

# THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Timothy 2:19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,  
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in  
the house.

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

### From The Editor's Desk

This month we are starting a one chapter per month sermon series from the book of Ecclesiastes, preached by Brother Linford Berry at Calvary Mennonite Fellowship, Harrisonburg, Virginia during 2012-2013, and used with his permission. The series is entitled, "An Empty Life – Asking the Hard Questions" with a separate appropriate title for each message.

Please note that the ESV (English Standard Version) Scripture translation is used, it is a transliteration of the most accepted Hebrew and Greek texts with explanatory footnotes in today's English and thus more readily understood by many believers especially those who have English as their second language. Free audio CD's of these messages are available on request.

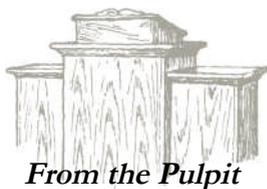
It is our prayer that we may all glean some treasure for our own individual walk with Christ and realise more deeply that to follow Christ or desire anyone or anything other than Christ is indeed vanity as it will not give us entry to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

***Bread and Water*** – this was a punishment often inflicted on recalcitrant prisoners and many times when peoples experienced famines there may not have been much else either to sustain their physical lives.

The people of Jesus time thought He was somewhat deranged when He proclaimed himself to be the bread and living water that people needed. They did not understand and neither will people today if they do not know the heart of the Gospel message but I believe we are privileged because we have the written word of God and in many cases brethren who can expound it to us either by word of mouth or in writing but even so it can be a hard message to grasp, we need the infilling of the Holy Spirit through the new birth that Jesus explained to Nicodemus (John 3) by which we receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit, He comes to dwell within us and He will guide us into all truth (John 16:13) so that we too can partake of the Living Water and the Bread of Life which Christ has promised. This bread and water that Jesus promises us is not the bread and water of affliction with which the King of Israel punished Micaiah the prophet (1 Kings 22:27) but that which saves and is for our sanctification and growth into holiness for Jesus is the giver of the Living Water (John 4:10) and He himself is the Bread of Life (John 6:35).

If we chase after those then it will not be vanity of vanities as Solomon portrayed but rather the way to life eternal!

J.v.L



*Number 1 of 12 expository messages from:  
The Book of Ecclesiastes by:  
Brother Linford Berry  
Calvary Mennonite Fellowship Virginia*

## Chasing the Wind

Catching the wind is a lot like living life, there's a lot of similarities there, you think you're going to be successful, you think you're going right and soar like an eagle and instead you're stuck with the rest of us, with the likes of us, and you suffer, you have pain and tribulation and things don't go your way.

So are you successful? It depends on your definition of success.

You have to ask some hard questions of yourself so take a hard look at your life, do you know what you are here for, does it mean anything, is there any significance in what you are doing, do you have a sense of purpose for what you do, what is this all about anyway, does it even matter?

The author of Ecclesiastes is a man who wrestled with these hard questions, some of you don't like philosophy you prefer to avoid these questions but like Solomon, like me, like everyone else we are forced at some level to reckon with this stuff we can only avoid it so long.

Young people this is especially important for you because the sooner you learn these lessons the better.

Today your whole life stretches before you, you don't know how long that is but it is all before you and you think that you have the world by the tail, well one day you are going to wake up to a different reality, one day the world is not going to be your oyster, one day, one day you are going to realise that the world doesn't revolve around you.

Now I know you don't believe that but it will happen and when it does happen how you have answered these questions, these hard questions of life, will make a big difference because if you are looking for love and satisfaction in the wrong places then you will be most miserable but if you heed the instructions in this little book of Ecclesiastes then you will find meaning and purpose in life and not just in the good things of life but in all

of life. You can live a joyful and satisfying life even in the midst of incredible pain and suffering.

That is the message of Ecclesiastes.

Now we are told throughout the course of history that philosophy only really began with the Greeks, we all know that, right? Wrong.

Some 900 years before Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Alexander the Great there was a man named Solomon, the greatest philosopher that ever lived.

Ecclesiastes is about the meaning of life, it raises the hard questions about what we're here for, it raises the questions that the rest of the Bible was written to answer, Why are we here, what is this all about anyway?

So let's read [Ecclesiastes 1:1-18](#)

“The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. <sup>3</sup>What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? <sup>4</sup>A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. <sup>5</sup>The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises. <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. <sup>8</sup>All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. <sup>9</sup>What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. <sup>10</sup>Is there a thing of which it is said, “See, this is new”? It has been already in the ages before us. <sup>11</sup>There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after. <sup>12</sup>I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup>And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. <sup>14</sup>I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. <sup>15</sup>What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted. <sup>16</sup>I said in my heart, “I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.” <sup>17</sup>And I applied my heart to

know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind. <sup>18</sup>For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.”

