

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

July 17, 2022

Ecclesiastes Revisited: Amusement

Ecclesiastes 2:1-3

Prayer: *Father, I just again, I thank you for again the testimony that we heard today and I thank you for the truth of that testimony. Lord, it's incredible that all of the struggles that we are in are building up for us an eternal weight of glory, and we just praise you and thank you for that. We just think today, Lord, of just the gifts that you give us, number one is a life with meaning and that's so incredibly important, so incredibly blessed to have. And so I pray today, Lord, as we kind of go through a catalog of the gifts that you've given us in addition to a life of meaning, you've given us your word, you've given us the Bible that we can turn to and grow from and you've given us the presence of your Holy Spirit and that, too, is something that we so greatly appreciate. And so again we pray this morning that we would have the presence of your Spirit, that you would guide us as we go through your word and that you would give us the ability to make it of permanent value. And we pray these things in Jesus' name.*

Well, as you know we've been looking at God's wisdom in Solomon's

life. And you know Solomon is the richest, the wisest, most powerful man of his day and puts all of his wisdom into this task of finding meaning in life under the sun and by that he means literally a life outside of God. Solomon has much to tell us about a life of meaning because he spent much of his life pursuing meaningless things. In *Ecclesiastes 1:13* he said: *And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind.* And then verse 1 of chapter 2, he said: *I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity.*

And we've been looking at one major category of vain and empty things that Solomon kind of gives this large title to pleasure. And pleasure includes laughter, includes wine, includes folly, amusement and sex. And so far we've looked at laughter and wine and folly. And we've seen that Solomon saw that laughter was foolish because the laughter he was speaking of was not the healthy laughter of a good joke but rather the laughter of cynicism. We've also seen that wine and folly can destroy, can degrade and can distract us from a life with meaning. It's not that wine is in itself evil because it's not, I mean, the evil lies in pushing good

things to bad ends and this is especially true of the topic that we're going to looking at this morning, and that is amusement. Our text this morning is *Ecclesiastes 2:1-3* and it says this, says: *I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?" I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine -- my heart still guiding me with wisdom -- and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the children of man.*

Now the part that we're going to look at, we're going to focus in on that one little section there, the amusement part is in verse 8. Solomon says, *"I got singers, both men and women."* Solomon speaks of acquiring men and women singers to entertain and amuse but then he concedes that that exercise was useless, and he says this: *And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun. And so once again after a lengthy*

examination Solomon concludes that amusement even for a man of his incredible resources, it was meaningless. He says: *All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.*

Solomon had no idea how amusement itself would explode meaning itself into pieces in our day. I mean Solomon with all of his wealth, with all of his power, he couldn't come close to the amusement options that a middle class child has in our culture in our time. I mean think about it, Solomon only had live entertainment -- quote -- "*I got singers, both men and women.*" He couldn't begin to compare with what we have today to amuse ourselves. I mean, Solomon had singers. What do we have? Well, PlayStation, virtual reality, text messaging, cable, laptops, tablets, cell phones, blogs, Netflix, TikTok, Twitter; need I go on? You see, never in history has a culture been more obsessed with amusement than ours.

You know, Rome had its bread and circus, Rome had its entertainment, it had its free food, it had its gladiators to amuse its citizens in its last days and we have been richly entertained as we approach our last days. Rome only had live entertainment. I can pop on Netflix and watch Gladiator in high def and five channel Dolby stereo any time I want to. So the question is: Is that a

bad thing? I mean is the Bible against the very concept of amusement? I guess the answer to that is that depends. I mean the devices that I mentioned, they're just that, they're devices. They're morally neutral. I mean a PlayStation can play Bible Blasters or it can play Grand Theft Auto. A laptop can display a Bible study video or it can display rank pornography. You see, the morality is not determined by the device but by its end use.

