

Where is the profit in life?

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn now to our Bibles and to our Bible reading for this morning. And you will find that in the book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament.

Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes. And we are going to read together this morning just a few verses from the beginning of the book, chapter 1. And then a slightly longer section, the beginning of chapter 2.

It's, to many people, it's a rather strange book and an enigmatic book. But it's a fascinating and very interesting book. And very powerful indeed, asking very powerful questions of us as human beings. As you'll see very quickly when we come to verse 3 here of chapter 1. So I'm going to begin at verse 1 of chapter 1. The words of the preacher.

You'll see there's a little footnote there. The preacher, convener, collector. It's a hard word to translate. The word is Ecclesiastes. It's where we get the name of the book from.

[1 : 07] But probably the preacher, the teacher, the provocative thinker is who this author is. The words of the preacher, the son of David, the king in Jerusalem.

Vanity of vanities, says the preacher. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

Well, it's a question that comes in many forms all the way through the book. But let's turn over to chapter 2, verse 1. And read a little bit more of what the preacher says to us.

I said in my heart, come now, I'll test you with pleasure. Enjoy yourself. But behold, this also was vanity.

I said of laughter, it's mad. And of pleasure, what use is it? I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine, my heart still now 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.

[2 : 26] I made great works. I built houses, planted vineyards for myself. I made myself gardens and parks, planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. I brought male and female slaves, and I had slaves who were born in my house. I also had great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.

I also gathered for myself silver and gold, the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, many concubines, the delight of the children of man.

So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. And also my wisdom remained with me. Whatever my eyes desired, I didn't keep from them.

I kept my heart from no pleasure. For my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was the reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done, and the toil that I had expended in doing it.

[3 : 40] And behold, all was vanity, and striving after the wind. And there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

Amen. Amen. And may God bless us. His word. Once is enough.

Good. Do turn with me in your Bibles to the beginning of the book of Ecclesiastes, as we read together. This morning I want to focus on another of the penetrating questions that the Bible poses us as human beings.

This time, one that comes repeatedly through this rather enigmatic book of Ecclesiastes. Now, we studied Ecclesiastes in detail. Well, it's a long time ago now.

I think it was maybe 2007 or so. But we have dipped into it occasionally since. And that's because I think it's a book that gives us a mighty dose of realism.

[4 : 47] And that's something that we all need, isn't it? Very regularly indeed. Because as human beings, it's far too easy for us to weave a web of fantasy, a web of unrealism all around our lives.

To pretend away the harsher realities of life that we find it much easier not to think about. We're in danger of that really in many ways right now as a country.

People are getting very used, aren't they, to having been paid to not work. To be paid to go out and have half-price meals paid for by the Chancellor.

We're being lulled into thinking that the government has got a sort of magic money tree. And that we think that it can continue to shower us with all sorts of good things at no cost to everyone. But, of course, that's not true, is it?

There's a day of reckoning coming. And we're going to have to learn that money doesn't actually grow on trees. That the government doesn't have any money except it comes from our pockets.

And the pockets actually of our children and our grandchildren.

[5 : 50] They're the ones who are going to pay for this. The money that we're spending gaily now is being borrowed from those who are as yet unborn. Which is very convenient because the unborn can't protest and the unborn can't vote for a very long time.

But, you see, reality is unfortunately very real. It can't be avoided forever, can it? Not in economics. And not in terms of our mortality as human beings.

The reality that we all want to hide from. That our lives are ephemeral. And therefore, they'll be passing in this world. Just because we're finite and limited, that our lives also are enigmatic.

They're going to be perplexing to us right until the very end. And worse, that this world is full of evil. And so life is going to be often very painful for us.

And Ecclesiastes therefore shouts to us again and again, Be real. Learn to live with the mortality that we can't control. Learn to live with the mysteries that we will never be able to comprehend.

[6 : 57] And learn to live with the miseries that we may never be able to curtail. Be real. Be real. If we don't do that, we will never be able to find the joy and the gladness and the happiness that there is for us as human beings in life.

That's the message of this preacher. And of course, if it's really true, and it is true, then it leads to that very important question that's right there in verse 3.

Where is the real profit in life? What does a man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? What is the point of life?

