

# WHAT'S THE POINT?

*the gospel according to Ecclesiastes*

## “Why Work?”

Before we get into the main text of the sermon today, I wanted to give a little lesson on Bible interpretation. One of the biggest concerns I have for Christians today (especially in the Western World) is that we miss the point of the Bible. Some view the Bible as a book of pithy statements that are simply meant to make us feel better about ourselves. Others view the Bible as a cool mythological narrative. Still others are like many we come into contact with: they are confused.

You may find yourself in this category. Have you ever wondered, “How does this connect with that thing over there? What’s the point of this book of the Bible? What about this situation in Deuteronomy?” We’ve all had questions. But I think that there’s an even more basic question that many people miss: **What’s the main message of the Bible?**

I’m talking about this today because I had a good conversation with someone this past week, and they essentially asked, “How do you get to the gospel from Solomon?” In other words, Solomon isn’t specifically talking about the gospel. He’s despairing. He’s not talking about Jesus; so, why do you go to the gospel?

I can’t help but wonder if there are many others here who might think the same way. So, I want to try to answer that question concisely and (Lord willing) clearly this morning. I think we need to ask “What’s the main message of the Bible” first. So, what’s the main message? In John 5:39, Jesus answers that question when speaking to a group of Jewish people. He says, **“<sup>39</sup>You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me. . .”**<sup>1</sup> The Jewish people thought they would find life in knowing the facts of the Scriptures, but Jesus says they stopped short. They missed the message. The Bible wasn’t merely talking about things. The Bible was talking about a Person: Jesus. This point is affirmed over and over again by Jesus himself. He says in the Sermon on the Mount that **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”**<sup>2</sup> This statement doesn’t simply mean that Jesus did everything the Law required, but it means that the Law was meant to be fulfilled by Jesus himself. The ESV Study Bible notes says this: “Jesus ‘fulfills’ all of the OT in that it all points to him, not only in its specific predictions of a Messiah but also in its sacrificial system, which looked forward to his great sacrifice of himself, in many events in the history of Israel which foreshadowed his life as God’s true Son, in the laws which only he perfectly obeyed, and in the Wisdom Literature, which sets forth a behavioral pattern that his life exemplified. . .” (notes on Matt. 5:17). Jesus teaches his disciples to think this way. In Luke 24:44-45, Jesus says to his disciples, “. . . everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. . .”<sup>3</sup> The Old Testament Scriptures point forward to the Messiah, Jesus as the fulfillment.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Jn 5:39.

<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Mt 5:17.

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Lk 24:44–45.

The reason why that's the case is because the main message of the Bible is God's glory in redeeming through the Messiah. To say it like Paul, **"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."**<sup>4</sup>

We were created for God's glory, as the prophet Isaiah said, and we will only *know* the glory of God through Jesus Christ. But at this point, you could say, "But did Solomon intend to write this way?" That's a wonderful question. While Solomon didn't know everything he was writing about, he was on the trajectory toward God and his Messiah, Jesus. Ecclesiastes is considered wisdom literature, and when we get into the New Testament and read that Jesus is the wisdom of God, we have to understand that the apostles were saying Jesus is the fulfillment of wisdom and the wisdom literature, too! The apostle Peter also writes in 2 Peter 1 that men didn't speak on their own, but by the Holy Spirit. So, while Solomon had his purposes in writing, the Holy Spirit had his purposes and the Holy Spirit's purpose connects with the overall message of the Scriptures. It's this context that we must keep in mind whenever we read the Bible. How does this book point us to God's glory in redeeming through the Messiah?

So, because of Jesus' teaching of the Scriptures and the New Testament's understanding of the Old Testament; because even Solomon points us to our need for faith in God and a need for a godly wisdom; I believe Ecclesiastes is to point us to Jesus and the gospel message. Whether or not Solomon knew all the connections to the gospel is not so much the point as much as whether we see the connections within the entirety of the Bible. I hope we've already seen some of these connections. To see how the New Testament brings up certain phrases and comments of Solomon and then addresses them with the gospel! How profoundly glorious.

So, with all of this, let's then move into the text for this morning and pray the Lord allows us to see and savor Jesus as a result of our time together in the Word. If you haven't already, turn in your Bibles to Ecclesiastes 2:18-26:

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*<sup>18</sup> I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, <sup>19</sup> and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. <sup>20</sup> So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, <sup>21</sup> because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. <sup>22</sup> What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? <sup>23</sup> For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity. <sup>24</sup> There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, <sup>25</sup> for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? <sup>26</sup> For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business*

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<sup>4</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), 2 Co 4:6.

