

Meaningless Life Under the Sun vs. Meaningful Life Under the Son

- **Vs. 2, 14.** What bleak, dark, discouraging outlook on life! Everything: meaningless, pointless, purposeless, empty, & vain – a chasing after wind, something you can never ever catch. **Vs. 2b.** I'd call that a pessimistic worldview! But what troubles/haunts me, this: realistic worldview? I wonder. These: inspired words/King Solomon, Teacher. Remember Solomon? Son King David. When Lord told Solomon ask for anything wanted, Solomon didn't ask for riches or power; wisdom. And Lord: **"I'll do what you've asked. I'll give you a wise/discriminating heart, so that there'll never've been anyone like you, nor will there ever be"** (1 Kings 3:12). God made Solomon wisest man ever lived. Remember famous account of 2 different women both claimed be mother/same baby? Solomon ordered baby cut/half. And when 1/women vehemently protested, Solomon knew she: real mother. Solomon: so wise that when Queen/Sheba visited from Africa: **"In wisdom/with you've far exceeded report I heard. How happy your people must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you & hear your wisdom!"** (10:7-8). Solomon reigned during golden age Israel: time/peace/prosperity. He: wisest/wealthiest king on throne. Enjoyed every pleasure/luxury imaginable.
- So what troubles/haunts me: how can wisest/wealthiest man/world, at end/life look back at everything seen/done & say, by inspiration/Holy Spirit, **vs. 2, 14?** Sounds awfully pessimistic. But realistic? Is that really what life like under sun, here on earth, in this sin-cursed world. And I think: he's right!; is meaningless! Just listen to Teacher: **vs. 18-19a; 21-22.** Under sun, we work so hard, every day: get up, go school, go work, do/build/fix/type/print/plan/manage this – it never stops! And for what? Few coins in pocket? We work so hard to earn this \$, accumulate this stuff. But this \$/stuff does not last & we cannot take it with us when die. Later in Ecclesiastes, **"Everyone comes naked from their mother's womb, and as everyone comes, so they depart. They take nothing from their toil that they can carry in their hands"** (5:15). Few weeks ago at Luth Piner camp, I heard story re husband/wife who owned/opened grocery store, well into 70s. Worked so hard make business successful. Then when finally retired, just few weeks in, husband died heart attack! Life: short! Fact is: going die! Maybe you're at point/life where think death: long ways off; or maybe: next few years. But you have no idea! When I: Sr/Husband at MLS, lived in 4-man dorm room. Today, 2 my roommates now dead: 25 & 42, few weeks ago. Under sun, life: just fleeting breath. In fact, that's what word meaningless actually means: breath, like when exhale on cold day: see breath, but only for moment, because vanishes instantly. That's your life/stuff, under sun – just breath; lasts only moment. Meaningless!
- And really sad part: so often we focus so much more on life under sun than life beyond. We pour so much energy/effort into accumulating wealth & finding pleasure. But we're never content! In another part/Ecclesiastes: **"Whoever loves \$ never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with income. This too: meaningless"** (5:10). \$ can buy temporary happiness, but cannot satisfy soul or give true peace. But so often we live like it can. Just look at Gospel/today. Jesus: **"Watch out! Be on your guard vs all kinds/greed; life doesn't consist in an abundance of possessions."** Then tells parable re man who focused solely on \$/pleasure; didn't think at all re Lord, faith, or eternity. So lost everything! (Luke 12:13-21). Probably had great parties & lot/fun; but lived meaningless life under sun. Or think re Psalm 90 (sang; hymn O God/Help): reminds us how short life is. **"You sweep men away in sleep/death; they: like new grass/morning. Though in morning it springs up new, by evening: dry & withered... The length of our days: 70 years, or 80 if have strength. Yet their span is but trouble/sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away."** So I think Solomon's right. Under sun, life is meaningless!
- But, we don't just live our lives under sun. As Christians, we live our lives under Son, Son/God, Jesus Christ, dear Savior. And Jesus alone makes life meaningful. Want turn attention to 2nd reading, Colossians 3, which makes this profound statement: **"You've been raised with Christ... For you died, & your life is now hidden with Christ in God"** (Col 3:1,3). Paul saying: resurrection/Christ, & your baptism into Christ, is what makes life (& only!) truly meaningful. See, gotta go all way back garden Eden, where Adam & Eve first fell/sin. When disobeyed God: earned curse & passed that curse of a hopeless/empty/meaningless life onto us, children. In fact, their 2nd son they actually named Abel, exact same word Solomon uses here for meaningless. Abel=meaningless. I think they saw havoc their sin wreaked on world & named son after it. But there in Eden, Lord made promise: send his Son to undo damage, by bearing world's sin & dying in place. And 2k years ago, on cross outside Jerusalem, Solomon's descendant Jesus/Nazareth bled/died/cried out finished, then walked out own tomb! Rose from dead & conquered meaninglessness of life under sun. And when you're baptized into Christ, when God washes away sin & adopts/family, then you: forever connected to Jesus. Col 3:3,1. Now you don't just live under sun; you live under Son/God! And that's what gives life meaning!

