Looking Beyond This Life

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Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[0:00] So I have a part two installment for you, beloved, from Ecclesiastes chapter 5.! That's where we'll be this morning. The title of my message, Looking Beyond This Life.

! Last week's title from Ecclesiastes 5, last week's title was The Dangers of Casual Worship.
The Dangers of Casual Worship. And we dealt with verses 1 through 7. Let me read that. Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen, rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools.
So there's a contrast being made there. For they do not know they are doing evil. Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God.
For God is in heaven and you are on the earth. Therefore, let your words be few. Now, if you think back to what we just read in the psalm for our call to worship, you can see a context for verse 2.
[1:15] For God is in heaven and you are on the earth. The psalm said that. Therefore, let your words be few. In the presence of the Lord, we need to understand who we are worshiping.

For the dream comes through much effort and the voice of a fool through many words. It's calling you to be circumspect and prudent and careful in your thought life.
So when you come to worship, you don't turn your mind off. You switch it on even higher. You raise your mind to think the holy, biblical thoughts of God as they are revealed to you in Scripture.
Verse 4, When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it, for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than you should vow and not pay.
So, verse 6, Do not let your speech cause you to sin. Now, this is in the context of you being in a worship service. He's not talking about out in the world and in the everyday course of your life.
[2:22] He's saying, Do not let your speech cause you to sin when you're in a worship service. Don't say foolish things. Even under your breath, don't make foolish vows to God. Don't be carried away in your emotion.

Engage your rational mind and worship according to what the Lord is putting before you. If you bring out of conviction some confession to God, which you should, if you bring out of conviction some promise to God about addressing some issue in your life or taking in this truth so that it can bring change to your heart, just keep your vow.
Don't go home and forget about it and get busy with the issues of life and blow God off. This is a foolish thing to do.
It's very dangerous. And the rest of the passage will bear this out. Do not let your speech cause you to sin and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God, that would be the priest, that it was a mistake.
So if the priest or the pastor shows up and said, hey, you made this vow to the Lord or whatever, well, you know, that was the heat of the moment. Don't do it.
[3:29] Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands? Verse 7, For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness.

So see how he's calling you to a rationality here that is based on the truth of the Lord. Rather, fear God. Rather, fear God. That's the point. I mentioned to you last time as we dealt with these verses that as Christians, we are taught by the Lord Jesus Christ to look beyond this life.
Now, I'm not saying that we should look beyond this life so that we become no earthly good. We don't live in some na-na land. We live in the rationality, the reality, the truth of what God reveals to us in Scripture.
And Scripture calls us to put our hope beyond this place. So we look beyond this life to take our cues from heaven about how to interpret this life.

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What perspective should I have on my own life? What perspective should I have on the lives of other people, on the church? What are the priorities of heaven for my perspectives on my own existence?
[4:45] This is what we're being called to. As Christians, we're taught by the Lord to look beyond this life while keeping our perspectives and expectations firmly grounded in the truthful reality of our eternal home.

Now we can read the rest of the chapter. Beginning in verse 8, If you see oppression of the poor and denial of justice and righteousness in the province and the place you live, what does he say? What's your response supposed to be? Do not be shocked at the sight. For one official watches over another official, and there are higher officials over them.
After all, a king who cultivates the field is an advantage to the land. Now we're going to talk about what that means. He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income.
This too is vanity, emptiness, breath, puff, air. When good things increase, those who consume them increase.
[5:51] So what is the advantage to their owners except to look on? The sleep of the working man is pleasant, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich man does not allow him to sleep.

Now, there is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun. Riches being hoarded by their owner to his own hurt. When those riches were lost through a bad investment and he had fathered a son, then there was nothing to support him.
Nothing to leave behind. No blessing. Verse 15, As he had come naked from his mother's womb, so will he return as he came. See, that's a principle of life.
You will take nothing with you but your own soul. He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand. It's all going to stay here and somebody else is going to get it and use it. My beloved chainsaws will go to someone else. I just pray they take care of them. Verse 16, This also is a grievous evil. Exactly as a man is born, thus will he die.
[6:58] So what is the advantage to him who toils for the wind? You see what he's saying here. So what good is it for you to spend the resources and best years of your life toiling for something that's just going to burn and turn to dust?

There's a much, much better way to spend your life. Verse 17, Throughout his life, he also eats in darkness with great vexation, sickness, and anger. Who's he talking about here?
He's talking about people who put too much emphasis on materialism, material things, money. Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting.
To eat, to drink, and to enjoy oneself and all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life, which God has given him for this is his reward.
So you see how verse 18 helps balance out all that? He's not being a fuddy-duddy here. He's not being a stick in the mud. He's calling you to heavenly perspectives that keep you out of the ditches of what brings pain to life and wastes life.
[8:03] Verse 19, Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, he's also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and to rejoice in his labor.

This is the gift of God. God has empowered him. God has given him the ability to receive the reward, to rejoice in that reward, and all of that is the gift of the Lord.
For he will not often consider the years of his life. This is the man. He will not often consider the years of his life. Why? Because God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart.
So here is a man who isn't distracted by materialism. Materialism. Here is a man who isn't worshiping materialism. This guy doesn't go to bed every night or this woman doesn't go to bed every night worrying and getting all anxious and full of themselves about all that they have or what they might lose or what might happen or forecasting doom here and doom there.
No. He says no. God keeps them so busy enjoying the riches and rejoicing in the riches that God gives them, whether it's a little bit or a lot, that they don't have time to worry like that.
[9:18] Because they're too busy living the gift of life that God gives them. And so they're not allowing themselves to be pulled in to distraction, despondency, depression.