*of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.*<sup>5</sup>

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Keep in mind that in 1:12, Solomon started a new section of his book which ends at the end of this chapter. We can see that this is a purposeful section to his book because it starts with three mentions of God and it ends with three mentions of God. In between these mentions of God are *no mentions* of God. As a result, Solomon has been talking about whether or not there's meaning in life apart from God. Is an earthly, "under-the-sun," God-less type of wisdom beneficial at all? Or, to put it in modern terminology, "Is secular humanism going to give you what you long for?" A secular humanist is devoid of God and focuses merely on what they can see.

Solomon's conclusion is that if you live this life merely from the perspective from what you can see, you will not get any of the significance, value, meaning, purpose that you're yearning for. Solomon's evaluated living life as a wise person. He's evaluated living life as a very self-focused individual – gaining all you could ever want. Then he evaluates living life from a moral versus immoral perspective. None of these fills the eternal void we feel. The final reason Solomon gives for why things around us can't fulfill the void is because we die. If you were here last week, you might remember that Solomon was evaluating the difference between living as a wise, moral person versus living as a hedonist. Solomon says that in this vaporous, transient life, morality is better; however, death levels both the moral and the immoral. At death, we all get the same thing. It's with this backdrop of death that Solomon moves into verses 18-26. And here in these verses, Solomon is going to test another thing to see if it can fill our longings. He goes to work. Will our labors give us what we long for? Solomon's conclusion in these verses is that **Our work cannot give us the significance for which we're longing.**

This is a profoundly applicable statement for us. Think about this with me. What's one of the first questions you ask someone you've met for the first time? It's usually, "So, what do you do for a living?" We understand that question. We recognize that in order to live, you have to have a job. So, we're really asking, "What's your occupation?" Interesting. First question, "What's your name?" Second question, "What's your job?" (Or, "How do you keep *you* alive?) When asking a mom this question, she might say something like, "I'm *just* a mom." Or, when asking a guy who's been laid-off, there's a tone of shame. We live in a culture that elevates certain occupations over other occupations. Even a few months ago I had a situation in my family where my son told someone he was interested in being a mechanic, and the person said something like, "I'm sure you could do more than that!"

What?! While I believe we ought to work and do good in our work, I think that many in our society has elevated work to a sinful degree – and we're gaining nothing in the end. Solomon strips away the façade of the significance that work gives so that we see our need to turn to God and not work for significance. In verses 18-23, Solomon gives three reasons why work can't give us the significance we're longing for. After each individual reason, he says something like, "this also is vanity." Then he moves into another reason. The first reason that work cannot give us the significance for which we're longing is:

- 1. Our legacy is at the mercy of others (vv. 18-19).**

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<sup>5</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 2:18–26.

Read verses 18-19 with me again: <sup>18</sup>I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, <sup>19</sup>and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity.<sup>6</sup>

Verses 18-19 are so similar to verses 20-21 that some people combine these as one point, but given that Solomon separates these verses with the statement of “this also is vanity,” I think Solomon is making two connecting, but distinct points. In addition to death taking away everything, Solomon introduces a new reason to hate work. He hates his work because upon death, someone else is going to receive what he’s worked so hard for. You could say, “Who cares!” But listen to the specific words of Solomon.

First, look at the word **must**. *I must* leave it to the man who will come after me. He doesn’t get a choice in giving it to someone else. All his labors are going to someone else by force. Solomon doesn’t want to die. And I don’t think anyone here thinks that death is the optimal scenario. Second, Solomon says, **“who knows whether he will be wise or a fool?”** He can’t be convinced as to what’s going to happen to his stuff. A wise person could get it or a fool will get it. But based on this wording it’s almost as if Solomon is thinking that it’s probably going to go to the fool. I mean, there’s so much vanity in this world, it’s almost *safe to assume* that our stuff is going to be squandered. And actually, Solomon was right in his case. In 1 Kings 12, we’re told that Rehoboam lost the bulk of his father’s kingdom. So, Solomon, the most successful businessman, the most earthly wise man who had gorgeous gardens and homes is the man whose estate and kingdom is essentially lost. All that work for what purpose?

But Solomon as a third statement and I think this statement is the first point he’s trying to make: **he will be master**. Solomon dies, he stuff is forced from his hand, given to who-knows-who and then *that person becomes the master of his stuff!* The word “master” assumes that there’s something under that master’s control, and those things under his control are the master’s servants. I think that’s what Solomon is getting at. The stuff he toiled for ends up serving someone else.

