enjoy his good gifts, to worship him, to come together on the Lord's day that we set aside to come together, to gather in fellowship, and to sing his praises, and to hear again the preaching of his word. We'll always need a personal relationship with God to make complete sense of why we're here, and to make sense of everything else that goes on under the sun. You must not rely on your own understanding, Solomon says in Proverbs 3, 5, and 6, but you must fear him and keep his commandments. What does it mean to fear God?

[17:33] Well, it really is a reverent trust. It's just like a childlike trust where we revere him, we honor him, we are reverent in his presence, and to keep his commandments is just to live according to all the instructions that he has given us in his word. So the scripture is very important to us. We believe that it has authority over our lives because God has commanded us to keep his commandments, to understand his word, to study his word, to read it, to delight in it. We'll always need that relationship with God to help us to have true wisdom. Think about where in your life you need more wisdom to embrace that God is fully in control of everything in your life. Maybe you're frustrated in a close relationship because you're certain you know what the other person needs. You know what their problem is, right? And you just want to fix them, or you want somebody else to do it. You want them to go to counseling. Maybe you're in that kind of relationship.

Are you willing to really trust that God is in control, to pray, to entrust that person to God in his word? You know, we have a lot to learn about relationships, and we can benefit from reading good resources, but at the same time acknowledge that we'll never figure people out completely. We can't even figure ourselves out most of the time, right? We need to be merciful and commit ourselves and others to God's care. By the way, there's some helpful resources in Rudy's room as you make your way out to get coffee and a snack on a Sunday morning. There are these biblical counseling booklets put out by wise teachers who spent their lives studying relationships. They know a lot at the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation, and here's just a sample. There's probably about 30 different or 40 different topics. When You Love an Addict, a little short book you can read, and Conflict, oh, we all need that one, a redemptive opportunity. It's not an accident. Helping a hurting friend. Bringing the hope of Christ in hard times is another one. Building a marriage to last. Five essential habits for couples, okay?

I need to read that one. Renewing marital intimacy. Great little book. Closing the gap between you and your spouse. Freedom from resentment. Stopping hurts from turning bitter. So, we order these, and we restock them, and they send us different ones, different topics, and they're there for our benefit to read and study. But the wise person understands that life is complicated, right? Life is unpredictable.

People and relationships are sometimes complicated and unpredictable. Solomon says in verse 3, he says something that kind of hurts. He says, human hearts are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live. Sadly, that's you and me he's talking about. Madness in our hearts while we live.

We have a hard time, you know, understanding ourselves sometimes. It's no wonder we misunderstand each other, and we rub each other in the wrong way, and we get into conflict.

[21 : 16] Maybe you're concerned about the complicated and unpredictable mess known as politics, okay? That's a messy business, whether it's in our city or state or the nation or the dangerous world that we live in. You realize we live in a very dangerous world. You know, anything can happen tomorrow on the news that is unpredictable and surprising and that will change our lives.

Do you need a reminder that God is in control, that your life, our lives are in his hands? You know, in your heart and your mind, are you depending as much on him to act in his world as you're depending on your own actions or your own efforts to change the world? You know, do you want to see change in the church? Do you want to see change at New City? Do you want to see change in the neighborhood? Do you want to see change in the nation? Are you confident in God and his word and depending on him to ultimately sort things out? That our dependence is childlike trust in him and calling on him. That's why this kingdom prayer seminar is important. That's why this is about the third or fourth time we've offered this because we want to be a praying church. We want to be a dependent church. We want to trust in him to acknowledge that our lives are in his hands, that he's in control, and he commands us to pray and to trust in him. You know, think about Jesus' disciples, how they didn't have it all sorted out.

You know, they certainly experienced the complicated unpredictability of life under the sun and the suddenness and the sadness of death. When their beloved leader, who they left everything to follow him, they loved him, they respected him. When he was arrested and put on trial and convicted and publicly humiliated and stripped and beaten and mocked and then crucified between two convicted criminals, you know, what were they to think? There was a lot of fear and a lot of dread and they scattered, right? They ran for the hills. How do we fix this? You know, this is really broken.

