

If you have a Bible, turn to Ecclesiastes 6. If you haven't been with us, we've been walking through the book of Ecclesiastes. And if you have been with us, then you know it's been kind of a frustrating and sobering look at life. I mean, I don't know how else to say it because Solomon is observing what life is like under the sun. And his observations are a bit frustrating because he's going to say this, "No matter what you pursue, no matter what you do, no matter the status you achieve, whatever happens to you under the sun all adds up to this: meaninglessness. I don't care if you go the route of humanitarian aid if you go the route of wealth, status and success. When it's all said and done, our lives are meaningless and vain under the sun." I mean, it's just a real depressing book, honestly. In chapter 1, Matt talked about this. And he ended his talk this way. He said, "When it's all said and done, you and I will be painted up like clowns and put in a box, and life will go on." So, he said, "Pay attention to the results of your pursuits so that you don't end up at the end of life, realizing 'All my life was spent on a treadmill, going nowhere.'" And so, we get to chapter 3, and chapter 3 says this, "Hey, God has placed these ingredients in life, He has given these things in life like mourning and sorrow and joy and laughter, a time to reap and a time to sow, a time to be born and a time to die. All of these things in life are placed in our hearts so that our hearts might grope for eternity, so that our hearts might long for something beyond the sun. And in chapter 4, he said this, "If you don't find people to lock arms with and do this thing together, you're going to have a very, very, very difficult time navigating through life. So, that was the call for community and the call for you and me to get connected with other people to walk through life with. Last week, the message was this, "As you approach the divine, approach Him with reverence and fear."

And then, now in chapter 6, Solomon is going to do the same thing. He's just going to pick up his lament where he left off. And he's going to say this, "There is no satisfaction in your riches. There is no satisfaction in your work. And this is just the way life is under the sun." So, are you all ready for this? Here we go. Bear with me, because the first 12 verses are bleak...and there's only 12 verses, okay. He says this, verse 1, "There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind:" Here's what he's saying, "As I am observing life under the sun..." It's important to remember here, he's looking at life under the sun. "...I am seeing an evil that presses against humanity. It is an evil that every one of us faces, and it's prevalent among all of the human race." And here it is in verse 2. He says this, "...a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them. This is vanity; it is a grievous evil." Here's the evil: God has given us wealth, possessions, riches, power, honor, yet if we do not have the ability to enjoy those things, which God has not given people the ability to enjoy those things under the sun, it is a grievous evil. That can also be translated "a malignant disease" or "an evil sickness." For you and me to have things to enjoy but not to be able to enjoy them, Solomon is saying, "This is like a sickness that has spread out through all of humanity that you and I have been gifted with good and honorable things, yet we can find no satisfaction, no lasting joy, no richness, no depth in these things under the sun." And he's going to use an analogy and a comparison in verses 3-6 to demonstrate his point. And I just want to tell you, when I first read it, it was like getting socked in the stomach. Because what he's going to compare this to is just a tragedy that all of us are all too familiar with. Look at verse 3, he says this, "If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with life's good things..." Let me say this, there's some culture going on here. For the Hebrew, if you have been given longevity in life, it's a sign of God's blessing. So, he says, "This man has been given many, many years." Also for the Hebrew, if you have been given multiple children, it's also a sign of God's blessing. So Solomon is saying here, "Hey, let's just make up a situation. Let's say you have 100 kids. Let's say you live 100 years. But if you do not possess the ability to enjoy life's good things," look at what He says, "...I say that a stillborn