Well that sounds pretty pessimistic does it not, pretty bleak, pretty empty. A philosopher once said “an optimist is simply a pessimist without experience.”

And there is some truth to that, the experiences of life have a way of tempering our optimism, have a way of kind of bringing to bear the hard realities of life but it is not all bleak, there is a lot of hope so we are going to look at three things this morning, hopefully you can find hope in this passage.

1] First thing we are going to do is look at 3 words or phrases that we need to understand going into this study of the book of Ecclesiastes.

Who is the preacher?

What is meant by “under the sun” and

What is this word vanity?

2] Secondly after we have explained those terms we will look at the main thesis of this book. He sets it out for us twice here in this chapter, the main point that he is trying to get across to us and then he defends it in a kind of summary defence here in chapter 1.

3] Thirdly we’re going to look at the hope that comes when we understand our predicament and the answer to it.

So three things that we need to explain:

The preacher, the teacher, who in Hebrew is qoheleth. This Hebrew word is translated in different ways as the gatherer, the teacher, the preacher, one who gathers together information and one who proclaims it to a gathering, that is why the name Ecclesiastes from the Greek word ecclesia, which means the gathered assembly, is the title chosen for this book when they translated the Old Testament to Greek.

So we don’t know whether this is simply a gathering of information, facts, experience or whether this is referred to as a gathering of people it could be both, in any case the main character here is one who assembles, gathers

and teaches or preaches, dispenses this information, this knowledge, this wisdom, this experience.

He is also very competent. Now if a pessimist is an optimist who is simply a pessimist without experience then King Solomon qualifies as an experienced pessimist, he had experienced pretty much everything there was to experience.

He was the wisest man that ever lived it says in Scripture, he was given that wisdom by God supernaturally, he was also probably the wealthiest man that ever lived. he had riches beyond compare, there is just no way to grasp or fathom what it must have been like in terms of Solomon's wealth his holdings, his influence.

He was also the most famous man that ever lived, this Queen of Sheba that we hear about in Matthew chapter 12 came from a very long way away to see this man, his name had spread throughout all of the world, so he had wisdom, he had wealth, he had fame and he had women, 1000 of them, 700 wives, 300 girlfriends, what more could you want?

This man speaks from experience he is basically saying; Look I've had a wide range of experience which uniquely enables me to tell you what is the meaning of life. He says I know what I'm talking about.

Solomon the wisest and wealthiest man that ever lived.

Bill Gates and Donald Trump together can't even come up with the kind of wealth that we're talking about here.

Albert Einstein does not hold a candle to King Solomon.

I mean we're talking about a man who has experienced everything, experiences beyond the ordinary, beyond anything that any of us will ever experience.

This teacher, this preacher is not naive, he isn't ignorant, he is experienced in life and this is why he can speak to us and why we must listen.

In other words verses 1 and 2 and verses 12 and 16 where he also explains his experience, basically say this author, this preacher he knows what he's talking about, I know what I'm talking about, I've been there, I got the T-shirt, it's all there. So don't go arguing with the preacher, the preacher knows what he's talking about, not me but that one – Solomon.

Now some of us don't like it very well but we will get to that later.

What does it mean by under the sun?

This phrase comes up time and time again in this book, what is he talking about?

Well in this book we have to deal honestly with the current of state affairs in this world, affairs of life that are under the sun, that's the preacher's way of talking about a life that is lived only in the horizontal plane, only in terms of this world and what it offers, it does not look above to God, it doesn't look to the ultimate realities that are outside of time and space.

This life under the sun is a life lived apart from God.

Now to really understand what that looks like, what that is, we have to go back to Genesis chapter 3 back to the beginning, surprise, surprise! to understand why we have this life under the sun conundrum. While we have this problem we have to go back to Genesis where we see that God created us, He created this whole world, He created everything under the sun but He created it in such a way that it communicated with Him, so it was not just limited to under the sun, but God came down, God was with us.

That sounds like Emanuel, God came again, we will get to that at the end, that's the hope. But God came, God communicated with, God taught, God walked with, but there was a problem.

God's pinnacle of creation, humanity, decided that they wanted to do their own thing, they decided that God didn't really know best and so they took their own way, they tried to find their satisfaction in the wrong place and because of that rebellion they faced separation from God.

So God withdrew in a sense from this under the sun area and life became crooked, death entered the equation, frustration set in and everything was tangled into this crooked mess that explains the condition of the world we live in today, it explains the "under the sun" the preacher is talking about in Ecclesiastes.

In the middle of this God laid out a series of curses upon the man, upon the woman, upon the earth, upon the snake, and these curses are with us today. Very simply we were given a task to steward and rule over Creation and God was going to steward and rule over us, we rebelled, we became unru-

ly, so God kind of upset the fruit basket and now creation is unruly makes it hard for us to make a living so we sweat and suffer.

