

Jason Upchurch - Ecclesiastes 1:5-11 - Life Without Jesus Is Meaningless - Part 2

I want to read you parts of a song summarizing this opening section. I think most of you will know it right away.

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only what? Sky

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion, too

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one.

Who wrote the song? John Lennon. It's the song called Imagine. Which is fitting because it's completely a fairy tale. You have to imagine no God, no religion, no countries because those things all actually exist.

But that gentle, quiet song is the atheist anthem. It's the anthem of life under the sun. Life without God. That's what life under the sun means: it's a godless perspective.

Ironically, Lennon thought rejection of God leads to peace and simplicity harmony when in reality it leads to suffering and misery and mass death.

If you add up all the people killed under atheistic regimes in the last 200 years it comes to something like 100 million people. China: 65 million, Soviet Union: 20 million, Cambodia: 2 million, North Korea: 2 million, other smaller countries account for 2 million.

That's just direct killing. That doesn't include the fallout from the godless policies that affect work conditions, food conditions, living conditions. When you add up direct killings with the policies of atheistic regimes many people estimate easily 200 million people have died in the last 200 years because of atheistic regimes. There's no godless utopia, it's only death and famine and tragedy. Because life without God to direct us is meaningless.

I entitled last week's sermon and this week's sermon - Life Without Jesus is Meaningless because it is and we see this most clearly here in Ecclesiastes.

Big Picture: Life Without Jesus Is Meaningless. And it is. If you don't follow Jesus and have a godless perspective, the only meaning you have is because you're borrowing it from the Christian worldview. If you have a religious perspective - Islam, Mormon, whatever - even though you might think you have meaning, you're meaning is based on lies not the truth of the gospel. Only in Jesus Christ is there true meaning.

Solomon is addressing us as the teacher or preacher to help us understand how to live life and here he is telling us what life is like without God.

We saw a couple keys last week to understanding the book. The first key was at the end: that if we're ever confused by what he's said, just remember the bottom line in the Christian life is to fear God and keep his commandments. That's the whole duty of man. And it's our duty because the bottom line is that God will judge us for everything.

Whatever else is happening in life, those who have believed in Jesus have been saved from the wrath of God through faith alone in Jesus, yet we know we'll give an account for what we do as well. So that's one guiding principle.

The other guiding principle is that when Solomon uses the phrase “under the sun” he’s almost always talking from the perspective of someone who doesn’t follow God. So when you see that phrase “under the sun” - and it’s everywhere - Solomon’s not telling us what he actually believes. He’s telling us what godless people believe. People who think and live like the only thing above them is the sun.

And several of you mentioned that sometimes we fall into that corrupt thinking as well. All seems meaningless. Generations, history, wealth, so on can sometimes seem meaningless. We know it’s not, we know there’s purpose, but we battle against that feeling nonetheless.

Last week we saw that Without Jesus everything is meaningless, work is meaningless, generations are meaningless. This morning we see a few more.

4) Creation is meaningless without Jesus. **Read 5-7**

So we have 3 examples of creation - or nature, whatever you want to call it - 3 examples of how people without God view nature as meaningless. We’ve got the sun, cycles of day and night. We have the wind sort of the meteorological cycles and seasonal cycles. And we have the hydrological cycle.

Now what’s amazing in all of that is that the very things we look at and think “Man, God is so amazing” unbelievers can look at and somehow think: this is all random and without any purpose or meaning. Remember that this list is a list of weariness. A list of pointlessness from the perspective of someone without God’s perspective.

So think about the first one. The sun. **Read 5**

The cyclical nature of the sun is meaningless to an unbeliever. It’s monotonous, just endless repetition that really serves no purpose. It’s as though every day the sun gets up and runs as fast as it can around the world in a race and then sets. Next day, same thing.

Maybe some of you guys saw the movie Forrest Gump in the 90s. It’s kind of a weird movie with Tom Hanks. But at one point Forrest, who’s a good runner, decides he’s just going to run. So he runs everywhere, all across America. He has no idea why. People start following him because he must know more than they. And then one day he’s just tired and decides he’s done. And stops, leaves all these people standing there wondering “what was that all about?” No meaning, no purpose, just running for nothing. That’s the unbeliever’s view even of the sun.

With Jesus our perspective is changed, isn’t it? Who made the sun? Jesus. And when God made the sun, he called it what? Good. So first of all we know that it’s not meaningless. God made things on purpose. **Turn to Psalm 19**

For the Christian, the sun and the cyclical nature of the sun isn’t pointless. It actually points to God. The sun, moon and stars and all of creation is massive canvass that God has created. And when we look at it we should be in awe. **Read 1-6**

So this is really awesome. The heavens are not God. When we see an amazing sunset we don’t say “God you look so good tonight.” No, God made the heavens. So when we see a beautiful sunset or sunrise we say “Wow God, what a great picture. You really a great artist.”