child is better off than he." That's just kind of sobering. You know, I read that, and I was looking for a way to kind of dance around the reality of miscarriage and stillborn being a part of this text. If you have the New American Standard Version, it translates that as "miscarriage." And I'm sure many of you, like I, know many people who have suffered through the tragedy of miscarriage. It's absolutely gut-wrenching. We have a ministry in place here at the church that specifically handles this situation in life. To have a child and that child not be carried to term is a tragedy that is absolutely gut-wrenching, not only on the father, but especially on the mother. And so, I was looking for a way just to kind of bounce around this text and not deal with it because it's so close to home, especially for those who have suffered through it. But to dance around this is to miss the very point that Solomon is making. He says this, "It is more tragic for someone to be given life and possessions and honor and riches and not enjoy life's good things than the tragedy of miscarriage." You see for Solomon, he recognizes both of them as tragic. He's just saying it is more tragic for life to be granted and this person not to enjoy the good things in life than it is for the baby to not come to term. You just feel the emphasis that he's putting there? You see, for all of us, we are on this side of life. We are on this side of life where we have been given opportunity to enjoy it, and he's saying this, "If your life is not marked by the enjoyment of life's good things, then it is better off that you were not even born at all."

And he's going to tell us why in verse 4. "A stillborn child is better off than he. For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered. Moreover, it has not seen the sun or known anything, yet it finds rest rather than he. Even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no good--do not all go to the one place?" So he says this, "Forget the long life. Take 2000 years of life. If you have been given 2000 years to enjoy life and you've been given hundreds and hundreds of children, it amounts to nothing. And the reason it's better for the miscarriage is because that little baby did not suffer through the frustration and the vanity and the futility and the meaninglessness of life as we know it under the sun." He says, "There is more rest for that baby than there is for the man or woman who has been granted life but can't seem to figure it out, can't find satisfaction, can't find the ability to enjoy life's good things." And he says, "This little baby is in a better place. He has more rest than this soul that can't find rest under the sun." So, his first point is this, "There is no satisfaction in your riches, in your honor, in your possessions under the sun."

Last weekend, I went to the Baylor vs. TCU weekend, So we went to the game. It was a good game. I enjoy college football. We had a good time, but really the reason we went to the game was because Baylor was unveiling what they called the "Baylor Football Heritage Project," in which they honored the 26 greatest football players in Baylor history. So it was kind of a cool deal. And what they did was, they had these huge posters that are hanging outside of Floyd Casey Stadium. If you ever go to Waco (I don't know why you would), you will see around the stadium, these posters. And the cool thing was that Natalie's dad was one of the 26 selected. And so, we go down there for this great honor, and he's going to be honored along with these other legendary players, most of them who had great NFL careers. And it was just kind of this cool deal. Mike Singletary, Santana Dodson, Thomas Everett, Coach Grant Teaff, I mean just legendary names, certainly around Baylor, but sometimes even bigger than the Baylor campus. So we go down, and we're hanging out in the Letterman's Lounge, which is, if you have lettered in any sport at Baylor, you have access into this lounge. And so, we watched the whole game down there because it was hot and we don't want the baby outside. So we're down there, and I'm just looking at all these athletes, former athletes. I was just looking at them. I'm asking my father-in-law, I said, "Neal, who's that guy? What's his story?" And he'd tell me, "Oh, man. Roger Gory, he was the man on campus, and he's 73." I was like, "Cool. I guess." 73 but cool, you know. And so, we'd talk, and he'd tell me who this person was and what this person did and kind of who they were in life and what they did at Baylor and why are they part of the 26. And so, it was kind of a neat deal. And at halftime, they all get paraded down onto the field. They introduce all of them. You know, ten of them are dead because you know, it's Baylor football, so it goes a long way back. So there were 16 of them who were actually there. They introduce them all, and then at the end, they take their picture. And it hit me because they all get down to take their picture, but then they all had to get back up, old football players, man. And I just started thinking,

