

22.10.23 pm

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Date: 22 October 2023

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good evening, and a warm welcome to the service tonight. We're going to begin this time of worship and we'll sing to God's praise from Psalm 131.

Psalm 131, and we'll sing the whole of this short psalm. There's just three stanzas, and we'll sing it in Gaelic. I'll read it in English. My heart not haughty is, O Lord, mine eyes not lofty be, nor do I deal in matters great or things too high for me.

I surely have myself behaved with quiet spirit and mild. As child and mother weaned, my soul is like a weaned child. Upon the Lord let us, let all the hope of Israel rely, even from the time that present is unto eternity.

We remain seated to sing this psalm in Gaelic to God's praise. And after that, Donald McSween will lead us in prayer in Gaelic, please. A warm welcome. O- application of child Of Jamey-Erich Or Faith In a portion of your Lord, as a soul, Thank you.

Thank you.

[2 : 33] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[5 : 03] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[7 : 33] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[10 : 03] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[12 : 33] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[15 : 03] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[17 : 33] Thank you.

Thank you.

Amen.

Amen.

Thank you.

[20 : 03] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

If you could turn with me.

[22 : 33] And we find the And also, Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

The Lord's my shepherd.

[26 : 03] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[28 : 33] And we come back.

Heavenly Father.

And we see the God of God.

Thank you.

And we're in the Lord.

[31 : 03] that you would help us.

We pray.

And we pray that the Holy Spirit.

And we pray, as people turn in the Lord, we pray, grant us the gift of the gift of the gift of the gift of the gift, we pray, and we pray, and we pray.

had the last few days but there was somebody who I won't mention the person they came out of ADs and they had a bag of shopping in one hand and they were holding a receipt in the other hand and they were checking this receipt obviously just checking and remarking on how much good value they'd received as they they'd purchased in the shop and as they were looking Augusta Wynne took the receipt and it blew it out of their hand and it kind of went on to the pavement so the person they they sort of put the shopping bag down for a second they bent down to pick up the receipt and just before they got it the wind caught it and took it across the road so they they ran across the road and they were just about on the bit of paper and as they bent down it went again so he had one more try and was just about at the thing and it was blown out of reach and he shook his head he shook his head and he he just kind of walked off and as he looked around he probably noticed it was a few of us that had seen what he was up to and probably thought he looked foolish as he chased after the wind and as I saw that sight my mind went to the book of Ecclesiastes and it reminded me of Solomon and this whole project this whole exploration that he's taking us through as he he looks for the meaning of life and he explores many things looking for purpose looking for what's truly worthwhile and so Solomon the the teacher uh he he tries study and if you're glancing back over the the opening chapters we we can see from verse 12 to verse 18 Solomon he he gives himself uh to study and he he tries great learning to see if that will give him the answers and it doesn't give him the answers he's left with more questions than he has answers and then uh from chapter 2 verses 1 to 3 uh we see Solomon he he tries pleasure he dives deep into the world of entertainment but uh he's left unsatisfied and then verses 4 through to verse 11 uh he applies himself to work he throws himself into a uh a whole pursuit of work and industry and that gives him he concludes uh some degree of satisfaction uh that's verse 10 but it's short-lived and it's not lasting it's not enough and so he concludes in verse 11 that all these things that he's been exploring that he's been giving himself to that he's been looking for answers within he says they're all meaningless everything verse 11 was meaningless says Solomon a chasing after the wind nothing was gained under the sun and yet as we read on in Ecclesiastes Solomon keeps on chasing the wind he keeps on searching he keeps on looking like like so many still do this is a this is a

commentary this this book on on our own age on our own day on our own uh culture so many people looking at so many places the old Puritans would would talk about uh drinking from so many broken systems and still left thirsty searching for meaning uh with no answers and so we're just going to carry on now uh from verse 12 uh through to the end of the chapter and i want to to look at um the observations that