You're not being drug into those things because you're too busy living the gift. And who's the gift? God. God. God keeps you busy living for Him.

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You don't have time to feel sorry for yourself. Isn't that verse 20? Or am I reading into this? Alright, where are my Tuesday morning men? Get me!
No. That's what He said. Look here, up on the screen. Ecclesiastes 5 then surveys four heavenly-minded perspectives regarding our companionship with God.
The worship relationship that we're to cultivate with the Lord throughout our lives. They are truthful perspectives grounding us in God's view of our life with Him.
[10:18] This is precious. The first perspective addresses your view of God. That's where you start. Everything in your life starts with your view of God. Now we could say that this is God's view of how you should view Him as it bears on worshiping Him.

Now remember, you're going to leave here this morning and you're going to go out of those doors and into the workaday world and hopefully you'll be back as a member at 5 o'clock today, sharp, ready to go.
But you're going to go into the workaday world. Now listen, the worship of your heart doesn't stop when you get up and walk out of those doors. You go on worshiping when you walk out of here, don't you?
You worship all day long. Every single day of your life, you are worshiping. It's who you're worshiping. You? It's what you're worshiping.
Stuff? That's the issue. So you need God to give you the perspectives on all of this that keep your worship centered in the fact that God is your greatest gift and He is the only one who deserves your worship.
[11:26] My wife doesn't deserve my worship. I don't deserve her worship. And I use us because she's the closest person on the earth to me. She's my soulmate, my one and only soulmate.

And even with that kind of heavenly tie, I am not to worship her. I'm to be grateful for her. But I only have one object of worship and His name is Jesus.
And I worship Him all day, every day. That's what I should do. That's what is possible for you to do, for me to do. Now, here's where I started with you. This is in the way of a quick review.
A truthful heavenly perspective on God in these first verses that we're looking at here down through verse 7. Now, I shared a quote with you from Sinclair Ferguson to put all of this in perspective, kind of sum up these first verses for you.
He says, Knowing God is your single greatest privilege as a Christian. But is it? See? Is it? And the one that sensitizes you, this single greatest privilege of knowing God, that is the one thing that sensitizes you spiritually to every other issue of importance in your life.
[12:35] You start with knowing God. That gives you the foundation and perspective that you need. But then he goes on to ask this very penetrating question. But is this the issue that lies at the very center of your thinking?

Is this what drives you, gets you up in the morning? The main idea from these first seven verses concerns how each of us approaches God in our time of gathered worship.
You'll hear me say this several times in the sermon. Which, for us, is on Sunday mornings. Now, we're going to have another one tonight which will be a worship service. It'll look different from this one, but nevertheless, we'll be worshiping the Lord.
We'll be thanking the Lord, praying to the Lord, singing the Lord, sharing about God's work among us. Is Solomon's God approachable? Is Solomon's God approachable?
Can we know Him? What is God's perspective on companionship with Him as we approach Him in worship? Does God want us to even do that?
[13:43] Does He draw near to us as we draw near to Him? Or does He remain aloof and go, does He look at it? That's not quite good enough, bub. See? Try harder.

Sing louder. Are we worshiping God His way? There is a right way and a wrong way.
And the Scripture speaks to it. It has everything to do with the attitude of our heart. God's love. How does God desire to be worshipped? Now, it might help you to think about this as I did just a moment ago, as it relates to your marriage or to some other important relationship in your life.
So think of it this way. As you think of that person, think of that person in your life, your spouse or some other important individual in your life, you can probably think of things that that person shared with you, has shared with you over time, which meant that you had to refine your view of friendship with that person.

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You had to make some changes. You had to grow to know that particular person so that your companionship with that particular person could flourish.
[15:03] I hope it's true that your friendship with your spouse looks different than it does from other relationships in your life because there's no one that God calls you to be closer to than your spouse, even given the troubles and things that we have to work through together in marriage.

But if you think about that person in your life, you reflect back on, you know, you're right. The longer I'm with this person, the more time I've spent with this person. I've had to make some adjustments in how I befriend this person.
Why is that? Well, there are a number of reasons for it. Here's the one that I'm trying to highlight. What does friendship and companionship and closeness look like to them?
Your idea of friendship and closeness might be a little bit different than theirs. What pushes your buttons might not be the same thing that pushes their buttons. And so one of the things Suzanne and I learned fairly early in our marriage was for us to sit down and say, what does it for you?
See, I had to tell her, Suzanne, you know that you didn't marry the sharpest tack in the box. So, having said that and admitted that, I need you to just tell me. Don't make me guess.
[16:16] Not that she was trying to do that. It's just we learn to communicate and work together. Tell me what it is that does it for you. So, when do you feel cared for? What kinds of things can I do or say in my life where you will feel cared for?

I will be working toward making you feel precious. You see, look, I'm not saying that I wanted to make my wife feel like a princess. I'm saying I'm trying to be a godly husband.
I'm trying to shepherd my wife's heart. I don't want to be a force in her life that discourages her from following the Lord and having joy in her life. Let's see the number of hands from our men who are husbands who want to do that to your wife.
You want to drive her into the ground. Boy, that will make for a happy time. No. No. So you have to communicate.
How has God called on you to communicate with Him as your God? That's worship. Is the only time that you worship, communicate with your God is on Sunday morning and then the rest of the time God gets nothing?
[17:30] There's no communication. there's no worship. There's no offering. Well, I do know people like that. I do. That's not good.

