

**Sermon Topic:** Is There Meaning in Life? by Rev David Ho  
**Sermon Text:** Ecclesiastes 1:1-11; 3:17

- Today's sermon is taken from another teacher's sermon (implies the wise teacher of Ecclesiastes) about meaning in life.

**Teacher's Answer:**

"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." (Eccl 1:2)

**Teacher's Question: What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun?** (Eccl 1:3)

- Stages in a person's life-cycle – study hard, get good grades, go to better school, get good university education, get a job, earn money, have comfortable life, have family and then children go through the same cycle. Ultimately, everyone grows old and dies.

**Teacher's Observations** (Eccl 1:4 - 6)

- Life is a vicious cycle (Eccl 1:4 - 6) – everyday routine goes round and round monotonously
- Life is insatiable (Eccl 1:7,8) – we are never satisfied; the more we have, the more we want; always striving to accumulate
- Life is wearisome (Eccl 1:8) -- get tired from all the striving
- Life is "same old, same old" (Eccl 1:10) – nothing is new and everything has been done before
- Life ends in oblivion (Eccl 1:11) – when we die, we are like a lamp running out of fuel and the flame goes out

**Today's Observation:** We are a YOLO (You Only Live Once!) generation living in a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) world

- Today's generation's lifestyle/philosophy focuses on the present moment's pleasures and satisfaction – "Enjoy!" "Don't worry; be happy."
- This philosophy is not a new philosophy for today's generation. For example,
  - Eccl 1:10: Is there anything of which one can say, "Look! This is something new"? Everything was here already, long ago; it was here before our time.
  - *Carpe diem*, meaning "seize/pluck the day", by Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65 – 8 B.C.) is well-known. What is less known is what follows, i.e. *quam minimum credula postero*, or "put very little trust in tomorrow". Tomorrow is unpredictable, so enjoy yourself.
  - In Isaiah 22:13b, the prophet warned the Israelites: "Let us eat and drink,...for tomorrow we die!"
  - Eccl. 8:15 states: So I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun.
- Straits Times article on 29 July 2018 headlined "*Why career ladders don't excite millennials*" highlighted different perspective of millennials. In the past, Gen X's goal was to get a good job after finishing studies, urgently look for good job; value stability, security and loyalty. In mid-life, they hit a crisis and come back to the same question of "Is that all there is to life?". Many millennials are asking this question much earlier and experience a quarter-life crisis. They ask: In a VUCA world, things change so fast. Why look for job security? Thus, their focus is more on gaining experiences and finding meaning in life.
- The Teacher answered the question of "What do people gain from all their labours at which they toil under the sun?" (Eccl 1:3) with "Everything is utterly meaningless." (Eccl 1:2). Thus, the Teacher recommendation is to enjoy life; to

eat, drink and be merry for then joy will be ours while toiling all the days of the life God has given us under the sun (Eccl. 8:15).

### The Teacher did not end here!

- The key to understanding Ecclesiastes is the phrase “under the sun”. This phrase appears 27 times while “under Heaven” appears 3 times and “on earth” 7 times.
- If one’s perspective is based on only what one can see ‘under the sun’, then it would appear that life is meaningless.
- Look at how Teacher continued in Eccl. 3:1-17

### How to make sense of life?

- There must be an acknowledgement of God!  
If life is only ‘under the sun’, without God and that’s all we can see, we would be no different than animals that live and die, or one digit among many people going through life like a zombie living through the cycle of life. Life will be meaningless...until we acknowledge there is a God.
- Even for those who profess to be Christians but live without acknowledging God, without centring life around God, they will go through life no differently, living ‘under the sun’ and striving ... at the end of the day, will ask the same question “Is there meaning in life?”
- There are seasons in life, but they don’t last forever. Hard times may come, but they don’t last forever. Also, we cannot see ahead to what the final conclusion will be. Story of horse owner’s calm responses to events and neighbours’ comments about his beautiful horse and series of events leading to his son’s breaking a leg and not being conscripted into the army when war broke out.
- If we acknowledge God and know God holds our tomorrow, we will not fear the future.
- We see injustice in the world but ultimately, God will hold all accountable. Conversely, if there is no God, there is no judgment ... then who cares about doing right?
- Time is not cyclical, going round and round; not linear either, but spirals towards eternity as God leads us there, to The Day when God will judge all.
- There is *Kairos* besides *Chronos*. *Chronos* is a measurement of time. *Kairos* is a Special/Meaning Time when God makes all things beautiful in its time (Eccl 3:11). Until we believe that God is in charge, life will be meaningless and just under the sun.

### What is the most important *Kairos* time in our history of life?

- What gives meaning to life is God’s plan of salvation for us all.
  - ✓ Acts 3:21 – God wants to come and make things right as He promised long ago. World is plagued by sin and brokenness. God promised He will come and restore everything back to Him.
  - ✓ Galatians 4:3-5 – God sent Jesus at the right time so that the world at the time (under Roman empire) could understand and may know
  - ✓ Romans 5:6 – at the right time, when we were powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. *Kairos* time is when we meet Jesus
  - ✓ 1 Timothy 2:3 – God wants all to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth.
- God has placed a *Kairos* time so that you and I can be saved.

### TODAY is *Kairos* time for some of us

- If you do not yet know Jesus, TODAY is the day! If you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts. (Hebrews 4:7). Carpe diem! Only then can you find true meaning in life.
- If you are a Christian and going through hard times, return back to God, centre your life on Him and re-align. That’s your *Kairos* time.

- NOW is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2)
- Only when God comes into your life that your life will have meaning, with no more fear that your life will end in oblivion, no more fear that whatever struggles or suffering you're going through will be meaningless.
- Personal testimony of response to doctor upon diagnosis of cancer. Told doctor we are all terminal anyway; we all have to die. Have no fear of death. If God wants to take me home, no doctor can cure me. If God wants me to stay, no cancer can kill me. Shared with doctor the morning's devotion from Ecclesiastes of casting bread upon water & sowing all the time and God will bring harvest, and personal mission of sowing the Good News.
- With God, there will be meaning in life. With God, there is salvation. With God, there will be a perspective of eternity. With God, we will not have a perspective of 'under the sun'. With God, our perspective will be that of being under the Son of God.
- If haven't given life to Jesus, do it today ... only way to begin journey to know that there is truly meaning in life.
- For those who believe, who may be struggling and asking "Where is God?", return back to loving God and centre life on Him.