[38 : 40] that Solomon comes to in the next section and i want to think about how these observations that Solomon uh has on his day and his age and his culture how they they resonate for us and they lead us on to the gospel i think if we we stick simply to the text here and we think about uh the the dark conclusions that Solomon comes to and we don't think beyond Ecclesiastes it's a pretty grim study but this is a book that shows us the futility of life under the sun of life apart from God and it's a book that drives us on to look to the Lord and think about all the the fullness that is found in him so so three observations in the time that we have uh the first point the first observation is everyone dies everyone dies everyone dies but Jesus brings life that's where this is pointing everyone dies that's a fact but Jesus is the one who who brings life life and fullness in this world and life eternal verse 12 then i turned my thoughts to consider wisdom and also madness and folly what more what more can the king's successor do than what has already been done so Solomon at this point he's thinking about all the things that he's done and he's actually beginning to think about what comes beyond his life he's starting to think about his successor and who will follow him and in this worldly terms the the teacher uh the writer Solomon he has it all and he's done it all he has the first class honors degree he has the phd certificate he's excelled in education far above anybody else and he's tasted every pleasure every shiny thing that the world could offer he could afford it he grasped it he he held it he had it nothing that money could buy was beyond his reach such was his riches and because he was the king no one that he wanted uh no person that he looked upon uh with desire would be kept from him because of the power that he had in his position he has success in business he has money he has property he has riches he has status he has power and so he concludes quite reasonably that there's nothing else to get he's done it all and yet unlike so many people who who reach the top of their game uh the teacher Solomon he still has his mind he still has a a sharp perspective he he has wisdom god has given him wisdom even in the midst of all this and he says in verse 13 as we just step through this i saw that wisdom is better than folly just as light is better than darkness the wise man has eyes in his head while the fool walks in the darkness so Solomon he he seems thankful for wisdom he seems thankful that he is some understanding and some vision he's some grasp on reality stuff but then he realizes as he mulls this over that even that even the wisdom that he retains it has very limited value he says in verse 14 i came to realize that the same fate overtakes them both he's talking about the wise man and the fool then i thought in my heart verse 15

the fate of the fool will overtake me also what then do i gain by being wise i said in my heart this too is meaningless for the wise man like the fool will not be long remembered in days to come both will be forgotten now remember this was written probably 3,000 years ago but nothing changes when it comes to this worldly under the sun desires and ambitions people want to make their mark on the world people want to be remembered people want to feel like we have significance beyond the short span of our own lives people want to be celebrated people want to be loved but the truth is our memories are short even the people that are most celebrated they're just remembered for a short time and celebrity status is such a a fleeting such a a fragile thing i was watching a documentary in the in the week off on david beckham and as we're guided along through his career there's one minute and in the documentary his career is on the rise and he's playing for england and he's there's these incredible scenes of of adulation he's loved beyond words and then on this particular evening in the world cup in 1998 against argentina the game was starting to go against them he lashes out with a kick he's sent off englander knocked out and this guy who's so loved in a split second goes from being loved to hated and hated with huge venom and that's just the way of the world it's just the way things are under the sun and

Solomon the teacher he has enough wisdom to realize that this is the way of things in this world this is the way of things under the sun the wise man and the fool they both die like the fool verse 16 the wise man too must die and the famous no matter how famous and powerful and celebrated they are they will very quickly be forgotten and so Solomon says in verse 17 so I hated life he thinks of all these things then he says so I hated life because the work that is done under the sun remember that phrase means the work that is done in this world locking God out the work that is done under

the sun was grievous to me all this all of it is meaningless a chasing after the wind so Solomon as he sees death coming as he thinks about what is going to come after his life he basically says what's the point what's the point in any of this and when we think about our culture when we think about how we can apply this to ourselves the taboo subject of our day the thing that nobody wants to talk about is death nobody wants to talk about death there's all kinds of euphemisms that we use for death because we don't like to talk about death and yet we're reminded here everyone dies and if that's where it all ends everything is meaningless if all we have is this short time and we die what's the point it's vanity it's meaningless our lives are just like a chasing after the wind and that's where Solomon is taking us as he thinks about a life without God he says it's all meaningless but the message of the Bible as we fast forward from