What's the meaning of it all? What's the meaning of our work, our toil, our worries, our family, our relationships, our possessions? At the end of it all, what is it all worth that is lasting?

What's our life's work worth? Where's the lasting profit to show from that? What does a man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

[8 : 07] I was reading the other day about the Italian composer Ennio Morricone, who died recently. Remember, he must have done some of the most memorable and famous movie scores of the last 40 years or so, from westerns to horror films to epics like *The Mission*.

You'll never forget that whistling at the beginning of *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*. Or, you know, Gabriel's oboe that's never off the read. That's one of my favorites, actually. But he died recently. 40 years of film scores.

And of course, he's left a great legacy of music. That'll live on, won't it, in the films, in the airwaves, and so on. But I was thinking, despite that legacy, in the end, what profit did he gain that he could hold onto in the grave?

Made a lot of money, of course he did. But he left all that money behind. He made a lot of awards. But there won't be any more Oscars or Grammys or any of those things.

And no more composing. Just decomposing, like the rest of us. So what is your life's work really worth to you? To you yourself?

[9 : 21] At the end of the day. Where's the gain for you? Never mind what you leave to others. What is the point? Well, people, of course, have been asking that question since the very beginning of time.

And they're still doing it today. Because it's a real question. It's a realistic question. And it's quite a scary question. Which is why people hide from it.

Or they joke about it, of course. Which actually is the same thing, isn't it? As hiding from it. If you look up life in the dictionary of quotations, as I did, this is what you'll find. All kinds of funny things.

But you're actually trying to hide from the truth. So I like the quip from R.D. Laying, that idiosyncratic Scottish psychiatrist. Life, he says, is a sexually transmitted disease.

Or somebody else said, well, the purpose of life is to fight maturity. Well, there's a lot of grown men who've taken that to heart, I think.

[10:18] Or Woody Allen. Life is full of misery, loneliness, and suffering. And it's all over much too soon. It's not very amusing, isn't it? But those amusing quotes, they're all trying to hide, aren't they?

From the reality. From the really big questions that just won't go away. Remember a few weeks ago, I quoted from the journalist Matthew Parris from his book.

Where he talked about waking up one night in the dark of night. And in the middle of the dark and the quiet, being so conscious suddenly of the great issues of life. And then the great need to banish those fearful thoughts.

Get the light on, he said. Quickly banish all of those things. Because he was wanting to hide, like we all do, from the really difficult questions. And yet, human beings can't stop asking these questions either.

Go into any bookshop. Look at novels written by serious novelists today. Not just the kind of stuff that you read on your holidays to escape. But serious novelists.

[11:20] They're asking and dealing with deep questions. Here's a quote from the back of one contemporary novel. It says, he addresses the big issues. God, suffering, miracles, family life.

Why bad things happen to good people. And says, seeking such answers is a necessary part of our humanity. And that's right, isn't it?

It's been true all through human history. So, two and a half thousand years ago, Socrates famously said that the unexamined life is not worth living for man.

And we sense that, don't we? We all sense that we're living for something. But the question is, what is it? Or what should it be? If I want to find the satisfaction, the peace, deep down.

That surely must be there somewhere to find. So, where is the profit in life? Where is the lasting gain? Can we find it in this world of our experience?

[12:22] What does an examination of what we can see around about us in the world tell us? The answers of history, of science, of sociology, plain common sense, the cumulative bulk of human existence.

What does it tell us about where real and lasting profit in life can be found? Well, that's the question that the preacher here in Ecclesiastes sets out to explore.

He sets out to answer these questions and to search for significance by examining life in the world all around about us. Life under the sun, as he calls it.

And in doing so, all the way through the book, he asks us to do two things as we consider these things realistically, seriously. He says, take an honest look at life as we know it.

That's the first thing. And then he says, then, give God an honest hearing. And his message is simple. If we're really honest about life, as we do experience it and see it under the sun, if we don't hide, if we don't pretend to ourselves, then we'll realize that the answers that we are seeking simply cannot be found in this world.

[13:42] And that they must come from beyond the world. They must come from above the sun. In other words, from God himself. So let's join the preacher then this morning, first of all, and have an honest look at life.

