

# WHAT'S THE POINT?

*the gospel according to Ecclesiastes*

## *“God’s Work Through Our Work” Ecclesiastes 11:1-6*

Ok, ok; maybe some of you have thought about this. You’re sitting there in the pew and you look at the sign behind me and you think, “It says June-September. Isn’t it October now?” Yes, you are right. You’ve caught me. I originally thought this would end at the end of September, but I couldn’t fit it in four months. So, here we are in October and in chapter 11. Lord willing, we will have two more sermons after this one. We’re in the final stretch, and while Solomon has caused us to see more and more wisdom as we’ve moved along, he still addresses questions that he’s been talking about almost since the beginning.

A big question I think he addresses in the text we’re going to read today is this: Does what I do matter at all? Am I making any difference? In parenting, I can feel like it’s an uphill battle many times. Do the kids really have to fight against baths, naps and even going out to eat? Maybe we should just give them the house and I’ll hide in my bed until everything explodes. Does my work matter? I invest hours into sermons, preach it and then it’s over. Hopefully you not only find the sermons uplifting but God changes your daily life through them. Does keeping up with the financial spreadsheet matter? Try to save and then something breaks. Does exercise matter? Trying to run, but then it rains and I can’t. Or my knees can bother me. Plus, shoes are expensive. Money really does seem to answer everything! Does reading a book matter? I read it, but I end up forgetting about most of the content.

Have you ever asked these kinds of questions for yourself? When we look around at our daily lives and see how the months or years have gone by and we can begin to think that all this work that we’ve done with our lives really makes no difference. I understand that struggle. However, I am a firm believer in what some may call the absolute sovereignty of God. What I mean by that is that I believe God is in control of the movement of every molecule, person, planet, star – and everything in between. I agree with the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Dutch statesman and theologian, Abraham Kuyper who said, **“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!”**

As a result of Jesus’ rule, everything is ultimately subject to his plan and his work. This should be profoundly encouraging and stabilizing for us. Generally, though, I think when we are discouraged with our labors we can tend to want people to say to us, “Don’t feel that way. You’re awesome. You do this and that, and then this thing happened when you did that over there! See, you’re great!” Now, while I’m all for giving honor to whom honor is due, I also have a concern. If we base our emotional state on the results of our work, we’re going to be emotional roller-coasters. In addition, we will weary ourselves like Solomon said in chapter 10. We’re always going to work for approval. We’re going to work for certain tangible visible results that we have decided are the best results. And when people encourage us on the basis of what we’ve done – then we can subtly find our value in what we do. So it begins a cycle of wondering, “Did I do a good job or a bad job?” And we can live for people’s evaluation.

But, if ultimately our trust is to be in God’s work and not ours, then when nothing seems to go our way and we don’t see good results from our labor, we can trust God. He’s doing a great work through our

work. If I'm just looking at me and what I can see, I'll never have the greater joy that comes in knowing and believing that God is doing something more grand than I can conceive in my mind.

I know in me saying all of this, some could say, "So, are you not to compliment people on a job well done?" No, that's not what I'm saying. And I hope you don't hear me say that. My point, and I believe Solomon's point, is to get deeper. Rejoice when you've done well. But don't just rejoice in yourself. Don't make it all about you. God wants our joy to be eternal not merely temporal. So, Solomon wants to get to the heart to compel us to trust in God and not in ourselves. Our work and the results of our labor matter not because we make it so, but because God makes it so.

So if you're like me and you've struggled with wondering, "What's the point" and "Does this matter," this text in Ecclesiastes is geared for us. So, let's turn in our Bibles to Ecclesiastes 11, and after I pray, we'll read the first six verses together:

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*Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days. <sup>2</sup> Give a portion to seven, or even to eight, for you know not what disaster may happen on earth. <sup>3</sup> If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth, and if a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie. <sup>4</sup> He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap. <sup>5</sup> As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything. <sup>6</sup> In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good. <sup>1</sup>*

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In this text, Solomon's talking about our work and what we gain in this world through our work. Does it matter what we do? Solomon concludes that it does matter. Because God is sovereign, we should work – no matter what uncertainties we will face. To put it basically, Solomon calls us to **"Be diligent and trust God."**

What does this look like then? Well, first point Solomon makes is that

### **1. The wise are wise with their resources (vv. 1-2).**

How do you like that phrase? Pretty complex and thoughtful, yes? Well, it's true. If you want to be diligent in this life, you need to be wise with the stuff God has given to you. But what does this mean? I'm glad you asked. Verses 1-2 are potentially quite confusing. There are actually multiple ways you can interpret these verses, so I want to re-read these verses: **"11** Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days. <sup>2</sup> Give a portion to seven, or even to eight, for you know not what disaster may happen on earth."<sup>2</sup>

If you're just wanting to read quickly through these two verses, you might come to the same conclusion I came to. It looks like this is talking about being generous with your stuff. We could simply stop there and

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 11:1–6.

