

Our Search for Meaning

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[0 : 00] Amen. Good morning. If you, parents, if you haven't taken your children already, they can be dismissed at this time to their classes.

My name is Billy McKillop, and I'm an associate pastor here, if you're new. And Pastor Kevin is out on vacation, and so I'm up this morning for preaching.

And thank you, praise team, and thank you, Jason. We're looking at Ecclesiastes 1, 1 to 11 this morning. I started out preparing to preach the whole chapter, but you'll appreciate that the Lord had me just cut it in half, so with communion and everything else going this morning.

Well, the author of Ecclesiastes, let me just say a couple of words about the text before we read it. He calls himself the preacher, and he doesn't name himself, though many interpreters have concluded that it was written by Solomon.

Some others believe it could have been written by someone later than Solomon. But either way, in the closing paragraph of the book, credit is given for its wise words to the one shepherd.

[1 : 19] And we know who that is, right? The Lord himself. We know he's the author behind the human authors. Amen? So these are his words of wisdom for us.

And, you know, sometimes the preacher poses an opening question for his listeners, and the preacher of Ecclesiastes does so as well. So what do you think you'll gain by all your toil at which you toil under the sun?

You know, what is the meaning of it all? What will you gain by all the work that you put into raising your children? Or studying for that degree?

Or building your career or ministry? Or accumulating all those possessions? Or gaining all that knowledge? You know, is your life really going to matter in the end?

And what, or better, who determines that? Who will determine? Ecclesiastes, it's not the easiest book of the Bible to read and understand.

[2 : 22] So before we read our text, let's ask for help in understanding, okay? Father, we know that your Holy Spirit was given to comfort us and to teach us, to convict us, and that you have authored these words that we read for our good, for our benefit, for correction, rebuke, for encouragement, for reminding us of your promises.

And so it's right for us to come and ask you again for your help in understanding and applying these words to our individual lives, to our own hearts.

So we ask you to come and do that this morning as we read. In Jesus' name, amen. Okay, reading from chapter 1, verse 1.

The words of the preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the preacher. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises and the sun goes down and hastens to the place where it rises.

[3 : 42] The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north. Around and around goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns.

All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full. To the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. All things are full of weariness.

You ever feel that? All things, he says, are full of weariness. A man cannot utter it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there's nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, see?

This is new. It has been already in the ages before us. There's no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after.
[4 : 40] And in verse 14, he says, I have seen everything that's done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity, a chasing after the wind. Amen.

The word of the Lord for us. You can be seated. I'm drinking water in my cup in case any of the deacons want to give me a hard time.
I'm not bringing coffee in an open cup. So in reading the opening chapters of this book, if you didn't know where the author was going, you might be tempted to turn away and say, man, this is depressing.

I don't want to read this. Why, you know, why do I want to waste my time reading a depressing story? He writes about the seeming meaningless of the natural world, the emptiness of self-indulgence, the vanity of gaining much knowledge, the futility of labor, the vanity of living wisely, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

But as you read through the book, and if you were to skip to the last paragraph, some of you like to do that if you're reading a novel, right? Go to the end so you're not wasting your time if it has a bad ending.

[6 : 03] But if we skip to the last paragraph, we'd have an idea of his purpose in writing. And it's so the listeners and the readers would put their hope and trust in God and his word, which lasts forever, rather than those things that are temporary and meaningless.

Listen to what he says in chapter 12. The last couple of verses, he says, Now all has been heard. Here is the conclusion of the matter. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.

For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. Or you could say, whether it has lasting meaning, or it's just a chasing after the wind.

God will determine. The expression, vanity of vanities, literally, the word is vapor, and it's translated figuratively as vanity.

It just means vapor or breath, something that has no substance. Go ahead and just breathe out. That's really the word.

[7 : 14] And he uses it five times in verse two. You know, it's That is really what he's talking about when he's talking about accumulating possessions.

This word occurs 38 times in the book. More than half of all the uses of the word in the 39 books of the Old Testament.

And here are some other ways that this Hebrew word is translated. Based on how it's used in the context, it's translated temporary, meaningless, senseless, futile, incomprehensible, absurd, a striving after the wind.

You know, have you ever thought about somebody who's had a very accomplished career like one of our athletes, you know, who's very rich and has really become famous that possibly their whole career and all of that is just like trying to grab the wind.