Now we find ourselves in the position of being frustrated with life, it wasn't meant to be this way this is brought on by the Fall, brought on by the curse.

So if you have ever been frustrated you are getting close to being biblical, this is part of the curse, this is part of the consequence it is what the Bible teaches we ought to be experiencing in terms of a consequence for sin but God did this, God pronounced this curse not because He hates us but because He loves us, God wanted us to see the consequences for sin, He wanted us to experience it, He wants us to be frustrated so that we turn to Him. You see if we didn't have any frustration, experience no pain, no suffering why would we ever want God? There would be no reason for Him.

Have any of you ever been frustrated, anybody here ever been frustrated? Come on now, someone.

You might not have chased after the wind but I can pretty much guarantee you that you have been frustrated.

You realise you get done paying the bills and you say, phew, wow, glad I got that done for another month! And you walk out to the mailbox to put the envelopes in the mailbox and you open the mailbox up and guess what? More bills!

That's the way life is, you mow the grass, you wake up the next morning the ugly little dandelion has done popped its head up. You can't win for losing.

Frustration.

God set it up this way and He set it up this way so we would cry out to him, hopefully this would lead us back towards him, back to his goodness, back to his provision and God made a promise right there in Genesis chapter 3 right after this curse He made a promise that indeed Jesus Christ will come, God will be with us once again and God will redeem and restore and connect all that has been disconnected and damaged.

One more thing we need to explain and that is the word vanity, the Hebrew word hebel.

Now this word is pretty important in this book, pretty important in the Bible, it appears 38 times in this book of Ecclesiastes and it is translated various ways, it is a hard word to translate.

It basically could be translated that life is a vapour, life is something that does not have much substance, it is fleeting, basically you start of in life sort of helpless, right, very helpless, you eat soft foods, you mumble to yourself, you wear diapers, you don't have any teeth, pretty much that is where you end up as well.

And in the middle between that beginning and that end in the middle there is a few years that pass by really quick and some of you know what I'm talking about and others of you will.

A vapour, fleeting, quick.

On the human plane of existence the preacher here, the teacher reduces everything to one grim concept expressed in this little Hebrew word this puny little word hebel, it is almost like the word even barely exists, it sounds less like a word and more like clearing your throat or something.

Now you can translate it many ways as I said but however you translate it, it is pretty terrible, it's a pretty terrible summary of what life is really like, some translations translate it meaningless, vanity, emptiness, futility, vapour, breath, phut. It's about what it is.

Maybe you should just translate it phut, maybe that's the best translation, that's life right.

So if you have ever done phut it must mean you're a Hebrew scholar or a biblical philosopher right, phut, vanity of vanities, all is vanity, life is just phut.

So what is this philosopher's thesis, what is the main point, what is the message that he wants us to get today?

Verse 2 and verse 14 have the thesis, vanity of vanities says the preacher, vanity of vanities all is vanity.

Verse 14, I have seen everything I have done under the sun and behold all is vanity and a striving after the wind.

So it is futile, it is meaningless under the sun, remember keep it in the right context here he is talking about life from an earthly perspective, life under the sun, this is a brutally realistic evaluation of life.

Now we don't like it very much but as I said before you've got to give him a hearing okay, he deserves to be heard, he has had a lot more experience

than us, he has a lot more wisdom, don't just discard it and say well it's that grouchy old man that lived a couple of thousand years ago, he didn't know what he was talking about, life really isn't that bad.

Well if you had 700 wives and 300 girlfriends it might be that bad.

But what he is basically saying is you go ahead, you try to live a life without God, you try to live without a God centred life and I'm going to tell you what your life is going to be like, phut, that's it! Vanity, meaningless, futility, fleeting!

Now there are so many things in life that seem to promise us more than that, our advertising world is full of them if only you had this or that then you will be happy, you will be fulfilled, life will be bearable.

Oh no, no, no, only for a very short length of time will it give you any satisfaction at all and that is what he says in this passage as well.

Many people, many of us we search for significance apart from God and if we honestly evaluate this if we reflect on our life we will realise that it is utterly meaningless, no endeavour, no quest, no possession can give you meaning, significance and purpose in life.

That is what the preacher, the author of Ecclesiastes, is telling us.

Oh yeah you say prove it to me, I don't quite buy it yet, prove to me!

So he does, he sets out to do that.

Here is the defence of his thesis.

Verse 3 he gives us a challenge, so okay show me, what gain, what profit does a man have in all his work which he does under the sun, so what good is it?

So you work hard, you stay up late, you toil long hours what have you got to show for it?

I mean really show for it.

Let me tell you a little story.

