

Part 2 - The Great Search

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[0 : 0 0] All right, thanks, Blake. How are you guys doing today? Cool, cool. This is typically when I jump right into the sermon, but sometimes there are just moments where it's just worth pushing pause, and this just seems to be an appropriate time.

We as a church, One Harbor Church, we support a church planner, a missionary, who is in the Iraq-Syria region. And if you keep up on the news, obviously this is a hotbed and it's a dangerous place to be at the moment. He has a family that are there with him, but they are not choosing to vacate, and they feel called to be there and to provide support and medical help and serve those people that are on the ground there. And his story is that he actually, earlier in the 2000s, he was a special forces soldier that went into Iraq.

And later, after he had come back, Jesus grabbed his heart and called him back to that same area. But this time, he wasn't going with guns, he was going with the gospel. And so some of those areas that he works in is going to be directly affected by the withdrawal of U.S. troops. And I just want to say, hey, let's lay aside your political opinion on that. I'm not here to say if that was the right call or the wrong call, but the reality is, in the absence of those U.S. troops pulling out, there is a real danger for the people left there. And there's a strong contingent of Christians in that area as well. And so, yeah, they're going to be, yeah, they're just going to be in a vulnerable spot. And they're likely to face severe threats and persecutions in the coming days. And just following it, that's already happening. You don't hear it on the mainline news. They're not talking about Christians being persecuted. But the other people that are in tune with that and following what happens with Christians around the world is definitely happening. And they project it's just going to get a lot worse. So one thing is, guys, we just want to take a moment now to just, as a church, just pray for him. I'm not allowed to say his name just because he's been there. And even as a church supporting him, we've never talked about his name just because it's just a dangerous place to be a Christian and be a missionary. But we're going to pray for them. And if you want to, he is trying to raise around \$50,000 because they're trying to get a bunch of medical supplies to go in there and just to provide medical care. He's collecting a team of guys and gals to go in with him. And they're just courageously saying, hey, despite the potential cost, we are going to do this. And so if you want to give to that, you can give to that. And guys, it's like time sensitive.

He needs to get in there like yesterday. And so if you're going to give a gift, you can write Syria on a card and give towards that. You can also give online. One of the giving drop-down options will say Syria on that. Everything you give is going to go towards him and him being able to buy those medical supplies. It needs to be done, man. If you're going to do it, you got to do it today or tomorrow. After that, the window's shut, okay? Just because of how fast things are unfolding in that area. So let's just take a minute. It's sobering. Just a reminder that, man, we have this amazing freedom that we get. We get to meet. We get to do this without any concern about our well-being. But that's just not true for many other Christians meeting around the world. So let's just pray quickly. Join with me in agreeing. Lord, we ask, one, that you would protect. You would protect these Christians. And they are a witness and a reminder that people that meet together, Christians around the world that gather together, that proclaim your name, that hold fast to the faith, it is costly for them, even unto death. And this is happening in Syria, but it's happening in many other places. We pray for your church around the world that you would protect them. Lord God, you would give them strength for these moments, strength in the face of persecution to hold fast to the faith. And even no matter what may happen, if there is going to be persecution and suffering, they would count themselves worthy to suffer for your name, Jesus Christ. We pray for fruitfulness in the face of this. And yeah, we pray that you would always remind us of them, that we can uphold them in our prayers to you. Amen. Cool, guys. Thank you for letting us have that little moment there.

[4 : 39] If you are new, welcome. Thanks for coming. For all of those who are listening online, there are a ton of folks out today. There's been a ton of illness, sickness going around, so people are out. We also have a big contingent of guys and gals in the Marines and Navy that are out in Yuma that got pulled out there. And so they're doing training and exercises out there. We miss them. If you're listening to this, guys out there, man, we love you. We can't wait to have you guys back.

So having said that, we're going to launch into the next part of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes, if you haven't been tracking with us, it's your first time with us, guys, just fair warning, this is not the kind of passage and the kind of scripture that you read for a quick pick-me-up.

And as we get into it and talk today, you'll get what I mean pretty quickly. It kind of reads like the author was going through like his goth phase of his life. It's pretty dark and tragic a lot just talking about the reality of life, but that's the whole point. He wants to get us to realize and wrestle through the reality that, man, life under the sun, this life we live is, man, it is full of difficulty and a lot of tragedy. In our last sermon, we looked at how our life under the sun is fragile and fleeting. Man, life is so quick and it's gone. It comes and goes and there isn't anything that you and I can do to change that. But the reality is we still have to live this life.