We separate the Creator from the creation. The creation is amazing because it points to Jesus. And notice, David points out the circular nature of the sun. **Read 4b-6**

So both David and Solomon are talking about the sun running a course. But where Solomon gives us the godless perspective, David gives us the Christian perspective. That God has done this to point us to him.

In apologetics we call this the teleological argument. Telos means the end goal of something. It's also called the fine tuning argument. And the argument goes like this: isn't it amazing that the entire earth and solar system is fine-tuned around not just earth, but as a habitat for human beings? What are the odds?

Nowhere else in the solar system even comes close.

We live in this perfect band of distance from the sun - where we don't get too hot or cold. It's Goldilocks principle. And the earth turns at just the right amount that we don't fly off or get smashed by gravity. And the earth gyrates which keeps wind moving and pushes the hydrological cycle. The moon also gives us tides and it orbits around us at a precise distance.

By the way - no evolutionary model can account for how we even have a moon. Where did it come from, how does it orbit us precisely, how does it rotate in proportion to it's own orbit around us? There's just absolutely no answers from a purely secular model for why we even have a moon.

David rightly takes the sun and points us to God. He made it - it gives him glory. Every single person who can see the sun and moon and stars should give glory to God.

That's why **Romans 1** says no one can claim they don't know there's a God. Everyone knows, they are all without excuse because we see God's handiwork literally all day every day. The universe is a museum of God's handiwork.

And we also see in the Bible that the sun serves as something of an analogy of the glory of God. Jesus's face in Revelation is said to be like the sun shining in full glory. And one day there won't even be a need for the sun because we'll sit in the glow of the radiance of God for all eternity. The sun is not a monotonous bore that has no meaning. No, the sun points us directly to God.

As does the wind. **Turn back to Ecc 1:6.** We have the sun, now the wind. **Read**

So just as the sun goes east to west, the wind goes north and south. That's not supposed to be a meteorological claim. Obviously, wind can move in all directions. It's poetic. Sun goes round and round east to west. Wind goes round and round north to south. It's all just a boring cycle that has no meaning for those under the sun. Those without God.

Longman: "Nothing ever really changes. As a result the human experience is dull and unsatisfying." (Note on 1:8)

Garret: "The repetition heightens the sense of ...purposelessness." (Note on 1:6)

The godless person looks at the fine-tuned nature of the world and sees it to be boring and without any purpose or organization.

Imagine opening the hood of a pristine 1992 Dodge Viper V10. You're staring at this amazing engine roaring, you see all the belts flying around, the cooling system pumping water, the air intake with fancy filters, the fan blade spinning to keep the whole thing cool.

And you yawn. And you're like "what's the point of all this - how boring." Who made this? Are you kidding me?

Even if you're not a car person, if you were walking through a parking lot and there was a bright yellow Dodge Viper sitting there with the engine open you'd take a glance. Why? Because you know how amazing that thing is.

Listen, the world we live in is fine tuned by God on a massive scale. Every facet of creation screams that there is an amazing God. Even the wind tells us that. Why, because God is in control of the wind.

Job 37:6 [God] says to the snow, "Fall on the earth," and to the rain shower, "Be a mighty downpour."

Remember that the next time you're shoveling out your car this winter. It's not random. God placed every snowflake on purpose.

Psalms 148:8: Lightning and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind all fulfill his word.

Jer. 10:13 When he utters his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and he makes the mist rise from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain, and he brings forth the wind from its storehouses.

Psalms 135:7 says basically the same thing.

If you read the flood narrative, who controlled the weather? God.

If you read the Exodus narrative as they passed through the Red Sea, who controlled the weather? God.

If you read about Elijah and Israel not having rain for 3 years, who controlled the weather? God.

If you read about Elijah praying for it to rain and he sees a cloud the size of a man's hand right before torrential downpour, who did that? God.

Remember when Jonah is on the boat and the weather becomes more tempestuous? Who's doing that? God. Who calmed it? God.

The 12 disciples are in the boat and the storm is about to drown them all, who sent the storm? God. And who was walking on the water and calmed the storm? God.

Who gives us seasons, fall and winter and spring and summer without end until the end of the world? God. That was his promise to Noah after he had drowned the entire world in a flood.