"Oh man, they're getting old. I mean, it's just not '74 anymore." And then, I went back in the Letterman's Lounge and just started thinking about this and looking at these guys and listening to conversations in light of Ecclesiastes. Because on the way down to the game, I'm working on this message. And so, I start listening to conversations, and some of them started sounding like Uncle Rico from "Napoleon Dynamite." "Back in '80, I could throw a football a quarter mile." And you just think, "You know what,..." And I talked to Neil, my father-in-law on my way home. And I said, "Hey Neil, this was a cool deal today." And he said, "It was very cool. It was a great honor." And he said, "It was great having the family there. It was a great time just to be together, just to a part of something as cool as this." And I said, "Hey, let me ask you this. Like, if this was all your life was about, it would be kind of lame, wouldn't it?" He said, "Yeah, it would be pretty lame." I said, "Like, because if you're hanging on to that game against Texas in '74 and all the recognition you get is a poster outside of the stadium that most people in the world will never see and nobody really cares anymore and you just get a plaque and a picture and five minutes on the field and this is what honor is for those who live under the sun, then it is terribly disappointing and stale." And the greatest thing about my father-in-law is that he's not hanging on to that Texas victory. He has seen life beyond the sun, but for some of those guys in that room, they didn't want the day to end because there was nothing else for them. And that is exactly what Solomon is saying, "If you don't get beyond the sun, there is nothing that matters in life. If you are stuck below the sun, all of your honor, all of your riches, all of your possessions amount to absolutely nothing. It is meaningless, it is vanity, and it just doesn't matter. And it's unbelievably sobering and real."

And he goes on in the next section, starting in verse 7, and he's going to say this. By the way, if you think you have that great job where you're helping people out or you have that great job where you're making a bunch of money, Solomon's going to say, "if you're stuck underneath the sun," your job amounts to nothing. Look at verse 7, "All the toil of man," meaning all the work of humanity, "is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied." Here's what he's saying: essentially when you boil it down, whether you're a high-profile CEO of a Fortune 500 company or you're a part-time Burger King working college student, you essentially work for food. You just work for your next meal. And you're going to leave here tonight, and you might go eat something that's great and grand. Let's say you get Chili's tonight or let's say you get Three Forks tonight. You're going to wake up in the morning and you're just going to be hungry again. And then, you're going to work, and you're just going to get hungry and you're going to have to eat again. And it doesn't matter if you're Mark Cuban or you're the ball boy for the Mavericks, you are just essentially eating food, and you're just going to get hungry again. And if I think about my life when I was in college, I didn't even have a job and I didn't miss a meal. I ate food. It wasn't great, but I ate something. And today, even though I have a job that makes more money than I was making then, essentially all I do is eat food. I mean, that's the reality of life under the sun. Your work is a four letter word. It doesn't matter. It's toil and it's labor and it's meaningless. I don't care if your company is one that really gives back to the community and you're going to restore a community, Solomon's going to say, "In the end, it doesn't matter under the sun." All you're really doing is putting food into your mouth. You're just going to be hungry later. I don't care if you're doing great court cases that are going to help the United States of America do something great. It doesn't matter because essentially, you're just putting food into your mouth. And if you work part-time for Starbucks, all you're really doing is working for food, and there is no satisfaction in your work.

And for those of you who think you might have found a loophole in all of this, "Ah ha! I won't work. I'll just study and learn. I'll just get really smart and have other people work for me," he's going to say this in verse 8. "For what advantage has the wise man over the fool? And what does the poor man have who knows how to conduct himself before the living?" He's saying this, "If you're really smart, ultimately you have no advantage over the one who's really dumb." If you have and gain wisdom, you have no advantage over the fool. If you have the ability to skillfully navigate through life, although poor, and work your way through life with skillful navigation or skillful living, he's going to say this to you, "In the end, it doesn't really matter. You have no advantage over the other. Everyone under the sun is on this equal playing field of meaninglessness and vanity. And I just want you to feel the gravity of the picture that Solomon is painting over

our lives tonight. He's going to say this in verse 9, "Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite: this also is vanity and a striving after wind." It is better for you to enjoy the little that you have than it is for you to dream big about something that will never ever, ever satisfy you. Now, the reality of this is this is reality.