So the question then turns to, how do we make the most of life under the sun? Ecclesiastes 1.16, it says this, I said in my heart, this is Solomon the king, he's saying this, I've acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me.

And my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceive that this also is but a striving after the wind.

[6 : 33] For in much wisdom is much vexation. Those of you, it's like an old school word of just madness. It's like something that makes you just crazy and angry and frustrated.

And he who increases knowledge increases sorrow. I said in my heart, come now, I will test you with pleasure.

Enjoy yourself. But behold, this is also vanity. And I said of laughter, it is mad. And of pleasure, what use is it? I searched my heart how to cheer my body with wine.

My heart still guiding me with wisdom. And how to lay hold on folly. Till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

Solomon gives us this sense of, man, what do we do? How do we make this life count? And he's saying, man, all these things. This is the great chase of life. Or as some of us call it, the rat race.

[7 : 30] It feels like that's what we're in, this rat race. And here's the thing, guys. At the heart of the matter he's getting at is our heart. Our hearts are ravenous, desiring things.

Why? Why is that? Our hearts are desperately searching for something good to come out of this life under the sun. Our hearts are desperately searching for something good to come out of this life.

Your heart, my heart, they're like those metal detectors you see people with walking on the beach. They're constantly just kind of searching and looking for something valuable and something good. And oftentimes we'll come across something that's, it's our hearts that just starts beeping, you know?

It's like, da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da. And we're like, sweet, we found something good. We found something meaningful and we start to dig into that and look for it and we think, man, this time we found it.

And then we find and we dig up something and we only find typically it's just trash, it's worthless. And so we start scanning again and we just repeat this over and over and over again. Why do we do that?

[8 : 33] It's because we keep searching and we keep scanning because we haven't found that one ultimate good. Ecclesiastes, that verse three, he says, I searched with my heart.

And the rest of that verse says, till I might see what was good. There's this search you and I have. We wanna find that one thing, that good thing.

And the solution that we're given isn't to get our hearts to stop searching. That's not the solution. The solution is to actually find what it wants. And what is that good thing that's gonna make our hearts sing?

What is that one good thing? What is gonna be so all satisfying that I'm gonna stop this restless searching? And this is what Solomon is getting at when he said he's testing his heart.

He's setting out to find what his heart wants. So where does he start? He starts where many of us do, especially in our youth. If anything describes our youth, it's that pursuit of pleasure and possessions.

[9 : 34] That's what we start out with. And Solomon did this as well. And this is what he found out. Pleasure and possessions will satisfy, but not for long. Verse four of chapter two, it said, I made great works.

I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made myself gardens and parks and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. I bought male and female slaves and had slaves who were born in my house. I also had great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and treasure, the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, many girlfriends, the delight of the sons of man.

So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also, my wisdom remained with me. He hadn't lost his mind. And whatever my eyes desired, I did not keep from them.

[10 : 41] I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. Now, we read this, and to be honest, man, most of us would kill to have this as our biography, right?

I mean, we read this, and it's like Scrooge McDuck meets Hugh Hefner. I mean, this guy seems to have everything out there that men want. You young guys that don't know about Scrooge McDuck, you can YouTube that.

It'll awesome. It'll change your life. It's good. DuckTales. Watch it. We live in this age. The point is, we live in this age. We live in an age of unprecedented materialism, right?

America, man, it's this land of opportunity. We have so much opportunity before us. Here, you can make something of yourself. The promise is that, the promise is held out to us that any of us can become like Solomon in some way, shape, or form if we work hard enough.

Nothing is keeping us from that. I mean, we just read this passage of all the stuff he did. Did you notice all the I's and the I made for myself in all those verses? I mean, it was repeated over and over again.

[11 : 52] And that's the American motto. Man, work hard to earn for myself, to spend on myself, to buy and build for myself. It's easy to get addicted to spending on ourselves.

It's easy to live a life of self-indulgence. And guys, guess what? You can do this making \$100 a month and you can do this making \$100,000 a month. I knew a lady.

She owned a casino. She made \$100,000 a month and she ended up having to declare bankruptcy. We think, we're just like, how in the world do you get there?

How do you do that? The big lie of our hearts that our hearts tell us is that, you know what? The next raise, if I can only make this much more money, then I'll be satisfied. Then I'll be able to get everything I want and I'll be okay and I'll be able to stop pressing and pushing.