And the reality, he says, is that despite all our search for meaning and value and purpose and profit, in the end, we simply have to conclude that it's all vanity.

You see there, verse 2 of chapter 1. Vanity, vanity. All is vanity. Some versions use the translation meaningless. Literally, it means vapor.

It means breath. Something that's fleeting. Something that's just passing. Like your cold breath on a, your warm breath on a cold morning. Like the froth on the top of a pint of beer that just fizzles away and goes flat in a few minutes.

Well, that sounds quite depressing, doesn't it? Does the writer need a good dose of Prozac? Well, some people have thought that. Thought he's very depressing. But actually, no.

[14:49] All the way through this book, the emphasis is not so much in despairing at the nature of life, but speaking about the dissatisfaction that we find in life.

He's not saying that all this world is bad and evil. See, in chapter 3, he says God has made everything beautiful in its time. But rather, he's saying that even the things that are good, that are

worthy, that are beautiful in their time, nevertheless, they cannot offer ultimate satisfaction. Because they are of their time. They're time-bound, like us. And that's the paradox, isn't it, at the heart of our human experience. We can't reconcile the world as it is and as we experience it to be with a sense, deep down, that we all have of what it should be, what we want it to be, what we long for it to be, but it just can't seem to be.

Of course, the Bible's explanation of that in this book and in every book of the Bible is the same. It's because the world is not as it was meant to be, but it's a vitiated image of what it ought to be. And human beings also are corrupted versions of what we are meant to be. And so God has given us, as human beings, deep down, an instinct for much, much more.

[16:13] God wants us to find what he has made the world truly to be. C.S. Lewis so often puts it so very well. He says the sense that in this universe we're treated as strangers, the longing to be acknowledged, to meet with some response, to bridge some chasm that yawns between us and reality, it's part of our inconsolable secret.

And he says, if I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, then the most probable explanation is I was made for another world.

And yet, you see, we don't want to accept that. We want, as human beings, for the world to be without God's interference.

We want it to be just under the sun. Because we don't want the challenge, we don't want the implication of anything above the sun that would make a claim on our freedom. And that's why we feel this tension, that's why we feel this frustration in the world.

Even the good things, even the very best things frustrate us. Because we want to find in those things the real gain, the real profit and purpose in life.

[17:30] And we never will. Because these things are never meant to bring ultimate satisfaction for us. Not ever. They're just for their time.

Only God, our creator, can ever bring human beings ultimate satisfaction. But we don't want to believe that. As humans. So we seek to overcome the vanity, the frustration, in all sorts of different ways.

But can we succeed? Many of us want to think that we can. Well, the teacher asks us to be honest. He says, have an honest look at life with me and see what we conclude.

And there are many ways that people pursue and seek to overcome this sense of need for meaning. But let's look at four things that the teacher highlights for us here in Ecclesiastes.

They're all very common. They're all very contemporary. Pleasure, possessions, power, and philosophy, learning and wisdom. First of all, pleasure, hedonism, enjoyment, leisure.

[18:35] Look at chapter 2, verses 1 to 3 again. I said to my heart, come, I'll test you with pleasure. Enjoy yourself. But behold, this also was vanity. What use is it?

I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine. My heart still guiding me with wisdom. How to lay hold on folly that I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven. Read on, you see, as we read, all the lengths that he went to seek pleasure. He had plenty of money. He built fine houses, gardens, pools, just as people do today.

Ours is very much a pleasure-seeking society, isn't it? Not many of us go to quite the lengths of the preacher here or of quite the means. But, you know, there are people in the world, aren't there, who do that?

Huge, extravagant parties. Flying to Paradise Islands for your birthday party. Hiring in the top singers in the world to sing, especially for you and your household.

[19:34] That's the world of the billionaire pleasure-seekers today. Not for many of us, but we all have our own versions. But pleasure-seeking, even for this man of extraordinary wealth, didn't satisfy.

Verse 10, whatever my eyes desired, I didn't keep for them. I kept my heart from no pleasure. And actually, he says in verse 10, doesn't he, that his toil was actually very rewarding.