I used to do a lot of things, probably still do, but one of the things I used to do was I had a landscaping business and one of the places that I worked every week was a Porsche dealership, of course even then I was interested in cars so it should be no surprise that I enjoyed that, I enjoyed walking in and seeing a couple of hundred thousand dollar cars on the showroom floor but one day I was in the office, I was waiting on a cheque, and the proprie-

tor of the company was on the phone with a customer or a potential customer and I heard him discussing prices and options and the pricing and the options were kind of out of my league like the base price is \$80,000 and the option package was \$20,000 and he was trying to upsell you know to get the customer to buy the \$20,000 sports package, and it was evident the customer had a little bit of resistance and so he said, What's \$20,000, you can't take it with you when you go!  
No you can't, no you can't.

So what does a man gain by all his toil under the sun, what are you going to have to show for it when you are wearing that diaper and you don't have any teeth and all you are doing is mumbling to yourself, what is your money going to do for you then? Give you a few more hours of peace, a little bit of relief of pain, you're still going to die and when you die they are going to put you in that box and they are going to pretty you all up and they are going to dress you all up and then they are going to close the lid on that box and they are going to put you in the ground just like everybody else.

So, show me, show me what all this toil and hard work is good for.

No matter what we accumulate, no matter what we achieve at the end of our lives we will still die and we can't take it with us when we go. In birth and in death we are the same as every other human being that has ever lived, helpless and dependent.

This really is kind of an insult isn't it, I mean this really does kind of grate on us, it shouldn't be this way, we don't like it at all, but notice he is not done yet.

He is not done yet so he says okay that didn't work so well let's try something else, How about why is it that the earth continues to go in the endless cycles and circles, the sun keeps coming up every day and going down every night and the wind keeps blowing around there and the water keeps coming down the stream and going back up in the clouds and doing it all over again, but we come and we go.

How is it that God's pinnacle of creation lives such a transient fleeting life while the baser aspects of creation just continue on and on? What's up with that? Even the earth is insulting us.

What he says is this life isn't a forward linear progression, we are not getting anywhere.

But you say we are moving we're making progress we're moving right along progressing.

No you are not, you are driving around the cul-de-sac, you think you are moving, you think you are progressing but you are just going in circles, it is not the same as forward progressive motion in a linear manner.

Life is like a merry-go-round, people get on, people get off but all it does is go round in circles, you're not going anywhere.

Now don't mistake movement for progress.

We do rotate around the sun we are moving, the sun goes up, the sun goes down, whoo big surprise! This is the way life has always been, generations come, generations go but the earth remains for ever.

Every generation does this, every generation rises up and says okay we're going to fix this old world, we're going to make this a better place we're going to change everything, we're going to make it a better place.

And that's a lofty ambition, it's a worthy goal and they say every generation before us they were just all dumb they didn't have it quite figured out but we're going to do this, we're finally here, evolution has finally reached its pinnacle!

Yeah right!

Life isn't this way, life isn't forward progress and evolutionary movement, life is what it is, it's a rut, that's really what it is, your life is a rut, my life is a rut, next year, next week you're going to be sitting right here, right, most of you, some of you will be sitting other places, every week you do the same things over and over again, you go to work, you eat and sleep, you get up and do it all over again.

Why? We are boring people that's why, we're just people, it's the way God has made us.

Now so we see that there is no significance in working hard there is no ultimate eternal significance that we can achieve by life under the sun in terms of making money and achieving success and even the earth kind of insults us by kind of standing there just kind of permanent always doing the same thing and here we come and go but there is something that's even worse than that and he gets to it in verses 9 and 10.

Even our own desires can't ever be fulfilled, it's bad enough that the earth kind of does its thing and makes us feel inferior but it is even worse when we have desires of the heart we can't even meet them, we can't even get enough.

All things are wearisome, he says so bad that we're not even able to talk about it, the eye is not satisfied nor is the ear filled with hearing.

So we can't get enough, we can never have enough to satisfy us and furthermore when we do get something we thought we wanted we find out it wasn't so good after all, it's the law of diminishing returns, it gets less and less good.

We actually get sick of something that we once delighted in.

My dad tells a story, I never heard it before, but this past week at my uncle's funeral, after the funeral, my dad met one of his childhood friends at the funeral hadn't seen him for 50 years, one of the stories they shared was how my dad went the next door neighbour's house and they had this whole bag of cinnamon heart candy on Valentine's Day and my dad ate the whole bag and he went out in the yard and threw it up.

It was so good – for a while.

But that's what our desires do to us, it is so good but it sickens us, it exhausts us, it drains us, it cannot satisfy.

Everything in life becomes wearisome, apart from God we cannot even fulfil our own desires.

So see you really aren't getting anywhere, you really aren't getting anywhere.