<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 11:1–2.

say, “Be generous.” Certainly we are commanded to be generous, but Solomon brings in more reasons to be generous. And this is where interpretations differ.

When you think about verse 1, it doesn’t really seem to make sense. If I take some bread and cast it on to Lake Michigan, it’s going to come back within less than a minute. Or, if you take some bread to a river and cast it into that river, am I ever going to see it again? Plus, even if I saw it, why would I want bread that’s been wet for days? How is this helpful motivation?

Now, some people ignore that mental imagery and think that this is talking about being generous to people and in time that generosity will pay off because people will be generous back to you. Certainly that can be the case, but I don’t think that’s what Solomon is saying here. I think we should go into verse 2 to gain more insight. Give a portion to seven, or even eight. Wait. Give a portion of what? Give a portion of the bread that was found after many days.

This actually fits the context of commerce. People would take their grain or produce and send it on ships to return with other great resources from the lands the ships traveled to. As a man named Phil Ryken writes, **“To ‘find it after many days,’ therefore, is to receive the reward that eventually comes after taking the risk of a wise investment. Nothing ventured, nothing gained”** (Ryken, p. 255).

But notice how sacrificial and trusting you have to be in order to do this. Solomon says that you are to cast your bread. The term bread doesn’t have to literally mean only your bread, but your stuff that you have for your livelihood. You take all that stuff, all that merchandise that you’ve worked so hard for and you throw it out on a boat in the ocean, hoping it gives a return? That’s trust and commitment. But there’s also patience, too. You will find it after *many days*. Oh, this grates on our nerves, doesn’t it? We want things fixed now. We want to be answered right away. But Solomon says, it’ll come . . . someday.

So, we see a wise person trusts and is committed to wise dealings that involve patience. This may be where we’d want to give up. We go for the quick-fix and try to hedge our bets. But the wise person truly is wise because they know they *will* receive a return on their efforts. It may be a few days from now. It could be decades from now. Either way, it will come. The wise person doesn’t settle for quick-fixes that give minimal to no return. They’re looking for optimal return.

Now, at this point, we can go into verse 2 and we see that with this return from the labor, they then give it away to seven, or even to eight. I think in this context, the number seven should be taken figuratively to mean the perfect amount. Solomon says that the wise person gives beyond what people would consider perfection.

Remember last week’s sermon and we saw that a person’s words are meant to minister grace and so is their money? We weren’t given so that we can hoard. We’re given so that we can give. And here we see we are to give very generously. But why are we to give generously? Here’s the answer Solomon gives. We are to give because “you know not what disaster may happen on earth.”<sup>3</sup> It’s here that people again think with a self-focus. I give generously because there could be a problem in my life and when that problem comes, I’ll want people to give generously to me.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 11:2.

Well, again, certainly this could happen. Like the King James says in Proverbs, “A man *who has* friends must himself be friendly . . . .”<sup>4</sup> When you’re friendly, others tend to be friendly back. If you want to keep friends, be friendly! Similarly with generosity. If you’re generous, people are more prone to be generous back to you. But is this what Solomon is saying here? I don’t believe so. I think we ought to think of Jesus’ parable about the rich fool. In Luke 12, Jesus tells a story about a man who had great crops. They were so great that his resources filled his barns to the max and he couldn’t put his current crop in those barns. So he contemplated what to do. His decision? Build bigger barns! Then he’s going to take his ease, eat, drink and be merry. Now, in one sense, this wealthy man is quoting from Solomon. Solomon has called us to enjoy the food and drink God has given to us. He commands joy. But what this man does is spend his stuff on himself. As a result, Jesus says: **But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’**<sup>21</sup> **“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”**<sup>5</sup>

Look at the wording. This man is a fool because he, through the resources God gave him, could provide for others. Since this man won’t willingly provide, God is going to take his soul and those things will finally be used as they’re intended. You could say to this, “How rude of God!” But hold on a second. Look at verse 21. Jesus, the greater Solomon, the Wisdom from God, says that we were not made to merely be rich in the eyes of this world. We were meant to be rich toward God. What does that mean? Well, there’s a whole book in the New Testament that emphasizes our riches in Christ. It’s the book of Ephesians. There we read about the “unsearchable riches” and the “riches of his glory.” And we discover that it’s through Jesus that we are given eternal riches – riches like eternal life, forgiveness, reconciliation with God, mercy, grace, growth in godliness. You see, we were made to be rich toward God, and that’s something that God gives us when we trust Jesus. And when we trust Christ, we will give. Jesus said to his disciples that since they received freely they were to give freely.