And the last three verses, 10-12, my title over it is "C'est la Vie," which is just French for "such is life." You can hate this truth, you can rail against this truth, you can say, "this ain't even true," but you can't do anything to change it. You see, you might be thinking to yourself, "You know what, man? I totally disagree. I've got a great job, and I love it. I feel like I'm doing great things for people." Or you might be saying to yourself, "You know what? Honestly, I'm rich, and I really like being rich. I'm having a good time." But Solomon's going to say, "Before you start down that path, just for a moment, would you have the courage to look at your life and see if you might not be on a treadmill?" He's going to say, "Just for a moment, just stop and look, because if you're on a treadmill, it can begin to lull you to sleep and forget that you're even on a machine." You can be deceived into thinking, "No, this is life. This is what it's all about." And Solomon's says, "As long as you and I are stuck under the sun, you are on a treadmill of meaninglessness and no progress." And if you've ever been to the gym and you walk in and see these fifteen treadmills that are lined up right here, you see all the televisions above it, and you can plug in to sports and news and sitcoms or talk shows or you can listen to an iPod or listen to a Cd on book, you can talk to a friend if you've got breath in you to do it. And all of those things simply serve as distractions so that you will not remember that you're on a treadmill. There's nothing worse than running on a treadmill. And so, we do all of these things to help us forget, "Man, I'm not really going anywhere." Because it wouldn't be likely that you would run on a treadmill in a room of white walls and just go. Because it would just drive you insane. So, what do we do? We look out a window or we watch a TV program or we listen to some music or we distract ourselves in a thousand different ways so that we aren't faced with the brutal reality that we're not going anywhere. And if you have tonight, the courage to look at your life that so long as you are stuck under the sun, Solomon is going to say this, "You are on a treadmill of meaninglessness. You are not going anywhere."

And he says this in verse 10, "Whatever has come to be has already been named,..." Let me translate that for you: God has decreed it to be this way. This whole idea of naming shows God's sovereign control over the entire universe, and God Himself has decreed meaninglessness in life under the sun. And the reason that you and I cannot do a thing about it is explained in the second half of the verse, "...and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he." You see, you can hate it, you can rail against it, you can say it ain't so, but there's nothing you can do to change it. And the reason that you and I can't change it is because God has decreed it, and He is stronger than we are. And then, he's going to go on and say, "If you leave here tonight and if we go to the restaurant tonight and talk amongst ourselves and go, "Man, this is stupid. This isn't the way it is. I'm going to figure out what meaning really is all about in life." And say, "No, there is something to life under the sun. There is significance here. There is meaning. This isn't true. I'm going to pretend." Then in verse 11, he's going to say this to us, "The more words, the more vanity, and what is the advantage to man?" You can talk about it, you can write a thesis about it, you can rail against this reality of life, but the fact is you can't change it, and the more you try to argue and dispute against it, only adds to the futility of life. And so, he's going to end these verses this way, "For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?" He's asking some really good questions here. And Solomon is saying this, "So long as you and I are stuck under the sun, life is meaningless." So long as you and I are stuck here under the sun, there is no purpose, there is no meaning, there is no satisfaction, there is no joy. And I hope that you and I are catching the picture of the bleakness of life under the sun. So, Solomon is saying here, "You and I have to get beyond the sun in order to find anything refreshing or meaningful or satisfying about life."

So, how do we get beyond the sun? And the first way you and I get beyond the sun is we locate the sun. You and I have to realize whether we are stuck under the or we are beyond the sun. We have to locate the sun in life. And you know what? It takes a lot of courage just to say, "You know what? I am stuck below the sun." But some of you are beyond the sun,