See, for the Christian we don't look at the weather as random or disconnected to our faith or our God. We view all weather and nature from the perspective of people who live in God's world where God is in control of all of it. He is using all of it to fulfill his purposes.

So when your kids or grandkids are asking why it has to be hot today, you know what the answer is? Because God wants it hot today.

Why is it snowing again for the 10th straight day? God. Rain? God. Wind? God. We point them and us to our Creator because even if we don't understand why the weather is the way it is, God does.

Paul Tripp wrote a great little book on parenting and he said basically the purpose of parents in the lives of their children is to point them to God always. So when you're on a walk or hike or whatever, "who made that tree?" God. Who made the clouds?" God "Who made that mountain over there?" God. Who made the sun? God. It's God, God, God, God.

Everything in all creation points to God because God made it all.

He also made the hydrological cycle. **Read 7**

So to the unbeliever the cycle of the sun is boring, the wind is boring and even watching water flow is monotonous and meaningless. To the believer it's proof of God and God's good design.

The hydrological cycle - the idea that water flows in a continuous cycle wasn't formally accepted as a theory until the 1580s by a guy named Bernard Palissy. Other people added to the theory over time.

But the Bible - specifically the OT - described the hydrological cycle 2,500 years before that. I mean, think about that: why don't the oceans rise? Massive rivers keep pouring in and although the ocean is big at some point they'd rise wouldn't they? Where does that water go? There's evaporation, possibly underwater conduits.

Researchers recently said they think there are massive water reserves deep in the earth's mantle that might be 3 times all the water on the earth's surface. They figured this out using seismic imagery. The idea that the water isn't in a big empty cave, but that the water is stored in rock kind of like water soaks into a sponge. But this has deepened their understanding of the hydrological cycle.

Side: One of the criticisms of the worldwide flood has been "there's not enough water on earth to cover all the mountains" - turns out there's way more than enough water to cover all the mountains.

This is from the Brookhaven National Laboratory and the Journal Science and the Smithsonian Science Education Center who could care less about the Bible that says but are confirming what Moses wrote in **Genesis 6** that "God opened the fountains of the deep and the storehouses of water and covered the entire earth 25' deep with water.

Look at Isa 55:6-11. Jordan preached this passage last year and did a great job. I just want to point out that to God the hydrological cycle - that many people find to be boring and monotonous and the very definition of meaningless - is actually explained by God. And God uses this cycle as an analogy for how the gospel is preached. **Read 6-11**

Water comes down from heaven. Flows back to the ocean, goes up into the clouds, comes down - round and round it goes. God describes again - 2,700 years ago - the hydrological cycle because he made it.

And that hydrological cycle is just like preaching God's Word. You ever tell someone the gospel and it just goes nowhere? You feel like you're wasting breath? Do you know that every time you proclaim God's Word to someone it accomplishes exactly what he wants it to accomplish? It's never void.

If they believe - it's what God wanted.

If their heart is hardened - it's what God wanted.

If they disown you - it's what God wanted.

If they do nothing with it for 10 years and eventually believe - God.

If they're a Christian and aren't ready to receive it - God.

If they're a Christian and are sanctified - God.

God's Word never goes out void. Whether you proclaim the gospel, call someone to repentance, encourage them with a Scripture, whatever - just like the hydrological cycle God created to point to him - his Word always goes out and accomplishes what God wants it to accomplish.

Not only is the hydrological cycle not some monotonous bore, it so points to God that God himself uses it as an analogy of the power of his Word. Amazing.

So back in **Ecclesiastes** creation is meaningless without Jesus.

5) Human experiences are meaningless without Jesus. Read 8-9

So life under the sun is life without God. And without God all things become weary. Why do anything if there's no greater meaning or purpose? Why get up and experience anything if it all doesn't matter?

For those who have no hope every aspect of life is a chore to be done with, but there's no amazing thing to do after the chores are done. They get a job they don't like so they can live in a home they don't want to maintain. They have a spouse who is a tire and kids who are exhausting. They work so they can retire and do nothing. It's all just a chore.

And I think this at the end of **8** is insightful. **Read**

The eye is not satisfied. Nothing impresses them. Nothing wows them. Even great things in life are just ho-hum.

I took my kids to the mall a few years back to go to the bookstore. Some of the younger ones had never been to a mall. And they walked in and there was this collective "Woowooow!" They had never seen such a huge place. The ceilings were massive and stores as far as you can see. They were amazed such a building existed.

We should be amazed by things too. God has made an incredible universe. Whether it's the sun, moon and stars - I still love seeing the stars and the milky way at night. Seeing mountains or the beach or some amazing sunset. When we see fantastic things there should be a satisfaction, a wonder that Jesus created all these things.