Something is really wrong. But then a couple days later on Resurrection Day, their whole perspective changed, right? When Jesus came back, when he came out of the tomb, when he came back from the dead, then they realized that there's hope. Now there's hope for the future. Now they began to see and to make sense of it all. They began to understand all that he'd been teaching them. If we could have that same perspective that the disciples had when they first saw the risen Christ and they realized who he was, then we would have a different, a wiser perspective on our little conflicts, our little problems, right? If God has done that, raised Christ from the dead, given us a hope and a future, then we can enjoy life, right? We can relax. He's got it. Our lives are in his hands.

Solomon is teaching us that trusting in God and his word gives us hope and gives us this perspective, this wise perspective on things. We can look at life in a different way than the way we did before we were united to Christ. We can embrace the reality that life under the sun, it's complicated, it's dangerous, it's unpredictable, and it's hard sometimes.

[24 : 54] But we can also embrace the reality that God has got it. He's in control, right? That's one of wisdom's benefits is understanding that. Another benefit of true wisdom that this passage highlights has to do with God's command to enjoy life to the fullest. So the wise person, Solomon says, enjoys life to the fullest while keeping God's commands, right? We enjoy life. We enjoy worship. We sang this morning, turning our morning into dancing, you know. I love the way the praise team just kind of spontaneously said, no, we need to sing this again. We could have sung it three or four more times, and we wouldn't have been bored because we know that's true, you know. Think about when we get to heaven and all of our inhibitions are removed, because that's really why we're inhibited. We're self-conscious, right?

And it's sin. So one of the best things about dying and going to heaven is there's no more sin. There's going to be a lot of dancing. There's going to be a lot. Even the white folks are going to be, there's not going to be any inhibitions, right? I promise you.

Even people that never dance, they don't know how to dance. They never go on the dance floor. Boy, when sin is removed, then there's going to be some dancing and praising on that day.

Walking in the way of wisdom is pursuing a life of joy in his good gifts while keeping his commandments. In five places in Ecclesiastes, before we get to this section, Solomon recommends enjoying God's gifts.

And here in chapter 9, he raises the bar a little bit because he makes five imperative statements just so it would be clear that enjoying God's gifts is not an option. This is a command of God.

[26 : 56] He gives some examples of ways we're to pursue joy. And pastor and scholar Douglas O'Donnell, who's, he spent a lot of time studying Ecclesiastes, he suggests three ways we can enjoy God's gifts. He says, it's not an exhaustive list, but here are three helpful ways for you to think about it that Solomon outlines in this passage. God commands us to enjoy the gifts he's given us in this brief life under the sun. He says, enjoy your food and drink that he's blessed you with.

Enjoy your spouse, if God blesses you with one, and enjoy your work that he's blessed you with. All of these are gifts from God. In regard to food and drink, he commands us in verse 7, he says, go, eat with gladness and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do.

Go, eat with gladness, drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has approved what you do. So, your food and your drink, we are commanded to eat and drink with joy. And that's something every person does every day, right? Every one of you eats and drinks every day, multiple times a day, right?

So, we are to go and eat and drink. We know that Adam and Eve were told to enjoy God's gifts he blessed them with in that perfect garden. He called it, it was paradise. And we read in Genesis that the Lord made all things, all kinds of trees grow out of the ground, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. It says, a river watering the garden flowed from Eden. It was a place of joy and gratitude, and God said, it is good. God approved of their delighting in his gifts. And here Solomon says, eat and drink with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do. So, what does he mean that God has already approved what you do? Well, I think he means that God delights when you delight in his good gifts, right? He approves of your enjoyment. He takes joy in your enjoyment in lawfully delightful things that don't go against his commands. But also, for us as Christians, looking back to what

Christ has done for us, you know, in our justification, we know that God has already approved of us because he's approved of his son. He's approved of his work. He's approved of what he has already done.