But how do we apply all of this? How do we apply Solomon’s words? Is Solomon just concerned about good business practices here? Some of you may have been thinking about one point, “Oh no, Pastor Timothy thinks that God guarantees that the wise will always become wealthier!” Actually, I don’t think those things. I think he’s talking about business practices as an example. And the example is to cause us to be wise in all of life, in all of work with all our stuff. The reason I think that is because of verses 5-6. We’ll talk about that more in a moment, but Solomon expands his argument to include all we do.

So, in all of our life, whether we eat or drink of whatever we do, we are to do to the glory of God. And, we are to think as servants. We are to think as people who are wanting to minister grace to others all the time. We are to be thinking about how we can help best. Yes, this is costly. Yes, this requires patience. Yes, this requires trust. And yes, it is required of the wise.

Again, to quote Pastor Ryken, “God invites us to be venture capitalists for the kingdom of God. This is not exclusively or even primarily about money. It is about having the holy boldness to do seven (or even eight) things to spread the gospel and then waiting for God’s ship to come in. Some of the things that we attempt may fail (or at least seem to fail at the time) – some of the ministries we start, for example, or the churches we plant, or the efforts we make to share the good news of the cross and the empty tomb. But we should never stop investing with the gospel in as many places as we can. Whenever we engage in kingdom enterprises, we offer the Holy Spirit something he . . . often will use to save people’s souls” (Ryken, p. 256).

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<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Pr 18:24.

<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Lk 12:20–21.

How are you thinking regarding your life and your work and your money? Will you patiently sacrifice? Will you give of yourself, your time and your money to make the glory of Christ known? I think you'll only do this if you're convinced that it actually matters to live this way. Earlier, Solomon said that the bread goes out and it will return. While it may take a long time, blessings will come back in various forms. And if not in this life, they will come in the next. Jesus told a parable of how his followers were to be wise with their resources and in the end he says **"make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings."**<sup>6</sup> Use money for God's glory and someday when money doesn't matter anymore, there will be people you helped who trusted Jesus and they died before you. And when you die, they'll welcome you into Heaven.

That's phenomenal! But at the same time, people could say, "Sounds nice, but there are just too many problems that happen in my life." Maybe God would do amazing things through my work, but I've got this issue and that scenario. I can't do what he wants. He'll have to be ok with this. In the next few verses, Solomon somewhat addresses this by telling us:

## 2. Fools let the uncertainties of life rule them (vv. 3-4).

Read verse 3 with me again: <sup>3</sup> If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth, and if a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie.<sup>7</sup>

If a cloud is full of rain. It's going to rain. If a tree falls, it's going to fall where it falls. And where it falls, it's going to stay right where it fell. Ok, now I don't feel so bad for the obviousness of my first point any more. I mean, you look at these statements and they almost mock our smarts. But I think that's somewhat the point. Solomon wants us to see how foolish our decision-making process can be.

In these verses, we see Solomon isn't only concerned with being generous with our money, but ensuring all our work is generous, so-to-speak. We tend to be misers when it comes to work, and we tend to make decisions based on limiting problems and risk. We want to know that if we take one course over another then we won't have as much difficulty. Or, at least we can have more control. We'll know that trees won't fall and rain won't descend. We want nice sun-shiny days that aren't too windy. But has God promised a life full of ease? Then why do we waste our time trying to figure out how to minimize fallenness?

Now, you could have some understandable questions to this. Are we to love the fallenness around us? No. Do we love vanity? Absolutely not. Aren't there ways in which the Bible tells us to confront the fallenness and even bring God's Kingdom principles into this world? Absolutely. But the problem that Solomon is talking about here is regarding the person who spins their wheels in trying to ensure no problem – and if there is a problem, they just sit back and do nothing.

We know this is what Solomon is saying because of verse 4: <sup>4</sup> He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap.<sup>8</sup> To put in modern wording: a person who's always watching the weather channel to see if there's a percentage of a problem will only ever watch the

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<sup>6</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Lk 16:9.

<sup>7</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 11:3.

<sup>8</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 11:4.

weather channel. He's going to say, "Well, today there could be this issue or that. I better wait until tomorrow." A person who stares at the clouds and perseverates on them will think some disaster could happen. I mean, after all, a storm came with one small cloud in Elijah's day.

