TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Bobby Rader / Opening Prayer by: Robert Ward
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Bobby Rader

#731 Take Time to Be Holy
#968 Oh, They Tell Me of A Home

Scripture Reading by: Pierce Balch
#354 I Gave My Life for Thee

Communion Devotional by: Don Taylor
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#286 Wonderful Story of Love
Sermon: "An Understanding Mind"
1 Kings 3:5-9

#904 Have You Been to Jesus?
#755 God Be With You
Closing Prayer by: David Smith

Bobby Rader's small group will meet today at
5:00 p.m. at the building

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

Feb. 9, 2025

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

Groundhog Day

This past Sunday was Groundhog Day. Many of you have probably seen the movie of that name. Bill Murray's character, Phil Connors, relives February 2nd over and over again in Punxsutawney, PA. It is never made explicit, but the best estimates are that Phil spent at least 3 decades in this loop. How does he cope with this monotonous existence, when it seems like nothing he does matters from one day to the next? He looks for happiness in different experiences, trying all kinds of things in his quest for meaning.

He indulges in pleasures, denying himself nothing—if it feels good, he does it. He gorges himself on food, punches out a guy who annoys him, and seduces women. When that fails to satisfy, he turns to materialism: he robs an armored car and uses the money to buy the car and clothes he has always wanted. Eventually, in despair, he takes his life multiple times, only to wake up again every morning right back in Punxsutawney. Finally, he turns to knowledge, trying to better himself. He takes up the piano, studies French poetry, and masters diverse skills like ice-sculpting and card throwing.

There's a scene early in the movie, when Phil is trying to figure out what is going on. He sits at a bowling alley bar with a couple of local guys and asks, "What would you do if you were stuck in one place, and every day was exactly the same, and nothing that you did really mattered?" One of the men stares into his beer mug and says, "Yep, that about sums it up for me."

You see, life is more like Groundhog Day that we would like to admit. What will you do tomorrow morning? The alarm will go off at 6, and you'll hit the snooze button. Eventually, you'll stumble into the bathroom, shower, brush your teeth. You'll get dressed, have a cup of coffee, get in the car, and head to your office or your classroom or the plant. You'll work a few hours and take a lunch break. Then you'll go back to work for a few more hours, head home, and eat dinner. You'll sit on the couch and watch TV for a bit and then you'll hop in the bed. Guess what you'll do on Tuesday?

We are stuck in a rut, going through the motions, trying to figure out what this drudgery all means. That is more or less the point of Ecclesiastes. The Preacher tried to find meaning in all of those things Phil did and more; in the end, he found it was all fruitless. *Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, all is vanity*! That word, "vanity," literally means a breath, a vapor, a breeze. That is the underlying theme of the entire book, the futility of life. Part of the reason for that is inherent in the word itself: life is like a puff of smoke from a candle that quickly dissipates, like the morning fog that burns off in the heat of the day—we see it for a moment, and then it's gone. Our lives are fleeting, rushing past us so that if we blink, we miss it. We are here one day and carried away forever the next. But there is more to the concept that brevity. Just consider what we can learn from the first few verses that make up the prologue.

Life is Elusive
Go breath out on a cold morning, and try to grab the vapor and put it in your pocket. You can't do it, of course; it is a real, visible thing, a physical phenomenon. But it is elusive—it slips right through your fingers. The very act of trying to hold on to it actually speeds its disappearance. Life is brief and it is inscrutable—Ecclesiastes confronts us with that reality.

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Staci Lunceford Copeland has been placed on hospice.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Oscar Cantu, Jennifer Stelly, Steve Ward, Geri Cryer, Gloria McKelroy, Scott Overton, Rickey Lucas, Debbie Lynn

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific, Mani Pagidopali in India

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Deacons, Minister meet Monday, Feb. 10th at 6:30 p.m.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Thursday, Feb. 20th at 8:00 a.m.

Food Bank

We served 126 families on Tuesday, Feb. 4th at our food bank. That equals to 389 individuals. We had 15 volunteers.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Bobby Rader	Daniel Balch	Bryant Perkins
Don Taylor	Danny Balch	
Robert Ward	Walden David	
	Gus Tristan	

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

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The Preacher thus begins by posing the question, *What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?* **(Ecc 1:3)** The word translated "gain" appears 9 times in the book, and nowhere else in the OT. It's a commercial term, from ordinary business; it means a surplus—something left over after all the expenses are paid. That's the goal of anyone in business: to turn a profit as a reward for labor. So the Preacher asks that about life: is it worth it? Am I really accomplishing anything? At the end of life, what will the surplus be? What will I have to show for all my hard work? And the answer to that is: nothing.

Life is Repetitive

He proves that point in the succeeding verses with a carefully constructed argument. The first half of the poem gives examples from the natural world: generations come and go (**v. 4),** the sun rises and sets **(v. 5),** the wind blows round and round (**v. 6**), the streams flow to the sea but do not fill it **(v. 8**). The second half gives examples from human senses: no matter what we hear or see, we are not satisfied, we are weary, and there is *nothing new under the sun.* **(v. 8-11).** Whether we look at creation or our own lives, the point is the same: there is nothing to gain. It is all the same old same old.

Learning to Live

The Preacher, then, has made his point: there is no gain for your toil under the sun. I am going to die—probably not soon, but it is inevitable. We will all die; in a century, no one will know that we have lived. And that is true for all of us; it is not as if being a Christian stops it from being true.

Instead, it should make us stop pretending it isn't true. The Preacher is trying to prepare us how to live; if we won't live forever, and if there is no gain in this life, then how should we live? Well we should stop being so discontent, trying to escape the confines of creation. We are not God—we are not in control, and we will not live forever. But we pretend that is not the case, don't we? We keeping waiting for a change in circumstances to make us happy. And we live our entire lives that way—we keep thinking, "If I just can get there"—wherever there is— "it will all be different." But when you get there, nothing is different.

The Preacher urges us to put this behind us once and for all and to think differently. Instead of trying to escape reality, let history and Creation be our teachers. Look at the tides and the seasons and the generations who lived before us. The very rhythms of the world are pointing us to what it means to be a human. Stop thinking that meaning and happiness reside in novelty. To want to "gain" something is to want to escape the confines of ordinary existence. Part of learning to live is simply accepting this.

But we should remember that there is a God in Heaven who rules over the sun. The weariness of our existence should drive us to not expect to find meaning in earthly things. We know this because Jesus put things almost exactly the same way, except he turned the question on its head: *For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul*? **(Mt 16:26).** The implication is even if somehow we COULD have a surplus, even the entire world is not enough to compensate for the loss of our souls.

There is a profit to be made, though—it's just a matter of where we focus our toil. Jesus encourages us not to lay up treasures on earth, but treasures in heaven; not to work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life. Our lives CAN profit—if we look for the gain that comes from the Lord.

Bryant Perkins