

Narcan for the Soul

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 June 2026

Preacher: Chris Oswald

[0 : 00] A bigger blessing to the kingdom and so on and so forth. We ask for that as well. And finally, Father, we lift up those who are just struggling with unresolved sicknesses and conditions.

And we just pray, God, your mighty hand of blessing upon them, not only in the physical, but especially in the spiritual. And we, Lord, as a congregation would say on behalf of all those people who need something to change, that we, together, even now in this time of prayer, come together to testify that you, O Lord, are trustworthy.

You are good. You are faithful, even when we don't see it. And there's countless testimonies in this room to say that that is so. And so, Father, if we can be an encouragement, if we can give our faith to those who are lacking it, Father, please help us to love those who are suffering well this week.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. All right, we're in Ecclesiastes again. Second week in the title of this message is, This Preacher Compares That Preacher With The Preacher, Jesus Christ. And I thought of the Spider-Man meme, for those of you that know the three Spider-Man pointing at each other. So, this preacher talks about that preacher, the preacher who wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, and compares him with the preacher, Jesus Christ.

[1 : 24] My main concern, whatever book of the Bible we happen to be in, is that I understand how Jesus Christ wants to use the place we are at in his word to feed his sheep here at Providence.

There are a lot of other things people look for in preaching. But my fundamental call before the Lord is to feed his sheep with his word and to consult him and seek him to know how to do that.

Now, I will tell you that at some point I maybe made a risky decision. I told Dove probably about 10 months ago, You know what, Dove?

Why don't you come up with the preaching calendar? Why don't you figure out what books you think we need to hear, and then I'll preach them. And so, we're not in Ecclesiastes because I decided we should be in Ecclesiastes.

Mr. Judeo-Christian wanted us in Ecclesiastes. No, I'm kidding. But I'm so glad that we're here. And one of the reasons for that is it's not something I would have picked, but it forces me to ask, Lord, what do you want me to do with this?

[2 : 38] How can I use this to feed your sheep? And I think that one answer, as I've sought the Lord on this, can be found in Jesus' parable of the seeds and the sower, which is Luke 8, verse 9 through 14.

And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom, but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see and hearing they may not understand.

Now, the parable is this. The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard. Then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved, verse 13.

And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root. They believe for a while, and in a time of testing, fall away, verse 14.

As for what fell among the thorns, they are those who fear, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.

[3 : 55] So I'm asking the Lord, how do you want your sheep to feed on the book of Ecclesiastes? And I think one answer is, is that there is a kind of person who has received the gospel, who has heard the gospel, but will not move forward and advance in the gospel or godliness because cares and riches and the pleasures of life cause their fruit not to mature.

And I think Ecclesiastes is one of the weapons in our Savior's arsenal to pull these thorns out of our lives, allowing the word of God to advance and prosper as we want it to, advance and prosper. So that's why I think today we're going to do a lot of contrasting what this preacher says in Ecclesiastes with what the preacher, Jesus Christ, says, and maybe glean some interesting information.

The first thing I think that the book of Ecclesiastes is doing for us is it's serving as a kind of spiritual narcotic. It's given by the Lord to us to wake us up out of an intoxication with the word, with the world.

There's two important words, at least two important words in the book of Ecclesiastes. The first one I've talked to you about, it's Hebel, and it's the word for vanity, and it appears, I think it's like 37 times in this one book.

[5 : 26] The majority of Hebrew uses of this particular word take place in this one book, Ecclesiastes. And that word simply has this idea of evaporation, of something here today and gone tomorrow, short-lived.

We talked about the water cycle last week and how this thing that you have today may not be here tomorrow. It may be absorbed and returned elsewhere. So that's one important word in the book. And this is interesting because, you know, when we were going through 1 Peter, which was the book we were in before this one, a book Dove also picked, when we were going through 1 Peter, kind of one of the key themes of 1 Peter is that they are in a refiner's fire to test the purification or reality of their faith.

So there's a disillusion happening. They're in the refiner's fire. All of the dross of their sin, their flesh and so forth is being burned off, and their pure, true faith is being revealed.