That’s why I said the first point is that “our legacy is at the mercy of others.” We tend to think our work will elevate us, and even when we think about death, we can tend to think, “Hopefully people will look back on what I did and think I was great.” But Solomon says, “What good are those thoughts? Someone will take our stuff and either destroy it or use it for their purposes. Therefore, our legacy isn’t our legacy anymore. It’s someone else’s legacy.”

Once someone takes control and masters our stuff, it becomes theirs and they can wield it however they want. They can also choose to not put our names in the continuing story of that legacy. We’re at the mercy of other people. But not only that, Solomon goes on to say that

## 2. Our accomplishments are given to the undeserving (vv. 20-21).

Read verses 20-21 with me: <sup>20</sup>So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, <sup>21</sup>because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 2:18–19.

<sup>7</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 2:20–21.

Here's another reason why our work is vanity or fleeting and can't give eternal significance. This builds off of the previous point. Solomon says that he gave his heart up to despair because the person's stuff goes to someone else. But more specifically, the person's stuff goes to someone who didn't toil for the stuff. This isn't Solomon simply saying someone else master's my stuff. But instead, "someone who doesn't deserve it, gets it."

If you're living for work and what you accomplish to serve as making a great name for yourself, just remember how easy it will be for people to take it away from you as they pry it from your dead, cold hands. When you die, your benefits go to someone else. They can do whatever they want with your stuff, and they did nothing to attain it. You think you're the Master of your Fate, but in one sense, you're a pawn of this vain world. Sadly, people's appreciation for you and your stuff will be minimized. All they'll care about (probably) is their own legacy and welfare – not yours.

As I was studying for this message, one commentator spoke personally in talking about his work as a preacher. He said, ". . . I worry about who will inherit my pulpit. As a student of church history, I know that many of America's once-orthodox pulpits are now filled by a bunch of unorthodox liberals. What a galling thought it is for me that in the next thirty years, in the very place I stand to preach, a man or a woman might be spouting heresy. Or, who knows, maybe the church will be a convenience store. That's at least a more reassuring thought" (O'Donnell, p. 60).

We all, myself included, have to ask ourselves, "Are we looking to our labors or our legacy to give us the significance for which our souls yearn?" Am I just wanting to find satisfaction in numbers of people coming to this church, no external problems, blue skies in my work? If that's what I'm looking towards, death will tell me that this is all fleeting.

We could be doing all we do only for self-centered fools to forget about us and destroy our work. But even if that's not the case, Solomon's point is that you have no way to guarantee that's not going to be the case. So, that leads to a third point. It's a point brought up in these first two points, but it's pinpointed in the next two verses:

### 3. **Our work comes with much toil (vv. 22-23).**

Verses 22-23 say, "<sup>22</sup>What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? <sup>23</sup>For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity."<sup>8</sup>

Think about all the negative outlook here. "toil," "striving of heart," "toils." Then we read "beneath the sun," which refers to being under its vanity and watchful eye. Then we have "full of sorrow," "vexation," "not rest," and "vanity." That's 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 negative references in two verses. Definitely sounds like Solomon!

At this point, I can hear our modern world try to counsel Solomon by saying, "It's not that bad, Solomon! Cheer up, fella!" Or we can say, "Here's a pill to get over that melancholy." For whatever reason, we think Solomon's conclusions aren't real or legitimate, so we try to gloss over them by saying, "Don't worry. Be happy." But I very much appreciate what one man wrote: "Whoever takes a sober look at what becomes of even the wise will have a hard time answering 'Fine' to the common question, 'How's

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<sup>8</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 2:22–23.

it going?’ As Daniel Fredericks observes, ‘We have been brainwashed by the heresy of ‘fineness’ when even as believers we live lives punctuated by ‘cursedness’ (O’Donnell, p. 61).”

Do you get the implications of that statement? Even in churches, it’s as though we think we have to counsel people to think *everything’s going to be fine in the end*. And by “in the end” we mean that everything’s going to be fine before you die. News flash, we live in a fallen world and God doesn’t promise that there’s going to be ease.

Some people here need to mourn the death of certain things in this world. Instead of blinding yourself to thinking that these things are what God is obligated to give you, you need to recognize the vanity and brokenness.

And Solomon specifically talks about all your work. In some sense you need to realize your work isn’t going to give you what you’re longing for. Yet, even in our culture and within the church, we talk about making sure that we only do things that we *love* and find fulfillment in. If it doesn’t fulfill, don’t do it. Really?! Now, I’m all about loving what you do, but let me say this, there are plenty of things I do that I don’t love. I don’t love unclogging the toilet at home. I don’t love feeling exhausted at the end of the day. I don’t love paying bills. I don’t love chasing after someone in sin. I don’t love confrontational conversations. I don’t *love* many things. But I recognize that my hope doesn’t reside in what I do. If it did, I’d stop doing those things.