Ultimate meaning is not found in progress, it is not found in inventions, it is not found in accomplishments, it is not found in the next best greatest thing because there really isn't any new thing under the sun he says, it is just recycled, regurgitated, it's the same old ideas packaged a different way they won't even remember you after you are gone.

So what should we conclude from all of this?

Everything on earth is vanity like chasing after the wind.

Basically the preacher is saying, See I told you so; it is all vanity under the sun.

But why is it this way?

Now this preacher he wasn't content to just recognise that truth, he wanted to discover really why it is this way, to figure it out, it says in verse 13, I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under the sun. I wanted to make sure that this really is the way it is.

And what did he find out? He found out the same thing that he started with, vanity of vanities all is vanity it's like chasing after the wind you never get it, it will always be just out of reach, just almost but not quite kind of like that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, you go where you thought it was and now it has moved over there.

My dad used to have this thing on the wall that says something about "every time I think I'm going to connect the dots somebody moves the dots."

It's just that way, that's the way life is and the reason that it is that way he says here verse 15, the reason life is this way is because it's crooked, it's crooked, that's one of the ways he talks about sin, a metaphor for sin crookedness.

So life is tremendously frustrating, life is twisted can't be straightened out, you and I cannot fix ourselves, we cannot fix our world.

Now people don't know that, a lot of people don't know that, they think they can fix it that they can get all this under control, well they can't even keep the car working for a year. I know because I fix them but then they break again, but that's the way life is, it is cursed, it keeps breaking, keeps falling apart.

It doesn't matter what it is we can't fix it we can't straighten it out and the reason is because we're crooked, we need to get straightened out first.

The other problem is that what is lacking cannot be counted, that means we do not have all the pieces.

How many of you like jigsaw puzzles, anybody here like jigsaw puzzles, God bless you! It's not one of my things okay, one of those frustrations in life, but let's say you enjoy jigsaw puzzles and let's say half the pieces were missing, they were gone, not there, you have this nice pretty picture of a ship sailing on the sea that's what it's supposed to look like when it's done but you don't have all the pieces, all you have is a bunch of blue water and white clouds and a few pieces of brown ship but they don't go together.

Is that going to be frustrating?

You probably don't have any edge pieces, those are the ones I like, how are you going to put the puzzle together if you don't have all the pieces? And the preacher here says what is lacking cannot be counted; if you don't have all the pieces you cannot put the puzzle together.

That's our problem, we're crooked and we don't have all the information, God does, God is the one that is straight, God is the one that has the information, God is the one that has the power to change things.

Now there is a big difference between information and transformation.

You see Solomon in his great wisdom had information, he had knowledge that even he in all his great wisdom and great knowledge, and it was great, he still couldn't fix it and you understood that and that's why he wrote Ecclesiastes because he is saying even the best earthly wisdom, even the best knowledge, even the most extravagant folly and self-indulgence will never satisfy in the end, will never be enough.

That is the message of Ecclesiastes and the sooner you get that message, the sooner you deal with that, the better off you are.

Now interesting enough there is a passage in the New Testament that uses language very similar to Ecclesiastes chapter 1 and that passage is first Corinthians 15. Now I'm not going to read the whole passage I'm going to pick a few verses here and there just to help you get some of the parallels.

[1 Corinthians 15:1-2](#), Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, <sup>2</sup> and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

Vanity.

[1 Corinthians 15:10-11](#), But by the grace of God I am what I am,.....

Not because of what I have done, not because of my achievements, not because of my wealth, not because of my knowledge and wisdom but by the grace of God I am what I am.....

"...and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me."<sup>11</sup> Whether then it was I or they, it doesn't really matter, so we preach it so you believed.

1 [Corinthians 15:14](#), And if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

1 [Corinthians 15:17-19](#), And if Christ has not been raised your faith is futile, there's another word, and you are still in your sins.<sup>18</sup> Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.<sup>19</sup> If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. Most miserable!

Without God, without the resurrection power of Christ we are miserable, we are to be pitied, it is all vanity; it is all vexation of spirit without God without Christ. So where is the hope in this?

And what is interesting is that some 900 years after Solomon along comes Jesus Christ and here is the good news:

Under the sun – no hope everything is vanity, everything is faint, it is futile, it is meaningless but who comes along? God comes.

God who is above the earth comes to the earth in the person of Jesus Christ.

He comes into this creation into this crooked frustrating fallen bent world and He comes into it and it is so interesting because at Jesus birth, or soon after his birth, some of the people who came to worship him were from the east, what were they called? Yes, Wise men.

What were they looking for? The same thing Solomon was looking for right, they were looking for the meaning of life, what is the point, where is the wisdom? And they end up on their knees worshipping the baby, Jesus Christ.