Well, it wasn't coincidental that Dove picked Ecclesiastes next because there's a different kind of refinement that happens here. And that's sort of, you might say, the refinement of evaporation or things are taken away and what's left and what remains.

[6 : 48] And that's one of the key ideas of Hebel. And there's another key word in the book of Ecclesiastes, and that's the word yitron. And that word gets used a fair bit, not as much as Hebel.

But this word is an accounting word, and it simply means what is left over at the end of the day. It's kind of the word for the balance, the net, not the gross.

What is left over after the world has exercised its taxes, its taxes of futility, its taxes of toil, its taxes of entropy?

What is left over? That's the word yitron. And Ecclesiastes' preacher is using that word to do the same thing. It's a spiritual narcotic. It's saying, you know, so little of the things you care about will come to anything.

That's kind of the basic idea there. That word appears usually, as you're reading Ecclesiastes on your own, that word appears usually as the word gain. And it's in a number of the chapters.

[7 : 51] For instance, one of the very first questions asked, I think the first question asked in the book, chapter 1, verse 3, what does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

The idea is, what's left over? What's the balance? And then chapter 2, verse 11, then I considered that all my hands had done, all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

So this is one of the things that Jesus is doing with the book of Ecclesiastes in your life and in my life, is he's trying to sober us up. I don't know of anybody in the Old Testament who would agree with Jesus' statement, what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul?

I don't know anyone in the Old Testament who is in a better position to agree with that statement from Jesus than the preacher in the book of Ecclesiastes. He can say absolutely correct, absolutely true, what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?

I mentioned that Ecclesiastes is something like spiritual Narcotic, and those of you that are first responders or medical people, you know exactly what I'm talking about, but some of you may not, and so let me explain.

[9 : 22] That was one of my intellectual side quests this week was to learn about the chemistry in these drugs that are known as antagonists, and I think it's absolutely fascinating.

So we have these opioid receptors throughout our brain and our spinal cord and all that, and it goes even into our stomach, and those love these little drugs like heroin and Vicodin and so on and so forth, and chemically, they're very attracted, and they'll just land in those spots and sit there, and

there's these feelings of euphoria and so forth, and that's the high that people are pursuing. I remember after one of my knee surgeries, I got handed, this would have been in the early 2000s, I'm one of those guys that got handed like 100 Vicodin, and just on my way out of a same-day surgery, and I remember taking one at night, and I woke up because I knew enough that I should take them at night.

I knew I shouldn't be awake for this. I had a suspicion, and I woke up because my face hurt, and I was like, well, why does my face hurt so much? It's because I was smiling in my sleep. I was that into the Vicodin.

Anyway, your body has these receptors, and people abuse those receptors by taking various drugs that make them feel a sort of elation or euphoria, and of course, it takes more and more of that drug to get you to the point where you want to feel, and the problem is is that those receptors, like the drug that sits on those receptors can make you so chill that you literally forget to breathe.

[10:51] These actually take your, these drugs actually take your breath away, and so you will die if you take too much of these drugs, and you will simply stop breathing. Now, what is going on with Narcan is that it is chemically even more interested in those opioid receptors, and so you inject this thing into somebody, and it immediately fills those opioid receptors and displaces the opioids themselves, and it's like a jolting kind of thing, and obviously, my son's a firefighter and a paramedic, like he knows this stuff, and he was telling me last night, I think, that there's kind of two ways to wake up someone that's about to, you know, die, and he's like, the one that the police use, because they're dumb, police, no, the one that the police use, they do the nasal one, and they just cram it all up there, and the person just jolts out of their, out of their stupor, and they're angry, and they're immediately experiencing kind of withdrawal, you know, in real time, and he's like, but we, we finesse a little bit more, we try to give them an IV, we don't give them a full amount, and so on and so forth, but what Narcan does is it rescues you from an intoxication that will kill you if you don't get it?

That's what Ecclesiastes is. It is, it is an intervention to rescue you from being intoxicated by all of the pleasures that the world promises, promises up here, delivers down here.