That's the idea here of just chasing after the wind, and trying to grab a hold of something that has no substance. It's translated as a bubble or smoke that curls up in the air or mist or mere breath.

[8 : 40] You know, God is imparting wisdom to us in Ecclesiastes and in other places in the wisdom literature to keep us from pursuing things that are insignificant and temporary, that are senseless and absurd, that are like a bubble, a striving after the wind.

And the message of Ecclesiastes in one sentence could be put your trust in God and His Word in order to turn what would be a vain and empty life into a meaningful life, a life where you'll enjoy God's good gifts.

The preacher, he says, fear God and keep His command so you'll enjoy God's good gifts. and Jesus, who is the greater preacher, He says something similar in John 15.

He's teaching His disciples, you remember, about the vine and the branches and He says, I'm the vine and you are the branches and the only way you'll have sustenance, real sustenance is life is if the branches draw their sustenance from the vine.

He says, remain in me and He says, I've told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. He's talking about joy-filled living, fulfillment in life.

[9 : 56] He says, my command is this, love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this to lay down one's life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.

And we know the purpose that Jesus came to earth, His incarnation, right, was to lay down His life for His friends. His friends, you and me who are His friends if we are trusting in Christ to turn what would be vain, empty lives into meaningful lives where we enjoy His good gifts in spite of all the weariness, in spite of all the difficulties of life that we often face.

The expression life under the sun simply means, it doesn't mean the secular life as it's sometimes misunderstood. It just simply means life on earth in this present age while we wait for something better.

So Christ has saved us but we're still here. We're still here on earth, right? And all of us are living life under the sun. All of us are in this present age where we all bear the marks of the consequences of the fall of man where our first parent fell into sin.

And the point of my message this morning, really just one simple point is this, because we live with the consequences of Adam's sin, we can only find lasting joy and meaning in the freedom that Christ brings.

[11:32] So all of us were created with this desire for meaning. He says in chapter 3 that God has put eternity in the hearts of men. So every man, whether he's a relativist or a hedonist or he's living in an escape, really God has placed in your heart this desire to figure it out, to understand what life is really about, to have a fulfilling life.

And one of several themes emphasized in Ecclesiastes is this theme of sin and death that's an unfortunate reality for all of us, all men and women.

We all wrestle with sin and we all have an appointment with death, right? Unless Jesus returns beforehand, we all have an appointment with the undertaker.

Just Friday morning I got the sad news that one of my dear friends in Montego Bay, Delroy Campbell, had his appointment with death. and he passed into the arms of Christ after battling cancer for a few years.

And what a great loss of Pastor Delroy Campbell. I grew up with him. He went to Bible College and served as a faithful inner city pastor for the same church, Faith Baptist Church, since 1978.

[12:52] So 45 years he has pastored this little church in the inner city. And we attended that inner city church when I was a teenager and when my family and I went to Jamaica to live and work.

We worked with Delroy Campbell in that church. Pastor Kevin and Sandra and teams from our church in Miami came and met him and we worked in that community. Delroy started out as a young pastor in his 20s and he made it all the way to 70 years old.

Faithful pastor. All of us living on planet earth experience the consequences of the fall and putting your faith in Christ doesn't make you immune.

It certainly helps. Right? Because now we have the spirit. Now we have someone to help us make sense of it all. To try to figure it out as we go along.

But even for us in Christ it's not always easy. we often have questions the same question that the writer starts out with. What's, you know, is it really going to matter?

[14:04] Christians don't get a pass on suffering and death. The Apostle Paul in Romans 8 he speaks of the effects of sin and he talks about it as the bondage to decay.

And he compares it to the pains of childbirth. He says the whole creation really is going through birthing pains. And this is what Paul says in Romans 8 22 to 27 he says we know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

Not only so but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the spirit that's us as Christians we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship the redemption of our bodies.

for in this hope we were saved but hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have we wait for it patiently.

In the same way the spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for but the spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

[15:16] And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the spirit because the spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. So birthing pains right?

Moms know about birthing pains. I know a little bit about birthing pains. But okay why are you laughing? Not personally. Not personally of course.

but I was there. I was there for three births. One almost delivered in an elevator on the way up to the hospital room.

And one came very close to being delivered in the car as we rushed to the emergency room. So it was a traumatic experience for mom and dad. Okay. I may have told you this story and some of you may not have heard it but on our last child when Gabrielle was born Sherry was in labor and Gabrielle had not turned.