Too many of us, even in the church in America, are letting ourselves and our personal preferences dictate to us our work because I think that we subtly think that work (and what we do) will give us significance. If we can’t do what we *love* then it’s perfectly fine to not do it. But what happened to sacrifice? What happened to love involving suffering?

Solomon says that work is painful, full of sorrow, vexation and vanity. Even when he wants to go to sleep, he has sleepless nights thinking about the day’s work. Many of us try to escape this vanity through vacations, may through drinking or maybe by burying yourself in a hobby. There are various ways we try to ignore that our work is vanity. Some will even say that because it’s vanity, then why work? Some say, “It’s hard, and they feel justified in not working much.” But that’s not Solomon’s conclusion, and the Bible clearly teaches us that we were created to work. Before the fall, Adam and Eve were commissioned to tend the garden. Work is a gift of God, but the curse has brought vanity.

And it’s here’s where we need to come face to face with Solomon’s conclusion. We need to embrace the vanity of the work under the sun! Why? Because if we see its vanity and the cursedness of this world and work, then maybe we’ll look away from finding life in the cursedness and then find blessedness.

This is precisely where Solomon goes. Look at verses 24-26 again: <sup>24</sup>There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, <sup>25</sup>for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? <sup>26</sup>For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind. <sup>9</sup>

These verses can almost shock us. God has not been considered in Solomon’s search, and then all of the sudden, God shows up. A man named Michael Eaton says, “**Having exposed the bankruptcy of our**

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<sup>9</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 2:24–26.

**pretended autonomy, the Preacher now points to the God who occupies the heavenly realm, and to the life of faith in him”** (Eaton, p. 86). Martin Luther called these verses “a remarkable passage, one that explains everything preceding and following it” (as quot. in Ryken, p. 71). And Phil Ryken calls this “an oasis of optimism in a wilderness of despair” (Ryken, p. 71). Solomon has purposefully trying to show us that a search for meaning and significance apart from God is a worthless and despairing way of life because there *is* a God. Solomon doesn’t argue for how we can know there is a God. Instead, Solomon simply takes the veil of this temporal realm and pulls it down so that we see that there *is* a God, and since there is a God, we recognize that meaning and eternal significance comes only from him.

So, our work cannot give us the significance we’re longing for. Instead, **Only God, through Christ, can give us the significance for which we’re longing. And only God, through Christ, can give meaning to our work.** Two big points from Solomon. First, Solomon assumes that we should be able to find enjoyment in our toil. This almost seems contradictory, kind of like when you hear the phrase “It was the best of times. It was the worst of times.” How can it be both? How can you have joy *and* toil come together? I love the phrase “find enjoyment” because it can also be translated “make his soul see good.” There is joy when we look beyond the temporal and speak to our soul and *make it* see good. But we don’t look to the temporal to find the goodness we’re looking for. Solomon is speaking spiritually now. There’s another realm. We need to set our soul’s gaze on the eternal. Where does that good lie? Solomon says the goodness is in God. God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy. And I think here, Solomon is talking about a godly wisdom, knowing and joy – an eternal, not-under-the-sun kind of wisdom and joy. It’s when we force our soul to turn from the temporal for life and actually submit ourselves to the eternal God that we find life.

Look at how Solomon even writes here. Instead of his talk of how he’s gained and he’s acquired and how he wants to master his life, now he moves to different terminology where he talks about how everything is dependent on God and how God gifts us with wisdom and knowledge. This is the Old Testament equivalent of James’ statement that “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights. . . .”<sup>10</sup>

Finally Solomon tells us that we don’t create our own fate. We don’t give ourselves our meaning. If we live this way, we’re denying God and spurning the One who created us. When we live this way, we act like traitors in God’s world and what we discover is that we only find death.

Our meaning and significance comes from God. Therefore, our desire should be to please him instead of toiling to please ourselves. What’s intriguing is that Solomon now creates a contrast between sinners and those who please God. Then he says that those who please God will receive reward, but sinners will toil for the one who pleases God. To some here, this might sound confusing. You could think Solomon is contradicting himself. Is he saying that he was wrong earlier and that every problem in this life will be corrected in this life? No, he’s not saying that.

