

Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

January 12, 2025

All is Hevel

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

KEY VERSES

The words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

- ²*Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher,
vanity of vanities! All is vanity.*
- ³*What do people gain from all the toil
at which they toil under the sun?*
- ⁴*A generation goes, and a generation comes,
but the earth remains forever.*
- ⁵*The sun rises, and the sun goes down
and hurries to the place where it rises.*
- ⁶*The wind blows to the south
and goes around to the north;
round and round goes the wind,
and on its circuits the wind returns.*
- ⁷*All streams run to the sea,
but the sea is not full;
to the place where the streams flow,
there they continue to flow.*
- ⁸*All things^[a] are wearisome,
more than one can express;
the eye is not satisfied with seeing
or the ear filled with hearing.*
- ⁹*What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what will be done;
there is nothing new under the sun.*
- ¹⁰*Is there a thing of which it is said,
"See, this is new"?
It has already been
in the ages before us.*
- ¹¹*The people of long ago are not remembered,
nor will there be any remembrance
of people yet to come
by those who come after them.*

We start this new year with a five-week teaching series through the opening chapters of Ecclesiastes, which is considered part of the “wisdom literature” of the Old Testament. In our age of self-actualization, it's easier than ever to find ourselves navigating life and truth alone. The good news of our faith is that we are shown a God who creates out of love and doesn't leave us alone to define a life for ourselves. We look to the wisdom of Ecclesiastes for a sense of why we exist as we start this new year.

In this passage, the Teacher describes four ways of living which guide the ways we live: 1) wealth (v.3), 2) career (v.9), 3) popularity (v.11), and 4) pleasure (v.8). Look closely at how the Teacher describes that even when each are achieved, none is ever enough and there will still remain an emptiness. **Which of these ways of living tends to be the most driving force in your life? What realizations have you had through experiences in any of these areas?**

As we begin to reconstruct our views of these four ways of living in this new year, it's helpful to do so through the lens of the word that's repeated in the first verse, “vanity.” The closest Hebrew word for “vanity” is “hevel,” which means smoke, vapor, or steam. The teacher is trying to get the point across to us of the impermanent nature of the things of this world. Hevel gives us a new direction for looking at our lives, realizing that nothing is permanent, and that we're not in control. **This week, how does “hevel” help you answer these two questions? 1) What in your life becomes less important? 2) What in your life becomes more important?**

Prayer: *God, give us the wisdom to look at our lives through the lens of hevel, realizing that nothing is permanent. Help us to live our lives being more present today, and to not be so busy that we miss the point of living until it's too late. Thank you, Jesus! Amen.*