Ecclesiastes and on into the wider sphere of the Bible the message of the Bible is that death is not where it all ends if death is where it all ends there's no point in life it's futile it's meaningless but as we open our Bibles and as we read our Bibles we learn that with the fall think about Genesis 3 the curse of sin came in and with sin came death but in that same chapter in verse 15 of Genesis chapter 3 there was a promise given there was a promise given of one who would come into this world to remove the curse and to remove death to crush death there was the promise given of one who would come and bring life to all who believe in him so who is the teacher here slightly indirectly cryptically pointing us towards who is the death crusher who is the life giver who are we looking for here who can bring meaning beyond this short life who can give us hope beyond these few years who can give us purpose for these few years well the answer is Jesus so in the darkness of the thoughts of the teacher in Ecclesiastes as we think about the whole story of the Bible the light of Christ is beginning to break through everyone dies but Jesus brings life are you trusting in Jesus second point everything is left behind but Jesus is forever everything in this world is left behind but Jesus is forever verse 18

I hated all the things I toiled for under the sun because I must leave them to the one who comes after me and who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun this too is meaningless remember when we moved to Loch Cairn when Mary and I and the girls moved to Loch Cairn the manse that we moved into it was owned by a couple it hadn't been used as a manse before it was owned by a couple who were retired and their huge enthusiasm was gardening and so they spent all their time in this garden and there was plants and there was shrubs and there was a rockery and there was pampas grass and there was flowers and there was acres of grass that needed strimming and so the garden required a lot of work and somebody very kindly said to

[51 : 10] Mary one day just as she was taking one kid in one hand and one in the other they came and they said you've moved into the manse yes yes we moved in there it's a lovely garden there yes it is a lovely garden just to let you know the village expects you to keep this garden up to the same standard so we tried and I think we did a sort of decent kind of a job but it took a lot of time you know to keep up with all that was required in this garden you know you've got a child in one hand and a strimmer in the other and I remember after we left Loch Caron the first time I went back I remember having conducted a funeral I think and then heading back a few hours later and I passed the house I passed the garden and I glanced up the drive just to see what it looked like because I knew new people had moved in and you couldn't see the house you could barely see the drive and it was just like the

Amazon rainforest there was trees there was shrubs it was just garden chaos and I remember thinking look at the state of this place and think about all the hours I spent in this garden what a waste of time and Solomon is looking at his whole kingdom here he's looking at everything that he worked for and he knew he would leave it behind but he's asking the question to whom am I going to leave it behind to and will they make a decent job of it and if they don't make a decent job of it after I am gone what's the point in me doing any of this now and if we fast forward a little it turned out that Solomon he left everything in terms of his kingdom to his eldest son Rehoboam and he lost five six of his kingdom it was all ruined his fears were reasonable fears but you know everything in this world whether it's a beautiful garden or a successful business or an amazing house or a rare record collection or a wardrobe full of designer clothes and rare trainers we leave it all behind and often those who are left with the things that we cherished they don't want them they don't care for them you just throw them on the skip so why bother with all the hard toil says the teacher it's all meaningless so my heart verse 20 says the teacher began to despair over all my toilsome labor

under the sun for a man may do his work with wisdom knowledge and skill and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it this too is meaningless and a great misfortune what does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun all his days his work is pain and grief even at night his mind does not rest this too is meaningless and we can enter into this all of us have found ourselves waking up at three in the morning thinking about work thinking about situations thinking about things that seem so important to us but in the grand scheme of things are not all that significant there's a gritty realism to this it puts into perspective the things that we give our time and our talents and our resources to because the truth is we don't get to take anything under the sun we don't get to take anything under the sun with us when we die all the things that we possess all the things we have title to all the things that we accumulate none of it we take with us and when we think about the reality and the truth of that it should cause us to consider carefully how we spend our time and our talents and our money while we live there's never been a person on his deathbed who said

I wish I'd spent more time in the office I wish I'd bought more stuff to fill my cupboards with because none of it can be taken so what can we take from time into eternity with us or put it another way who is with us in death and who is with us on the other side of death who is the teacher longing for and looking for here who is the answer to all the bleakness in the teacher's musings in these verses well Jesus is the answer this is whom we are being led towards think about Psalm 23 and verse 4 yea though I walk in death's dark veil yet I will fear no ill for thou art with me see without