And they say they're Christians. what does friendship and companionship and closeness look like to the person that you have in mind who is important to you? Do you know what creates friendship and closeness with them?
Do you know what's important to them? It may be very simple stuff. That's what I found in my own marriage and in my counseling ministry and my pastoral ministry. Most people when they sit down to talk about this, when I take them through this in counseling or whatever, and in my own life, it's simple stuff.
It's just not big old. You were married for how many years? 40 years. And you find that friendship is just not that complicated. It's simple stuff. And you learn to repent and replace.
As we approach the Lord of glory and worship, what does He mean by worshiping Him? See? Now, let me put this up here real quick.
[18:40] We are to worship God in spirit and truth while avoiding, see there's something to do and something to not do, avoid, while avoiding certain hard attitudes and actions which are sinful.

These are the kinds of things that work to promote a casual, flippant, superficial approach to God. You know, I used to take some flack for wearing a coat and tie when I would preach.
Boy, and I'm tempted to go back to that so much. And what happened was I had a number of men, now this was 11 years ago, I had a few men come to me and say, dude, you need to relax.
And I said, what are you talking about? When you're in the pulpit, you need to relax. And they didn't mean my demeanor because I can't do that. I tried to relax when I'm up here and I bought blue gaskets.
So this is what you get. I love the word and I am preaching to you today knowing that I could walk out of here and you could lose your pastor in a blink of an eye and this would have been the last time I could minister to you.
[19:44] So I preach as a dying man to dying men and women. What was I saying? Yeah, yeah. So I said, what are you talking about?

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They said, you need to lose the tie and the coat, man, and just chill out and relax. Well, you know what? I prayed about that for a while and I thought about that for a while and I thought, you know, if what I'm wearing is causing some of those guys to feel like I'm up here being Mr.
stuffy, it's not a hard thing for me to take that tie off and lose the coat. Here you go. Right? But now if I bring that tie and that coat back, I don't want to hear any guff about it.
The reason I wore that stuff wasn't just because I had become accustomed to do that. That coat and tie was a way for me to show the Lord and demonstrate to the people of God that I had a high regard for the word.
But I don't want that coat and tie to be the thing so that if I don't wear it, you think I've lost some regard. See, so I started wrestling with that in my own heart. And I said, you know what I need to do? I need to set those puppies aside and see how it affects me.
[20:49] Because the attitude of my heart is a lot more important than a coat and a tie, right? So what will be? See? And so I've done that for a while. And it's been fine. I don't want any of you, based on how I dress, how I do my little hair, what's left of it, how I preach to be a distraction to you from the word.

I want all of that to serve the word, to put across the message of the good news of the gospel of the Lord Jesus. If there's anything in my life that's distracting from that, you can tell me.
I'll hear you and I'll pray about what I need to do about it. Now, you might remember from last time that I talked about pastors and church leaders, if you were here, who foster triviality by focusing on the trivial.
And so these are moments when there's a lot of stories, a lot of anecdotes, a lot of jokes, a lot of distractions and things like that, and not much, if any, dealing with the actual text of the scripture.
And so by focusing on the trivial, they call people the triviality. Now, the main emphasis, however, in this passage is on you, not pastors, not church leaders.
[22:04] It's you who come to the moment of worship and gathering together as his people. You are to guard your own heart and life against casual worship coming from a casual attitude.

This is all under number one here, knowing God. We reveal that casual, hidden attitude of the heart in many ways. Not all of us reveal it in the same exact way.
It looks different. The setting that we're talking about concerns our time of gathering for worship together, and we see that from the text as it speaks about the temple of worship.
Guard your steps as you go to the house of God, which for these people would have been the temple. Draw near to do what? Listen. In contrast to offering sacrifices that the foolish would do.
The foolish want emotionalism. The foolish focus on the trivial and the shallow. He says, don't be like that. And in many cases, they don't even know they're doing evil.
[23:05] They think they're offering something worthy of the Lord and they're not, which is scary. Don't be hasty. Don't be impulsive. He's engaging your mind. But you, the point is, you guard.

Solomon is not speaking directly to pastors, teachers, or church leaders. He begins with, you guard your steps when approaching the Lord. In other words, here's how we'd say it.
You need to watch your step. Now, you don't need to be so circumspect and prudent about this that you stay away from worshiping, gathering.
Don't do that. That's the wrong approach. You don't need to walk in here where you've spent so much time worrying about whether or not you're worshiping the Lord, you can't find any joy in it. It doesn't have to be that complicated.
If it was, we would not be able to do it. So what God's called us to, we can do in the power of the Spirit. Now, here is how I put all of this to you.
[24:04] I'm going to throw it up here on the screen for you to see. I'm just walking you into what I want to say to you today in the way of these other points. The target of responsibility for countering casual worship is, here it is, this is the way I put it up last week, you.

That's really the subject of the sentence. You guard your steps as you go to the house of God and as you draw near to listen. You.
This is the emphasis on you. You. Your heart attitude, your focus, your expectations, your hope, your knowledge of what it means for you to be a worshiper of Almighty God. Don't say you're a Christian.
If you don't have a heart to worship the Lord, you need to check that. Be careful. The onus or responsibility rests with you personally and individually. Now, I gave you three spiritual safeguards

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to help you foster a reverent spirit toward the Lord as you come to worship Him.
I'm not going to go over those again. That's last week. If you weren't here, please listen to those from last week. But then I did this. After I offered you those safeguards, I did this.
[25:13] I offered you a, what I'm going to call a heartfelt pastoral challenge. If I were the Apostle Paul, this would be couched under not so much a command.

