

Topic	Life Sucks
Reference	Ecclesiastes 1:1-11
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In our hearts of heart with some life experiences, if we sit down on a bad day without any hope beyond of what we can see, if we look at our country today, if we look at our economy today, if we look at the variety of entertainment that is becoming more and more worldly, more and more trying to find satisfaction of self and yet you come home empty and tired and weary and you would agree and say 'Life Sucks'.

These 11 verses are a challenge because they are the everyday reality of those without hope. These 11 verses and these two words is the mantra of people who cannot see life beyond the sun.

A Very Peculiar Teacher

The words of the teacher or in ESV the words of the preacher. Who is this preacher? It says that he is the son of King David. He is a king but he doesn't specifically tell himself that he is Solomon, because if it was really Solomon he would just put his name on top of that. It is a very respectful name, but he leaves that vague. The word teacher or preacher is actually 'Qoheleth' in Hebrew and what that basically means that he is the gatherer. He gathers people together to a gathering to teach. The Qoheleth therefore just be a personification of wisdom but from a very pessimistic point of view. He is older, he is more experienced, he is therefore more realistic, he is therefore less optimistic than the voice that we normally hear in Proverbs, but the real teacher behind it is not the words of the teacher or the preacher. The teacher or the preacher is actually used as a catalyst to help us journey through the Book of Ecclesiastes. The real teacher behind this book is the author of Ecclesiastes and he will have his last say in chapter 12 verse 9 onwards.

This teacher teaches very profoundly of what life is all about and from that we come with the first few words of teacher.

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

That is a very rude awakening. What the teacher is doing is that he is actually bringing out two nuances. Number one is, he is saying straight in your face that life living for itself is not worth it. The word that he used is actually the word 'hevel', which means vapor and it is the first Hebraism on talking about the quickness of life. How life quickly comes and how life quickly goes. How life sucks just because it just flies by very fast.

Another teacher of Ecclesiastes says it very well that life therefore is like vapor. It looks solid, it looks something that you can trust but try and grasp on it and it will suddenly disappear. Life

can also be like vapor where you can try and shape it and manipulate it but when you die so deep into trying to figure out what is your best life now, you will be caught in all the vapor and you will end up being lost in trying to figure out what is the meaning of life in life itself. So hevel, hevel, everything is hevel. Life is only like a vapor, life is like a mist that you try and grasp to find some solid foundation only to slip out of your hands. Life is like trying to dive into and trying to maneuver to what exactly you want, you end up being lost. Life in that sense therefore sucks.

There are three points that the teacher is teaching this morning in these 11 verses and he points directly to three things that we try and find meaning and find comfort in life.

Self-Significance Sucks

3 What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun? 4 Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. 5 The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises.

We will hear the phrase under the sun a number of times in Ecclesiastes. It is a Hebraism of living life only in what you can see from sunrise to sunset and the next day all over again. Life under the sun is basically therefore asking us to reflect what therefore do we find comfort in if life is all about just living from 9 o'clock in the morning to 5 o'clock, go about our day and as the sunsets we get ready to go to bed only the next day to do it all over again.

6 The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. 7 All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again.

If you think your life could even add a cup of water into the sea in hope that it will increase in volume, no, your significance on this world, our significance on this world dies out the moment we breath our last and for some of us it dies even earlier the moment when we realize that everything that we build up for either is going to fail or even if you succeed it actually means nothing.

So the question that we have at hand is what is therefore the meaning of our short life?

A movie released in 2003 to parallel the experience of Ecclesiastes in an everyday modern setting. Frances having gone through a heart wrenching divorce after doing what she thought was right in a marriage, went to Italy and bought a villa on a whim and tried everything life under the Tuscan sun had to offer. She tried having a carefree life but found no purpose, so she swung herself into a no-strings-attached relationship with a man who later she found out is engaged to another woman while at the same time did some acts of kindness by cooking for the workers renovating her apartment, played matchmaker and mediator for a young couple and even offered her pregnant lesbian friend to stay with her after she broke up with her partner. The scene ends at

the young couple's wedding: the bride and the groom happy together, Frances' pregnant friend had given birth and is seen happily singing and dancing with her newborn, while Frances sits all alone tired and lonely, that is until a young man turns up out of nowhere, showing interest in her and she in him... a long while I would always finish watching that movie with a smile on my face, but after reading what the Teacher said in Ecclesiastes, I now feel sorry for Frances, for under the Tuscan sun, life is offered only so much and at best she might repeat her life cycle all over again. Under the Sun, under any sun, life is merely Hevel, vapor.

Where does our significance lie and does it stand the test of time?

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. 3 They have no speech; they use no words; no sound is heard from them. (Psalm 19:1-3)

When we just take a look at the mountains or the villages we will realize that there is God. The one thing missing though is the being that was meant to represent His image. Where is humanity? Humanity fleeting in life, trying to find God in their selves, has no right in this place. Sure you try and find significance by... any architect would like to sign off on a building that will hopefully last beyond his lifetime and then it crumbles to pieces. Some engineers and some doctors and some scholars and some businessman would like to be able to make great significance in life but then they are quickly forgotten.