- Wanna know what'd really make life mnnnglss? If guy MM talked to outside J's tomb actly was gardnr & actly did take dead body/J out/tomb & toss it in ditch rot away – that'd make life utterly mnnnglss. Paul once: **“If Xp has not been raised, yr faith: futile” (mnnnglss) (1 Cor 15:17).** But under Son, under crucified/risen Son/God, under cross & in shadow empty tomb, our lives have a btfl new meaning. Take dth, for instnc: bec/J, dth is now gateway to etrnl life in hvn w/J forever. And on Last Day, J'll undo dth & raise us fr dead. **“When Xp, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear w/him in glory” (Col 3:4).** Or take your day/day life, occpntn, or even wth. Under Son, we can view our lives/jobs as ways serve Xp & oa in love; and we can view \$ as way serve Lord & ppl. We don't let wrk become our life's goal, nor do we let \$ become our god. Think re this: what if your house burned to ground & you lost evthng own, ev penny to yr name. You cld still say w/Paul, **“I have learnd to be content whtvr the cirmstncs” (Php 4:11)** bec **“[I] have been raised w/Xp”** and **“[my] life: now hidden w/Xp in God.”**
- True meanng in life: not found in how much we own, or how much make, or what pleasrs enjoy. These: gifts fr God, and we receive them w/thanks. But in end, all these temprry things, under sun, in this sinful wrld, are just mnnnglss – a chasing after wind. But when we have Xp; when there is nthng more imp in our life than Xp; when our wrld is centered on Xp, bec we know Xp's love is centered on us; when we find our identity as his belvd/baptzd child; and when we trust him, not only to bring us to etrnl life, but also to use us in his service in this life (whtvr that service may be) – that is life under Son, and that life is truly mnnngful!
- **Vs. 26a** (bel in J); that's a mnnngful life, under God's Son. But **vs. 26b** (unbel); that really is a mnnnglss life under sun. Smtms we let our pessimsm get best/us, & begin think: evthng really is mnnnglss. But w/J, we Xians are optimists. We have Gos, good news of good God. We know that life: so much more than a frivolous cycle of work, pay, & pleasure, that evntly leads to dth. We have etrnl trsr/Gos, riches/hvn! That's life under Son, under J. And J makes life truly mnnngful!

Ecclesiastes 1:1-2, 12-14; 2:18-26

¹The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:

²“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.”

¹²I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³I applied my mind to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens. What a heavy burden God has laid on mankind! ¹⁴I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

¹⁸I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. ¹⁹And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. ²⁰So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. ²¹For a person may labor with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then they must leave all they own to another who has not toiled for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. ²²What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun? ²³All their days their work is grief and pain; even at night their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless.

²⁴A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, ²⁵for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? ²⁶To the person who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.