This would be couched under, I urge you brethren. This is an urgent urging, as it were. An urgent appeal, a heartfelt pastoral appeal or challenge, which I personally think we would do good to ask ourselves as a church family from time to time.
Use it to evaluate. And I want to put it up here. Here's what it was. You'll remember. If you knew that Jesus Himself would be physically here next Sunday to lead our service and to preach to us, would it change anything at all about how you would approach being here?
All right. Now, please think about that. And I think many of you have. Please think about that. It's not silly. It might not be as silly as it sounds.
Because whose presence are we coming into as a gathered people? Whose presence? We are in His presence.
[26:21] I am preaching His word, not mine. I pray to God. This is thus saith the Lord. Jesus is speaking to you from His word.

You are in His presence. This isn't so far-fetched as we might want to think. Would it change anything at all about how you would approach being here? Would it change how you dress?
I just talked about that one from my own life. Would it change any of your attitudes that you bring in? Would it change your participation in the service?
If Jesus were up here doing what I'm doing? Would it change when you arrive? Would it change how you leave? Would it change the preparation that you make through the week?
If you knew next Sunday Jesus Himself were going to be here, what would it be like for you through the week? How would you arrive? See? Now as you consider all that, before I leave the point to tackle the next one, here is a principle you can adopt and contemplate.
[27:30] I am actually, guys, I'm borrowing this principle from the study that you're doing, our men are doing, on Tuesday mornings. Okay? So let me share the principle with you guys.

You should, the Tuesday morning crowd should recognize this. And we're going to extrapolate and bring that principle over into how we're thinking about our worship of the Lord. All right, here's the principle.
Our hermeneutics, what a fancy word, it simply means the rules for studying Scripture. Our hermeneutics, our rules for studying Scripture, become a response to what we have acknowledged as Scripture's own self-witness.
That's the principle that your husbands and whoever the men are dealing with this week. That's the main idea. Let me give you another words.
Let me put this a different way. Here it is. When we come to study the Bible, we must have as our starting point the Bible's own testimony about itself.
[28:35] See, I don't have a right to look at the Scripture and make it what I want it to be. Well, here's what it means to me. It doesn't matter what it means to me. My starting point is what does God say and what meaning did he put in it?

That's what I've got to get out and I've got to get me out of the way to do it or I'll read into it. Kevin, what's that called? Eisegesis. He's on it. He's on it.
Good job. When we come to study the Bible, we must have as our starting point the Bible's own testimony about itself. I go on to say, informed in this way, informed in this way, we then form rules for our study which honor what God has said to us about the nature of his word.
I don't want the rules for my study of his word to contradict what God says about his word. I don't want my rules to trivialize God's word in any way.
So what will have me, what will help me have a high and holy view of God's word as I come to his word based on what he's told me it is, its own self-witness, its own self- testimony.
[29:50] But Jeff, here's what the word of God is. Now, how does that affect my attitudes? How does that affect my perspectives, my actions toward the word? Do I leave it on the shelf all week?

Well, that doesn't suggest that I have a high and holy reverence for the word. Do I play fast and loose with trying to figure out what it says? That doesn't suggest I have a high and holy view of the word, which is what God says I should have, right?

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What the scripture says it is ought to be what governs the way that I approach it. Now, you with me? I need to know if everybody's with me on this before I go to the next one.
Okay, now you see where I'm going. You see where I'm about to go, don't you? Yep. All right, now let's do this. Apply that same principle to worshiping God from his word.
We cannot worship the Lord apart from his word. So now here it is. I'm putting it up on the screen. Our starting point for worshiping God is his own testimony about himself.
[30:51] He is a holy God. He is omnipotent, all powerful. He is omniscient, all knowing. He is omnipresent everywhere at once.

He is sovereign. In control of all that he has made and created, he sustains it in himself. He is self-sustaining. He is Lord. He is Lord.
Well, that's what God tells us about himself. Now, how should those realities, truths, and perspectives from heaven influence, impact, and guide the way that I come before him in worship? How does that affect me as a worshiper? See? Now, one more thing. I put it up here.
Informed in this way about who God says he is, we then form our attitudes and our actions which honor what God has said to us about worshiping him. We, in our statement of faith, members, all of you have to sign off on the statement of faith before we'll let you proceed for membership here.
[31:58] If you have a problem with anything in our belief statement, our statement of faith, we ask you to talk about that with your pastors before we let you move through to the next step in membership. All right?

If you sign off and say, nope, I can get behind every bit of what you guys are saying you believe as a church family. All right? Here is just a brief excerpt of a number of paragraphs that you would see in our statement of faith if you went there and clicked on it on our website.
Here's what we start to say. This is the opening paragraph about the triune God, Father, Son, and Spirit. We believe and teach that there is only one God. There's all the references.
One in essence, yet eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That's a nod to the Trinity. We are Trinitarians here at this church. God is glorious because of who He is and what He has done.
As the God of glory, He deserves our worship and obedience. Amen. All right, there you go. That's your belief statement, church. Yeah, isn't that good? You ought to read the rest.
[33:12] You ought to read the rest. In other words, friends, you are responsible for the worship you offer to God, even in a corporate or gathered setting.

Pastor Greg and I can only do so much to set the tone and offer you biblical prompts for biblical worship, but we can't do the worshiping for you. How worship is done matters to God.
And Pastor Greg and I are immensely aware of that. Now, look, one more caveat. We're not trying to be legalistic with you here.
All right? Look, I could have taken this approach. I could have said, you know, let me pick on the late thing. If you come in late, you disrupt people, you do it. Yes.
All right. All that's true. That's true. But you know what? That's not the point. The point is, what does it say about your attitude to the Lord?
[34:12] Now, here's, see, here's, here's the, I'll do this. Here's, I couldn't do that a month ago. Here's the thing about that that trips you up. We love you. And if you need to be late, be late.