We try and find significance in the things that we do from the little bit to the great but all we have to do is go to bed and the next morning we got to do it all over again, no difference. So you can try and make certain significances into this world like trying to build a beautiful skyline in Hong Kong, but climb up a mountain and look down from the mountain and see if it cares about your building. That mountain that has been there from nearly the beginning of time, will look at your building and say, I give it a wink of my eye, close open, falls to pieces. Self-significance sucks because it does not last, it just will be fleeting.

Percy Bysshe Shelley is an English poet and he pen this very famous poem and it talks very accurately about how fleeting and how the sense of time will just take anything that you find self-significance and just put it back down to dust. Here is what the poem says

*I met a traveler from an antique land,
Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,*

*The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal, these words appear:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."*

Self-significance if you try and find life's purpose and meaning in self-significance alone it is going to suck because it will just disappear.

Legacy Sucks

Why does legacy sucks?

9 What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. **10** Is there anything of which one can say, "Look! This is something new"? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time. **11** No one remembers the former generations, and even those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them.

You see the uselessness of trying to think too far into the future. Nothing is new under the sun. discoveries of all sorts have always been there. When scientist says, we found something, it is the thing that has been there for a long time and they just discovered it.

By the use of technology today and satellites we know that the circumference of this world is 40,300 kilometers, which is quite an interesting feat to be able to measure the circumference of the world, but apparently a mathematician, Eratosthenes of Cyrene, had already done that with a stick and observing the shadows. By observing the stick and its shadow and measuring one space and another space and then using basic fractions he found out in the year 320 something BC that the world is about 40,000 kilometers in circumference. We forgot about him and the legacy that he left behind in mathematics is like clean water in the sea, it just disappears.

The fashion world also reminds us that legacy sucks because at the end of the day we repeat itself. The hipster fashion for teenagers nowadays is actually the fashion from 50s and 70s. The similarities are profound because we are repeating again. Legacy sucks because there will be no difference. Second thing about life under the sun and the big-big theme throughout all of this is this, legacy sucks because life is out of our control. Legacy sucks because life and life of others is out of our control. There is a Japanese proverb that we like to tell our children and it says this

"When parents work hard and their kids enjoy life, the grandchildren become beggars."

Life is unfair because sometime when you work hard you don't get the reward. Legacy sucks because life is not fair. Life is not in our control. People of middle age will suddenly go off and some people of old age are still alive. Legacy sucks because life is unfair.

Life tells us that there are other nuances in life that makes life so complicated we cannot control. Jesus said it very clearly. The fight was again about inheritance. Two men came up to Jesus and the younger brother said, please tell that man to divide the wealth of our father accordingly. To which Jesus said, why did you bother me with things such as these. Then Jesus told them a story about a man

The Parable of the Rich Fool

¹⁶ And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ ¹⁸ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’ ²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ ²¹ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

Instead of thinking about the poor, instead of thinking about helping other people, which normally in Jewish culture you are supposed to. If your store houses cannot fit your crops will not last long, so just give it to the poor so that they may have temporary satisfaction or temporary comfort so they can try again next day of their life. But he says, no here is what I am going to go, I am going to build a bigger store house. I am going to put all the things inside there. I am going to sit back and shake back legs and say well done you farmer. Actually he wasn't the farmer, he was the land owner. He didn't till the ground, he didn't water it, he didn't care for the fertilizer. He just kept stock and pay wages, but he looks at himself and says, well done I am going to enjoy the next few years in life. God came up to him in the night and says, you fool, this very night I shall take your life and the very interesting statement that he said. To whom then your stuff go to? Are you sure that they will uphold it as much as you would?

It is interesting because not only did Jesus questioned the person's choices and thinking that he might not be thinking for himself, he might be thinking for his kids. I will store a little extra, I will put up in a trust fund so that my kids don't have to suffer so greatly for a start, but then he realized are you sure that your children will benefit from it, because actually Jesus is saying that as quickly as your life may go so is the life of your children and grandchildren.

Self-significance sucks because it disappears so quickly. Legacy sucks because it is not in our control.

Satisfaction Sucks

In the very middle of these 11 verses there is a reason why this all of life sucks.

8 All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing.

What the teacher is saying is that life and all of its intricacies is hard. If it was easy, everyone would have been doing it. Marriage is hard. I would never forget the sermon that my dad gave for me on my wedding day. He pointed straight at me and he said, Mark love is hard. He told me that before and then when he came on the pulpit he looked at me in the eye while holding on that piece of paper and say love is hard because it is so intricate, it is so difficult. How to balance, because sometimes love you don't love for the sake of your own satisfaction, you love to satisfy the other person. It is so hard and yet the very reason we will do all these things in the first place without God to find our own self-satisfaction, it never ends but we will never be satisfied in this life.

