

True Worship: The Reality of Faith vs. the Ritual of Fantasy

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[0 : 00] But let's turn now to God's Word this morning, and we are continuing our series in the book of Ecclesiastes. So do turn up, Ecclesiastes and chapter 5.

We're looking at the first seven verses here of Ecclesiastes 5, and I'll read there from verse 1 of chapter 5. Verse 1.

Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?

For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity. But God is the one you must fear. Amen.

And may God bless his Word to us this morning. Amen. Well, do turn with me, if you would, to the passage that Paul read for us there in Ecclesiastes chapter 5.

[2 : 01] The theme in chapter 4 was all about living for success, worshipping success.

And it's so easy, so common. Well, that's defined as prosperity in social terms, or in terms of possessions, or in terms of power.

But people living that way, as our world demonstrates so clearly all around us all the time, leads only to oppression. Oppression in loss for the have-nots of this world, but also oppressiveness even in apparent gain for those who have.

The striving miser, do you remember there in chapter 4, verse 8, with no end to his toil, and yet depriving his life of all pleasure.

So that he says it's all vanity, it's an unhappy business. Or the ambitious ruler that we saw in verse 10, who has no end of people. And in the end, they all just forget about all of his efforts, and it's vanity, it's just a striving after wind.

[3 : 13] But there is a key to life, and it lies not in this fantasy of success chasing, but in the reality of recognizing something far greater, the eternity in our hearts, that tells us there's more than just life under the sun.

And therefore, we live for that. Living for eternity is what liberates our lives here, in time, in this world. And actually, it's the only way to real joy.

But as chapter 4 showed us, people don't generally live like that. They suppress the truth about God above, and they just do live for success in this world.

They worship success. Or as Jesus puts it, they serve, they worship mammon, worldly material things. And that isn't just a problem for the secular world.

It's a problem for the church too, which is why Jesus talks about it so much. You can't serve God and mammon, worldly success. You can't live for time and for eternity.

[4 : 29] You can't live for earth and for heaven. You just can't. Either you'll be laying up treasures for one or for the other, but you cannot do it for both.

Not according to Jesus, anyway. And not according to the preacher here in Ecclesiastes. But of course, the problem is, many of us try to do exactly that.

And it's a particular danger for the believing people that the writer here, the preacher, is addressing. Remember after the exile?

Well, they're very taken up with money, with prosperity, with trade, with financial security, and so on. And so the problem is, you see, you can think that you are living for heaven, but in reality, you're just striving for gain under the sun.

You're serving mammon. You can be very spiritual. And yet at heart, you're actually just utterly secular of this world.

[5 : 36] Lots of talk about things that are above the sun. Lots of talk about God and heaven and the church and the gospel and so on. But in reality, your heart is actually just fully engaged with life under the sun.

And we're just like the people of the world. And that's why the preacher in Ecclesiastes' greatest challenge is not to the total outsider.

That's a huge mistake. It's not to the person who has nothing to do with the house of God. Look at verse 1 of chapter 5. It's to the one who goes to the house of God. It's to the people who are outwardly, at least, are very pious, very evangelical, you might say, very faithful.

But in fact, he says it's all just fantasy. They're deceiving others and they're deceiving themselves. And so it's just like the Lord Jesus himself, the great preacher, when this preacher speaks. Coelet turns the spotlight full on to examine God's people and their worship. And he's asking the question, is your worship true worship? Or does our worship really evidence and demonstrate the reality of faith?

[6 : 57] Or is it, in fact, just a ritual of fantasy? That's a very important question. It must be because the Bible keeps asking it all the time from beginning to end.

Jesus is always asking it. Because, he says, it's possible to delude yourself, literally delude yourself to death. And when what is at stake is of eternal significance.

We really had better be clear, hadn't we, about the difference between fantasy and reality in our worship. Well, the preacher says you'll get a good clue by examining three things.

Your approach to praise of God. Your attitude to prayer to God. And your action regarding your promises to God.

Is there reality in all of these things? Or is it just ritual fantasy? Preacher's first focus in verse 1 there is on a right approach to praise.

[7 : 57] And he tells us that real praise is not about ritual offerings. But it is about the reality of obedience. Guard your steps. Literally watch out when you go to the house of God.

To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools. Because they do not know that they are doing evil. Well, that's a shock, isn't it?