Here, the preacher is describing people who come up with all sorts of excuses as to why they can't do what they ought to do. Things may break. Things may be hard. We might find opposition. Yep. Do it anyway. I'm reminded of the proverb that says "The sluggard says, 'There is a lion outside! I shall be killed in the streets!'"<sup>9</sup> Wow, you'll come up with any excuse not to work! Is that you? You think working is going to kill you? It's just too hard? That's not biblical thinking. But I think there's more than simply laziness addressed in these verses. Solomon's talking about how people want to control all their circumstances and have them "just so" before they do anything.

I think Solomon's words here are extremely applicable to our culture. We do not want any types of difficulties, do we? We try to save each other from as many difficulties as possible. And we start this while our kids are young. A while back I was reading a Reader's Digest article that was discussing how there are baby toys for just about anything in order to make the baby most comfortable. The writer of the article mentioned how we have baby wipes that are warm for babies' bottoms. We have chairs that provide the ultimate comfort. We have to ensure that they're always occupied with what they want immediately. The assumption is that anything that involves discomfort is bad. Hence, a psychologist said that our babies are basically growing up with a mindset that they need to have anything that will lead them away from discomfort or pain, and they won't be ready for the real world if they can't be ready for minute challenges like having cold wipes.

We are teaching our children to run from problems. But we are teaching them that because we believe this, too. Almost shockingly, the man named Alexis de Tocqueville commented on America in 1830 by writing, "Most of the people in these [democratic] nations are extremely eager in the pursuit of immediate material pleasures.... They think about nothing but ways of changing their lot and bettering it. **For people in this frame of mind every new way of getting wealth more quickly, every machine which lessens work, every means of diminishing the costs of production, every invention which makes pleasures easier or greater, seems the most magnificent accomplishment of the human mind.... The prospect really does frighten me that they may finally become so engrossed in a cowardly love of immediate pleasures that their interest in their own future and in that of their descendants may vanish...**"

What about you? Will you recognize that living in this world involves risk? Will you recognize that there's fallenness all around? Solomon's statement here covers so many areas of life. Work, generosity, helping others, friendships, parenting, school, marriage. Are we trying to fix things we can't fix? Do what God calls you to do and trust that God is in control! "But there could be risks." There's always risk! Embrace the risk. If you don't embrace the risk, you let uncertainty rule your life. You let worry take control. And worry never promises to give anything but exhaustion. I like what one person said about worry: Worry is like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do, but gets you nowhere.

The person who stares at the clouds and wonders about the wind never accomplishes anything. But we were made as human beings to accomplish things. We were made to work – even in this world that could seem to squelch our work. But ultimately our hope doesn't reside in our work. It's in God's work. And that's the next point Solomon speaks on in the next two verses.

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<sup>9</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Pr 22:13.

### 3. God calls us to diligence and trust (vv. 5-6).

Verses 5-6 say, “<sup>5</sup>As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything. <sup>6</sup>In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.”<sup>10</sup>

So, here are the objections we carry to work. We don’t want to be generous. We’re afraid that if we give, we’ll lose out. Solomon says we should give of our resources (and all of ourselves). We also don’t want to work at something unless there are limited problems and we win in the end. To put another way, we’ll only work if there are favorable circumstances.

This is a bad mindset for those who live in a fallen world. But you could then say, “If I have no guarantees, then why do anything?” I love Solomon’s illustration of a baby being formed in the womb. I love this argument because I find the formation of a baby in the womb to be absolutely fascinating. When Tracy was pregnant with Isaiah and we went to our first doctor’s appointment, we received a trillion reading materials, but there was one that rose to the top. It was a magazine that went through each month of pregnancy. It had pictures of what the baby looked like in the womb and then described all the things happening in that given month. How does this happen? I mean, I know we can describe what’s happening and even in some ways how it’s happening, but at some point, our questions go unanswered. We simply say, “It happens because it happens.” This probably Solomon’s point here in verse 5. The word for “spirit” here is the same word for “wind” in this text. I’m not sure Solomon is talking about the spirit of the person as much as the breath of life. How does God give life to this unique human being in the womb? How does he do that? I don’t know how he does that. I just know that he does.

And on that note, Solomon says “so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.” As I think about this statement, I’m reminded of the speech my dad gave at my wedding reception. He was my best man and throughout his speech, he talked about the many questions I would ask throughout each season of life. Of course, when I was younger, I probably just asked “Why?” But as I got older, while I verbalized those questions in different ways, my desire was to always get to the bottom of things. I wanted to know *everything*. I still struggle with that. And worry takes over as a result because the reality is that I can’t get to the bottom of things. What I, and all of us, have to recognize is that there’s One who knows all and causes all. And this One can be trusted. I don’t have to know everything. I just need to know the One who knows everything.