Another question you could have is, “Is Solomon saying that if you’re just a good person, then you’ll get rewarded?” No, Solomon has already addressed that earlier. To say someone “pleases” God is to say someone is not in the camp of the sinners. In other words, the person is “righteous.” They are people who “delight themselves in the Lord.” They are the people who have turned to God, repenting of their sin and looking to God for satisfaction. They’re the ones whose souls have found eternal good in God.

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<sup>10</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Jas 1:17.

As a result of seeing God’s greatness and goodness, their desire is to please him – to do what brings delight to his soul. But what does this look like? Some here could come up with ostentatious lists of greatness. You could be thinking God wants you to save the world or make a name for him in this world, but what’s interesting is that God delights in the ordinary. He delights in the mundane. Solomon says that our work is to eat, drink and find enjoyment in our toil. God delights in our delighting in him in the everyday of life. Listen, if you can learn to be content in whatever situation you’re in, that’s a miracle of God.

Now you might be thinking, “How can I delight in God in the ordinary?” Answer: through faith. As I thought about “pleasing God,” I immediately thought of Hebrews 11. This chapter talks about people who lived difficult lives, but they trusted God. At the beginning of the chapter, the writer says in verse, **“And without faith it is impossible to please him. . .”**<sup>11</sup> Faith is not merely wishful thinking. Faith, by definition, is dependence. It involves trusting someone else. What Solomon points us to is to realize we can’t depend on ourselves and what we can see. We need to look to God and realize all things come from him; therefore, we’re dependent on him.

But because we know that Jesus is the fulfillment of Solomon’s teaching, we also know that these words should lead us to Jesus himself. You see, as sinful human beings, we all spurned God and failed to do the work he called us to do: to glorify God in this world, even through our work.

Here humans were under the curse of God and yet God sent Jesus to this world. In this world, Jesus said he came here to fulfill the Scriptures and to do the work that the Father called him to do. Jesus’ work was the work of rescue. We humans had rejected God and the Bible says that because of our sinfulness, we are bound in our sins. We are dead in our sins. There’s hopelessness “under the sun.”

But Jesus came under the sun, in this cursed world and he obeyed the Father perfectly and took the punishment that traitors deserved. On the cross, before he breathed his last breath, he said, “It is finished!” What was finished? His work. He took the punishment for sinners and satisfied the laws demands. And then three days later, he rose from the dead and killed death!

Then the Bible tells us that **“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”**<sup>12</sup> Not by our works, but because of Jesus and his work, through dependence on Jesus, we are rescued by God and given eternal life. We now can delight in him and his gifts. And we can also now do good, godly works in this world. Even though we live in a cursed world, our works matter now. So, the Bible says that we work “unto the Lord (Col. 3:23-24, Ephesians 6:5-8), and then in 1 Corinthians 15:58, we’re told that we are to be “be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”<sup>13</sup> Ephesians 4:12 tells us that our work with one another in the local church is also of value, too. We’re commanded to “equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. . .”<sup>14</sup> Seeking to work for our own individual legacies is a dead-end, but trusting in Jesus leads to eternal glory because God’s legacy is eternal. He is eternal!

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<sup>11</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Heb 11:6.

<sup>12</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Eph 2:8–10.

<sup>13</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), 1 Co 15:58.

<sup>14</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Eph 4:12.



So, work not because work gives you meaning. Work because in God there is joy and he will maximize his glory in all that you do when you're dependent on him. Work because God is good. Work in the mundane. Work in the ordinary. Work in the toil. Don't do it because you're going to get validation from people. Instead, work because God's work is glorious and he promises to teach us and grow us through it all. Martin Luther once said, "The entire world [should] be full of service to God, not only in the churches but also the home, the kitchen, the cellar, the workshop, and the field" (as quot. in Ryken, p. 76).

Work because God's working in you right now both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Work because now, if you have entrusted yourself to Jesus; the eternal, immortal God and Master actually says he takes pleasure in *you and your work!* Work heartily, with zeal, because your works now are empowered by the Spirit. Work because someday Jesus is coming again and we will live in a New Heaven and New Earth where God will make all things right. This is the blessing I think Solomon points to for those who please God – a new Heaven and New Earth. The apostle John writes of this in Revelation 21. Talking of this Kingdom to come, he says **"<sup>24</sup> By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, <sup>25</sup> and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup> They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. <sup>27</sup> But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life."<sup>15</sup> Sinners, those who reject God, will be punished. Those who trusted in Christ and looked to God as the giver of all good will live with him forever. Now work because Jesus accomplished the saving work of God and he is continuing to work through us, his church, for his glory and our eternal good.**

**This is the gospel according to Ecclesiastes.**

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<sup>15</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Re 21:24–27.