But what about the idea, what about the idea of amusement itself? Well, you know, Solomon said it, too, was vanity. And even the word suggests meaninglessness. You know, if you put the prefix A before a word, it means to negate it. A theist is somebody who believes in God. An atheist is someone who doesn't believe in God. You look at muse. Muse means intellect, it means mind, it means thought. If you add an "A" as a prefix you get amuse. What does that mean? It means literally to negate and turn off one's mind. Now again is that wrong? Again the answer I think is that depends.

You see, from the very beginning God granted Sabbaths as periods of rest and restoration but he granted it to a culture that was largely committed to the hard labor of agriculture. But you know hard physical labor isn't the only thing that requires rest. We need rest in every area of life including our minds. I mean, I can testify that the hardest part of preparing a sermon is really the

thinking part. You know, sometimes I feel like I got smoke coming out of my ears. Make no mistake about it, thinking is very hard work and it's something that we don't like to do unless we have to. And instead of using the "muse" that God has given us, we often choose to amuse ourselves instead. And whether it's right or wrong is really a matter of degree.

Twenty years ago Neil Postman wrote an incredibly prophetic book about that, it was entitled "*Amusing Ourselves to Death*." And in the introduction Postman compared two different visions of the future. On the one hand it was the dark political oppression of George Orwell's *1984*, which most of you are familiar with, it's where the government controls everything; and he compared that to *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley's novel where pleasure and autonomy rules and all that matters is me, myself and I. Postman foresaw a showdown between Orwell's vision of a government-controlled future and Huxley's where pleasure is what rules. And this is what Postman wrote in the introduction to his book. He said: "What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one. Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared

the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. Orwell feared that we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture, preoccupied with an equivalent of the 'feelies.'

And so in "1984" people are controlled by inflicting pain. In "Brave New World," they're controlled by inflicting pleasure. He said: "In short Orwell feared that what we hate will ruin us. Huxley feared that what we love will ruin us." And so Postman says in the book, he says: "This book is about the possibility that Huxley, not Orwell was right." And Huxley was exactly right. This is a brave new world, and much of it stems from our relationship to amusement.

And so we say, what does scripture have to say about amusement in 21st century America? I mean Solomon in his day said it was ultimately meaningless but how can a book that's thousands of years old give us guidance today in how we are supposed to handle amusement? Well, once again I'm drawn back to Hebrews 12 which I spoke of last week which gives us a clear cut mandate. This is Hebrews 12:1. It says: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter*

of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. And let me add "or overly amused."

So first let's fix our eyes on Jesus and the cross remembering that glorifying his Father by rescuing the sheep was the joy that Jesus willingly died for, because that's the source, that's the substance of our lives. And secondly, let us throw off everything that hinders and entangles that vision. I can think of at least three areas in which amusement reeks havoc on that vision. One is in our communication with God, another is our convictions about God and yet another is our commitment to God. So let's first take a look at our communication with God.

Simple question, how do we communicate with God? Well, I hope you give the same answer as everybody does, the answer is prayer. And you know, I've said it many, many times and people disagree, I say prayer is hard work. I think prayer is possibly the hardest work that we do. I mean I've often said if we ask for volunteers to scrub the toilets with toothbrushes for two hours or spend two hours in solid prayer, what do you think people would pick if they were honest? I don't think it would be prayer.

One of the reasons why prayer is so difficult is because it's one of the few things that the devil truly, truly fears. It's one of the only things that he does whatever he can to stop. And God tells us two things about prayer in Romans 8. Number one, he says we stink at it, says we're awful at it, and that he knows that we stink at it. But he cares so much that we pray that he sends his Holy Spirit specifically to help us, knowing that we stink at it. Listen to how he puts it. He puts it a little more elegantly in *Romans 8:26*. He says: *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

I've said it before, I said there's three things that you really need for your prayers to be effective: You need stillness, you need solitude, and you also need a schedule. And I realize these are not carved in stone. You can pray anywhere, you can pray any time, but by and large prayer needs stillness, it needs solitude to be effective. And that's not just my opinion. This is what Jesus said in *Matthew 6:6*. He said: *But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

So my question is: Do you ever do that? Do you ever get absolutely alone with God? Do you ever find a specific place of silence to pray? Or does silence just kind of creep you out? I mean, ever notice how addicted we've become to amusing the silence and solitude out of our lives? I mean how many times do we walk into a room and flip on the TV or the radio and throw on Spotify, anything to fill in the silence? How many times do we get in the car and just pop on the noise? I mean have you noticed that everywhere we go we are accompanied by a wall of sound?