and let me tell you how that happens. The only way that you and I get beyond the sun is through the gospel of Jesus Christ. I wasn't raised in a Christian home. I didn't have a church background. I wasn't brought up in the fundamentals of the faith. I grew up in Plano, and my parents were Plano parents. And we did the Plano thing. And they divorced back in middle school, and my life absolutely unraveled. And because my heart was so filled with anger and frustration and hurt, for so many different reasons, I chased all of these things to try to alleviate this pain in my heart. And so, when I'm in middle school, I begin to drink. By 9th grade, I'm in rehab. I've come out of rehab only to open my life up to the whole world of drugs. And so, I entered into that world at 14, and I go from rehab into drugs. And so, from 14 to 19, that is my world. I get kicked out of the 11th grade at Plano Senior High School and sent to Marine Military Academy in Harlingen, Texas. I get kicked out of Marine Military Academy in Harlingen, Texas to come back to Plano but not allowed to come back to school. So, I go ahead and forfeit that whole 11th grade year. I finally get let back in, I finish high school the next year. It took me five years to get through high school. And the summer after graduation, I'm about to go to college. Two weeks before I'm supposed to leave to go to Austin Community College, I'm at a party on August 3rd, 1996. And I get jumped at this party, and I get beat up really, really bad. I get sent to the hospital. I've got a broken jaw in two places. And I wake up the next morning, and I think to myself as my jaw is wired shut, "Man, this is just not working out the way that I'm hoping it's going to work out." And I was so frustrated because I felt so stuck, and I couldn't get out of this cycle of life that all I knew was junk. I mean, I couldn't get out. I had friends, I had fun, I lived it up. Every aspect of that life that I could have wanted to be a part of as a 14 to 19 year old, I kind of lived it up. And I found myself wanting and frustrated and angry, only to go back to that which I hated. But I didn't know how to get out. So now I'm in a hospital room, and I decide not to go to college because my jaw's wired shut, I can't talk and I've got to recover from this jaw surgery. So, I stay at home.

A week later, a buddy calls and says, "Hey, do you want to go to a Bible study with me?" I was like, "Why are you going to a Bible study?" He was with me the night I got beat up. And so, he was like, "Man, Tim called. I don't want to go by myself. Please come with me." I was like, "Well, I can't really go anywhere else, so I'll go to this Bible study with you." And so, we go to this Bible study, and on the way in, I said, "Whose house is this?" He said, "Tom Bailey." I said, "Who's that? Is that the...?" He said, "Yeah, it's the guy." I was like, "Dude, why did you bring me to Tom Bailey's house?" Because when I was 13 in the 8th grade, a friend invited me to church camp. And at church camp, I bring with me, I probably knew better, I just didn't think about it, I brought a fifth of vodka and a 12-pack of alcohol to church camp. And so, just before the worship service, I'm just catching a smoke before I go to the worship service. Well, the youth workers were made aware of this situation, okay. So who comes into my room? Tom Bailey. And he comes in there and finds everything and takes everything and goes back with the youth minister, and they talk about, "What should we do with this guy?" And they're like, "He seriously need Jesus, let's let him stay. We think we've got all his stuff." So, I stayed, and you know, just kind of went on with life. And, you know what, here I am at 19, and nothing changed in my life, nothing had changed in my world. And I'm walking in thinking, "He's just going to say, 'Of course.'" You know, I just felt so shamed, I just felt dirty, not only for this instant but just for who I was in my entire life. I felt like a fool, I couldn't talk, my face was out to here, I had my wisdom teeth taken out the same night, so I was just blown up. I just felt like a complete dork. And so, I walk in and I sit in the back, and Tom starts talking about the gospel. He starts talking about the gravity of sin and what sin really was. And he said that there was a way for sins to be forgiven, and it was paid for at the cross of Jesus Christ. And so, I'm sitting there and I'm hearing this. You know, growing up in Dallas, I heard this a thousand times, but that night I heard it. And I walked up to Tom and said, "Tom, I've got to talk with you." And he said, "Let's go in the back room, let's chat and let's talk." And this is what he told me, that Christ absorbed the penalty for my sin, and as I place my faith in Jesus, God the Father gives me the righteousness of His Son Christ, so that Christ's righteousness lays over my life, so that as the Father sees me, He sees the Son. And this is such great news, because God was not saying, "Clean up your junk before you come to Me." That would have been deflating to me because I had so much stuff that needed to be cleaned. You see, sin is something that I am, not something that I do. And I needed someone to change who I was, not the things that I did. Because if it was just about me changing the things that I was doing, I could just kind of learn it and white-knuckle