And God help us if we judge you, including me. Matt and I were just talking about this. You got little bitty kids. We were just saying, Matt said, what if you have a blowout?
One of the kids, you know, you put him in the car seat. That happened to us. The windows, it's all, you know. What is that? And now you're all back in the house.
And 30 minutes goes by. I get it. It's happened to me. And I was the preacher. You have sickness. Somebody just has a meltdown.
We understand. Stuff happens. All we're saying in this, folks, is what is your heart toward the Lord in this?
[35:13] What is your heart of worship toward the Lord? So what does it look like as a lifestyle? What does it look like Sunday after Sunday after Sunday? Right? That's all.

We're just trying to call you to what the Scripture calls you. I hope you're not seeing here. I hope you're not seeing. Boy, Pastor Jeff is calling us above and outside the Scripture here on this one.
I hope you see. You know, I'm just asking you to carefully consider that God doesn't want you to go into this issue of verse 1, that they make an offering to God that is considered by God to be a

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sacrifice of a fool, and they don't even know they're doing it.
See, I don't want that to be you. I don't want that to be us. And so I'm offering this to you. It's not legalism. We're trying real hard for it not to be that.
We're trying to encourage you in holy living and worshiping. We want to make offering to God of something that's worthy of Him. Lord, let the Spirit use this as we use it in the Word and let Him bring it to you and make it worthy of you.
[36:23] Because you are worthy. Alright? Now we're going to progress to Solomon's second heavenly-minded perspective. And it helps us guard and nurture a relationship to God.

Keep that in mind. These perspectives are not legalistic commands on you. These are things that God has given us to help us keep our perspective where it needs to be in our worship.
And it's truthful, heavenly perspective on government. You say, how in the world is government related to worship? Well, let's see. If you look with me at verses 8 and 9, if you see oppression of the poor, if you see denial of justice and righteousness in the province, what does He say?
Don't be shocked at the sight. For one official watches over another official and there are higher officials over them. After all, a king who cultivates the field is an advantage to the land.
It's proverbial. He's kind of moved into some proverbial stuff here with you. So that's how we're going to deal with it. Here's the question as we look into these verses, who do you trust with your life?
[37:25] Who do you trust with your family, your possessions, your future, your eternity? Is it the government? You see, many people do. Many people think that the government owes them a living.

And they put a lot of faith in the government. A lot of trust in the government. You see this on the news. But any answer in terms of who you trust other than God, you're in a bad way. You're headed for major disappointment in your life.
The idea of government here could also be understood, and this might be helpful to you, as bureaucracy. Trusting in, putting your hope in the bureaucracy. You won't have to do that but one or two times and it'll fix you.
It'll stop you from doing that. This is how ordinary people try to plead their case and live ordinary lives.
Especially though, the emphasis here is on the poor. He's just trying to highlight people who have a lesser ability to defend themselves than others.
[38:26] And what does he say? Instead of justice and a timely and fair experience as they plead their case, they're exploited by the system. Now, have you not seen this in the news the last year?

Okay. We've got all these people in a certain state that were supposed to be being helped by this organization that was reaching out to the people who were in this dire need, poor, disenfranchised, etc.
only to find out that the officials at the top were raking in millions and millions of dollars for themselves. Yeah. I mean, we have this. We have this.
Fallen human nature corrupts everything it touches. The mention of officials here in these two verses watching over each other can have a good effect because it can be about accountability.
It can be about maintaining and dispensing justice. And there are times this does happen with people. But the context here suggests corruption.
[39:33] This is negative. It suggests corruption. And here's what we can extrapolate here. The systems of government reflect the sinful nature of the people overseeing them.

Corrupt officials are layered in these systems. Have you seen this? Okay. Have you dealt with this? I have. They watch for any opportunity to press their advantage, first of all, against each other.
They're constantly jockeying against each other. And there are ordinary people often caught in the fray and the battle that they have between themselves.
That's reality. And Solomon is stressing this. Listen. He is stressing the dark truth of life as mankind governs without God. What do you expect?
When you have a government or a system, when you have a business, when you have employees, when you have any system of authority that is trying to exercise that authority apart from God, what do you expect?
[40:39] And so he's saying, don't be naive about this. Don't have a perspective on authority and on government that leaves you going, ah, ah, ah, ah.

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Don't be surprised. Anticipate it. And don't put your hope in it. Don't put your hope in it. Are we called to pray for our leaders?
Yes, we are. So pray for your leaders. At the heart of all of this, I'll put it on the screen, is avarice. It's the greedy desire for money and the power over people which money can bring. You're not surprised to hear that, are you? You're not surprised to hear that money is behind much of this. This is the context of what we see in the following verses.
Money, money, money. And so here's Solomon. He's a king himself. He's an official. He is the richest king, the most powerful king on the planet at this time.
[41:44] And he tells us what our perspective needs to be. He says, don't, look at the text, don't be shocked at the sight is the way the NAS says it. Right in the middle of verse 8, do not be shocked at the sight.

when it regards these officials and corruption. This is again what we can expect when fallen, sinful, spiritually blinded people try to live and govern among each other but doing it apart from God. Doing it apart from His truth. Doing it apart from His justice. Don't be shocked and don't hide. Don't go stick your head in the sand.
We don't need to do that either. Christians need to model respect for authority. It needs to start with our worship of God and His authority.
You're going to have a hard time dealing with the wrong kind of authority out there if you can't get the authority of God over your life right. That's where you start. Now, verse 9 is interesting.
[42:55] After all, a king who cultivates the fields is an advantage to the land. That speaks to the issue of a corrupt king who offers some advantages. What are you talking about some advantages?