She came early a month early and she wasn't turned in the right way and she went into labor and I got in the car and we were headed a long drive winding road to the hospital past the deputy sheriff going much faster than he was going and he thought I robbed a bank and he pulled me over and turned his siren and everything on and he saw the look in my eyes and he believed me because I said you're going to be delivering this baby if we don't get to the hospital.

[16:51] And we followed him to a fire station put her in an ambulance ambulance took off called the doctor ahead of time emergency room emergency C-section it was a traumatic experience.

So I've heard the birthing pains. I understand a little bit about it. So think about that. Think about I mean it's really a miracle that any baby is born alive.

Right? Because it's a traumatic thing. A lot has to happen for it to work out and God does it. But think about that the pain of childbirth all creation and all men and women groan in this life.

It may not be as loud a groan or a scream of a mother in labor but Paul says we groan inwardly while we eagerly but patiently wait for relief.

Waiting for something much better that God has planned for us. And because we see through gospel glasses you know we have great hope. we have hope that this is not the way it's supposed to be and not the way it's gonna be for all eternity.

[18:10] We can also find great comfort in what Paul says in knowing that God empathizes with our groaning. He understands the inward birthing pains these groanings.

In fact God's spirit in a real way he groans as he intercedes for us. I don't know what those wordless groans of the Holy Spirit sound like but I take comfort in knowing that he knows our situation.

He knows what we're going through. He knows our battle with the world of flesh and the devil and he knows our suffering at times. He knows our sin and our self-centeredness and he keeps interceding for us.

He keeps calling out with wordless groans on our behalf as we continue to live life under the sun. Life in this age.

Life under the sun is life lived under the fall of Adam and Eve into original sin. At the fall of man into sin our first parents as our representatives they forfeited the righteousness that they originally possessed before God and now all of us all people and the creation even has been impacted.

[19:27] All of us are sinners in need of a savior. He says in chapter 7 verse 29 the writer he says this only have I found.

God created mankind upright and they've gone in search of many schemes. Think about schemes of men today. It wouldn't take you long for several to come to your mind of how men are trying to find meaning in a way that God didn't intend and that only brings greater frustration and greater questions and greater problems.

In verse 20 of chapter 7 he said indeed there is no one on earth who is righteous no one who does what is right and never sins. The opening chapters of Genesis make it clear to us that the consequences for sin was death.

It doesn't go very far until we get to chapter 6 and we see that the consequences of Adam's sin Adam and Eve's sin was the whole world except for one family.

God said I'm going to start over and so God decided to destroy all mankind except for Noah and his family. Adam's sin led to the death of everyone on earth except eight people.

[20:49] and Adam's sin resulted in a geographical separation between us and God. Remember Adam in the garden would walk with God and then what happened after the fall?

He was ejected from the garden. No more walking with God in the cool of the day but he was forced out and not allowed to return. There's this geographical separation and a theological separation between us and God.

You know God is in heavens and we're here on earth and God is perfectly holy and we are not. And the good news is that in Christ we're justified by God and we're declared to be holy and we're being made holy.

That's good news for us as we think about the gospel of what God has done but it's good for us to remember the sin and the depravity and the original sin why Christ had to come in the first place

and it's good to remember that we wait for a day when we're set free from remaining this remaining part of our sin nature.

I'm really looking forward to attending the celebration of life service for Pastor Delroy Campbell in a few weeks and he's had such an impact I don't know if there's a church big enough in Montego Bay that will hold all the people that have been influenced in his 70 years and his ministry in that church.

[22 : 20] His son Shannon told me that Delroy had the service all written out. He knows who's going to do what in the service what scriptures but we know that Delroy won't be in attendance.

He's not going to be there. Body, yeah the body will be there but if the person Delroy were to show up none of us would recognize him because of the upgrade that he's been given.

We may even some would say think of somebody who would return as a deity. We would want to worship them some of the best news for Pastor Campbell is that he's finally been set free from sin and death.

He's been freed from the trouble of life under the sun. And it's important for us to understand the nature of sin to fully appreciate the greatness of God's forgiveness in Christ and fully appreciate our new identity in Christ now and fully appreciate what it will mean to be completely free from sin and the consequences of the fall.