it and stop cussing and drinking and smoking and living this lifestyle, and then, maybe then, I would be good enough. But because sin is the very essence of my nature and I could not change who I was, for one second, I needed someone else to do it. And I just had that “ah-ha” moment. He did it. I mean, that’s what He did. And because of that, He has given me the opportunity to be reconciled with the Father. And as He gave me the gift of faith to believe that night, He also gave me the gift of the righteousness of Christ that covered over my life. And I was transformed so that all those little things I was involved in kind of quickly faded off as all things in my life were becoming new. You know what God did for me that night? He gave me forgiveness, He gave me the righteousness of Christ, but He also gave me meaning, purpose, significance and the opportunity to enjoy life. Because the gospel of His Son catapulted me beyond the sun. And if you have never responded to the invitation and the call of the gospel of Jesus Christ on your life, you are stuck below the sun, and there is no hope down there. But if you receive that great and glorious gospel by faith, God in His mercy will not only redeem you and restore you and reconcile you, He will then launch beyond the sun, so that your life takes on new shape and new meaning and new purpose. Family, for me, was a dirty word and it was just something that I didn’t understand, because it didn’t work in my life.

And then last night, as I’m preaching, I look right here and it’s my dad and my step-mom, and they’re here. And they’re here not because they’re coming to see me preach, but they’re here because they’re members of the church. It’s really weird for me. And what’s weirder is that my mom was right over there with Natalie and that they’re all here at the same service. And if you would have told me when I was 18 years old that our family would be in the same church service together as I’m preaching, I would have thought you were absolutely insane. I mean, it just didn’t add up for me at all. And not only that, but right here, Tom Bailey was sitting here, not because he was coming here to hear me preach but because he’s a member of this church. And God has just brought this whole thing full circle in my life. It’s just been unbelievable, and I see His hand woven all through it. You know, Tom was the youth worker that came to my room that night, but when he went away to talk with the youth pastor about the whole “stuff,” the crazy thing about that whole situation is that I would marry that guy’s daughter, the youth pastor of that whole event. And that’s his first impression of me. But I married his daughter. And God has just done crazy, crazy stuff like that. But now that I’m beyond the sun, I can see the meaning in it all. I can find the purpose. I can see the significance. Before, it was just hopelessness. But because of the gospel, God has brought things full circle, and His grace has absolutely changed the very fabric of who I am.

And I imagine in here tonight that many of you have similar stories. Maybe not of lifestyle, but of death to life, which is absolutely miraculous. Do you realize that salvation is always a death to life process? There’s always resurrection in salvation. So I don’t care if you’re a goody-two-shoes your whole life and then you get saved, it is absolutely miraculous, no less miraculous than the guy who went from gutter to glory. It is absolutely dumbfounding that God would save any of us and bring us from death to life. And so, as you sit here tonight, those of you who have been launched beyond the sun because of the gospel of Jesus Christ and you find yourself reading this text, saying this about your life, “I am just dissatisfied with who I am or what I have,” then God is calling you tonight to learn to repent. If you’re a believer in Jesus Christ tonight and you have been gifted with the opportunity to enjoy life’s good things and your or I are dissatisfied with who we are or what we have in life, then we are spurning God’s good gift in our life, and He is calling us to repent. Do you realize that nobody else in the world except for the believer has the opportunity to enjoy life’s good things? And to not enjoy those things is to neglect the opportunity and the gift, and the call on your life and my life is to repent.

About a year ago, I got braces. Praise the Lord, I got them off about three weeks ago. That might not sound like a big deal, but that’s because you had braces in junior high with everybody else. Braces at 29 is just awkward. I don’t know how else to explain it. They finish and they say, “Hey, you look good. How do you feel?” And I’m like moving my mouth; I can hardly talk. I mean, your lips just feel out to here. And I go and look in the mirror, and I said, “This is a mistake. I made a mistake. Can you take these things off?” You know, I just felt like a dork. And so, I’m kind of navigating through life, learning how to just think that braces aren’t that big of a deal. They’re really not that big of a deal, but I’m thinking, “Man,

what are people thinking about me?" I have braces now; it's just kind of nerdy. And I know that's vain and maybe this is just me letting you into my head too much, but the reality is I just struggled with the whole braces deal. And it didn't help being on staff here at the Village, because the guys that I work with are compassionate friends of mine who never mentioned anything about my braces. Well in May, just to kind of add spice to my life, I graduated from seminary, which was kind of this "hallelujah" moment for me. Four years, I'm done, it's an unbelievable feeling. And at the graduation party, Natalie's grand parents said, "We're so excited for you guys." You know, they're 88 years old. They're the coolest people in the world.