But then, you know what? We get it and we start spending the gap. Then we need more. Suddenly, the sedan needs to be a Land Rover. Right? It's that thing, man, our hearts.

[12 : 57] Do-do-do-do-do-do-do-do. We dig. Then the Land Rover needs to be a Ferrari.

Do-do-do-do-do-do-do-do. We dig. The \$800 Nikes replaces the \$50 variety that we used to get, right?

Do-do-do-do-do-do-do-do-do-do-do-do-do. We dig. You know that you can buy a \$10,000 belt on Rodeo Drive if you wanted to? Here's the thing.

I've never met a person who didn't increase their spending when they started making more money. Have you ever wondered why that is? Have you ever thought why we do that? Solomon talked about testing his heart.

Man, that is a good testing of the heart question, thinking about those things. And Solomon hits on it when he says, I became great and surpassed all who were before me.

And we love that statement. I don't know how you were as a teenager, but that was, man, ingrained in my head. That was my goal for life. I wanted to be great and surpass all who were around me.

[14 : 00] There is this drive in you and me to be better than our neighbor. That phrase, keeping up with the Joneses, right? We connect with that because we get that. That is like, that shows what our heart, where our hearts are at.

Keeping up with the Joneses is that drive to be great and to surpass all. Now let me qualify this a little bit further. This desire to be the greatest doesn't have to be this like worldwide, worldwide domination thing.

I'm going to take over the world. I'm going to show everyone. And it could be limited to your family. It could be limited to just your workplace. It could be limited to just your sphere of friends. The point here is that however great or small the boundaries of your universe and my universe are, we want to be the sun in that solar system.

That's what's going on here. We toil away for that reward. Scanning, digging to find that man, it's empty even if we are lucky to achieve even a modicum of success in what we're trying to accomplish there.

when we achieve it, we find that man, it doesn't pay off like we thought it would. It's actually empty. And that's what Solomon gets out in the very next verse, 11. Then I considered all that my hands had done, all the building and the achieving and the gathering of silver and gold and concubines.

[15:22] I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I expended in doing it. Behold, all was vanity. It was a vapor. It was empty and a striving after the wind.

There was nothing to be gained under the sun. And Solomon is telling us, he's warning us, guys, I had it all more than anyone before me. You are never going to match what I was able to achieve. You are never going to match what I was able to accomplish and amass as far as wealth and possessions. Everything that a man's heart could want, I got it. In the end, guess what? I gained nothing.

There wasn't an investment or a booty call that ever satisfied my heart's craving for that ultimate good. Everything wasn't enough.

At some point in our lives, we actually wake up to that reality, right? The pursuit of pleasure and possessions. We wake up after we've run after sex and power and wealth and they just never seem to be enough.

[16:24] It just demands more and more and more and it takes and takes without giving anything back and we all get there just like Solomon did and then we all do what he did. We search elsewhere.

Verse 12 says, So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly for what can man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done.

Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly as there is more gain in light than in darkness. The wise person has his eyes in his head but the fool walks in darkness and yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them.

Then I said in my heart what happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise? And I said in my heart this also is vanity. For the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten how the wise dies just like the fool.

So I hated life because what is done under the sun was grievous to me for all is vanity and a striving after the wind. So Solomon's saying I've tried this life of hedonism and materialism that proof of verse list and that will let me try a life of virtue a life of wisdom and again here's what he concludes after doing that wisdom can make life better but it can't fix everything.

[17:50] See there's this glimmer of hope we have in a life of wisdom and a life of virtue. It's the first time actually Solomon says that there is something to be gained in life. When he talks about this in verse 13 he says I saw there is more gain in wisdom than in falling as there is more gain in light than in darkness and that's the thing life without wisdom is like stumbling around in a dark room right and if we fill up that dark room with all kinds of pleasure and possessions we stumble around in the dark just stubbing our toe all that much more right now what I'm I'm not saying that to be wise you have to take this vow of poverty or celibacy or anything like that man wisdom isn't about avoiding living life wisdom is about seeing how to live it's the virtuous life it's the moral life and I think we would all agree that a virtuous life yields better results than a self-indulgent one I mean think about this it's better to tell the truth than to lie it's better to be faithful to your spouse than to bring on the pain of infidelity on your house it's better to be generous with your wealth than to hoard it they did a study with two groups of people each group all the individuals were given \$20 one group had to go spend it on themselves the other group had to go spend it on someone else guess which group came back and experienced more joy in how they spent their \$20 like by and large it wasn't even close by and large the people that spent it on someone else reported so much more