But hold on. There’s a specific point Solomon is making here. He’s been talking all about our work and our need to keep working even though there’s difficulties, opposition, fear of loss. Why should we do this? Because over *all our work and through all our work, God is at work*. And just like I don’t know how he works in the womb to give life to that baby, I don’t know how he’s working through my work. But he is! And as Solomon said earlier, “**He has made everything beautiful in its time.**”<sup>11</sup>

God is at work through our work! Don’t not work. Don’t be lazy. Don’t be slothful. Don’t be paralyzed by fear. Instead, as verse six says, “<sup>6</sup>In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand.

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<sup>10</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 11:5–6.

<sup>11</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 3:11.

...<sup>12</sup> These are the points Solomon has been making. Work hard. Give generously. Why? Because it's not just you at work in this world! Oh, you know, my heart gets burdened sometimes when I hear people say things like, "God's depending on you." What kind of motivation is that? It's actually me-centered. Because God's dependent on me, I better get to work because he needs me.

That's not faith-based. Ecclesiastes doesn't say God's depending on me. It says that our surge to work and give is to know that the eternal, immortal, all-powerful, sovereign God is at work through me – a weak, frail, human being. Therefore, work! This truth is emphasized in Philippians 2, where the apostle Paul says, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,<sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."<sup>13</sup> Why work out the salvation he's given to me? Because he's at work in me! And if God's at work in me, can I not work? Absolutely not! I have to work. I need to work.

But did you notice I didn't comment on the last part of verse 6 yet? Here's where people get a faulty understanding of God's providence. They say that if you trust God and follow him, then things will become nicer and easier. So they'll say that if you prayed and trusted God, then this or that endeavor is going to only be easy and blessed. If you trust God over there, then God's going to make sure there aren't difficulties. If a problem comes, did you pray enough or seek God? That's not what Solomon says: "for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good."<sup>14</sup>

We need to get through our thick skulls that following God and leaving the results to him is the best way to live. God is at work in and through you. He promises that he works what is best. So, whether prosperity or pain: work and give. And if you have prosperity, don't be afraid of what the future might bring and then be stingy with others. Be generous today because you have today. You don't have tomorrow. Work today because you have today.

But I need to say it the way Solomon says it. Sow today. Why that phrasing? It's planting words. Some things take more time than others. And in planting, you have to trust the One who's in charge of the winds and clouds. You know, throughout the Scripture, we read much about sowing and reaping. And as we think about this passage, I think it's appropriate to ponder our sowing in this world.

How's your work? Did you know that "the Bible most frequently uses the imagery of sowing and reaping to talk about what we do with the Word of God" (Ryken, p. 260)? There's a parable where Jesus talks about a man who sowed seed, and the seed is the Scripture. The urging of this parable is that we ought to speak the Word of God to others. Every disciple of Jesus, through their words, actions and giving are to point to God's truth – and even more specifically to the gospel of Jesus Christ. To use a phrase I used in our Matthew series, disciples of Jesus are Kingdom Missionaries!

How are you, through your work, giving, words and actions seeking to honor and glorify God and then sow the seed of the Word? But I can't end with that question. As we look at our lives, we will see areas of sin and weakness on our part. So, where do we turn for hope that we can overcome our sinful tendencies? Jesus.

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<sup>12</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 11:6.

<sup>13</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Php 2:12–13.

<sup>14</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 11:6.



When Jesus spoke of his own ministry, he said in John 12:24, **“unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”**<sup>15</sup> He himself was to be sown in the ground to die, but after his death, much fruit would follow. What does that even mean? Well, we know Jesus came to restore the brokenness in this world. He came to forgive and grant grace to sinners like me and you. Have you trusted him? Have you called on him for grace and forgiveness? He came to bring us back to a restored relationship with God. And he came to bring a new order someday. But until that day, the Bible also says that our lives are to die to the things of this world, and someday we will die, too. That doesn't look like victory. Except

**In 1 Corinthians 15, we're told that Jesus' body died and rose again. As a result of his death and resurrection, our bodies will also be sown in the ground and we will rise up with new bodies. In this knowledge, God then tells us that because Jesus has sown himself and bears much fruit; so we are to “be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”**<sup>16</sup>

**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), Jn 12:24.

<sup>16</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), 1 Co 15:58.