Well, that's what he says. It's more advantageous to live with a corrupt king than to descend into mob rule, revolution, anarchy.
You're in a worse place then, friend. And look, we may not have the best leaders or government or whatever in the world that this country, that country, whatever. I'm not preaching politics here. Whatever the case may be. But having someone in the place of ownership and authority is better than descending into anarchy and mob rule where you've got all these groups of people that you've seen on the news running loose in hordes, burning cars, blowing up buildings, shooting each other. You see? You'd rather have somebody up here saying, oh, no, no, no. You may not like what we're doing, but we're not going there. That's all this is saying. So what is he saying?
[44:02] He's saying, keep it in perspective. This is biblical perspective. And what it does is it helps you step back and deal with I'm not shocked.

The Lord said this was coming. So I'm not going to be shocked. I'm not going to be immobilized. I'm going to pray. I'm going to put my trust and my hope in the Lord.
And I'm not going to let the news define for me how I view life and the world and what's going on in it. Because I know there's a sovereign God of the universe who is holy and he rules over all of it. See? You're like me. I can only watch so much. So much. Because it affects me too, folks. I have a heart just like you do.
Now he goes on to tell us this. Don't be shocked at the sight. Instead, you need a truthful heavenly perspective on gain. He quickly moves to the motive behind everything I've been saying to you.
[45:01] Money. Power. What money can buy and get for you. And this is verses 10-16. He who loves money will not be satisfied with money.

That's the main idea. Nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is puffs of wind, vanity, emptiness, vapor.
That's what he's saying. Now Derek Kidner down through verse 17 as you see it up here. Derek Kidner sums up this section really well. He's a commentator that I've read for Ecclesiastes. He says this, the love of money grows by what it feeds on.
Isn't that good? If anything is worse than the addiction money brings, it is the emptiness it leaves. Man with eternity in his heart needs better nourishment than this.
Boy, that's good. Couldn't have said it better, which is why I'm putting it up here. We have a correlating verse of scripture that helps us with this in 1 Timothy 6 verse 9.
[46:08] But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. Now did you notice that he did not say money is evil?

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We all need money. We all have to have money. We all make money. We all use money. What's he saying here about money? The love of money. The temptation for you to put your hope in money just like the temptation was for you to put your hope in government or in your boss or in them doing the right thing.
Look, it's hard to be disappointed when you can look your boss in the eye and say, oh, I don't expect anything from you. Thank you for employing me. I'm going to try to give you a great job, but anything that comes my way through you beyond you paying me a salary that we agreed on, that's gravy.
Thank the Lord. Praise the Lord. God, it's going to be hard for you to disappoint me, Mr. Sir, because I'm not asking for nothing. You see where I am?
This is protecting you. It's keeping you from getting bitter, vengeful, about your job, when you should be saying, you know what, that's a gift from God.
[47:28] God gives me the ability to be employed. God gives me the ability to make a wage. Thank you, Lord. Now help me make the most of it. Help me make the most of it.

This is this verse. But when you put the emphasis and perspective on money and gain and stuff, and you measure your life by the stuff and the gain and all that kind of stuff, that becomes your God.
So what are you worshiping? Then you come in on Sunday, but you've got this false God that you're looking to, and it can be anything. Here it's money. It can be anything, as you're learning on Wednesday night.
The love of money creates more craving for more money. The love of money. Many of you have been blessed by the Lord in God giving you a certain degree of wealth, and you use it well in the sight of the Lord for the glory of the Lord and the perspectives of the Lord.
Just keep it that way. This is a slippery slope. It creates more craving for money so that the person in this kind of heart attitude will never find satisfaction.
[48:31] They'll never be satisfied because their heart is worshiping an idol. In verse 11, look at verse 11, you find that money attracts leeches.

Look at this. When good things increase, those who consume them increase. So what's the advantage to their owners except to look on? This is very interesting.
There becomes no end to people who line up to cash in on what you've collected. Family, friends, whoever, right?
Gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme. This is smart, isn't it? Do you think he's not dialed in to human nature here?
Verse 12, look at this. The sleep of the working man is pleasant. Now, the working man here is a guy who's just making an honest wage. He's not asking more of his employer or money or life than what is normal to be expected.
[49:31] He's looking to the Lord whether he eats little or much. You see, here's a guy who's content. Pause. I've learned to live with much, I've learned to live with little and be content.

But however, there's another option. The full stomach of the rich man doesn't allow him to sleep. Why not? Because he's too worried about losing his God.
He's too worried about what's threatening his God. Money. The love of money creates inner turmoil that no amount of medicine or therapy or distractions can cure.
You see, this was so many unbelievers popping pills, going to therapy, trying to deal with all these issues, distracting themselves from the reality because they're so insecure.
They're so full of dread and fear that I'm just one paycheck away from disaster. And they live like that and you see it in their life. So Solomon says in verse 13, verse 13, there is a, notice his language, grievous evil which I've seen under the sun.
[50:39] What is it? Riches being hoarded by their owner to his hurt. It's this hoarding attitude of my money, my stuff, my life and it's a grievous evil, he says.

Strong language, folks. It's a grievous evil which only hurts and destroys the hoarder. Does it hurt other people? Yes. Where does it start? With the hoarder. The evil that he lives under in his own heart is like gangrene.
It's poison. It's cancer. It goes out to others around him. As long as you're not getting in the way of him reaching his objective in his worship of false gods, you're on his team.

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The minute that you begin to become an obstacle, he's got no use for you and he'll let you know. Keep in mind, Solomon isn't saying again that money is bad.
What he's saying is wrong is allowing the love of money to rule your heart. It's misplaced trust so that you sinfully and selfishly use it.
[51:43] Now listen, please listen to this. You selfishly use it to further yourself at the expense of the things that matter most for eternity.