You can think you're going to worship God. But in fact, he says you're going to do the very opposite. You're doing evil. Not just not worshipping, but anti-worship. Now, this is a very significant verse. Because it tells us something that people very often don't grasp at all. That the first priority for the worshipper of God is not an open mouth, but open ears.

And that's always been God's priority, hasn't it? That his people should listen to his voice. That's the very heart of what it means to worship God. Not our voices, but God's voice.

[9 : 02] And of course, to have open ears means to have an open and obedient heart. To obey. To respond to what we hear. That might surprise us. Especially in a church culture today.

Where most people think the word worship just means what you sing. And often sing endlessly. Or even sing ecstatically. But no, says God. Even way back here in the Old Testament.

At the heart of the temple. Was far more about God's voice being heard. Than any offerings or any sacrifices being brought. Of course, there were offerings and sacrifices abundantly.

Very much at the heart of temple worship. But the point is. All of that was absolutely as nothing. Unless. Unless. People had their ears open.

And their hearts open to God's voice. Because for God, obedience always comes. Before offerings. David knew that. Just read Psalm 51.

[10 : 02] You do not delight in sacrifices or offerings. Or I would bring it. You will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken heart. A broken spirit. A broken and contrite heart.

You will not despise. That is a life that listens. And responds in obedience. To the voice of God. And that's supremely the focus.

In corporate worship as well. The very first gathering. Of the church. Of God's people. Is at Sinai. In the Old Testament. And there.

What do they do? They gather to listen. And to obey God. And in Deuteronomy chapter 5. God says to the people through Moses. Go near and hear. All that the Lord. Your God will say.

And the people say to Moses. So you then speak to us. Everything that the Lord speaks to you. And we will hear. And we will do it. You see. You go near to listen. In order to obey.

[11 : 02] And without that. Approach. To praising God. All your praise offerings. Are as nothing. In fact. The preacher here says. They're sin. They're evil. People. And that's all through the Bible friends.

Proverbs 21 verse 3. To do righteousness and justice. Is more acceptable to the Lord. Than sacrifice. That's why the job of the priests.

And the Levites. All through the Old Testament. Was principally. To be teachers. Of the law of God. That was the very heart. Of religious life. For Israel. If you read in Leviticus.

In Deuteronomy. You'll find that there are all sorts of laws. To ensure. That they were able. To fulfill that ministry. To protect. The speaking. And the hearing. Of the word of God. It's exceptionally clear.

Isn't it? In Malachi chapter 2. The lips of a priest. Should guard. Knowledge. And people should seek instruction. From his mouth. For he is the messenger.

[12 : 01] Of the Lord of hosts. That's what going to the house of God. Is all about. Seeking the word. Of the Lord of hosts. And obedience. Is the reality.

Offerings. However. However flamboyant. The praise. Those can be just mere ritual. Just empty. Evil. As first one says. Now that was the constant challenge.

Of the prophets of God. You're always multiplying your offerings. They said. But your hearts. Are far. From God. Plenty of praise. Plenty of voice.

But no room for God's voice. To be heard. Plenty of ritual. But precious little reality. And that's what the preacher's warning about.

Here. It's so easy. He says. To offer to God. The sacrifice of fools. Which is evil. And you see. It's very deeply ingrained within us.

[13 : 02] That's why it's a constant danger. Remember the story of Saul. You can read it later. In chapter 13. Of first Samuel. No sooner had Saul been made the king. Than he fell into this trap. He had to wait.

He was told to wait. For Samuel to come. And offer some offerings. And he couldn't be bothered waiting. So he decided. To usurp Samuel's place. As priest. And he would just. Offer the offerings himself.

And he says. Oh I forced myself to do it. It's very contemporary. I forced myself. And Samuel said. You have done foolishly. And that was what led to Saul's downfall.

The offering of fools. It's evil. God takes it very seriously. A little later on. He showed that he certainly hadn't learned his lesson. He took exactly the same approach.

To praising God. God tells him to. To go out onto a military mission. In a certain way. And Saul says. Well no. He knows better. So like Frank Sinatra. He did it my way.

[14 : 03] And Samuel says to him. Why did you not obey. The voice of the Lord. Behold to obey. Is better than sacrifice. And to listen.

Better. Than all the fat of rams. Do you get the idea. God does not want. The ritual of offerings. God wants from his people.