I mean one of the things I used to enjoy about going to Planet Fitness, nobody noticed anybody else. You could sit and you'd walk into that place and work out, not worry about people staring at you. Then I realized the reason why is that virtually everybody in there is tethered to some kind of electronic device that's pumping music into their heads. I mean nobody's speaking to anybody else because everybody's enveloped in their own little world as defined by their earbuds. Now the question is, is that wrong? Well, I would say it's unfortunate rather than wrong because people are not only cut off from God, they're cut off from each other and the noise that makes it almost impossible to hear God speak, something that oftentimes requires stillness and silence. Look at *Psalm 46*, it says: *"Be still, and know that I am God."* *Psalm 37* says: *Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him.* And we all

recall God speaking to the prophet Elijah in what? A still small voice.

So we ask, are we not telling God by surrounding ourselves with oceans of noise that if he has anything to say to us, he better shout it. I mean our addiction to amusement can hinder or entangle our communication with God. I mean the silence that once was an integral part of life before electricity now is so nonexistent in our lives that we find it completely unnerving when we encounter it. And could it be that we are unnerved by even the possibility of encountering God in that silence and that we use this wall of sound to shut him out. You know, next time you stumble on silence, just stop for a moment, see if you can catch yourself flipping a switch to fill up the silence with noise. And when you do, just stop for a second and say these words, say, "Hi, God, it's me." You just might find that you haven't really spoken to God for quite a while. And you may also find that the silence now takes getting used to. I mean I love silence because I know God inhabits it. It's one of the reasons if I'm walking without Janice, I'll never walk with earbuds. I don't want to waste my time. And so if you're in a car alone, just try leaving off all of the noise and just talk to God. You may be very pleasantly surprised.

And the next area in which amusement hinders us is in the area of

our convictions about God. I mean amusement can hinder how we know and understand doctrine. I mean do you know who and what you believe? I believe in Jesus. Well, so do Mormons, so do Jehovah's Witnesses, so do Christian scientists. At least they all say they do, but all three groups deny that Jesus Christ was fully God incarnate. Now do you know how or why they deny it? And does it matter whether or not you know? Well it mattered to the apostle Paul. This is what he said in *Galatians 1:6*. He said: *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel -- not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.*

We have the problem with that and the problem is we don't know what the gospel is unless we know and understand doctrine. In a culture that worships amusement, in that culture doctrine becomes a dirty word. It's just like Paul predicted in *2 Timothy*. This is what he said: *For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away*

from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Well, what does amusement have to do with doctrine? Well, let's look at the number one source of amusement for everybody, let's look at television and its affect on doctrine. Now Neil Postman describes how technology fundamentally alters a society. He said put printing presses into fifteenth century Europe and fifty years later you don't have Europe plus printing presses, you have an entirely different Europe. Everything has changed; the political system, the cultural system, the religious system, and so on. In 1946, television entered into America. It's now 76 years later. And that's not America plus TV, instead it's a vastly different America. Our politics, our culture, our education, our religion and yes, our doctrine has been fundamentally changed by television and we've gone from an oral tradition to a written tradition and now to a "telly visual" tradition. The problem is the ideas that are more complex than cartoons and sports, those ideas are not served well by television.