Jesus death separates us from everyone but when we have Jesus when we're able to say the Lord is my shepherd he is with us forever and his love unites us with all his people forever so death is not the end when we have Jesus it's actually the gateway to the place where there are no more goodbyes no more separations things and in terms of the things that we toil for in this world what we do for self what we do with a kind of sinful seedy sinful kind of greedy drive we want things for ourselves all that will be left behind all the treasures that we want to store up in this world will be left behind in this world to perish but all that we do not for self but for

Jesus sake all we do with a desire to honor him to lift him up that's like an investment that never fails but just grows it's like an investment that can be enjoyed forever when we pass through death into life that's everlasting the new heavens the new earth the apostle Paul knew all about that he was a Pharisee he had money he had reputation he had qualifications he had everything this world could offer as a young Pharisee and then Jesus met him on the Damascus road and Saul became Paul as he trusted Christ and as he trusted Christ he threw everything at this world called riches he threw it away and on his death bed what did

[59 : 36] Paul say did he say I can't believe what I did what a waste of my life all the things I could have had all the things that I lost no this is what he said in his death bed he said in 2 Timothy 4 verse 6 Paul knew everything everything in terms of this world riches it has to be left behind he left it behind years ago but Jesus and all that he did for Jesus sake it's forever what did Jesus say in Matthew 6 he said to us in Matthew 6 verse 19 do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moths and vermin destroy and where thieves break in and steal but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moths and vermin do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal for where your treasure is there your heart will be also so in

Ecclesiastes the teacher he's he's showing us the dark side he's showing us the the meaning lessness of life if all we work for are the things we will leave behind but as we read on in the Bible we see the meaning fullness of life I just can't get that word out properly but you know what I'm trying to say we see the wisdom in the greater sphere of the Bible we see the wisdom of trust in Jesus we see the purpose we see the eternal worth of spending our lives working for things that will bring glory to him and will bring actually an eternal reward to us time's gone so I'll finish with a verse and we'll come to the last point maybe on

Wednesday evening 1st Corinthians 15 58 always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord for you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain so everyone dies but Jesus brings life everything is left behind but Jesus and what we do for Jesus is forever and the final thing is nothing satisfies without Jesus but we'll spend a lot of time thinking about that in these last two verses on Wednesday evening and we'll pray Lord we thank you for your word and we thank you that you have shown us the meaning of life and we thank you that the meaning of life our chief end our purpose is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever we see so many people in this world who are living out the life of the teacher and ecclesiastes who are looking this way and that way and

exploring so many different avenues and finding that there's nothing down there that satisfies we know

Lord that sometimes we are in these places ourselves as we regress and as we go from light into darkness as we pursue satisfaction in things that don't satisfy we thank you that satisfaction and purpose and joy is found only in walking with and trusting in and in serving the Lord Jesus so help us we pray to be trusting in him to be serving him and to be knowing the joy that there is as disciples of Christ and we pay this in Jesus name Amen we sing to conclude mission praise 1217 we never quite got as far as this in terms of our thoughts in the sermon but we find life the life that we thirst for the life that we want the life that we were designed for is not something we earn it's something that's given to us it's a gift

Jesus has paid for it and we see that payment on the cross so 1217 in mission praise oh to see the dawn of the darkest day we sing about the power of the cross oh to see the dawn of the darkest day Christ Christ on the road to Calvary beaten dioff

[65 : 53] To the shame, or the wrath, peace and forgiven at the cross.

O Jesus, we remain, waiting on your face, bearing the awesome weight of sin.

Every bitter thought, every belief, counting your blusting ground.

This the power of the cross, Christ began sin for us.

To the grave, or the wrath, peace and forgiven at the cross.

[67 : 03] Thou the day of peace, thou the ground beneath. Quakes as its neighbor bouts its head.

Curtain door in two. Dead or rich divine. Finish the witchy cry.

Christ began sin for us.

Took the grave, or the wrath, peace and forgiven at the cross.

Hold you see my name, written in the wounds. For through your suffering, I am free.

[68 : 11] Take this rush to death. Life is mine to live. One through your selfless love.

This the Lamb of the cross. The Son of God, stay for us.

What a love. What a cost we stand for. Give it back to God.

Amen. Amen. Amen. And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.

Amen. Amen. lovingly. Amen.

[69 : 16] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.