But then, look at verse 11. In the end, it turned out just to be vanity, a striving after win, nothing to be gained. And this is honest look at an extraordinary life.

And ours is a society with unprecedented opportunities for pleasure and for leisure, for amenities, for holidays, for sports, for all of these things. Are we a society falling over ourselves with happiness, with satisfaction, with contentment?

No, we're not, are we? In many ways, people are working harder. They're more miserable. They're more burnt out. They're more damaging to their health.

[20 : 43] The two fastest-selling drugs in history, it's very telling, isn't it? Viagra and Prozac. That's where our society seeking pleasure has got us.

Nothing wrong in pleasures. God has made them to be joyful and wonderful in their time. The preacher says that. But more pleasure and mere pleasure is not the purpose in life.

Therefore, it can't be the answer to what we're seeking. What about possessions then? Well, we are certainly an ever-increasingly wealth-chasing culture.

And our wealth is ever-increasing. I read recently, by the way, that, I'm not sure if this is true, but I read that women now spend twice as much on clothes as they did ten years ago.

I doubt if that's true for men. I know a lot of women who really like their husbands to spend a lot more on clothes than they do. But, in general, we are a possession-loving, culture.

[21 : 46] Is it giving us satisfaction? Long ago, Jane Austen said, didn't she, a large income is the best recipe for happiness that I ever heard of. Or was she right?

Actually, I've often thought I would be willing to give it a good try for a while, but all the evidence, actually, is against it, isn't it? For one thing, have you ever met anybody who thinks they've got enough?

Ever? Well, maybe a few. Chapter 5, verse 10. He who loves money will not be satisfied with money. He who loves wealth not with his income.

This also is vanity. He goes on to say in verse 11, doesn't he, when goods increase, they increase who will eat them. Well, consumption.

We are certainly a consuming society. one thing our wealth has brought is an epidemic of obesity, isn't it? That is literally killing us. I read this week there have been 4 million deaths in the world this year from obesity.

[22 : 51] That's more than four times more than have been killed by the coronavirus. And actually, even with the coronavirus, 75% of those who've been critically or with it have been obese.

That's why the government is wanting us all to lose five pounds. And the chancellor is helping us out by giving us half-priced McDonald's and pizzas. It's called joined-up government. But you can't keep even the possessions that you gain to consume, can you?

Look at chapter 2, verse 18 and following. Again, all this, he says, and I've got to leave it to the one who comes after me and who knows if he's wise or a fool.

So often, isn't it, the business that somebody has invested their life and their toil in. It goes on to somebody who then absolutely squanders it and makes a mess of it.

Sometimes wonder what Mrs. Marks and Spencers think of their shop or Mr. Morrison in his supermarket and all the rest of it and so many others, many of which will cease to exist.

[24 : 00] Or, as he says in verse 20 there, you have to leave it to somebody who never worked for it. at all, verse 21. Someone has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it.

And this also is vanity and a great evil. Maybe it ends up just being the Chancellor of the Exchequer who will find a funny way to spend it. So much for possession, so much for the things that we try to gain, but we can't gain ultimately from them.

What about power then? That's a great pursuit, isn't it? For some people to find meaning, to find significance. Papers are full, aren't they, of political intrigue, of power games, of the leadership jockeying in our political parties here, across the Atlantic, everywhere.

Leadership battles, elections. And these leaders so often have that desire, don't they, to make a mark, to leave a legacy, to have a name.

Mr. Trump wants to have his face inscribed in stone like those other great presidents of the past. Even that, well, it's satisfied. Does that last?

[25 : 21] Well, even presidents, prime ministers, first ministers, they're soon past the sell-by date, aren't they? And soon forgotten, soon fading. Could you list the last ten prime ministers of this country?

Could you list all the first prime ministers? Do you even know the names of the leaders of the political parties? There's nothing so has-been as it has-been, is there? And all ultimately go that way.

That's what the teacher says. Look at chapter 4, verse 13, where he talks about this one who rose up all through the ranks and became a king.

He went from prison to the throne, though in his own kingdom he'd been born poor. And I saw all the living who move about under the sun, along with that youth who was to stand in the king's place. There was no end of all the people whom he led. Great leader, great power. And yet those who come later will not rejoice in him.