Today we often speak about bandwidth. Bandwidth is the ability of a medium to carry information. I mean if you remember at the very beginning that squawky weird noise with the dial-up, everybody trying to get into the Internet and then we switched from that to cable because cable had a much broader bandwidth, it was able to

carry much more information. Well, Neil Postman says imagine trying to carry on a philosophical discussion via smoke signals. There's not enough bandwidth. You can't do it. There's not enough information in smoke signals. Well, TV is has the exact same problem. You see, you can't pause like you can in a conversation, you can't reflect like you can in a discussion or an argument, you can't review like you can in a book. Everything has an immediate span of about three seconds which is how long the average TV image lasts. And the result is TV has no place for pause or reflection or review or restatements. Make no mistake, it's great for sports because it really can only show you the right now that sports consists of, but it's terrible for anything that requires thought and reflection like ideas or philosophy or faith or doctrine. Those ideas get reduced to soundbites by television. And since we've been raised on those soundbites for literally 60 years now, literally we have that many, that much time that we've spent just sucking away at the TV, we've lost the appetite to have any other forms of mental nourishment. The core values of Christian faith like regeneration, justification and sanctification, they're too rich, they're too complex for television. But television has shaped our appetite so that learning those ideas are no longer attractive compared with amusement. The result is this profound ignorance of what is basic Christianity.

Let me give you just one practical example, it has to do with the program *The Chosen* which you know I really enjoy, I really love. *The Chosen* at one point opened up a Pandora's Box when it applied for and received permission to film on a location that was custom built by the Mormon church to resemble a city in ancient Israel. Now the decision brought up all kinds of conversations about whether evangelical Christians should have anything to do with the Mormon church, including using your set to film *The Chosen*. Well you have to understand something about Mormons in the first place. You have to understand that Mormons believe that Jesus and Satan were at one time brothers. They believe that both were sons of God and that Jesus agreed to God's plan and Satan didn't. They believe that Jesus was not eternally co-equal with the Father and that he progressively learned how to become a god. They believe that only after his resurrection did he fully become God. They also believe that we have the exactly same capacity to become gods just like Jesus did. Well, that's not orthodox Christianity. Their ideas of regeneration, justification and sanctification as a Mormon put them way, way off the reservation when it comes to Christian conviction. And look, we all know that Mormons are decent, clean living, lovely people but that doesn't make them Christians. *John 3* says:

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Believing in the Son means I believe that he was very God in the flesh come down to earth to pay the penalty of death that my sin deserved. It's a belief that the one who gave his life for mine is the one worthy to be loved, honored and obeyed. That's what doctrine is. And doctrinally you can be a Mormon, you can be a Christian, but you can't be both. And doctrine is crucial to faith. I mean regeneration tells me that only the Holy Spirit can open up my spiritually dead heart to even understand what it means to give my life to Christ. Justification means that Jesus's finished work on the cross has paid the debt of my sin and that I now stand before God as a perfected adopted son, and sanctification tells me that God causes all things to work together in my life for the purpose of shaping and molding me into the very image of Jesus Christ. And these are all doctrinal issues. These are convictions that are crucial to understanding the gospel, but they're no longer fully grasped by the vast majorities of so-called Christians.

Quote -- *"for the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching."* I think you can thank the idea of amusement for getting us to this point. And God says sound teaching is the responsibility of all of his people. He says in *1 Peter 3:15*: *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.* And so that becomes the question, can you give someone that kind of an

account? Very important question.

Now I've oftentimes quoted Sam Harris. He wrote a book called *"Letter to a Christian Nation."* Sam Harris is a militant atheist. He's appalled that our culture even tolerates Christianity. He wants the teaching of doctrine to children to be forbidden because in his mind it is vile and filthy. He thinks it borders on child abuse to tell children about the Bible. Well, his book and his movement have grown very popular and a Christian culture addicted to amusement doesn't really know how to answer him.