Now you've got to hear that second part. There's nothing wrong with you spending your money on things that please you. There's nothing wrong. I can't fault that. Right?
I could be driving, well I do drive a 20 year old car. Let me get another example. Anyway, look, we could all be wearing thrift store rags right now or something, right?
Why do we wear the clothes we wear? Why do we there's nothing wrong with this. If it has a little label on here that's got a little picture of an animal or something, you know, people go, whoa. Or it says, Doug, mine's Orvis.
I went to an Orvis store a couple years ago and went, oh my goodness, look at this pretty stuff. I love their flannels. Or I could just go to Walmart and buy a flannel shirt.
[52:48] Look, there's nothing wrong with that. You make the money, you buy stuff for your wife, your kids. Don't hear your pastor saying that you need to be all mully-grubbed about the fact that God has blessed you with some wealth.

Listen to the caveat. Let me say it again. You don't want money to rule your heart. You don't want stuff to rule your heart so that you sinfully and selfishly use it to further yourself at the expense of what?
The things that matter most for eternity. You see, it's a heart issue. It all comes back to your heart. If the priorities of heaven and eternity are suffering in your life because you can't get over you and you want to build your little paradise and spend your time in your little paradise, we got a problem. You have a problem because that comes under hoarding and what does the Bible say? Hoarders are going to hoard to their own hurt. It's going to catch up with you.
So your pastor is warning you that this is not the way to live. This is false worship. Stay with me now. Verse 15. As this man, verse 14, when those riches were lost, see, because that's what happens to them, a bad investment is the case here.
[54:11] Then he had a son and there's nothing to leave to him. Sad situation. Then in verse 15, as he'd come naked from his mother's womb, so the rich man will return as he came.

He'll take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand. It doesn't matter how much stuff you have, it all stays here. And if much of your life is being lived to work, work, work, work, work, work, make, make, make, make, make, make, be careful.
All I'm saying, check your heart. Verse, verse 16, this also is a grievous evil. Notice for the second time, grievous evil. Exactly as a man is born, thus will he die.
So what is the advantage to him who toils for the wind? You know what, this is an encouragement folks for all of us to say this. Whatever God has given us, much or little or somewhere in between, all of it needs to be used resourcing the priorities of heaven.
Can I get an amen to that? Yes. All of it needs to be used as resourcing for the priorities of heaven. Keep your priorities right.
[55:28] God will bless you. You can get nice stuff. You can enjoy it. And then you can look up into the Lord and say, Lord, this is so fun. Thank you for allowing me to get this. But I didn't get it at the expense of holding on to the priorities of heaven and resourcing the gospel in the area and sphere of influence that I'm in.

Grace, church, Williamsburg. All right? this gets really weird, folks. People get weird about this. Solomon says, we all live with this truth.
We can't take it with us. We came here naked. We'll leave naked. We came here with nothing. We'll leave nothing. It doesn't matter what kind of family you were born into. I guarantee you, as rich as Donald Trump is, when he dies, nothing goes with him.
When his son dies, nothing goes with him. I just tried to pick some people that I know have money. I'm not picking on our president.
So, what is the advantage of your toil as you choose to neglect the things which matter most to God? Don't do that. Don't neglect what matters most to God. Keep your perspectives and priorities where they need to be.

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[56:40] Why would you want to deal with something and try to forfeit what matters most to God, to gain what matters little to God?

You're always going to be on the short end of the stick in that deal. And that's Solomon's wisdom for living for the Lord. That's not Jeff's. I'm just borrowing it too. Alright, now I'm going to put this up here.
Don't let Solomon's force of warning escape you. Twice now, he has said this is a deadly or grievous evil. Now, before you read the rest, I don't trust you.
Before you read the rest, grievous here is a sickening evil. It means a life-sapping evil or a pain-inducing evil.
It's really sick. The analogy of gangrene or something eating away at your body, your skin and all that, that would be apt. This is a deadly evil.
[57:41] Now, we go back. And verse 17 is a scary look at this deadly evil. And I bullet it up here for you. This deadly, grievous, sickening evil creates a dark and lonely life.

It destroys you emotionally, it destroys you physically, and it consumes you in life-dominating anger. So, the admonition is be prayerfully careful.
Throughout his life, in verse 17, throughout his life, he also eats in darkness with great vexation, with great sickness, and with anger.
That's the bullet points. Be prayerfully careful. And then finally, a truthful heavenly perspective on good.
So, we've got God, we've got government, we've got gain, and we've got good. And you see where it all starts. It all starts with God. Verses 18-20. Here is what I've seen to be good, see?
[58:42] And fitting. To eat, to drink, and enjoy oneself and all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him, for this is his reward.

See? There's the balance. There's the enjoy the good stuff God showers you with. Enjoy your wife, enjoy your kids, enjoy your home, enjoy the blessings of the different things that God has put in your life to make life pleasurable for you.
You know? Enjoy that to the max. Just remember that it's not stuff to be worshipped. It's just stuff. And if it goes away, it doesn't have to mean the end of your joy.
This is the tension Solomon is creating between a life lived for the here and now contrasted with a life lived looking beyond this life.
Hence the title of my sermon. A life that has a perspective looking beyond this life. And so the question is on the screen here, what is good for us to pursue?
[59:47] What is God's view of what is most worthy of the efforts of our lives? How do you and I experience what is truly good about this life under the sun? There's the questions that come right out of these verses that end this chapter.