And everybody, everybody who honestly pursues wisdom, godly wisdom, will end up there at the same place on their knees bowing to Jesus Christ.

He is the source of all that is true, all that is good; all that is wise ultimately. And Jesus lives his life and He tells us in [Matthew 12:42](#) one who is greater than Solomon is here.

And here is the point, Why is Jesus Christ greater than Solomon? Not because He was more wealthy in terms of earthly possessions, not because he was more wise in terms of earthly wisdom, not because he had more wives, which wasn't very wise.

Why was Jesus greater than Solomon?

Because Jesus had the power to change, Jesus had what Solomon didn't have, Solomon knew what the problem was, he observed it, it tells us accurately how it is but he had no power to change it.

Jesus Christ can, Jesus Christ will, Jesus Christ did.

Solomon could not cleanse the stain of sin, Solomon could not forgive sin, Solomon knew that people were crooked and lacking but he could not straighten them out.

Jesus was greater than Solomon because Jesus was God; Jesus was above the sun not below it.

So life has no purpose, life has no goal unless the Creator God and the creation are reconciled.

In every philosophy, in every religion, in every morality, in every movement there is an attempt to bridge this gap between God and man but there is no hope of us rising above the earth and so God came down, God came down to be with us, God came down to die for us, to rise for us.

The simple truth is this that if we leave God out of our lives if we live our lives with no regard to God and his plan, his wisdom, it is like chasing the wind, it is like beating the air, no hope.

But there's another place in the Bible where mention is made of wind, John chapter 3, Jesus was talking with Nicodemus and He said the wind blows wherever it pleases, you hear its sound but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going, so it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

So instead of chasing the wind God wants us to be filled with the wind but we don't get filled with the wind by chasing the wind, at least the earthly satisfaction, we can fill it with the wind when God works in our hearts when God brings redemption and God's Holy Spirit lives within us when we surrender to Him then we are filled with the wind instead of chasing the wind.

So I invite you this morning to that God who created, that God who longs to restore and redeem, that God who makes sense of everything, the God who can fix everything.

I invite you to trust him, to depend on him. I invite you to turn away from that which will distract you, that which will take your eyes off of God, for all that stuff is vanity, it is all fleeting, it is very temporary but if you

trust God, if you do like Jesus says, seek first the kingdom of God and all of these things will be added to you, [Matthew 6:33](#).

You have got to set the priorities right.

It is not that all of this stuff in earth is of no value to us, it is not that there can be no joy in the everyday experiences of life, no, quite to the contrary and we will see that as we go through Ecclesiastes.

What he says is enjoy life, make the most of it but we can only do that when we recognise who is the author of life, when we recognise where real meaning and real purpose come from and so turn from your selfish ambition turn to Christ, turn from yourself turn to God then you will find satisfaction, you will find peace, you will find joy even in the hard things of life.



## Living Water

*Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again." [John 4:13](#)*

*"For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light." [Psalm 36:9](#).*

Without water, life could not exist. Every living thing requires water and consists mostly of water. The adult human body is two-thirds water, and every day our body needs to replace two and one-half quarts of liquid. Is it any wonder that we thirst for water? Yet no matter how much we drink, we soon thirst again.

But what about the thirst of the soul? Is there water that will satisfy the thirst of the hard and parched soil of a sin-burdened heart so that it will not thirst again? Yes! There is a Fountain flowing, full and free, for everyone. Jesus is that fountain. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Isaiah 55:1).

As we study God's Word, may we drink deeply from its life-giving flow. It will satisfy our thirsty souls.

The setting of John 4:13 is the country of Samaria. The Jews felt contempt for the Samaritans because they did not have the Hebrew standard of religious and racial purity.

The road from Judea to Galilee passed through Samaria. This journey took about three days. Jesus was tired and with His disciples had stopped at Jacob's well for a rest. The disciples had left Him there to go buy food in the city of Sychar. The disciples' absence at this time could have been providentially planned.

A woman of Samaria came to the well with her water pot, no doubt thinking it was just another mundane trip for her daily need of water. But at the well she met a man—one like she had never met before. First, He asked for water, and then He told her He had water to give and that she would never need to thirst again.

One can imagine that this particular day in Samaria was warm, and the need for water was pronounced. As the woman heard about water that would cause her to never thirst again, it seemed very inviting! If it was true, this was the water she wanted.

Did she recognize the thirst within her soul? Her mind was yet thinking of literal water. Jesus began to address the condition of her heart by asking her to call her husband, and then revealing to her that He knew she had had five husbands. She recognized His authority, perceiving Him to be a prophet. Tenderly, Jesus exposed her ignorance and faulty worship of God. Surely, by this time, there was a conviction of sin and a better understanding of the thirst within her soul.