We have never lived for a minute without the consequences of the fall. That's all we know in this life is the effects of our sin nature.

[23 : 47] But when we're set free from that that's a whole new existence. That's something that will be so refreshing and so surprising to us.

So it's important for us to understand you know that sin and our relationship to it and so in the time remaining let's look at some truths that scripture affirms about sin and our relationship to sin.

And when we deal with the subject of sin don't think that we emphasize it so we can feel depressed or dirty or we can just feel like a worm undeserving worm.

No that's not why we emphasize why in the reformed tradition we emphasize sin. We emphasize it because it will help us to see the riches of Christ and what he saved us from and what he is saving us from as he sanctifies us continually as we grow in him you can't begin to plumb the riches of your life in Christ if you underestimate your need for him every day.

You need to understand that sin nature and your relationship to it to understand what Christ is doing for you every day. If you think Jesus came to just give you a better life and help you be a better person you don't understand your deep bent toward independence and self-centeredness and unbelief that the writer of Ecclesiastes is talking about then your Jesus will be too small.

[25 : 29] You will minimize the work of Christ. You'll minimize the cross. You'll minimize the atonement if you take for granted this sin that God has rescued us from and is rescuing us from and you'll minimize the work of the Holy Spirit his wordless groans that he is interceding for us.

That's a big deal of what he is doing. So here are eight truths that scripture affirms about sin and our relationship to it and we'll put them up on the screen here one at a time and just say a few words about them.

Surge is a mission organization that several of our missionaries serve under and they get the credit for the wording of these theological affirmations from some of the training materials they have.

First of all, scripture affirms that all men and women are sinners and are categorically and justly condemned to death and punishment without the work of Christ. Does that sound familiar to anyone?

where do we hear that? Whenever we receive members into the church, right? That's one of the things that we ask every member in the PCA church to affirm that they are sinners in need of a savior.

[26 : 49] Really, they're joining a church but they're really unworthy and undeserving to be a member of the church because they're sinners, right? To be a member of the church, you have to first acknowledge that you're a sinner and you're not worthy to be in Christ's church and admitting that truth helps us rely on the mercy of Christ.

So we cling to his mercy to turn what would be a vain and empty life into a meaningful life where we enjoy his good gifts. A second affirmation, the scripture affirms that we have inherited our sin nature from Adam who as the representative of the entire human race also corrupted us when he fell from his created state of innocence in the garden.

So we affirm that our actual sins proceed from our inherited fallen nature and that we're guilty for them. So we believe that admitting this truth helps us to rely on the wonderful mercy of God in Christ.

So we're singing about today that we'll be joyful people because we've been set free. So we cling to his mercy and we believe that understanding that helps us turn what would be a vain empty life into a meaningful life where we enjoy his good gifts and the promises that he has for us, his benefits. A third affirmation, scripture affirms that sin touches, corrupts, and pollutes every part of our lives. There's no part of our inner or outer lives, our desires, our motives, our dispositions, or actions that is untouched by sin.

[28 : 31] So, bad news, right? This is the bad news of life under the sun that even our motives, sin touches our motives, our desires, our disposition, dispositions are touched by sin.

So admitting that truth that even our desires and motives don't go untouched by sin. That helps us rely every day on the beautiful mercy of God in Christ.

So we cling to his mercy. We trust him and his word. A fourth affirmation, scripture affirms that the curse of sin touches not just our individual lives but all parts of God's creation including our communities, constructs, and cultures.

And yes, they could have added even the church. The church as an institution, right? The only hope for rescue in our community and our culture and its institutions is through Christ.

And we rely on his mercy and receive help through his means of grace. We trust him and his word to turn what would be vain empty lives of people in our community into meaningful lives where boys and girls, men and women will enjoy his good gifts.

[29 : 49] I mean, that's why we have the Glenwood School. That's why we partnered with Chattanooga Christian School to have the Glenwood School here. And that's why we have the GLAD program and ESL and other ways to reach out in our community, the block party, Bible clubs.

We want to improve the institutions. We want to help students have a better education. We want folks to have a better income.

But it's not enough. Just that is not enough. People have to draw meaningful life from the vine in Christ. So we trust him in his word and we communicate the grace of God in Christ in the gospel. Scripture affirms fifth affirmation that apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives to call, regenerate, and supply us with faith, no person has the ability to come to God on their own or be brought to Christ-likeness through their own efforts.