The reality. Of obedience. And that's a warning. That we all need to hear. Isn't it. Not just an Old Testament problem. Remember Paul's words to Timothy.

2 Timothy 3. In the last days. That's in the days we live in. People will be lovers of self. Lovers of money. Lovers of pleasure. Rather than lovers of God. And what will that always lead to.

It leads says Paul. To people who have the appearance. Of godliness. But denying its power. You see there's no reality. Plenty of offerings.

[15 : 00] Plenty of loud praise. But precious little. Transformation of life. And of priorities. And of witness. Because. No real obedience.

But God wants obedience. Not offerings. And that comes from listening ears. Seeking God's word. Not. Loud and lavish extravaganzas of praise.

So we need to ask ourselves. Don't we. Do we have a right approach. To praise. What approach marks out. How you. You came to church this morning.

Of course the church building. Is not a temple. The temple in Jerusalem. Is gone forever. Because Jesus himself. Is now the place. Where we meet with God. But the New Testament.

Talks. And teaches. Doesn't it. That the people of God. The church. Gathered. Is a temple. Where God's spirit dwells. We are God's temple. Paul says to the Corinthians. And God takes that very seriously.

[16:02] He says. Because his temple is holy. Especially. When we gather together. As the church. And he says. God is in the midst of us. The spirit of Jesus. Is present. That's why Paul's just as serious.

About the church's conduct. Just as serious. As the preacher is here. In Ecclesiastes. Well are we as serious. As Christ's apostles.

And prophets. Do we guard our steps. Yes. One writer I read. Was speaking about. Being an itinerant preacher.

Going to different churches. Different weeks. To preach. And he said. They divided the churches. That I go and preach in. Into two very clear. Groups. One. Is very clear.

That for people coming. Sunday is just. A habit. It's just a ritual. It's largely social. People came and went. More interested in meeting. One another. But really no sense at all. Of meeting with God.

[17:01] The other. He said. I would walk in. And immediately. There was a different atmosphere. People were anticipating. God. Speaking to them. Longing for God. To speak to them.

Ready to respond. Not focused on themselves. But all focused. On God. And his word. Well it's a good question.

Isn't it? I wonder what a casual visitor. To our fellowship here. Would think. Maybe I should ask. Any visitors on the way out. In the service.

And before the service. And after. Where is the focus? Is it just on one another? Is it on what's going on? Is it on catching up with each other? Or is there an expectancy. That we come with? Is there a desire?

Is there a longing? To hear the voice of God. And to respond. With all of our hearts. What about each one of us? Ourselves.

[17:55] Could we say that we guarded our steps. As we came. To church this morning. Preparing our hearts. Ready for. For serious. Engagement with God.

Well Jesus takes it very seriously. Doesn't he? In the sermon on the mount. Remember he says. Don't go and give a gift on the altar. Without getting really important things. Straight. In your heart. Like.

I've been reconciled to your brother. By making sure that there's no. Animosity. Between you and another. Christian believer. See if we don't do that. It's as the preacher is saying here.

We're coming to offer the sacrifice of fools. And it's not only not good. It's evil. He says. Of course our Christian worship.

Is the whole of our lives. It's not just our corporate gatherings. It's not just about being in. In God's house. As we're gathered together. It's about being as God's house. As his people.

[18:53] All the time. In all that we do. That just makes it even more solemn. Doesn't it? So the reality of our obedience. Must be an attitude. That permeates the whole of our life.

Before God. As well as the ambience. That's evident. In our corporate gatherings. To worship. Not much.

Not much. Not much reverence around today. Is there? Even in the Christian church. Somebody put it. It's so much more. Often God almighty.

Than God almighty. That is. The sense that one gets from. Christian people. We need to read. Hebrews chapter 12. Let me recommend it. We think that reverence.

Is something that went out. With the Old Testament. The apostle there says. See to it. That you do not refuse him. Who is speaking. And he says that at Sinai. Yes. The earth shook. But how much less.

[19:51] Will we escape. If we reject the one. Who now thunders. From heaven. And will shake the heavens. And the earth. The risen Lord. Jesus Christ. On his throne. Is the one who is speaking.

So says the apostle. Let us. Offer to God. Acceptable worship. With reverence. And awe. For our God. Is a consuming fire. And that's an even more.

Emphatic way. Isn't it? Of saying what the preacher. Is saying here. In Ecclesiastes 5 verse 1. It's not less. It's more. Watch your step. With God.