[26 : 23] They'll soon forget who he is. Surely this also is vanity. It's just a striving after win. Power and fame that's soon forgotten. Well, what then about philosophy of power, of possessions, of pleasure doesn't do it?

What about the pursuit of learning, education? That's certainly another thing that's exalted today, isn't it? We've had the fiasco of the exams and all the rest of it.

But we want more and more education, more and more learning. Is it really getting us anywhere? I still remember hearing on the radio years ago a cabinet minister talking about education and saying that he and his party would not rest until every single child in this country was above average in their marks.

And I thought you really need to go back to school and have a lesson in arithmetic, don't you? Well, the teacher went that way as well, seeking learning. Look at chapter 2, as we read, verses 12 and following.

I turn to consider wisdom and madness and folly. For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what's been already done. And then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly.

[27 : 37] And there is more gain in light than in darkness. The wise person has eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. Yes, there's a lot more to gain in wisdom than just being foolish.

But, look where it ends up. Verse 14, And yet, I perceived that the same events happens to all of them. And I said in my heart, what happens to the fool will happen to me also.

Why then? Have I been so very wise? I said in my heart that this also is vanity. For as of the wise, as of the fool, there's no enduring remembrance.

In the days to come, it'll all be forgotten. And the wise dies just like the fool. So there's the honest truth that preacher lays out, whether it's a life full of pleasure or of pain, full of possessions, or whether it's just been full of privation.

Whether it's been a life that's known power or just powerlessness. Whether it's been one full of wisdom or one of folly. As he says later on in chapter 8, verse 8, No man has the power to retain the spirit or power over the day of death.

[28 : 58] So, what is the answer to this honest look at life? Is there only despair? Well, yes, there is. If you insist on only looking at this life under the sun.

Either you can close your eyes and just go on gaily pretending it all away, or if you're honest, like some of the great philosophers, the existentialists and so on, you have to conclude that life is just absurd, it is empty, in the end it's nothingness.

that's where an honest look at life as we really know it will take us if that is our only perspective. But there is an alternative and that's the preacher's message.

If having taken an honest look at life, we give an honest hearing now to God. Turn over to chapter 3, verse 11 because here is a verse that explains this tension.

It's a key verse in the book, in the Bible. God has made everything beautiful in its time, he says. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart.

[30 : 13] It's so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. God has invested this world with beauty and with meaning for us.

but not as a substitute for God, not to make these things ultimate. And God has also set eternity into our hearts.

And so that means that only in the eternal will we ever find real satisfaction. Only there can we be freed from this bondage to vanity to meaninglessness and hopelessness.

And the preacher's answer is yes, you can find joy, you can find pleasure, satisfaction, in abundance in this world. That is what God wants for human beings. Look down at verse 12 there of chapter 3.

Joy, doing good, eating and drinking, taking pleasure in your toil. This is God's gift to man. This is what God wants for us. But you can only have that if you grasp this difference between time and eternity, between the ultimate and the ephemeral.

[31 : 26] You will never find that satisfaction if you confuse the gifts with the giver. Because God's gifts for this world under the sun, they are beautiful, but only in their time and for their time.

They're transient. But the giver, verse 14, God endures forever. Only him and what he does. God's God's love. That's why the ultimate answer is given to us right at the very end of the book of Ecclesiastes. If you look to the end of chapter 12, verses 13 and 14. What is our life and our life's work really all about?

Where do we find the truly satisfying answers to what it really means to be human, to what it means to be man? Well, we find the answers, says verse 13, here only in God, the end of the matter. It's all being heard. Fear God. Keep his commandments. For this is, literally, it says, for this is the whole of man.

[32 : 28] This is what it means to be human. This is what it means to have life that isn't profitless, that isn't just vanity and loss and bubbles and vapor. Because that inconsolable longing within each one of us is for more.

It's for more solid satisfaction, it's for lasting joy. And it's real and it's true. Life is not just to be experienced under the sun.

That more that we're seeking for, that we sense instinctively, is there. It is there to be found. There is an eternal world and God has set the desires of that world in our heart to make us uncomfortable in this world, to make us dissatisfied in this world, to reach out for what is real.