[29 : 34] And so, that's why we can come to him and know with confidence that there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We're now united to Christ. We died with him. We were raised with him.

We were raised to walk in a new way of life, a life of enjoyment of his gifts while keeping his commandments, understanding that he is in control. Our lives are in his hands. So, when you eat or drink, every time you have the opportunity to do that, do it with gladness, enjoying, knowing that God approves of your enjoyment in the provision that he's had for you. Another command Solomon gives to us is enjoy life with your wife whom you love all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun all your meaningless days. He just keeps emphasizing that, you know, emptiness, meaningless, brevity of life. He wants us to get that, that life is short. It's unpredictable.

We're all going to die. So, he says, enjoy these things. Enjoy your wife. Husbands, enjoy your wife. She's God's gift to you. Wives, you know, you can apply this too. The principle is there. Enjoy your husband.

He's God's gift. Non-married people, you can apply the principle. Nourish and enjoy friendships. They're God's gifts to you. Jesus remained unmarried, so we don't think that single life is somehow second class, right? But if God has given you a spouse, he or she is your gift from God. That's a gift from God, and he commands you to enjoy one another. This is a command. It's not an option.

If you have no spouse, then nurture your friendships. Life is short. God is good. Live with gusto. Live with great enjoyment in life. Live to the fullest enjoyment that you can while trusting fully in him.

[31 : 43] And finally, a third command we're given for joy-filled living has to do with our work. This is something that may be a little controversial, right? We're supposed to enjoy our work.

The mundaneness, in verse 10, he says, whatever your hand finds to do, do it. That's another imperative. He says, do it with all your might. For the realm of the dead where you're going, there's neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom. So from the perspective of Ecclesiastes of life under the sun in this present age, we're all going down to the place of the dead.

And from a purely human perspective, there's no more working. There's no more planning or knowledge or wisdom there. So work hard while you're in this life. Work hard and enjoy it while you have the chance. Work is not a part of the curse. Remember, God worked in creation and he rested from his work.

So he set the example. Long before the fall, he gave Adam and Eve meaningful and fulfilling work to tend the garden. They enjoyed what they did. They had delight in their work. It's good to work hard and to enjoy whatever God has blessed you with. And it's wrong to take someone's dignity away, dignity of work. It's not good to create dependency in our children, for example, so that they don't experience the fulfillment that God intended for them in meaningful work. Don't let your adult children live in the basement and play video games into their 40s. They need to understand the dignity of work. This is a command that God gives to us. My friend Bobby, who I visit in the prison, he shared with me just the other night, the last time we met, that he regrets he's robbed his son of the dignity of work. And I asked him if I could share his experience, and he's happy for others to hear his testimony.

He told me that his 34-year-old son has never had a full-time job. And Bobby has supported him, even though his son has had a drug addiction. Bobby has kept supporting him, giving him money, giving him a place to live. And like his dad, the son has been in and out of prison. But the encouraging thing right now for Bobby is that his son is out, and he's living in a halfway house in Georgia.

[34 : 15] He's going through a drug treatment program, and he's going to work every day. And his son told him he really enjoys going to work. He's got a nine-to-five job, regular schedule. And Bobby, he was excited about that. He said, because I've worked hard. You know, he's not always worked at things that were legal at making money. But he's been a hard worker. And he's just, he was excited that his son is now working and enjoying. And, you know, that makes sense.

Because his son and all of us are created in the image of God, who is a worker. God enjoys work himself, and he commands us to provide for ourselves, provide for our families, provide for others through honest, meaningful work that glorifies him. So Solomon commands us to enjoy food and drink and spouses and friendships and work simply because they are gifts to you from God. And Jesus adds another lens, you could say, through which we can look at living this short life on earth to the fullest. We should enjoy God's gift in this life because of the promise of another life, of everlasting life. Romans 6.23, the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord. So why should we practice joyful living to the fullest now? Because we're going to be doing it forever. That is what we're going to be doing. I don't believe we're going to be floating on clouds or sitting up in a nice mansion, just sit back with a drink and, you know, somebody to wait on us.