Have a right approach. To praise. God isn't fooled. By rituals. Of offerings. Sacrifices. Songs. Suits. Or anything else. He wants the reality. Of obedience. And it begins. When we draw near. To listen. To his word.

[20:54] The second focus. That he has. In verses 2 and 3. Is on a right attitude. To prayer. And he tells us. That real prayer. Is not all about. A ritual. Of sort of rash. Ramblings.

To God. But it's about. The reality. Of a reserved. Reverence. Before him. The same theme. Isn't it?
As verse 1. The first.

Command. Of God. To his people. Is hero Israel. Not speak. O Israel. God. But when worship. Is a ritual. Of fantasy. When we're. At the center. Not God. When in our fantasy.

God is actually. Serving us. Not us. Serving him. Then usually. What happens. It's our words. That are right. To the fore. Because God.

And therefore. Prayer to God. Is. Is just become. Another tool. In the box. For us. Chasing gain. Chasing success. In this world. Is that true? Isn't a lot of our prayer.

[21 : 48] Much more about us. Than about God. Someone told me recently. About a sermon. That they heard. In church. And they said.

Of that sermon. I learned an awful lot more. About that young preacher. Than I did about God. Well suppose. Somebody overheard. Your prayers. And my prayers. Will they learn.

An awful lot more. About me. And about you. Than they will about God. What do you think? It's got a question. But you see. God isn't fooled. Is he? God sees. And God hears.

All of that. And. If our attitude is wrong. It not only offends God. It bores him. And so he says. Be quiet. Shut up. Verse two.

Look. Don't be rash. With your mouth. Don't let your heart. Be hasty. To utter a word. Before God. Let your words. Be few. For goodness sake. Pipe down. Says God. It's like being at a meeting.

[22 : 43] With some irritating person. Droning on and on. Full of all of their own sense of importance. And you just don't know what they're talking about. You want to just stop. Everyone's looking at their feet. Or falling asleep.

Like President Biden seemed to at the opening session. Last week. But that's how God feels. About our totally wrong attitude.

In our prayers. Weesh. I don't want those rash ramblings. There's no reverence. If there was. You'd be far more reserved. You'd be far quieter.

You'd be listening. And responding. That kind of rash ramblings. And dribblings in prayer. Comes because we're far more full of ourselves.

Aren't we? And our own lives. And our own cares. And our own concerns. These are the things that are absolutely filling our horizons. So there's lots of pious language that we might pour out before God.

[23 : 40] But God spots the humbug a mile off. And the symptoms are so plain. You see. Look at verse 3. Just as dreams. And disturbed sleep.

Are the mark of a troubled mind. Full of burdens. Full of that bad business. That word again. So that attitude of rash. Self-focused words. Are sure evidence.

Of a foolish heart. Of self-deceptive religion. Fantasy religion. And that's the essence of folly. Isn't it? In Ecclesiastes. That you don't grasp reality.

The reality that our life is defined by God. Not God defined by our life. As verse 2 says. Look. He is in heaven.

He's transcendent. He's eternal. But we are on earth. We're just transient. We are ephemeral. It's not the other way around. And unless you grasp that.

[24 : 38] You see. You have no idea. What God is like at all. And therefore no idea. What life is really all about. As John Piper says. It's not about you.

It's not about you and me. It's about God. It's about his story. And you see. There's plenty. Of religion.

Plenty of piety. Plenty of evangelical piety indeed. It's just all back to front. Upside down. Just a ritual of fantasy.

Because his whole attitude to prayer. Is to manipulate God. For our ends. Jesus said as much. Didn't he. In Matthew chapter 6.

When you pray. He said. Don't. Don't heap up empty phrases. Like the pagans. Do they think they'll be heard. Because of their many words. Stop. Jesus is saying.

[25 : 37] That a lot of pious worshippers. Are just like pagans. Because. They've got no real. Relationship with God at all. It's all about getting God.

To serve us. It's all about using God. As a tool. For our success. Here under the sun. In this world. But Jesus says.

No. No. No. Don't you be like that. If you really know God. He says. You know. That God knows what you need. Even before you ask. No.

You don't pray like that. You then. Pray like this. Our father. In heaven. Hallowed. Be your name. Do you see.

Reverence. Reserve. It's first of all. About God. Because he is in heaven. And life is about him. And so. Prayer. Is about him too.