That's what Pastor Kevin was preaching about last Sunday, right? That it's not about us. It's not that God just made a potential and anybody who now it's up to you to just reach out and you know the illustration is not a good illustration of the person who's drowning and God throws the life preserver out and it's up to that person to kind of grab a hold of the life preserver.

[31 : 08] The scriptural truth of men being dead in their sins as Paul says in Ephesians is you're already drowned and you're down at the bottom. Right? You're clinging to the moss and the sand down there.

There's no life. God has to swim down there and he has to give you life, new life to understand. None of us on our own efforts can turn what would be a vain empty life into a meaningful life. We have to be given the gift of faith to even begin to come to an understanding. A sixth affirmation about sin and death. Scripture affirms that our sin nature will not be eradicated in this lifetime. Even though we have been born again and our new creation in Christ and the completion of our salvation is guaranteed by God, during our remaining days in this life we are truly at the same time both justified and sinners.

So what that means is we live in this biblical tension situation and trying to deny one or the other always leads us to problems.

[32 : 18] We're not just helpless sinners who can't love God and our neighbor as he commands. No. We're justified sinners who are now declared to be saints and our relationship to sin is not the same as it was before we came to Christ.

But neither are we simply saints who are becoming perfect the more effort that we put in. We're just getting better and better and better. We live in the center of this biblical tension of being justified and sinners at the same time.

And the Holy Spirit may come to us at times and confront us of our sin. He may say that there's really some sin in your life that I need to deal with, that we need to deal with.

It may just be self-righteousness that, and that's a kindness. That's what Paul says in Romans, that it's the kindness of God that leads to repentance.

So he comes and confronts us as a sinner or he might come and comfort us as a sufferer because of someone else's sin. Because I get cancer doesn't mean that it's because of my sin.

[33 : 33] It is because of life under the sun. It has to do with the sin of my first parent, yes. But I am also a victim of someone else's sin against me or just a victim of the fact that we live under this fallen condition, right?

Car accidents happen. People get cancer. We get sick. So the Holy Spirit is a comforter. He will come and say, remember what Jesus said.

He said he was going to send a comforter and that's me. I'm coming to comfort you in your suffering. And at times he may just come to encourage you that you are a saint.

That you are justified. There's no condemnation for you who are in Christ. So cheer up. I know you're a sinner, but cheer up because Christ has the last word.

And so the way we should look at ourselves. Somebody has written about kind of the three parts of our identity. Sinner, saint, and sufferer. And the Holy Spirit deals with us wisely in all of those ways.

[34 : 46] Oftentimes overlapping, you know, all of them at the same time. Scripture affirms that our sin nature will not be eradicated in this lifetime.

Scripture also affirms that our sin and all its effects in our communities, constructs, and cultures will be completely eradicated when our salvation is perfected after our death or when Christ returns.

So we believe admitting this truth helps us recognize that our cultures and our communities and our institutions will continue to be broken in this lifetime. Right?

They continue to bear the marks of the fall. We're never going to reach utopia. No matter how hard we try in this life, we're not going to fix it all. Yet we can see improvement.

It doesn't mean that we give up and we don't try. We can see improvement in human flourishing as we rely on the wonderful grace of Jesus that's greater than all of our sin. So we continue to proclaim His grace and His word to help others enjoy the good gifts and the benefits that He gives.

[35 : 52] And lastly, this last affirmation, Scripture affirms that sin is essentially self-focused and inward, avoiding the call to love God and others or to engage in Christ's calling to take up the cross and follow Him by giving ourselves to reach the world.

So it's important for us to admit the truth about the nature of our sin in order to turn away from it and to trust in God and His word.

Our sin essentially makes us self-focused, makes us turn inward, makes us self-centered so that we avoid loving God and loving others as we ought to.

It's our sin that keeps us from answering the call to take up the cross and to follow Jesus into the world. You know, a world around us, there's people that you know personally that are chasing after wind, that are living for a bubble, that are toiling day and night for nothing permanent.

They're duped by Satan, the enemy of our souls, into trying to find meaning and significance in gaining knowledge or possessions or self-indulgence.

[37 : 06] May God help us to recognize and repent of our sin, mainly of our sin of being numb to that, being numb to the fact that there are so many people that God has placed in their hearts.

hearts, right? He's placed eternity in their hearts, that they want to know. They need to understand there's this sense, this hole in the heart that is trying to be filled up.