Sam Harris wants to know where God was during our worst natural disasters. He wants to know where was God during the tsunami and during Hurricane Katrina? Our answers as Christians involve doctrine. In this case it's the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. We say that God was on his throne, that God was in charge, God was responsible for both the tsunami and Katrina. And we acknowledge that it's God who said in *Isaiah 4*, he said: *I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.* That's quite an admission. But I'd be the first one to tell you, I don't know why God allows such devastation for believers and non-believers alike, but I do know that if God had a separate set of rules for believers and unbelievers, all of us would be believers because we'd see a

great advantage in that. And that's why folks used to offer sacrifices to the gods; it wasn't out of love, it was to curry favor. But as a Christian I already know that I have the love of God. I know that this same God demonstrated his love for us by becoming one of us, living a perfect life and then offering himself as a substitute for us on a Roman cross. And so therefore I trust that I don't know about tsunamis and Katrina to what I do know about the cross of Christ.

Sam Harris is a materialist naturalist atheistic evolutionist. In some ways he basically represents the modern equivalent of Solomon in his quest to understand life under the sun, understanding life without any influence of God whatsoever. And where Solomon was brought to absolute despair by the meaninglessness of life, the Sam Harrises of the world, they still demand answers from a God that they claim doesn't even exist. I mean according to Sam, we're just a bag chemicals that got put here by time and chance, lots and lots of time. I mean if that's true, why complain to God or me or anyone else about anything, I mean, stuff happens and it happens by time and chance alone and when it happens, it just happens. It's not good, it's not bad, it just is. Isn't that Sam Harris's actual position? You see, you can't complain to a god who doesn't exist that he doesn't perform the way you like. I mean if Sam really believes what he says he believes, then a tsunami or a Katrina,

they're just moral non events, I mean, some people die; so what. It's no different than when a spring storm that wipes out a flock of birds or a red tide that destroys a school of fish. I mean a bird, a fish, a person, we're all just accidents of time and chance, we're all just bags of chemicals according to Sam, so what is the big deal? At least we Christians have a God to pour out our sorrow to. Sam's got no one but Sam. However, the reason why Sam and his ilk are growing in popularity is because Christians are not prepared to give an account that challenges that atheism, and we're not prepared because we don't read. And we're sure not going to get these answers on television. It's true what Neil Postman says, we are amusing ourselves to death.

Amusement can hinder and entangle our communication with God by driving out the stillness and solitude that God speaks in, it can also hinder and entangle our convictions about God by reducing our faith in our doctrine to soundbites and cartoons. You know, John MacArthur once lamented the fact that in his opinion, he said, sermons have become sermonettes and as he put it, sermonettes have the habit of producing Christianettes. Real sermons take work to produce and they take work to listen to.

Amusement can destroy our communication with God, our convictions about God, and finally amusement can hinder, entangle our

commitments to God. *Ephesians 5* says: *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.* Did you know that the average person by the time he's 60 years old has spent more than ten full years of his life in front of a TV? That's ten years spent 24-7, 365. Literally the whole day for ten years sitting in front of the television. Just do the math. I mean the average person watches about four hours of TV per day. That's one-sixth of a day. One-sixth of sixty years is ten years spent just amusing ourselves, passively watching glowing dots on a screen.

I once heard a man describe what it was like, he was going door-to-door. He was in a high-rise apartment, he was taking surveys and he said he knocked on hundreds and hundreds of apartments and he said every one was the same. He said in every one I'd walk into a dark room with a flickering image and people were all sitting around that image. He said at first he pictured there was dozens and then he thought there was hundreds and then he thought, no, there's not hundreds, there's thousands. And then he thought, no, there's tens of millions of us all doing the exact same thing at the exact same time. He said we're all amusing ourselves to death every night in the exact same way. Ten to fifteen full years of our life spent watching TV.

Now, if we're going to give an account of every single idle word we ever speak, how are we going to give an account for 88,000 hours of TV watching? And what's so amazing is that because TV is telly visual, it's not spoken, it's not written, we forgot almost 99 percent of what it is we watched, and that's probably a good thing. Because the vast majority of the TV program is anti God and it's certainly anti Bible. *Philippians 4* says: *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -- think about such things.*

Just imagine if that was a permanent crawl that went across the bottom of all of our believer's TV screens all the time? Would we or could we still watch TV the way we watch it? See, amusement has stolen the silence and the solitude that God speaks, it has so dumbed down our thinking that it has stolen our ability to understand what makes Christians Christians and its subtle and unrelenting attack on God and his kingdom has made the hours we give to it overwhelmingly unredeemable. I mean the quantity of time we give it is enormous, the quality of the product that it gives us is often revolting, and worse yet, it's steadily deteriorating. I mean what was unthinkable ten years ago is commonplace today and the pressure to push the envelope is unrelenting. I can give you tons of examples but you all got TVs.