[26 : 33] That's the kind of speaking to God. That comes as a response. To listening to God. Isn't it. It's reverent. It's real. Because it remembers.

That God. Is transcendent. In heaven. And we are on earth. We are the ones. Who are transient. And therefore.

We know that God's words. Are infinitely. And eternally. More important. Than our words are. Or could ever be. I wonder if God's words. Will be heard at all.

In the whole two weeks. Of COP26. What do you think. Well we need a right. Attitude. To prayer. The reality. Of reverence. And a right reserve. And then finally. In verses 46. The preacher.

[27 : 26] Also turns. To examine. A right action. In response. To God's promises. Or our promises. Indeed. To God. Tells us.

It's not a ritual. Of promises. Followed by delay. And denial. That's not what God wants. What he wants. Is the reality. Of our determined doing.

It's easy. Isn't it. To be miles away. Actually. From engaging with God. Even right in the midst. Of what we. Are telling ourselves.

Is worship. Either on our own. Or as part of the gathering. Of the church. It's easy for the focus. To be on our words. And especially. If that's all taken up. With a sort of.

Heady atmosphere. Of praise and prayer. And it's easy. For that. Just to be empty ritual. But it's also easy. For that kind of thing. To lead to rash.

[28 : 21] And emotional. Overreactions. To all sorts of promises. Of great things. That we're going to do. For God. Or maybe even sometimes. If there is a real. Spiritual breakthrough.

Maybe God has spoken to us. We've learned to listen to him. We've been convicted. We're challenged. Rightly. To respond. But even then. The preacher's message. Is watch out.

Be careful. Guard yourselves. Because even if we speak rashly. If we burble out things. That we haven't thought of. As promises to God. Well God takes us seriously.

When we do that. So what he's saying is. If you make promises to God. Well you need to take those things. Seriously too. Verse 4. It's not delay. That he expects from us.

Do not delay. In paying your vow. God has no pleasure in fools. Nor is it denial. And wriggling out of it.

[29 : 15] God wants. Verse 6. Don't say before the messenger. It's all a mistake. I didn't mean it. I didn't mean to say that. Well you've said it to God. God expects you to do it. Better never to make a promise to God.

Better never to make a vow to him. Than to default on that vow. Is what he's saying. Go back and read Deuteronomy chapter 23. Later on. It speaks about it very clearly.

It says it's no sin not to make vows to God. It's quite voluntary. But. Once you've promised something to God. Well then. To default on it.

Then it is sin. So here's the thing. God takes our words seriously. Even if we don't take our own words that seriously. It's a dangerous thing.

He's saying you see. To make promises to God. It's a matter of integrity. So we better be careful. Be serious. Proverbs 14 verse 3.

[30 : 13] By the mouth of a fool. Comes a rod for his back. But the lips of the wise. Will preserve them. And all the more so.

When we're dealing with almighty God. Speaking to God matters. We better get that clear. Hadn't we? Because. God is real. Not just the figment of our imagination.

We're not talking to the air. And to make promises. And then just delay. Or default on them. Well that scorns God. Doesn't it? Because it. It means we're not taking God's reality seriously.

Of course when we say promises. That just really means all of our speech. Doesn't it? Jesus is.

Very devastating. Against those who made all kinds of loopholes. For their promises. So they could say. Oh well that vow wasn't really a vow.

Because I didn't. I didn't swear on the right thing. Nonsense he says. God sees everything. God hears everything. He takes you at your word. So you better take yourself at your word. Let your yes be yes.

[31 : 14] And let your no be no. No wriggling out. So we need to be careful don't we? To follow through our words with actions. Pious words are very easy.

Especially in the height of a. Spiritual experience. We need to be careful. How many times have you said to somebody. Oh we'll pray for you. Very easy to say that isn't it?

I'll be praying for you. Do we always fall through on it? God hears us when we say that doesn't he? You need to be careful. It's dangerous. To make promises to God.

Or after a stirring message. About mission or evangelism. You get all worked up. You say I'm going to be trained to be an evangelist. I'm going to go and do that for the Lord. Well God hears those things.

Don't be slow. Or when you say to God in prayer. After you're convicted. Oh God I'm sorry. I have been robbing you. Of my time. Or my talents.

[32 : 20] Or robbing you of my money. I'll put it all right. I promise. Well. There's a preacher done delay. God takes no pleasure in fools. If you're in any doubt about that one by the way.