Even man-made structures should impress us. God has made us in his image. God is the master creator; guess what we do too? Create and build and subdue.

I remember standing at the base of the St. Louis Arch - it's dizzying how huge and high it is from the base.

You see the Sears Tower loom over Chicago for miles and miles before you get to downtown - it was the tallest tower in the world for a while.

We were driving through Ohio and there's a huge office building in the shape of an old school bread basket. You don't see that every day but okay. That's pretty impressive.

The point is that God didn't put you in this world to be bored and unimpressed. He put us into an amazing world where not only does he show off his own glory, but we show his glory when we create fantastic things because we're made in his image.

One of the things I think Christians need to do more often is be wowed by things. Genuinely wowed.

Go see some mountains, see an ocean sunset, peek through a telescope, see the Grand Canyon, drive by Mt Shasta which is still one of the most amazing things on the 5 freeway. And just be in awe.

If you're not ever satisfied with the world that's a you problem. That's a misunderstanding that the world and everything in it that is all designed to point us to worship the amazing Creator God who has given us all things to enjoy.

We've been watching this documentary on Canon+ called the Riot and the Dance and it's just a guy going around the world looking at nature and he's just amazed at creation. Bugs and birds and rhinos. He wants to know more because these are God's good creatures.

Some of you might know that I like fireworks - shocker, I know. One thing I love about fireworks is the sheer beauty of the colors. The booms are nice too. But as I watch the fireworks I just thank God that I get to experience such beauty, even for a moment. **Read 8**

The eyes and the ears of the pagan are never satisfied. What they hear doesn't satisfy them either. Hearing here is probably learning more and more.

2 Tim 3:7 Paul warns about false teachers who are always learning but never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

Have you ever met people like that? People who are constantly asking people about truth, seeking truth, looking for answers to this or that but they never arrive at the truth. They're never satisfied with what they hear.

Listen, when the Good Shepherd Jesus speaks we hear his voice, don't we. And we're satisfied. Jesus says come to me and you'll never hunger, come to him and you'll never thirst. He's not talking about physical appetites. He's talking about truth. He's going to nourish us with truth and we won't be empty we'll be what? Satisfied.

So here's our whole list: Without Jesus everything is meaningless, work is meaningless, generations are meaningless. Creation is meaningless and so are human experiences.

6) Human history is meaningless without Jesus. Read 9-11

All of human history is absolutely meaningless to the unbeliever. The beginning doesn't really matter. Where we're at now is just a blip, and where it's going doesn't matter either.

There's nothing new. Oh sure there's electricity and cars and iphones and rockets and modern surgery and nuclear fission. Internet, global travel in mere hours. Printing presses, transistors, antibiotics, lasers, air conditioning, MRIs, understanding of DNA structure.

For the unbeliever there's nothing really new, right? Because in the grand scheme of things none of that really matters. It's a pessimistic view of history and the future.

I was talking to a friend I hadn't seen in a while the other day. And I forgot how pessimistic he is. He's just thinks the world is going to pot, how can people have kids in this day and age, he feels so sorry for the coming generations.

And I'm thinking, man that's a brand new truck your driving back to your really nice house and you're doing just fine financially somehow I think you'll make it in life and the next generation will too. He's really bummed even as his whole life is blessed - it's crazy.

See, here's the deal. The Christian worldview doesn't make history meaningless. It makes all of history completely meaningful. We understand that there are cycles of life, but we also understand that things do advance. The printing press and the internal combustion engine were pretty big game changers. And they advance because history is going somewhere.

We're not just riding a spinning ball through space to nowhere. We're on this amazing planet that God has made and it all points to him. And God the Creator came into the world to point us specifically to himself and redeem us because we had messed his whole world up. But he took our sin, he took our infinities Peter says and he suffered for them on the cross. Three days later he defeated death and rose from the grave. Shortly after that he ascended into heaven sitting at the right hand of God the Father until every single enemy of his is made a footstool under his feet.

And the thing every believer is looking forward to is the Day the Lord Jesus bursts forth into the world again. Not in a manger, but in glory to set the world to right forevermore where he will be visibly worshipped as the King of kings and the Lord of lords for all eternity on the New Earth.

That's the history plan Christians know and love and rejoice. We don't mope about meaninglessness. We don't mope that nothing ever changes like the pagan unbelievers. We don't scowl that nothing matters. We know everything matters because when Jesus returns we're going to all stand before him in judgement and give an account for everything. Whether big or small, open or secret.

We've got work to do until then, amen. Let's leave a legacy of Jesus until he comes.

Pray