And they said this, "We're so excited for you guys and just so excited for your little family and kind of getting started. And we want to give you something." I was like, "Aw, this is going to be good." And I was eager to hear, and they said, "You know, we don't have much use for the minivan, so we just want to go ahead and give that to you. I was like, "What for? We've got two cars." And I was like, "Naw, that's fine." And you think, "Oh, that's not a bad deal," but maybe that's because you're not having to drive around in the minivan. Let me unpack for you how this whole process worked itself out. Before I accepted the gift, I went in and sought wise counsel with Bleecker and Chandler and Paul and some of the other guys. And they were like, "Man, you've got to take that, dude." And so, I'm thinking, "Yeah, I do. I've got to take it. You know, it's cool, right?" And they're like, "Yeah man, it's really cool." And so, we received the gift, and it is a great gift. It's gold, it's a gold mini, and I mean sweet, man. And we get it, and Natalie...because I'm thinking one way, and then Natalie says, "You know Josh, the minivan's a '98 and the TrailBlazer is an '04. I mean, that's like six years of safety standards that I'm sure have been increases. And since I have the baby, I should probably drive the TrailBlazer." I'm like, "What? But you've got the baby. You should be in the minivan." And so, who's driving the minivan? Me.

So, I'm driving around with my braces and gold minivan. I just felt like the biggest dork in the world. And I just wrestled with it, and I kept telling myself, "No, it's practical. It's a practical car. It just works. I have a family." Why am I driving it? I don't have the baby. I'm going out to lunch with the guys, and they're like, "Why don't you drive, Patterson?" You know, this is just so frustrating. And I walk into the office one day this summer. And we have kids, some of the youth come into the office and hang out, especially in the summer. And this junior high kid, who I don't even know, said, "Hey Patterson, could you come pick me up from soccer practice today?" You know, I just wanted to kick him, and it's just so frustrating, you know. From across the parking lot, "Hey man, is that your van?" I'm like, "No...Yes it is." Why am I driving the minivan? It just was awkward. It's me by myself, driving the gold mini. And some of you are going, "Hey man, you're ungrateful." That's exactly where I was, although it has four bucket leather seats and a Cd player. It's way better than my car. I just saw everything from a vantage point of being under the sun.

Because I thought, "Man, this is going to say something about my status." As if I even had status. And you know, I was just thinking, "You know, I'm just not going to be cool anymore," as if I was ever cool. But this is the way that I'm thinking. I'm thinking, "This doesn't look good. This isn't the cool thing. None of my guy friends are in minivans." And so, I'm just kind of going through this, but I'm forgetting that it doesn't matter if I'm in a Porsche or a minivan so long as I'm under the sun, thinking that status matters or thinking that my image somehow says something about who I am and that it even matters under the sun. I got caught in that thinking, and God called me to repent. Because her grandparents gifted us with a wonderful gift of a free car. I mean, how many of us wouldn't want a free car? And on top of that, he said, "Hey, if anything happens, any repairs, you let me know and I'll cover the cost." That's unbelievable. And here I am thinking, "I'm way too cool for this." As if being cool even mattered or as if I was even cool in the first place. And so, God, in His grace, called me to repent for that line of thinking.

And some of you might be in a similar situation. Although you're not stylin' the mini tonight, maybe you're frustrated with your house. Maybe 3,000 sq. ft. doesn't cut it for you, and you need something bigger. Or maybe you just don't like the way your dorm room is set up. Or you're hating the car that you're having to style tonight or the clothes that you have

to wear. I don't know where you are. Maybe work for you, just doesn't cut it, and you're just disgruntled and dissatisfied. Maybe the common denominator in all of this is you and not the things. And maybe you are like me and are stuck under the sun. And maybe you, like I had to, need to repent. Because if you're a believer in Jesus tonight, you have been gifted with the ability and the opportunity to enjoy life's good things and you have been gifted and enabled to enjoy who you are and what you have.