Ecclesiastes is essentially displacing fantasy with reality and romanticism with accounting.

Ecclesiastes is that friend you have who always responds to everything you say with, well, actually. That's why some of you like reading Ecclesiastes more than others. Some of you are more into the, well, actually approach than others, but it is a wake-up call.

It is supposed to jolt you awake. It does that because the preacher in Ecclesiastes has been uniquely equipped to explore every potential kind of lane of human achievement or pleasure or satisfaction.

[13:07] Some of you have watched a movie with someone who's an expert in the field that that movie is covering and they will repeatedly tell you that's not how it actually happens.

This is happening all the time for people that know science better than I do when I use my science illustrations. You're like, well, not quite, Chris. But you've watched a movie with someone and they're like, well, that's not how that happens or that's not how that works or that was massively oversimplified and reality is that's just what Ecclesiastes is doing.

It's the person who explored it all the way interrupting your romanticized vision of what romance can be or what financial freedom can be or what achievement can be and it's just constantly, well, actually, it's constantly sobering you up from the various delusions.

The reality is is that people who become intoxicated to secondary pleasures, whether they be money or power or control or beauty, they just need to be reminded of some certain truths and that's what's happening in the book of Ecclesiastes.

I would say those truths are summarized as follows. Life is way, way, way more chaotic and complicated than you'll ever expect it to be.

[14:30] I was wondering, do you think I can make any money on this idea? I buy a bunch of land out in western Kansas, like a lot of land, and I put a roller coaster that takes like a full day to ride.

Just one roller coaster and that roller coaster is called life and like massive chunks of this roller coaster, you're barely doing anything followed by three seconds of terror and then you're barely doing nothing followed by this overwhelming feeling of existential dread and then some people make fun of you and then your neck hurts.

Like, could you like, could you like do a, like let's teach you about life on a day long roller coaster because that's the reality. It's way more complicated than you think it's going to be and just when

you think it's boring, it's not and just when you think it's stable, it's unstable and just when you think you've got this skill unlocked, that skill doesn't matter anymore and it's just, that's the wake up call. That's the Narcan. There's four kind of pieces of this that the preacher launches into early on starting in verse 13 of chapter 2.

The first one is this, death, it's undeniable. Death is undeniable. I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly as there is more gain in light than in darkness.

[15:55] The wise person has his eyes in his head but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I perceive that the same event happened to all of them. Then I said in my heart, what happens to the fool will happen to me also.

Why then have I become so very wise? I said in my heart, this is also vanity. And again in verse 17, the wise dies just like the fool.

So Narcan squirt number one, we're all gonna die. Narcan squirt number two, look at verse 18. I hated all my toil in which I toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me.

And what's worse, verse 19, 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. So point number one, we're all gonna die. Point number two, returns for our labor are unpredictable and not always fair. Look at verse, chapter three, verse one.

[17:02] Third kind of shot of Narcan. Everything is always changing. Verse one of chapter three, for everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven, a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant, a time to pluck up what is planted, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to break down and a time to build up, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones together, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to seek and a time to lose, a time to keep and a time to cast away, a time to fear and a time to tear and a time to sow, a time to keep silence and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

I think it's funny how the type B hippies use that as like a poetic kind of comforting song when all the type A people I know are just like, this is terrible. How am I going to plan for anything if all the seasons keep changing?

And I know some people that are so deluded, they read that thinking that they're the ones who get to turn the page and change the seasons. It's like, no, no, no, no. That's done for you without your consent. You're in one season, not anymore.

You figured out how to do this, and now that. That's Narcan's shot number three. And Narcan's short shot number four, which I think is a doozy, is found in verse nine of chapter three.

What gain has the worker from his toil? I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

[18:53] I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and do good as long as they live. Also, that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil.

This is God's gift to man. Now, here's the crazy thing about this fourth shot. You can't enjoy something unless God gives you the power to enjoy it.