And that world is coming, it's breaking into this world of time and space, and it's coming and breaking into the personal world of every one of us. Because, look at the very last verse of the book, God will bring every deed to judgment, with every secret, whether good or evil.

So it's not just that we want to find the answer to the great question of life. We must find the answer, because God will bring every deed to judgment and every one of us with our deeds.

[33 : 56] Where do I find profit and gain and real meaning and purpose in life that just isn't fleeting, that isn't ephemeral, that isn't just ultimately vain and passing?

Answer, only in fearing God and keeping his commandments, in listening to his word, obeying his word of life.

That is the consistent answer of the preacher and of the whole Bible. What does that mean for you and me today? Well, let me just end by rephrasing this preacher's question in the words of Jesus himself, because it's just the same question that God has always been asking all the way through, but it's put in Jesus' words for our time now that he has come, now that in Christ God has confronted the world with the ultimate revelation of himself and of his commandments.

Here's the way Jesus puts this question in Mark 8 verse 36. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? See, it's the same question.

And his answer is this. If anyone would come after me, that is to truly fear God and keep his commandment. If anyone would come after me to do that, he says, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

[35 : 18] Because whoever would save his life, that is by seeking the mere satisfaction that can be found here under the sun, whoever would save his life by grasping for that will lose it.

But whoever loses his life for my sake or the gospels will save it. He means permanently and forever. That's the answer to life.

Fear God and keep his commands. It means take up your cross, turn your back on the world and follow Jesus Christ because he is the way and the truth and the life.

Of course, that doesn't mean that we will experience instantly an end of all the frustrations of this passing world. If anything, actually, it heightens the tension because we come to know more and more, don't we, of what we're really made for and we become more and more dissatisfied with the present.

And as the hymn says that we sang, when we're loved and when we know that we're loved with everlasting love, then our eyes are open to see much more of the joy of this world.

[36 : 30] Heaven above is softer blue, earth below is richer green. But we long for even more than that and we long more and more deeply. C.S. Lewis again, he says, it was when I was happiest that I longed the most.

The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing to find the place where all the beauty comes from. The more beauty we see in the world, the more we want to see its source. To know the answer to all the great questions of life.

That won't dissolve the tensions, the tensions, the perplexities, the struggles of life in this world. No. The gospel isn't a fantasy about instant salvation like that. Don't listen to any preacher who tells you that or offers you that.

That is not real Christianity. That also is an illusion. No, but the gospel does lift our eyes up so that we see more.

To see above the sun. To see the one who's enthroned in glory and power. to see the one who has the authority to judge, who will judge the whole world in righteousness.

[37 : 37] And who will bring an end to all of those sorrows, all those frustrations, all these merely passing and vain and ephemeral things. We see him and we see everything else then in its true light.

So let me ask this morning as we finish, where is the prophet in your life? What's your life's work and your whole life itself?

What's it really worth in the end? Without him, without Jesus Christ, the Lord of time and eternity. Friends, the preacher is right. It's nothing. It's a vanity.

It's a chasing after the wind which turns to dust and ashes. But with him, how very different it is, how vastly different, how eternally and utterly different.

That's why the apostle Paul ends his great resurrection chapter in Corinthians with these words to those who are in Christ Jesus. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable and this mortal body must put on immortality.

[38 : 51] When the perishable puts on the imperishable and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that's written, death is swallowed up in victory and thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's why he says to those who know that, therefore my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, faithful, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your work is not in vain.

It's never a chasing after the wind. It's a solid joy and a lasting treasure. Now and also forever and ever.

Well may that be true of all of us who are listening here today. Let's pray. Gracious Father, we thank you that you have created us in a world of joy and delight with pleasures abundantly.

That you reign upon our heads. And yet we know that you have also placed eternity in our hearts so we should never be able to be satisfied even with your greatest joys here on this earth under the sun.

[40 : 14] So help us, we pray, in knowing your eternal promises to us to be longing for that future joy and so living with real joy now even amid the mysteries and the miseries of this passing world.

Fix our eyes, we pray, on that kingdom where true joy is to be found. And help us in living in the light of your glorious gospel, sunlight of truth, to live day by day in this world to your praise and to your glory.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.