

## When Emptiness Gives Meaning Ecclesiastes

Do you know what the word “vanity” means?

1. Excessive pride in or admiration of one's own appearance or achievements.
2. The quality of being worthless or futile.

It's interesting that the same word can mean both! That a person/thing can be attractive & accomplished, & at the same time be worthless & empty!

Today we are looking at the book of Ecclesiastes. The Hebrew word “hebel” is used 34 times in this book, 5 times in one verse at the very beginning (vs. 2).

This word is best translated into English as “vanity”. Why would the author highlight such a word, & use it as the driving force behind his message?

Who is the author? His name is never given in the text, but there is much evidence that points to Solomon, the King of Israel, as the author of this book.

It's interesting that a man with such riches, power, position, wisdom, etc., would choose to use in a sermon near the end of his life this word, that speaks of both “having it all”, & yet “having nothing” at the same time!

**Ecclesiastes 1:1-2:11** – All is vanity! A chasing after the wind! A pursuit of meaninglessness! What's the point, if we gain everything & yet have nothing?

We as human beings are always trying to fill our lives w/ things that we believe will satisfy us, but with each addition often comes a greater sense of emptiness!

Examples:

- The 3-year-old at home who longs to get on the bus and go to school!
- The 8<sup>th</sup> grader who wants nothing to do with middle school anymore!
- The senior in high school who just wants to graduate & be done!
- The college student who longs to start a career in their field of study!
- The single person who dreams of their wedding day!
- The married couple who desires more than anything to start a family!
- The divorcee praying for another person to love, and be loved by!
- The unemployed seeking that dream job!
- The employed working so hard for that big promotion!
- The 9-5pm, Monday-Friday, worker just longing for that vacation!
- The 20-year employee that still has 20 more years until retirement age!
- The retiree wanting a bigger boat, better golf clubs, more time!

We are always chasing after what's next, what's bigger, what's better, what's more satisfying, etc. But even if we get it, it's never enough!

Just take Solomon for example. He had it all, but his 700 wives and 300 concubines obviously reveals his own unquenchable desire for more!

Solomon may have left us a bad example, but he did leave us some words of wisdom: “I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after the wind” (1:13-14).

He goes on to say with all the wisdom of man, “What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted” (1:15). Basically, he is saying that on our own, we are not able to fix this “vanity” within us!

“For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow” (1:18). We can know this about our sinful condition, we can even understand the effects of it, but we are powerless to change it!

But there is hope because of what we celebrated last week!

- Not in a holiday, or a bunny, that only comes along once a year!
- Not in baskets full of goodies that are probably already consumed!
- Not even in chocolate, that is hollow and filled with unwanted calories!

Our hope is found in resurrection! That the empty tomb is actually the remedy to our vain and empty lives! Because Jesus is not in the grave, our lives have eternal meaning and significance... now and forever!

### H.C. #45 – How does Christ's resurrection benefit us?

- First, by his resurrection he has overcome death, so that he might make us share in the righteousness he won for us by his death. We are no longer defined by our own appearance & earthly accomplishments; we are defined by Christ's work on the cross & His resurrection!
- Second, by his power we too are already now resurrected to a new life! We no longer have to live according to our flesh; we are a new creation!
- Third, Christ's resurrection is a guarantee of our glorious resurrection! Our lives now have eternal meaning & worth! All is no longer Vanity!

What's empty doesn't normally give us meaning, but the empty tomb does!

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