So that even if you were able to dodge all the wrenches of outrageous fortune and season changing and manage all the variables and somehow achieve the thing you wanted to achieve, your ability to enjoy the thing you have always dreamed of achieving is in God's hands and not yours.

This is one of the most important concepts in the book of Ecclesiastes. It's said previously in chapter 2. It's so important it's repeated. Chapter 2, verse 24.

There is nothing better for a person than to eat and drink and find enjoyment in their toil. This also I saw is from the hand of God. For apart from him, who can eat or have enjoyment?

[20:08] I think we often think about part one of that idea being, yeah, I can't do X, Y, or Z unless the Lord helps me to do it. Yeah, you won't be able to accomplish what you'd like to accomplish unless the Lord helps you, unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.

The part we forget is that that's only half of the story. And the second half is you need God's help to even enjoy what you've achieved.

Do you know anybody for whom enjoyment itself is just constantly elusive? Their brain seems to be wired for ingratitude.

They simply can't be grateful for the things the way that they are. And it's just a constant drip of discontentment, no matter what their circumstances.

You know, again, the body sends two signals, and they're supposed to be kind of equally loud. And one of them is, I'm hungry. And one of them is, I'm full.

[21 : 18] And what happens when one of those gets out of whack? What happens when your desire to be satisfied outstrips your ability to be satisfied?

Well, this is kind of where morbidity comes from. I found that out firsthand. I can speak on this one. Like when one signal gets jammed up and the other one, the I'm hungry, I need more, more please, more please, it's not enough, more please.

When that signal gets jammed up and the I am okay, things are okay, gets jammed down, both physical and spiritual obesity is the result.

You will not be able to live the life that God's called you to live unless he gives you the ability to enjoy what he's given you. I don't have time to walk through this, but I will tell you that I am convinced and would be happy to talk to you personally, that if I just described you spiritually, I would tell you there is a likelihood that that's the discipline of the Lord.

I would tell you it's pretty likely that your lack of contentment, at least you should strongly consider that it's discipline from the Lord.

[22 : 42] I think it's the consequence of a consistent state of ingratitude that you have been warned about and a constant taking God and his gifts for granted. And so I would just remind you that if you are this person, the Lord God is the one you should appeal to, not to give you the next thing, but to teach you to listen to the I'm full signal and appreciate what he's already done and is doing and has promised to do.

This is highly controversial, but I'm not persuaded that at least a significant percentage of clinical depression that shows up in the body is God's discipline on an ungrateful, self-obsessed soul.

And I would just say, like, if you are that person and all you're hearing is more signals for, I need, I need, I need, it's not enough, it's not enough, and you aren't aware and satisfied of God's goodness and blessing and the way he has filled you and cared for you, you need to do some business with your God.

It's essential, actually, that you learn to talk to this God who can give you this blessing of being able to enjoy. So that's the spiritual Narcan section, at least for now, of the sermon.

But I also want to point to you that there is a limit to the preacher in Ecclesiastes' understanding.

There is the preacher's limit in Ecclesiastes, and then there's the preacher, Jesus Christ's answer.

[24 : 27] Look again at chapter 3, verse 16. Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice even there was wickedness, wickedness, and in the place of righteousness even there was wickedness.

I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and every work. I said in my heart, with regard to the children of man, that God is testing them, that they may see that they themselves are but beasts.

Verse 19. For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same. As one dies, so dies the other.

They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts for all is vanity. Verse 20. All go to one place. All are from the dust, and two dust all return.

Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth? So I saw that there is nothing better than that man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot.

[25 : 32] For who can bring him to see what will be after him? So I need to take a moment, and I'm aware that it's warmer in the room today than normal, and I'll try to accommodate that, but it's important stuff here.

The Bible is always going to do what God wants it to do. It's never going to do more than what God wants it to do. And one of the things the Bible is doing is it's showing us what God wants us to see in that moment of theological history, or what people saw in that moment of church history, if you will.