Can we relate with her in our own lives? How would we have known our true condition, if we had not met Jesus? Where would we be had He not come to visit us at the well or cistern of self and pride from which we were drinking?

Jesus began to teach the vital truths of the gospel to the Samaritan woman. The time had come that His kingdom would be within the true worshipers, and that, like a well of water, it would spring up into everlasting life. Geography and race would not matter anymore. The Father, who is a Spirit, would be worshiped in spirit and in truth. The Holy Ghost, like a river of living water, would reside within man (John 7:38-39)

The spirit comprises the essence of man. Our will and affection are included in it. It is here that our thirst is truly felt and where the living water satisfies. This is the inward and hidden part where God desires truth to be Psalm 51:6. It is from this altar that we truly worship God. "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly" Proverbs 20:27. "He that believeth on me ... out of his belly shall flow riv-

ers of living water" John 7:38. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" Romans 8:16.

As the believer seeks to worship God in truth, he comes to understand that Jesus is the truth (John 14:6). "Thy word is truth" John 17:17. How can God be rightly worshiped in untruth? The true worshiper may not be fully enlightened or understand all truth, but he cannot knowingly live in untruth or that which is not scriptural. But as Truth is loved and enthroned within, he will follow, or obey, as it unfolds to him, and his thirst is ever quenched.

It is so encouraging and comforting to know that our heavenly Father seeks for those who will worship Him this way. Can we not sense His appeals? He is seeking still today.

As the woman of Samaria realized that this man was the Christ, the Savior of the world, it appears she forgot her thirst and need of literal water because she left her water pot, and hastily went back into the city to tell others what she had learned and found.

May we leave, as it were, the water pots at our own broken cistern and drink freely the life-giving water of Emmanuel's well. Let us, too, with haste, tell others what the Lord has done for us and how the thirst within us is satisfied.

God created man in His own image and after His own likeness. Man, through the subtlety of Satan, sinned and fell from this creation. Though our nature became corrupted, God did not give us up to Satan. God placed enmity between man and Satan. Even though the fall of man was complete, the soul of man still longed for God, his Creator. Every person has this longing or thirst, even though he may not always recognize or understand it. We can forever be grateful for this thirst. How could we ever desire to drink of the Living Water if we would never thirst?

Do we understand the thirst within us? When we think of all the sin that is committed in the world, especially the results of it, why would anyone want to "drink" of it? Consider how sin deceives, defiles, and destroys. But, when one is in the flesh, and is unconverted or not in Christ, the thirst for sin works to bring forth fruit that is unto death (Romans 7:5). And the more one drinks of sin, the more he thirsts! But sin, when it is finished, brings death and separation from God (James 1:13-15). Oh, how we hate the fruit of sin; it makes one look so foolish. Yet we are not willing to let the Cross slay self because we love it too much. This is the work of the law

of sin and death in the lives of those who choose the way of sin.

Only God can satisfy our thirst. This is how He made us. We can never have true purpose and fulfillment in life until we have His peace within. Here alone is our thirst quenched. Can you imagine that God would design it any other way? Would He want the crown of His creation to be satisfied outside of His divine will? No! By faith, through the power of the cross of Christ, the flesh can be put to death, thus mortifying its thirst. And our soul's thirst for God is ever satisfied as we live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). Read Song of Solomon 3:1-4. "I found Him whom my soul loveth." What a beautiful life to live! This is the abundant life that Jesus came to give (John 10:10). And as we hunger and thirst for righteousness, we will be filled (Matthew 5:6).

The faithfulness of Christian youth is a great source of encouragement to the church and a ringing testimony to the communities where they live. The world can readily see the effects of the living water in the life of one who is drinking of it. Devotion to God will bring victory in this present world and will certainly be rewarded in the judgment to come.

Jesus warned that in the last days there would be deception. To be deceived, we must first resist the truth. It is our flesh that resists the will of God, always seeking a way for itself. Satan tempts us to turn from the fountain of living water to another source that somehow seems better to us at the time. Let us often encourage each other that we may be true to the end.

May we all live so we can be a channel for this source of living water. We live in a society that is in a great spiritual drought. Souls are crying and men are dying Christless filling graves. What is the worth of a soul? There is a thirst in every precious soul, but "how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" (Romans 10:14-15). It is our responsibility to tell them how their thirst can always be quenched.

Every person in this world needs water to live. So when the thought of water comes to our mind, we immediately understand it. Surely, it is not a coincidence that the Bible often uses water to illustrate important spiritual and eternal truths. May we in our own daily use of literal water remember the spiritual water of which it is a symbol. Following are a few thoughts to consider:

As we daily drink to satisfy our bodily thirst, are we conscious of the

need to satisfy our soul's thirst by prayer, studying God's Word, family devotions, etc.?