Some of us might have gone around the world tours before. We want to see and we want to find satisfaction in being able to see the great things in history, but at the time when we come back we probably might be thinking about the next vacation. We probably might be thinking about our next trip. We probably might be thinking about our next meal.

We will never ever be satisfied, so what is the point of going through all this hard life only to never ever really be satisfied. In the Old Testament it talks about this story about how King David was having a civil war and he was far away from his hometown, Bethlehem. He has been on the road for a long period of time and one day out of his homesickness he said this, "O how I would love to just get a cup of water from my father's well in Bethlehem". There were so many soldiers in Bethlehem that were trying to assassinate him, but three of the best soldiers under David's rule out of love for King David went into the night, killed enemies quietly along the way, snuck in to that well, drew water from that well, put it in a jar and carried that jar back to King David with great skill. When the next morning David woke up the soldiers were kneeling saying, here you are my dear King David water from your well. King David took it with great joy but before he drunk he said, what did you do, how did you got it? They told King David that they love him, we went into the night at a nearly dying for the sake of your satisfaction we give you this water. King David thought of honoring them by drinking it but then he realized something is not right. He took the jar and pour it on to the ground and he says that I will never let my satisfaction cause the potential waste of life of another. I will never let my satisfaction be abusive to the people down the road.

Friends, how many times that we buy stuff in the shopping mall without really caring about the people who are making these things. We try and find satisfaction in our lives without really caring about the lives behind. Let say, if we try our very best to give life and be satisfied with

your life in the nicest and the best way, the most morally good way possible, I have a question for you which Jesus also asked

What good is for someone to gain the whole world yet forfeit their soul?

What is the point of trying to find satisfaction in our own life but then realizing eternity without God is an illusion for you but when you certainly realize that you need God but you have spent so much time trying to find satisfaction in your own life you forgot about honoring God, you therefore lose your own eternity? What is the use of having gain the whole world and yet forfeit your own soul and even the secular world felt it. They feel it even until today.

Duncan Riach is an android and IOS app maker. He is a genius. He makes specialize applications. He is a multimillionaire by 27 years old and he is not a Christian, a practicing homosexual and yet he himself also realize this.

I was a multi-millionaire by 27-here's what I learned:

- *Money doesn't make you happy*
- *There will always be someone richer than you*
- *Luxury is a very addictive drug*

Crystal Bassette recently became more and more popular on the social media. She is now a pastor, a wife of a pastor in a small church in US. Before that she was a porn star, who comes in the top ten video winners in various genres of pornography, earning 300,000 US dollars a year. She goes to the club, drinking and clubbing every night and yet when she wakes up the next morning she feels empty. Now she had a radical change, she came to know Christ, walking into a church she found out that she was pregnant with a second child and do not know what sort of environment will be suitable for her children. Legacy sucks but it is still important for us to be responsible for it. She said my life had to turn around, I was looking for satisfaction in areas where I get nothing but disappointment, so she turned to Christ, married a pastor and now she is helping little teenagers who are considering that sort of lifestyle because it looks satisfying, it looks like fun, it looks secure and a lot of them are actually quite desperate. They come from a poor family background. So she goes and speaks to them before they even attempt to go into that business, to say no, that is a death trap.

Satisfaction sucks because it never gets contented.

What then therefore is worth living for?

Where can we find a direction to be able to overcome all these things. In my journey in looking out for meaning in life I looked at various religions. I came back to Jesus because in the end he was the only God that face the wind of meaninglessness. The eternal life that only lived 33 years. When Jesus was teaching his disciples he was giving encouragement. It was very close to

him also going to be arrested, trialed and crucified. He is going to experience the grunt of hevel, the suckiness of life. He did not do it for his own self-satisfaction because how can you be satisfied knowing that you are going to be flogged by a whip that has a potential of pulling out the kidney from your body. His disciples denied him. Was he satisfied? Because he was going to be sacrificed to satisfy the wrath of God and yet when facing all that he took a very interesting turn in life. He then prays this,

“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. **2** For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. **3** Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. John 17:1-3

This is the life that does not fly away, this is the life that does not suck, this is the life that does not disappear as soon as you grasp it. This is the life that will last longer than any vintages that we can ever think of. This is the one that will last forever.

With Jesus Christ proving to us that life is beyond just living under the sun and that is not fleeting under him suddenly everything turns around. Our self-satisfaction goes to become his glory; our legacy is no longer our responsibility but our inheritance through Christ. Our satisfaction is no longer guided by our own, never contented life. Satisfaction then comes through Jesus Christ who looks upon you and say I no longer call you servants, I call you friends.

The only thing that changes all this is through the person that is Jesus Christ that says, I now can give you eternal life that you may know God and know him who can turn your self-significance to inheritance as Children of God, who can turn your legacy instead of being responsible for your legacy you will become the one who inherits the legacy of being called children of God. From your satisfaction you can then turn it away and know that Christ finds satisfaction in you when you know him and know the God who has sent him.