You know. You know exactly what I'm talking about.

So what do we do? Well, one communication professor made her class go on what she called an "E fast." That was one whole day with no electronic media whatsoever. If you had one slip-up, you had to start all over again. She made her students write a paper about their experiences, and some described the worst day of my life; others described as the best experience I've ever had. No one treated the assignment as insignificant, which just goes to show how important amusement has become to us. It just shows us how much of the media rat race we are part of.

For many of us amusement has gone from a change of pace to a way of life and we don't even realize it. I mean a media fast might seem like a drastic solution to some but there are plenty of other steps that we can take to break the hold that amusement has on us. You know, you can cut your TV time by one-seventh simply by coming to the Wednesday evening prayer meeting. Hint. I mean I look back, I've been doing that for about forty years now. I look back at that time with pleasure. And I thought, well that's four thousand hours that I can bank on my end, not on the other end, four thousand hours that TV wasn't able to steal from me. You could also vary your media, you can change from TV to radio, even Christian radio, you can read a novel or a nonfiction book. You

can join a Bible study -- again, hint, hint. This is a big one, you can change your schedule, you can change your schedule so that you eliminate a lot of TV watching time altogether. I remember reading about R.C. Sproul. He said he changed his schedule so that he went to bed at 9:00 o'clock and got up at 5:00 a.m., said it gave him a whole new lease on life. And finally, you can decide if you still want to watch TV, make it a choice, not a lifestyle. And like I said, I like to watch *Planet Earth*, I find out when it's on, I watch it then I turn it off or I DV-R it. I mean, don't just flop down to see what's on the boob tube. Choose only what you want to watch and watch only what you choose. See, you can change your amusement habits.

Neil Postman died in 2003. I don't know where he was spiritually, but I do know that he was absolutely right in his premise.

Christian and non-Christian alike, we are amusing ourselves to death. And I'll be the first one to say if you're outside the kingdom, it certainly makes sense. I mean we've seen in this series so far that all the pleasures that Solomon embraced are all distractions from the ultimate meaninglessness of life. But that doesn't have to be the case with us because we have the ultimate answer to the meaninglessness of life. We have the word, we have the logos, we have the logic that Christ alone can give us. *John 1:1: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and*

the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. He goes on to say: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

You see in Christ we know who we are, we know where we are headed, and we know why we're here. I mean the answer to the vanity of Solomon's life is Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. And all of what Solomon is saying is summed up in his final words in Ecclesiastes. He says: *The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.* In other words aim your life at God and his kingdom and you'll never regret the race that you've embarked on.

Solomon had the greatest wealth, the greatest influence, the greatest power his world ever knew but he didn't have a fraction of the choices that we have to amuse ourselves. The result is that Hebrews 12:1 has become a much more urgent cry and much more demanding today. And whether it's communication with God that's compromised due to a lack of silence and solitude or convictions about God that are rooted now in soundbites and sermonettes or a commitment to God to study and grow and share the gospel that gets

swallowed by TV, God says it all in *Hebrews 12:1*. He says:
Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. So let's stop amusing ourselves to death and let's start running the race that God intends for us. Let's pray.

Father God, we praise you and thank you for your gifts, your grace, your book, Lord, your warning it's so easy to be amused, it's so easy to get caught up in what is essentially meaningless. And so I pray, Lord, that you would give all the grace, strength, peace, power and wisdom that we need to be able to start moving away from this culture of amusement to a culture that really values the things that matter, things that will last, and I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.