

Theme: **The meaning of Life**

Text: Ecclesiastes 5:10 – 20

Occasion: 22nd Sunday after Pentecost / Stewardship Sunday 1

Date: October 21, 2018

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO

Grace and peace to you as you learn from God's past about your future, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today in our search of God's past we come to King Solomon. How King Solomon is credited as being a wise man and people came from far distances to learn from King Solomon's great wisdom given to Him by God. God had given King Solomon a wise and discerning mind to govern His people, but King Solomon was not always wise in listening to God's Word. One of King Solomon's greatest faults was not listening to God's Word about having only one wife and that wife sharing the same faith as her husband. King Solomon instead listened to the culture of his time and had many wives and most of his wives did not share his faith in God. King Solomon's many wives became his down fall just like his father King David and at the end of his life, as he looks back on his life, he shares some of the wisdom that he learned from God about the meaning of life. King Solomon shares with us, **"This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them—for this is their lot. ¹⁹Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God. ²⁰They seldom reflect on the days of their life, because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart."** (Ecc. 5:18 – 20)

What is the meaning of life for you? The meaning of life can change from when you were young and growing into adulthood to when you are old and seeing your life slip away. At the end of King Solomon's life, he came to understand that the meaning of life is not what you achieve but how you use what God gives to you to finding satisfaction in the work and the life that God has given to you to live. Have you found that satisfaction in the toilsome labor of your life in this world? Has God blessed you with wealth and possession that you have been able to use to give thanks to God for all that He has given to you? Do you worry about what is going on in your life or are you enjoying each day as a gift given to you by God? When we are young, life is often an adventure that we are eager to explore or we are reluctant to experience. When we are older, life can be a burden or a journey of trust all depending on who's in control of your life.

King Solomon through his life moved from being strong in his trust in the ways of God to being at other times trusting in his own abilities just like each of us do in our lives. What we trust in right now, has a lot to do with what the meaning of life is for us. If our trust in our abilities and the wealth that we can achieve by our abilities, then God through King Solomon has this to say to us, **“Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless. ¹¹ As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owners except to feast their eyes on them? ¹² The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep.”** (Ecc. 5:10 – 12)

If our trust is in the things of this world then there will be those nights when our doubts in our own abilities will prevent us from finding the sleep that we need to do the toilsome labor of the next day. King Solomon had learned this first hand in his life and I’m sure that there are some of us here today who have learned this same lesson over and over again also. Jesus reminds us of this very thing as He says to His disciples, **“How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!’ And the disciples were amazed at His words, and said to Him, ‘Then who can be saved?’ Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man it is impossible but not with God. For all things are possible with God.’”** (Mk. 10:23,26-27)

King Solomon was given the treasures of the world and he fell into trusting the things of this world more than God at times in his life, but God through His Word lead him back to trust in God again and again as he to say to us, **“I have seen a grievous evil under the sun wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners, ¹⁴ or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when they have children there is nothing left for them to inherit. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ This too is a grievous evil: As everyone comes, so they depart, and what do they gain, since they toil for the wind? ¹⁷ All their days they eat in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger.”** (Ecc. 5:13-17)

What are we teaching our children to cherish in this world? What we teach our children and others by our words and actions has an influence on their lives that says a lot about what the meaning of life is for us. We all came into this world because of the love of God give to our parents.

That love may have been nurtured in us by our parent if they had learned through God's Word about that love of God for them and shared it with us. That love was shown to all the world when **'God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.'** (Jn. 3:16) That love is our greatest inheritance and yet it is forgotten because we have been persuaded by our Evil Foe to trust in the things of this world instead of God.

It's impossible for any of us to make it through life without God's love being a part of our lives, for God not only gives us the breath of life, like He did for Adam and Eve in the beginning of the world, but He sends His Only Son, Jesus Christ, into our sin filled world to redeem us from all our sins so that we can have the breath of life in His love, peace and joy now and forever. The Old Evil Foe doesn't want us to have life in God's love, peace and joy and will use whatever he can to keep us away from God's love, peace and joy in this world.

Our problem in this life comes when we let the old Evil Foe convince us that we can do it on our own, without God's love, grace and mercy giving us life instead of death. That same Old Evil Foe that doesn't want us to trust in God's love, grace and mercy to keep us alive will be working on our children, our friends and our neighbors to take the breath of life from them also. What do you really want our loved ones, our friends and neighbor to inherit from you? Death and all the pain that comes with it that will never end OR life in the love, peace and joy of God forever?

If your answer is life, then you are a steward of God's love, grace and mercy given to you. A steward is not the owner of what he has but the one who is responsible for carefully managing all that has been entrusted to him. That's the meanings of life, for Stewardship is the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care, God's love, grace and mercy. The meaning of Life and stewardship are connected, as King Solomon said, **"Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God."** (Ecc. 5:19)

God gives each of us the wealth and possessions that we have in this world and the greatest of them all is God's love, grace and mercy. God gives each of us the ability to enjoy the lot of life that we have and the toil that we have in this world. God gives us all this because of His

great love, grace and mercy for us and is looking forward to living with us in His Love, peace and joy for all eternity, that's what make us His stewards. Is being a steward of God's love a part of your life? That's a question we have to ask ourselves as we live in this world now and wait for our creator to come again and take us to be with Him forever. As good stewards of God's love we look for ways of sharing God's love, grace and mercy given to us with our family, friends and neighbors. That's what God gives each of us the ability to do in this world in many different way through God's Word and sacrament as the Holy Spirit works in our lives, but that's what our Old Evil Foe is going to try to talk us out of.

The meaning of life has a lot to do with who we are listening to. King Solomon found that it is hard to remain focused on the living Words of God throughout his life without God's help. That help is given to us through God's Word, through our sacraments and through our fellowship in God's Word and sacraments daily. In the book of Ecclesiastes often hear the phrase, "**This too is meaningless,**" for all the things that King Solomon found himself doing that did not lead to life, peace and joy in this world and with God forever. Do you want your live to be meaningless or filled with the love, peace and joy that God has given to you as the meaning of life? Hold onto the inheritance of life given to you by the creator of life in this world and you will find the true meaning for life that is worth sharing and inheriting, God's love, peace and joy. Be God's Stewards in this world of all that God has given to you, that comes as you let God go to work in your life through His Word and sacraments. Share the love, grace and mercy of God in this world and find the true meaning of life with God. Amen.