They're tricked by the devil sometime into escapism or to hedonism. And may the Lord help us to answer the call, answer the call of Christ to follow him into the world.

And Bobby is a man that I've come to know through a mentoring ministry that I'm involved in at Walker State Prison. And we spend time together twice a month.

And Bobby's happy to share his story with others about how the Lord has rescued him from really a cycle of meaninglessness, of chasing after the wind, of absurd living.

[38 : 09] his sin has led him to make bad decisions that have resulted in his being in and out of prison for the last 20 years. On one occasion he told me that he was out of prison and two weeks later he was arrested and he was back in prison.

He's on this endless cycle of making bad decisions, getting caught up with bad people, getting trapped in bad romantic relationships that turned into nightmares for him and probably for the poor women.

But something happened recently that's given him purpose and meaning. The last time he was arrested and put in jail it was the same day that his daughter was born in the hospital here in Chattanooga.

Can you imagine? Couldn't be there for the birth of his child because he was sitting locked up at Silverdale. And he was so angry with himself for getting arrested and being put back in prison. And he told me that he sat there frustrated on the bottom bunk in the cell. And there was this towel hanging down from the top bunk.

[39 : 18] And he leaned over, reached up and in frustration angry grabbed the towel and yanked it down. And someone had given him a Bible as he went into prison.

And the Bible was sitting on top of the towel on the top bunk. And as he leaned over the Bible came off with the towel and hit him on the back of the head and fell down on the floor in front of him. And he said something came over him. And it was someone came over him. And he fell on his knees in the cell and confessed his sin.

And gave his life to Christ. And he's growing in the gospel. He has this desire to grow. He's growing in forgiveness of people that have wronged him and coming to terms with things that he's done and seeing his new identity in Christ.

He's a baby in the faith. But he has this desire to grow and to be mentored. To understand. And he's committed that he's going to end this cycle.

[40 : 33] He's going to get out. Hopefully in about four or five months. He says I'm not coming back. I'm not coming back. Because he now has this hope.

He has meaning and purpose. Beyond just trying to make a quick buck. You know. Is there someone in your world who needs some of your precious time and energy?

You know. If you prayed about it. Would God lead you to think about a person that you need to spend some time with. To listen and to share some wisdom from your experience.

Of walking with Christ. And from scripture. God will reveal it to you. Right. If you are open to taking up your cross. And following. I know a lot of New City folks are busy in ministry.

But maybe there's time for some of us that can pray about becoming a mentor to someone.

Because we and everyone else we know lives with the consequences of Adam's sin.

[41 : 38] And we know that the only lasting joy and meeting is found. And freedom is found in the life that Christ brings.

Amen. So here's a few takeaways maybe from our time in Ecclesiastes 1. Maybe we could pray that we would understand the brevity of life for people that we know who need Christ.

Their life is just like a breath. So short. And we have an opportunity perhaps to be that link.

Understand the nature of sin and its effects on you and everything and everyone around you.

And maybe we could be more merciful and compassionate to other sinners. And sufferers. And understand that your life in Christ is permanent.

And it lasts forever. You are going to last forever. If you are in Christ you're already given this gift of eternity. It's starting now. That you're going to have this wonderful life in eternity.

[42 : 53] And you can be a link for others to experience a meaningful and lasting existence. Amen.

So as we prepare to take the Lord's Supper this morning let me pray for us the words of our Lord Jesus and the words of the larger catechism question 194 that's really an answer to why did Jesus teach us to pray forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus you've taught us to pray forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And we have to acknowledge that we're all guilty both of original and actual sin. And we're therefore debtors to the justice of God. And we can't make the least bit of repayment for our debt.

So we pray for your help that you'll continue to bestow your free grace on us through the obedience and satisfaction of Christ our Savior. Acquit us O Father of both the guilt and the punishment for our sin.

Accept us in your beloved Son. Continue his favor and grace to us. And pardon our daily failings and fill us with your peace and joy in giving us every day more and more assurance of forgiveness.

[44 : 25] And we are confident to ask for that and encourage that we will receive your forgiveness when we are known to be people who from the heart forgive others their offenses.

We thank you for these things for these truths from your word and it's in Christ's name we pray.

Amen. Amen. So elders you can come and