What I'm talking about is a term that theologians use called progressive revelation. And let me just read the definition from the book on what progressive revelation is. Progressive revelation is the principle that God disclosed himself and his redemptive purposes gradually across the span of

Scripture, with later revelation building upon, clarifying, and bringing to fullness what was given in earlier and often more partial or shadowed forms.

It does not mean earlier revelation was false, that God changed his mind, but that the same unified truth was unveiled by stages, reaching its climax and interpretive key in Christ.

Why do we need to talk about that? Because of what the preacher says in verse 9 and also 11. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

[27 : 11] The writer has a category for eternity, but he has not yet received the full revelation that what would become what we understand of life beyond this life, life in the next life.

Our preacher doesn't know some of that. Jesus does. It's why you have to almost think in twinsies to some extent.

And by the way, Jesus encourages this in chapter 12 of Matthew. Jesus says that he is the greater Solomon. He says someone and something is better.

Someone and something better than Solomon is here. Jesus is much wiser than Solomon.

Solomon sought to understand what was created, but Jesus created all there was that Solomon sought to understand.

Solomon got on every trail of potential pleasure and followed it to its end. Jesus made the whole trail system, sees the telos of all things, and knows the maximum capacity every pleasure has to bear.

[28 : 21] Most importantly, Jesus knows what the preacher in Ecclesiastes doesn't. Jesus knows what will happen to a man when he dies.

So when we're reading Ecclesiastes, we have to know, what is this book really for? I think spiritual narcosis is probably a good way to talk about it. But we also have to know, what are the limitations of Revelation at this stage?

And the one, main one would simply be, there is not a full-blown, well-articulated architecture of eternity in the book of Ecclesiastes.

It is its main obvious lack. It simply doesn't have a really clear understanding of life after death.

He says in this section, who knows what will happen to man when he dies? So here's what we know in this room. If we're studying all of God's revelation, which he's written and finished in the Word of God, here's what we know.

[29 : 25] We know this, that those who die apart from Christ will spend eternity in a state that is defined by its absence of all pleasure. What is hell?

To one extent, hell is the absolute negation of every gift of God. It's functionally the place where ungrateful people experience the reality that they were always believing in, that God isn't blessing them, that God isn't caring for them.

Hell is the place where there are no good things. There's no friendship in hell. There's no food in hell. There's no achievement in hell. There's no sleep in hell. Certainly not any air conditioning in hell. There's no relief in hell.

There's no achievement in hell. People who go to hell will be there because they were guilty of worshiping and serving God's creation over the Creator who is forever blessed.

And the person in hell's eternal punishment will be to live in a world utterly devoid of the Creator's blessings. The very thing they hijacked and abused and made too much out of will completely be absent.

[30 : 50] Now those who die in Christ will spend eternity in a state that is defined by the perfect union of the Creator and His creation. There will be no more sin.

There will be no more curse. There will be no more interruption or confusion about the nature of this or that good. We will have all the goods and they will all be subordinated beneath the sum and bottom, the ultimate good, Jesus Christ.

That's what those who die in Christ get. So on the subject, when the preacher in Ecclesiastes, through the Lord's inspiration, says, I don't know where people go, we'll see as we progress through the book, he knows there's a judgment coming.

But when he says that, we have to remember that we have the whole Bible and we have the one who's self-identified as being greater than Solomon and he has brought the full message to us so that we can really calibrate the meaning of life fully by using both preachers and both covenants to understand what it is that God's trying to say to us.

The ignorance of the preacher, I think the question is, we identified last week that, okay, there's this tenfold, like this statement that gets repeated ten times and this is the structure of the book.

[32 : 17] That statement is summarized. Guys, just enjoy your life while you can and fear God. Do good. Like very simple, you can listen to last week's message.

It's just a very simple message. Now we have to ask this. Does that message change when you introduce a belief in eternity?

When eternity is clear to you, does that message change? Now we're not going to answer that entirely today, but that's one of the things you've got to deal with as you're working through the book of Ecclesiastes. Let's kind of play with it a little bit.

To what degree does the preacher's lack of understanding of the new heavens and the new earth, let's say, negate or change his prescription that appears over and over again to just enjoy the little things, fear God, honor him, and so forth.