As we wash to keep our bodies clean, is the washing of water by the Word cleansing and sanctifying our spiritual lives (Ephesians 5:26)?

Do our eyes frequently fill with tears because of the burden for the lost and thirsty souls of men? Read Psalm 126:5-6. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

Are we sharing the love of God with friends and strangers by giving them a cup of cold water (Matthew 10:42)?

What does it mean for us today to forsake the fountain of living waters and hew out cisterns (Jeremiah 2:13).



### **The Bread of Life**

John 6:35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

1 Corinthians 10:17 Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

If man is to live, he must partake of that which sustains life. This is true both spiritually and physically. Let us now focus briefly on that which sustains spiritual life. May we, with the help of the Holy Spirit, understand the importance of the bread of life.

Shortly after Jesus had miraculously fed five thousand people (John 6:1-14) the multitude wanted to take Him by force and make Him their king. Under their various oppressors, the Jews often suffered from a lack of food. Their thinking was that a man who had the ability to feed five thousand people with five barley loaves and two small fish was surely a man who could help them in their time of need.

Jesus, knowing their thoughts, left the multitude and went to the mountains alone. His disciples also departed and went to the sea. There they boarded a boat and began rowing along the coast. That night a storm arose. As they were rowing hard for land, Jesus came to them, walking on the water. The disciples were afraid until Jesus spoke to them, saying, "It is I; be not afraid" (John 6:20). They gladly received Jesus into the boat, and soon they

were safely at land.

In the morning the multitude sought Jesus. Upon finding Him they asked Him why He had left. Jesus told them that they sought Him because of the loaves and the fish. He told them not to strive for that bread which so soon becomes stale, but for that bread which would give them everlasting life! He told them that the Son of Man would give them of this living bread. The people then asked what they needed to do that they might receive this bread. Jesus told them to believe that He was the bread God had sent. They retorted, "What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe?" The people minimized the fact that Jesus had just fed the five thousand. They told him how Moses had fed their fathers manna in the wilderness. Jesus kindly told them that it was not Moses who had given their fathers manna, but His Father. The true bread, He told them, was He whom God sent to give His life for the salvation of the world. They then asked to be given of this bread.

Because of their unbelief, it was difficult for most of the people of that day to really understand Jesus' words. Jesus explained to them that He was the bread of life and that as they would believe this, God would send His Spirit to dwell in their hearts. Then they would truly understand that He was that living bread and fountain of spiritual life.

The people of Jesus' day asked that He would give them of the living bread. Jesus' invitation to His listeners was to come and partake of Him. This invitation will stand until the end of time.

We today have a great advantage compared to those who lived under the Mosaic law. Today mercy is available to every living soul. As the soul begins to understand its need of a Saviour, God's mercy shows to us how unworthy and helpless we are without Him. We see our need of God, and upon true repentance and confession of our sins we are born again and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is truly a miracle of God. The heart is changed and the cry of the soul is quieted because the Holy Spirit dwells there. As we continue to crucify the flesh and obey the Holy Spirit, the living bread occupies our hearts, filling the void only He can fill.

There are those people who become unwilling to submit to God. As they allow self to rule in their hearts, the Holy Spirit must leave. The soul that once knew of the living bread can search the world over but will never find the fulfillment it knew when it was submitted to God.

We also need to understand the sacrifice Jesus made to make this living

bread available to us. Jesus came to this world to give His life as a supreme sacrifice. He paid the debt of sin for all mankind from the beginning of time until eternity. In this sense, our sins have been "prepaid." This does not mean that all sin is forgiven, but only that which is repented of with a godly sorrow.

Satan would like to cause us to think that we need to labor to earn the blessing of the Lord. Let us not be deceived. Only that which comes from God can sustain our souls. Our part, as children of God, is to have faith, trust God's promises, and be obedient to Him and His Holy Spirit. As we believe Christ's words and live them in simple, trusting faith, He, the living bread, is living in us. The works that our lives produce are a result of Jesus' influence and power in us. Therefore we do not glory in ourselves but in Christ.

In the bosom of every person is a never-dying soul. The soul is in God's grace until God awakens and calls it. This call requires man to make a choice between God and self. Many times this choice is made by default. Because of unwillingness or a lack of understanding, some people make no effort to choose the right way, and thus they turn Christ away. This leaves the soul with a desire that man seeks to fill. To this hunger the devil offers many enticements that promise pleasure but that leave only a deeper discontentment. There is no time in life when we can survive without the bread of life to sustain our souls. In Ephesians 6:11-17 we read about the armor that the Christian is given to wear in the battles of life. May we, as servants of the eternal God, seek daily strength from that bread of life so we can use this armor to its full advantage. This daily sustenance will make the difference between being overcome of evil, or finding victory over self and sin.



*If we do the will of God eternal life is ours*

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