happiness in how they spent their money than in the other group see wise living living to what should be always yields more joy and often times in the moment wisdom calls us to something harder which is why we don't often do it wisdom is costly in the moment but the reward later is so much better now we all see the stark difference between the wise man and the fool but what is surprising is that although they may be different in life they are the same in death right verse 15 then I said in my heart what happens to the fool happens to me also why then have I been so very wise it doesn't matter how good of a person you are guess what guys you're going to end up like the fool next door morality will not buy you an extra decade of life let alone an extra day and that's a tough thing to accept right this is like the great wrestle atheists have and if there is no God if there's no afterlife if there's no judgment then really what's the benefit or purpose of morality at all what's the what's the point of living well what's the point of living a life for the sake of others rather than just living a self-indulgent life if in the end there is no difference between the pimp and Mother Teresa what's the point see if there is nothing after this life then piety just like possessions and pleasure are meaningless to be moral to be virtuous to be pious is absolutely pointless you will die and be forgotten just like the fool that's a bummer death is the great equalizer but we think maybe okay if that's true maybe just maybe there's one last hope here one last hope to tilt the scales in our favor to make something out of this life so that we can shake our fist at death and say ha

I got the better of you and that is the final search that we see Solomon turn to in hopes to make this life count what can I do to not be forgotten can we build something that will carry on after us can we leave behind a legacy a heritage that points to us and in that way we can kind of live on in a sense right we can live on after we pass on that's why rich people slap their names on buildings and foundations and charities right Trump infamously visited Mount Vernon George Washington's estate not too long ago and he said you know what if he was smart he would have put his name on it Trump puts his name on everything he builds why because man he wants to be remembered right and I'm not saying like I'm not trying to put him down I'm just saying that he's a great example of what we're how we're wired and that's the other side of the coin right our hearts and have this search for greatness we are afraid of being forgotten but here's the thing no matter how hard you try whether it's putting your name on a building or a gravestone our best efforts will dissolve one day verse 18

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 and who knows whether he will be wise or whether he'll be a fool yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and use my wisdom under the sun this also was vanity so I turned about he did this u-turn in his life I gave my heart up to despair man to think of such things that is depressing right he's saying man I just gave myself up to despair what is my hope what is my hope over all the toil of my labors under the sun 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 a vanity and a great evil what has a man for all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun 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

I think we all have a bit of dynasty desire in us right we all man we all want to create a dynasty that's going to just we hopefully it'll just live on past us and just keep going when our team wins the championship it takes like five minutes before we start thinking about the next season and how we need to dominate that right so from Alexander the Great to the Tudors to the Godfather to the Patriots we want the power to stay in the family we want the power to be associated with us in our name even after we die we just want it to live on we want to create that dynasty to carry on our name and Solomon he's like man I'm uncovering that desire in your heart and guess what guys I'm gonna crush that dream you have how often does it happen that subsequent generations piddle away their parents wealth the spoils we leave behind don't stretch that far

I know people that spend so much of their life trying to build something to leave behind that they end up never really living but as we discussed earlier the answer of the response isn't to live for pleasure it's not to just waste it all today there isn't the answer isn't living in the tension between those two things right actually it's a totally different way of living actually it's a totally different way of seeing life under the sun and it's this the good our hearts are searching for is a free gift not an earned reward verse 24 I think this is probably one of the most pivotal parts of the book of Ecclesiastes 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 for apart from him who can eat or who

can have enjoyment for to the one who pleases him

[26 : 10] 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 the one who pleases God this also is vanity and striving after the wind that verse 24 it says there is nothing better for a person that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment it's actually it's a very odd phrasing in the original language it's hard to translate and some people don't translate it the way it's been translated here it could also say this it isn't in a person that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil and to be honest that translation makes more sense with how what he's been talking about it is not in us it is not in us to find and experience and create lasting joy and meaning in our life we can't do that it's not in us we're not capable of doing that no matter how hard we try or what we work towards it's not in us and this is what

Solomon is saying life can be lived we can choose to live our lives from the belief that all that is meaningful is earned I work hard I get to reward myself with good things pleasure possessions wisdom guys that's the life of endless performing to earn it's that rat race it's that chasing after the wind that's the life of vanity in the end what we're promised from him is that all our work adds up to nothing there's nothing to be gained under the sun all the rewards we work for have vaporized but then he offers us another way here it is also to work and toil under the sun but instead of trying to perform our way into earning good things it's a heart that receives that's the heart of grace that's living in grace receiving life as a gift and this is a seismic heart shift guys this isn't little this is big massive see