Well, let me see if I can walk you through this at least partially while also being respectful of our time and temperature. Let's move to point three for a minute and think about another extremely consequential statement.

[33 : 37] It's kind of like the fifth shot of Narcan if you really need it, I guess. Ecclesiastes 4.4, look at this with me. Ecclesiastes 4.4, then I saw that all toil and all skill and all work come from a man's envy of his neighbor.

This is also vanity and a striving after the wind. As if the writer of Ecclesiastes hasn't painted a grim picture enough, he's now saying, guess what, guys?

People spend their whole lives trying to get stuff just because their neighbor has that stuff. This is mimetic desire on display.

He's saying that people are moved by what Rene Girard would call mimesis, mimetic desire. That most people are working for things not because they originally desired them, but because they see other people desire them.

And that most people are pursuing life goals that were more caught than taught, more absorbed than intentionally formulated. But be serious with yourself for a minute.

[34 : 54] Why do you want your house to look the way that you want your house to look? why do you want to look the way you want to look? Why is that car the one, that car, that car, why is that car the one you'd be a little proud to park in the driveway?

And who taught you to be proud of it? Where did you get your sense of what a successful 30-year-old looks like and a successful 40-year-old looks like?

Did you reason your way to that? Did you start at first principles? Have you been suspicious of where it came from? Have you even been, honestly, like, talk to guys for a minute, have you even been manly enough to consider the possibility that people are trying to manipulate you and yours? or are you just kind of moving along, desiring what you desire with no serious examination as to why?

Have you ever had a single original desire? Are you sure? Or even a thoroughly thought out one? Or are you, like the rest of the world, moving along a predefined set of values that is varied enough and branded enough so that you think when you're into alternative music you're actually doing something alternative?

[36 : 33] Aren't we mostly guided by comparison and coveting and marketing? Aren't we mostly guided by what we see not on the table that we think should be on the table and why should it be on the table?

Because it's on somebody else's table. Wake up. Wake up out of the stupor, friends.

This is another reason why I'm so grateful we have a greater Solomon because the problem is clear as day here. The solution solution, not so much.

So what is the solution? Here's what I would tell you. When people start talking about Rene Girard or mimetic desire and so forth and this idea that you're getting all of your categories from others, that's fine.

It's a great diagnosis, absolutely true. Here's where most people will lie to you. They will suggest that you are capable of coming up with your own and you're not.

[37 : 48] You are a mimetic figure. That's what you do. You figure, this has happened your whole life, you figured out what's important by watching other people demonstrate what they believe is important.

You and I are people who imitate. That's what we do. And every dissatisfaction you're currently feeling right now, every ambition, whether it's fulfilling to you or not, it's all subject to some level of comparison that you've exercised in prior to your evaluation of this or that thing is important or good or the absence of it is bad and so on and so forth.

And it's like you and I are stuck. It's a closed system. We are going to value things by looking at someone else. And what we have here is that Jesus Christ knows that and very much with genuine love in his heart tells you, follow me.

Imitate me. Look to me to set your determination of what's important and what's not important, of what's beautiful and what's not, and what's essential and what's not.

Look to me. You're going to look to somebody. Look to Jesus. It is inevitable that you will have as an adult a system of values of what you want and don't want out of this life and it will always have come from someone other than you.

[39 : 28] And Jesus, I think, is just that rare exception of a person who is honest enough to say, that's all I want from you is to do what I want. Do what I want. Be like me.

Follow me. Copy me. So we have the problem brought forward in Ecclesiastes 4. We have lots of problems in Ecclesiastes and all of the solutions wind up being in one way or another what you know I'm always going to say in pretty much every sermon.

The solution is always Jesus. If you're visiting Providence or new to Providence, my main commitment in terms of hermeneutics, understanding God's word is I want to see Christ everywhere.

I want my mistake to always be on the side of seeing him where he isn't, not missing him where he is. And I will tell you that if you're here and you're hearing this preaching, we always wind up in two places almost every week and that is Christ is the pattern we follow and the power that allows us to follow the pattern.