So, the last point is this: live by faith. If you want to live life beyond the sun, you first locate the sun. Where am I in relationship to the gospel? Have I been launched beyond the sun? Then, we have to learn to repent, to find those areas in our life and in our mind where we are not content with who we are or what we have. And then third, we continue this process of enjoyment and satisfaction by faith. We live by faith. And the thing that is so significant for me in this text is that the entire book of Ecclesiastes says this, "You can have it all under the sun, you can have millions, your name can be plastered over every billboard, magazine, newspaper, you can have everything that life has to give you, but if you are stuck under the sun, it just doesn't matter." And Solomon says that about life under the sun. But then, Paul the Apostle in the New Testament comes over here, and as he looks from a vantage point above the sun, he says this in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." So over here, this big and grandiose and huge and amazing absolutely amounts to meaninglessness. But over here, the routine and mundane and the everyday, insignificant things of life take on significance and meaning and purpose because they are above the sun. So that if you drink a glass of orange juice and you have the ability to enjoy it because of the Son, you have the opportunity to reflect and give glory to the almighty creator of the universe and orange juice. So, He put all those little nectars together that would just tantalize your taste buds, and you just think, "Man, that is good," So, you can have a conversation on the way home in the car tonight that absolutely means something because you are above the sun. You can lay down in your bed tonight next to your spouse and it can mean something different because you have been enabled to enjoy life because you're above the sun. You can lay down tonight in your bed by yourself because you are single and you can enjoy life because God has enabled you to do it above the sun. Everything in life takes on meaning and significance and purpose of you are above the sun. Whatever you do whether you eat or whether you drink, do it all for the glory of God. And there is nobody else in the world who can say that or do that except for those who have been gifted with that opportunity through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I taught at children's church about two months ago and taught the story of David and Goliath. And the whole Philistine army and Goliath viewed the world under the sun, and the Israelite army did the same thing. David didn't. He saw beyond the sun. And because of that, he had the courage to step into a situation that there was no hope in and he believed in the Lord of hosts. He lived by faith. And I told the kids, "Hey, you know what David had? David had God glasses. He just put these God glasses on, and he could see differently. You see how he saw the situation differently from everybody else? He had God glasses." So, we gave all the kids glasses and had them put them on and said, "We want you to see things differently, because we want you to see things through the lens of faith." And God's calling us to the same thing tonight, that we're to put on the glasses and lens of faith, that we might see life's good things and be able to enjoy them, because nobody else in the world can. And God has gifted us with that opportunity.

And so, as I close tonight, my challenge for you is this: put on those glasses, view life through the lens of faith, and see how it transforms your world, how it launches you from the mundane and meaninglessness of life under the sun and takes you to glories untold beyond the sun, as you reflect the creator and the almighty of the universe.

Would you guys pray with me? And as you bow, I want to read you this verse that Solomon himself wrote in Ecclesiastes 5:19. "Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil--this is the gift of God." "And so, Father in heaven, we thank You for Your good and gracious gifts to us. Primarily God, we thank You so much for the gospel of Jesus Christ, which because of your great and glorious gospel,

You have forgiven us, reconciled us to Yourself, given us the righteousness of Christ, justified us, but also launched us beyond the sun, so that life takes on meaning and significance and purpose. And I pray, God, that we would engage work differently, that we would engage relationships differently and that You would give us the rich and deep satisfaction of being able to enjoy who we are and what we have. Because those things are the very gifts from Your hands. And Father, if we have failed to enjoy those things and find ourself disgruntled and discontented, I pray that You and Your mercy would lead us to repentance. And we will give You all of the praise and all of the glory. And these things, we pray in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.”

© 2006 *The Village Church*