



## **“The conclusion of the matter...”**

**Steve Stanis - Eccl 12:8-14 - 20 Sept 20**

### ***Finding the Point of Life's Meaning (v13)***

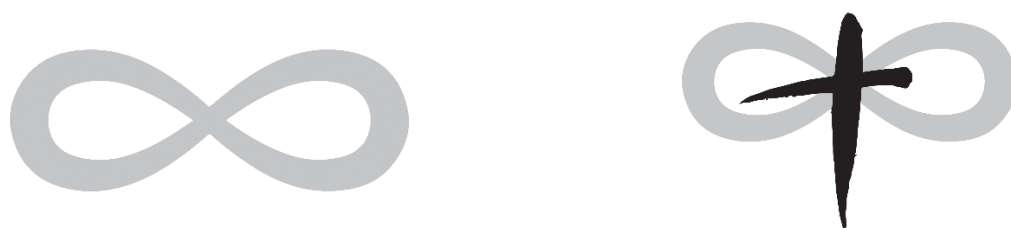
Throughout Ecclesiastes the author is trying to document all the ways we find meaning in our lives apart from God. He lets the Teacher deconstruct this. The Teacher gives a hard lesson in reality, targeting wisdom, pleasure, status and career. We have heard this over the past eight weeks. Our longing for the power of authority and control, the safety of financial security and being held in high esteem drives so many of our choices and feelings about this life. But these things are momentary. What is lasting comes in verse 13 of Ecclesiastes.

We are to fear God and keep his commandments. We are to seek wisdom, know freedom and live our 'now but not yet' existence of our heavenly hope. Verse 13 takes us beyond life's hurts and disappointments. Instead, God invites us to live as if we are in the Promised Land. The promise of heaven is for now and eternity.

Ecclesiastes has taught us that God's presence fills his creation. He wants us to enjoy his presence now and forever. How do we practise living like this amongst the struggle and futility that Ecclesiastes explains is the toil of life? Because this life is not all there is. God fixed the broken world. He cleared the fog. He had a plan for salvation in his son, Jesus. Jesus confronted evil and darkness in all its forms, liberating people from sickness, sin and even death.

The resurrection gives hope and assurance that God's promises are true. Ecclesiastes doesn't call us to lose hope. God calls us to a righteous fear that will humble our heart and draw us all into faith that is obedient to the King. God gives us hope.

***The concluding summary of the point of Life's meaning (v9-14)***  
***Infinite symbol – draw it with me...the Cross is the point!***



Verses 9-14 are a final summary and evaluation of everything the Teacher has said. The author wants us to hear everything the Teacher has to say, then helps us to process it to form our own conclusions. He says to accept that everything in life is out of your control.

The Teacher describes the gift of God as enjoying the good, simple things in life. Life is not what I think it should be. This is why the author affirms how important the Teacher's words are. He likens them to a shepherd's staff with a goad (or pointy end) like a cattle prodder. While it might hurt, the Teacher is trying to push you in the right direction.

The author warns us not to try to solve life's existential puzzle by reading and analysing too many books. Be wary of building anything as an addition that God does not desire in the meaning of our lives.

Think upon the book of the Bible itself. I received one of the best pieces of advice at Moore College, now 25 years ago - it is possible to learn to read the Bible as a literal manual with over-righteousness that could make the scriptures a companion for an overwicked life.

Learning the information without the Spirit filled, Cross-centered point of God's eternal plan can so easily distract each of our focus. Jesus explains this in our New Testament reading today.

***Jesus tells a story recorded in Luke 12:1-7***

Titled 'Warnings and Encouragements': Jesus talks to an almost immeasurable number of people whose minds are capturing the truth that would set them free. Also listening are the pharisees, who are plotting against Jesus using their religious superiority.

Beware of head knowledge consuming you, Jesus challenges the Pharisees.

The word 'yeast' or 'leaven' has two meanings in the Jewish Torah. It signifies flour dough rising to become leavened bread. But it also signifies something fermented, sour and corrupt. This is the context in which Jesus uses the word here. It only takes a little yeast to affect an entire batch of dough. It only takes a little hypocrisy to undermine the best intentions. The actions of hypocrites do not conform to their words.

Jesus calls us to personal integrity – coherence between what we believe, say and do. KAC:

K Knowledge

A Application/Act

C Church/Cross of Christ!

Always in unity....

Walk it as you talk it! Jesus is tough on hypocrisy and often hard on people who use religion for their own ends. Our true selves come through, just like the hypocrisy of the Pharisees will not always remain hidden. Hypocrisy can cause great damage to my life and that of others. Very often I am not aware of my own hypocrisy, so I ask for the grace of God making my heart pure. Blessed are the pure of heart for they will see God.

I pray constantly that our church can be united in love with faithful followers whose minds are capturing the truth that will set us free. Jesus reminds the crowd to keep their face brightened to the search of the light illuminating the truth that only Christ can bring.

Let Jesus have control of all of God's creation.

Strive only after God's wisdom, words, writings and practices. Jesus reassures simply that as the sparrows, pennies and even every single hair on each head has been measured (I know yes especially mine 😊)...

'Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.'

(Luke 12:7b).

I let the gentle force of these words enter my heart and inspire me with God's provident care for me personally. I remain in wonder and gratitude. True spirituality is always on some level or in some way

about letting go. Jesus said also in (John 8:32), “the truth will set you free”.

Freedom is letting go of wanting more and better things, and it is letting go of our need to control and manipulate God and others. Remember, infinity in Christ.

Let go of all the measures of the world beside the single point to the infinity’s purpose for eternity – the cross of Christ. I hope that makes you cross!

### ***The concluding summary of the point of life’s meaning (v13-14)***

Back to Ecclesiastes. My conclusion takes us back to verses 13-14. We need to challenge our false hopes to place our true hope in Jesus, the one who clears away the ‘hevel’ and brings true justice to the world. This is the hope that fuels a life of integrity and faithfulness before God, despite the fact that I remain puzzled about life’s mysteries.

The Teacher recognises the importance of learning wisdom and living in the fear of the Lord. His implication is, since you can’t control your life, stop trying. Learn to hold things lightly or with an open hand because the only thing you can control is your attitude to the present moment.

Remember back in our series about the seven churches. To the church of Philadelphia in Revelation 3:7, Jesus said, “What he opens no-one can shut, and what he shuts, no-one can open.”

Stop worrying and choose to enjoy God’s simple blessings that he sends every day.

“Come to me, all of you who are weary, and I will give you rest...For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28, 30). How might we have a faith that serves us to this end, rather than feeds the anxieties, fears and dread we hold so tightly? Let’s learn this practically through this COVID-19 time together. Life has meaning, even if you can’t make sense of it.

Be in awe and wonder of our great and mighty God, accept his love, enter his presence and ***with your one precious life, live for him.***

Amen.