Solomon tested his heart rather than trusted it the heart problem in the reward system is that we feel entitled because of our performance but life reminds us that that's not how things work that isn't how life works we're one market crash away from bankruptcy we're there's depression and despair and anxiety that come upon us in an instant without reason the sharpest mind can succumb to dementia and Alzheimer's and even if in life we avoid all those things there is one thing that you and I can't escape and that is death possessions!

pleasure wisdom all these good things in that moment slip out of our grasp now if we believe and live in the reward system then we look at that and we say you know what yes that is a great injustice that is a tragedy that is unfair that is vanity that makes life pointless and worthless but on the other hand if we live life seeing that everything we have is a grace gift it's given to us we receive it then we get to hold those things with open hands and see in the economy of grace the gifts aren't good based on what they are rather they're good because of who they come from those gifts! grace is good are good because he gave it to us and here's the thing your heart my heart will never be satisfied until they meet the giver that is when our hearts stop that search that is when it lays down the scanner it finds God it lays it down it stops searching!

[30 : 45] digging searching digging searching digging what happens when you experience infinite goodness perfect goodness unmatched goodness that will never end what happens is what we're promised you experience peace and joy in your heart that's what happens you don't feel like you have to earn significance anymore and here's the other thing guys the other reason we have peace and joy in our hearts is that we realize we don't have to be afraid of being forgotten that when we pass away that we don't have to worry about having our legacy live on because we have everything we need in him now how does this happen the answer to that question is at the heart of the gospel Jesus came and earned what you and I could never earn he was the wisdom of heaven who came to live under the sun he was the king of creation he possessed it all he owned it all yet he left that he left that place of privilege and possession and power to come under the sun he made himself weak he made himself poor when you look at

Jesus life it's an incredible life he was generous he was virtuous he was wise in every way and despite his being poor despite his being despised and hated yet he lived the most meaningful impactful life how could he do that he had a heart that was connected to the goodness of his heavenly father and Jesus he was the son that was so connected with the father's heart he said man I and the father are one there was this unbroken!

relationship with them and he knew it he lived it and that he didn't come here to live that to keep it to himself he came to share his advantage with us see the Bible says that Jesus is the fullness of God to see him to know him is to know the father to know his love the band comes up in Jesus it says the goodness of God the goodness of God the father is put on full display we get to see it in him what do we see when we look at Jesus in the gospels a generous good heart that gives graciously

and his offer to us is always man guys don't live to earn live in grace live in receiving you get to live in what I earned for you you don't have to try I give you the best without price this is why we come and we celebrate communion as believers we're reminded of this by faith we freely receive the gift of

God's goodness which isn't his stuff it's him it's knowing his heart and we come and we're reminded of that as we partake of the bread which represents Jesus his body broken for us and we drink which represents his blood that was shed for us we're reminded that man he did it for us we don't have to earn it that is our hope we stop living to reward ourselves with things that won't last those things that are empty and meaningless that lead us into doing things we regret it reminds us man communion reminds us we don't have to earn God's love he gives it to us freely but you have to believe and that step of faith means that you repent you turn and you trust and as we come to do this online some of you still like to give old school you like to do it in person that's cool we have giving buckets at the communion tables but we give not because we're trying to earn something from

God we give because man God is good and his mission is big and in that moment where we give we're saying to our money you know what I'm telling you right now you're just vapor you're not the substance of life you're just vapor you can't add anything to me you can't satisfy my heart only God can if you're a visitor and you're here man there is no pressure for you to give we're not asking you to do that this is a privilege for those who call one harbor home but as we come and before we come just take communion to take communion let's reflect let's reflect on where we need to make shifts in our heart where we need to surrender to him and if you're here and you haven't crossed that line of faith yet man your next step isn't to come take communion but man I'm holding out to you man surrender to Jesus by faith in him today you can experience that one soul good that your heart

[35 : 51] God I thank you for all my friends in the room those who know you those who don't know you God I thank you that you love them all you love us all and you want us to know and remind us that everything our heart has been searching for and stuff possessions materialism sex wisdom and knowledge Lord those man those don't even compare to you and our hearts are never going to be satisfied until they set on you until they behold you we find our one soul good help us we can't do it on our own heavenly father we need your grace amen