We're going to be working in the new heavens and the new earth, and we're going to enjoy it. It's not going to be mundane. We're going to be living life to the fullest forever and ever and ever and ever.

So that's a beautiful reason for us to work hard, to study hard, to be the best, whatever you spend your time in, your waking hours, whatever you're planning to study in graduate school, whatever, to know that God, that's, this is not an option. You need to enjoy your work, enjoy, live life to the fullest, and food as well. You know, whether it's a porterhouse steak or a taco or a peanut butter sandwich, right? It's God's gift. We need to enjoy it, right? Sherry and I enjoyed dinner last night at one of our favorite Mexican restaurants downtown, and I really tried to apply this. I've been studying this passage, you know, I said, I need to apply. The preacher needs to preach to himself. So when those shrimp tacos came and sprinkled with mango, you know, I just looked at those and I had to say a prayer of thanks to the Lord. I even took a picture of it. I sent the picture to my kids because they enjoy Mexican food as well. And I just wanted to say, oh my, what a wonderful gift from God just to sit here and enjoy this meal that he has provided. It's a command. We need to enjoy those good gifts that God has given. Give him credit for it. And of course, I delighted in the company of my delightful wife. I'm thankful for her, and I'm thankful for the work that God has given to me here at New City Fellowship. In regard to work, do you see your calling and vocation as one of God's good gifts? You know, whatever your hand finds to do, whatever you feel called to do,

I have to confess that sometimes I don't always value work as one of his gifts, like mowing the grass. I mowed the grass two nights ago, and I waited till about eight o'clock.

[38 : 26] I hope my neighbors didn't mind, you know, because I was mowing so late. It was just too hot. But even mowing the grass is something that is worth doing with all my might and being thankful to God for the grass, being thankful that I have the energy to get out there and work.

Maybe you're retired, and amen to that. I'm looking forward to one of these days. But you're still able to contribute to God's work, right? Because God is not retired. He doesn't know anything about that, right? You may stop earning an income from whatever the career or vocation that you had. But Pastor John Piper would say to you, don't waste it. Don't waste your retirement, right? Use it for, continue to use your gifts that God has given you as long as you have strength to do something in his kingdom. Paul reminds us in Colossians 3.23, whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you'll receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. So we work hard, right? We do it with contagious joy and an attitude of gratitude because of the redeeming work of Christ Jesus and what he has done for us. Amen? Amen. So Solomon's instructions to us on the benefits of true wisdom, really, they're pointing us away from ourselves and to our Savior because he is the true wisdom. He is wisdom in the flesh. He's the most important word. Jesus is the final word. He's the most powerful word.

And this is the word, the little word that Martin Luther is referring to in his great hymn. You remember A Mighty Fortress, that line he says, the prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him.

His rage we can endure. Lo, his dube is sure. One little word will fell him. And that one little word is Jesus. That's the word. That's the final word. We need no other one. Because of his sacrificial work and payment for our sins, you're already approved by God. Isn't that good news? God approves of you, not because of anything you have done, but because of what Christ has done. His hard work, his sacrificial work for you on your behalf. And your life is in his hands. Amen. So don't you want to know him more?

Don't you want to trust him more? Don't you want to love him more and obey him more and delight more in him and in his gifts? Amen. Let's pray. Ask him for his strength and blessing. Father, thank you for this word this morning. Thank you for Solomon, though he was a man. He was a man who you gave great wisdom, even though he made big mistakes in his life. There was madness and folly in his own heart. And he's not preaching to us from a holier-than-thou place, but a place of reality, of understanding, of going through difficulty in his own life. And of course, your Holy Spirit giving him words to say to us, to encourage us. Father, remind us that though life is unpredictable, help us to rest in the reality that you are in control. Our lives are in your hands. And give us wisdom and help us to live our lives to the fullest, delighting in you and delighting in the gifts that you have provided for us, all the while keeping your commandments. And we pray these things in

[42 : 23] Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Please stand with us as we sing our questions.