These verses leave us with an encouraging tone for what Solomon instructed us to do as we gather to worship the Lord. And what is it? To guard our steps.
To guard our hearts. To guard them carefully and to prepare our hearts to do what? Listen to God. To listen to God. I'll put it up here on the screen.
Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting. I love that he ends this this way. This is where the good life begins. If anybody were to ask you, man, what's the good life?
I'm chasing the good life and I can't find it. The good life is spelled J-E-S-U-S, friend. The good life is found in a person. And guess what?
[60:50] Here's the best part. You get to die and leave this place and go to something mind-blowing. See? It's all perspective, isn't it? Because of the truth of the Lord, we can have this kind of encouragement in the Lord.

This is where we learn the value of this life as a gift from God. If you can wake up every morning, folks, and have one attitude in your heart, it would be, Lord, help me live to the fullest your gift to me this day in Christ Jesus.
Help me to make the most of that. But life closes in on us and we spend so much time worrying and fretting and running around. all of this good life, as I say on the screen, begins with knowing and worshiping God as He makes Himself known to us in Scripture through the Lord Jesus.
This is God's view of what is good as we live our lives, as we cultivate companionship with Him as our highest effort. You see what I quote here.

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To eat, to drink, and to enjoy oneself and all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during a few years of his life which God has given him, for this is his reward. So enjoying the fruits of our labors, that's God's reward.
[62:10] But it all has to be kept in truthful perspective. It's easy to slip with this because life has a way of pounding on us, doesn't it? Once again, here's the quote from Sinclair Ferguson.

Knowing God is your single greatest privilege as a Christian. Now what are you doing with that? It is the one thing that sensitizes you to every other issue of importance is knowing God.
God will keep you regulated. But is this the issue that lies at the center of your thinking? Or do circumstances, do situations, as hard as they might be, what is serving to define you most?
Is it circumstances? Because look, you're going to go from one difficult circumstance to another. Right? I used to think that if I could just get my kids past the terrible twos or whatever it is, because sometimes the terrible twos happened at four.
Right? And I just thought, boy, if I could just get my kids past this section of life and get them up where they can think a little bit better. Right? Then we can reason with them.
[63:22] I know you're laughing. It didn't take but the first one for me to figure out, boy, that was pretty wrong. The older they get and then they reason and they argue back with you and sometimes you've got to go, I don't care, I said.

It gets harder. I'm just saying, you're going to go from one to the next to the next. Now, if you let these things define you, these circumstances and situations have more defining effect on your heart of worship, you're going to run to fear, you're going to run to anxiety, you're going to run to worry or whatever.
You're going to find something to distract you. And so now what are you doing? You're learning to live your life trying to cope. And God does not call us to that.
Folks, I'm doing my best up here to encourage you. don't fall into these traps. You use this idea of casual worship to wake you up and say, you know what?
I have slipped a little bit. That is true. And that's dangerous. Boy, how did I get there? See, that's a good thing to ask. And then run to the Lord and run to the truth and let what Sinclair Ferguson is saying here sink into your heart.
[64:40] Finally, in verse 19, furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given, please underline that. I've got that underlined in red and highlighted in yellow. As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, he has also empowered him to eat from those very blessings and gifts, to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor.

This is the gift of God. And that ought to make all the difference in how we use the stuff so that we don't worship it, we worship the giver. not what's been given.
This is the gift of God. That perspective is one of looking beyond this life.
Beyond this life. What is the good life? What is the truly enjoyable life? The fulfilling life? Even in the realities of injustice, toil, suffering, even death.
How do we answer that? Verse 20. For he will not often consider the years of the person. He will not often consider the years of his life. He's not morbidly introspective about his life.
[65:56] Why? Because God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart. Isn't that beautiful? God keeps you so focused on the fact that the giver of all good things is your God that you just can't get over God.

You just can't get over. You got to slap me, hit me, beat me, whip me. It doesn't matter. I know who God is. I know who's on the throne. I know where I'm going to end up.
I'm not being trivial, folks. I'm trying to say this is the kind of perspective we're called to wake up with every single day. God is on his throne. He's working through my life.
It's the life lived for God. It's the life lived to God, with God, for God. It goes by quickly because you have such gladness of heart in living your life as God's gift to you, and you live the gift of God that he's given you back to him.
What is the greatest gift you can give to God as a worshiper? Give back to him what he's given to you, Christ Jesus in all of his glory. Worship the Father through the Son.
[67:01] You cannot give God a better gift than that. So surrender to the Lordship of God and live the life that he's called you to, dearly beloved. Let's pray together.

Almighty God and Father, what a chapter of Scripture as you have loaded us up with the challenges, the wonderful exhortations, and even admonitions, that we are to have no God besides

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you.
And so it is that we ask you to forgive us, that each of us, beginning with me, needs to seek your forgiveness for the idols that we allow to creep into our lives, the things that distract and draw us away from worshiping you as the giver of all good things.
Instead, we are worshiping the creature, we are worshiping the stuff, we're running around like busy bees with our heads cut off trying to make this happen and that happen and tie this end and lose, and we justify it, Lord.
We justify it to ourselves. But Father, you've called us to a life of peace, a life of calm, a life of trust. We work hard, but we remember who it is we're serving, why we're doing it, and we do it in your resources.
[68:12] We do it in the power of the Spirit. We do it with calm hearts, focused hearts, and we're never too busy with the stuff of this life that we don't turn to the perspectives and priorities of heaven and say, this is more important.

This is more important. This is why I do the smaller stuff, so that I can give myself to the bigger stuff of the priorities of God. Help us to be those people in every way so that even the small things in life, as we enjoy the smiles of our loved ones, as we give ourselves in thankfulness to you for the clothes on our back and the vehicles and the land and the houses and the stuff, when all of that happens, help us simply to get on our knees and rejoice in the good, good heart of our God, who is the giver of all good things.
We pray this in Jesus' name and for His glory. Amen.

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