Read Acts chapter 5. And read about Ananias and Sapphira. God took that very seriously. Oh Lord make me holy. Oh Lord make me useful in your service.

Very dangerous prayer. Because God is in heaven. That he hears your prayer. And he will make you holy. But it will be a costly thing.

A painful thing. Be careful. Watch your step. With what you pray. And with what you promise. To God. Be careful what you sing. Take my life.

And let it be. Consecrated Lord to thee. Take my silver. And my gold. Hold. Well. God's hearing. He's listening. He's taking your words seriously.

[33 : 20] Perhaps you better as well. Hey. That's why if you're considering the Christian faith. And considering commitment to Jesus Christ. You also better be careful. Because coming to the house of God isn't enough.

In fact it's a very dangerous thing. He says here. To do it at all. You need to guard your steps. You need to watch out. You need to be prepared. To have a right approach. To praise.

To have a right attitude in your heart. To prayer. To have right actions. To follow. From your words of response. If you're not. Be very careful.

Don't presume. Upon God. Verse 6. Why should God be angry at your voice. And destroy the work of your hands. That's a real warning.

It's saying God is real. Be very careful. Don't mess around. With the living God. And we need to all ask ourselves.

[34 : 19] Don't we. Am I. Am I a true worshiper? Is it. In my life. The reality of faith. Or is it just a ritual of fantasy.

That I'm acting out here. In front of everybody else. Fooling them. Fooling myself. It's all summed up really there in verse 7. Do you see.

The contrast between reality. And mere. Ritual religion. Ritual can be very outwardly impressive. Can't it? Very exciting at times. Very aesthetically.

Appealing. Impressive dreams. Visions. Revelations. Impressive words. Very spiritual. Very ethereal. Very loud. Even spectacular. But. When dreams increase.

And words grow many. There is vanity. Says the preacher. What matters is something far more basic. Far more mundane. Fearing God.

[35 : 17] Do you see. Standing in awe. Of God. If you have the NIV. In other words. Taking God. Seriously. You draw near to listen.

And to obey. Not to multiply offerings. So let your words be few. And reverent. Not rash. And incessant. And you don't deny.

You don't delay. Your response. To God. You do. What you say. You will do. In response. To his word. That's reality. That's what God wants. Not fur coat.

But no knickers. Christians. All sorts of style. And splash. On the outside. But no substance. All sorts of apparent wealth. And substance. On the outside. But inside. Just nothing but poverty.

Rags. God isn't fooled by that. He sees below the fur coat. So don't let's be fooling ourselves either.

[36 : 17] Because God's real. He won't be used. Not by anybody. Certainly not by his own church. We are his creation.

He's not our creature. And we need to never forget that. Do we? God is in heaven. And we are on earth. So stand in awe of God.

Draw near to listen. Not offer the sacrifice of fools. Fools might fool themselves. And they might fool others.

For a long time. But not forever. And they will never fool God. Let me finish with the words of another preacher.

The preacher. Our Lord Jesus himself. Come from heaven. To earth. So that we must. Hear and listen. The words of God. Jesus said.

[37 : 16] Not everyone. Who says to me. Lord, Lord. Will enter the kingdom of heaven. But the one who does the will. Of my father. Who's in heaven.

On that day. Many will say to me. Lord. Did we not prophesy in your name. And cast out demons in your name. And do many mighty works. In your name. And then says Jesus.

I will declare to them. I never knew you. I never knew you. Depart from me.

You workers. Of lawlessness. See one day. One day. Jesus is saying. The whole universe. Will see the enormous gulf.

That there is. Between the reality. Of true faith. And what is just the ritual. Of tragic fantasy.

[38 : 12] But friends. The gospel calls us to see that difference now. Today. And to flee from the one to the other. Before it's too late. And to find.

And to find. In doing so. The key. To life. And joy. Understanding. Meaning. And true gain.

Which will never. Ever. Be lost. Amen. Let's pray. Blessed Lord.

Who has caused all scriptures. To be written for our learning. Grant that we may. In such wise.

Hear them. Read. Mark. Learn.

And inwardly digest them. That by patience. And the comfort. Of thy holy word. We may embrace.

And ever hold fast. The blessed hope.

[39 : 10] Of everlasting life. Which thou hast given us. In our savior. Jesus Christ. Amen.