Those are the two things we always wind up on and we're here again today and we're saying, you know what? Jesus, the greater Solomon, had some answers to questions that the first preacher did not have.

[40 : 50] Would his life have looked, did Jesus' life look exceptionally different than what the preacher prescribes? that's another good question to ask.

Did the life of Jesus Christ look exceptionally different than what this prescription occurs over and over and over again in the book of Ecclesiastes, to just enjoy the simple things and fear God?

And I would say probably not as much as you might think. Jesus had 33 years-ish on the earth, an awful lot of that time was spent in the normal. An awful lot of that time was spent at the dinner table, in the quietness, in the work, in the toil, in the simplicity.

But it was always done under the fear of the Lord and so he knew when to step away from this season and embrace this season, when to step away, when to let go of the season to build or to heal and to embrace the season, to kill or, in his case, to be killed.

I don't think that Jesus' life actually looks that much different than what Ecclesiastes is prescribing. I think it's just different to us because we are so far off from the life that Ecclesiastes is prescribing.

[42 : 22] One last thing. One tweak I would make, the one Christological tweak I would make to the book of Ecclesiastes is this.

You're told ten times to enjoy your toil and enjoy the fruits of your toil. I think there's a lot of value in that and I'll talk about that a lot throughout this series. But friends, I want to be super clear about this.

The uniquely Christian approach starts by enjoying the fruit of his toil. The word toil is not just some word as a replacement for work.

It is bearing all of the connotation burden of the curse. The word toil is not a neutral word. It's a curse word for work. And it's like, yeah, we definitely want to live a life that's happy with simplicity and that enjoys the labor of our toils.

But friends, day one of your new life in Jesus, if you're here and you've not decided to follow Jesus, day one of your life is not you enjoy the fruit of your work. Your life as a Christian is built on the fruit of his work.

[43 : 33] Specifically, his toil. And I want to make sure everybody here does not escape that essential thing. Have you built your life on the toil of Jesus Christ?

who carried his cross and bore your sin to make an end of all your sin and to make you his friend and his father's friend and to let you be with him forever?

Is his work the thing you most enjoy? Is his work the thing that you understand is the foundation of all your enjoyment? It's interesting because, you know, the writer of Ecclesiastes says, enjoy your toil, eat and drink.

Enjoy your toil, eat and drink. And you're like, what did God give us to remember the labor of Jesus for us?

He gave us something to eat and drink. The second Solomon, the better Solomon, is able to tell us so much more than the first, God.

[44 : 44] Including that he has done the work to assure that you can be his forever, that you can be forgiven and you can be his and that you can walk with him and imitate him.

So I'm going to pray for us. And I would just say this, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, come to these communion stations, grab your elements, return to your seat, and just be prepared to celebrate the toil of Jesus Christ for a moment.

But if you're not a follower of Jesus, man, I would just absolutely do anything to convince you that you need to do that. There's so much more rest on this side of this question.

And so don't come and take the elements, sit in your seat, and do business with God. Here's what I would tell you to pray. Let me give you a specific prayer. Dear Jesus, these people seem to enjoy Jesus.

and I don't. Can you make that the first thing that you help me to enjoy? God, His Word, the Gospel? Ask the Lord to do that for you while those who have already seen His miraculous gift come and partake of the elements.

[45 : 57] Let's pray. Father God, we praise your holy name for your glorious, beautiful Bible. What a beautiful thing you've given us, Lord. And it's all the more glorious because it essentially testifies to Jesus Christ.

Even in places where there are mysteries and unknowns and darkness, Lord, we see all of those mysteries pointing to you, Lord Jesus. We thank you for your Word.

We pray, God, that you would inject us with a sobering agent, Lord. Keep us from being deluded by this world. Lord, give us the grace to see rightly.

And I think that your Word says that when we see rightly, we see Christ. And that Christ is the light by which we see all things rightly. So, Lord, make much of Jesus even as we celebrate this table now.

It's in his name we pray. Amen. Come. .