

**8-2-20 ENTANGLED IN A LIFE OF VANITIES
VANITY MESSAGE**

Ecclesiastes 1:1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

Ecclesiastes 1:2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 1:3 What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?

Ecclesiastes 1:4 One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.

Ecclesiastes 1:5 The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.

Ecclesiastes 1:6 The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.

Ecclesiastes 1:7 All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.

Ecclesiastes 1:8 All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

Ecclesiastes 1:9 The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 1:10 Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.

Ecclesiastes 1:11 There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.

**ENTANGLED IN A LIFE OF VANITIES
HOW A PERSON GOES FROM ONE VANITY TO THE NEXT**

THE WORD VANITY APPEARS 86 TIMES IN OUR ENGLISH BIBLE. ABOUT HALF OF THE OCCURRENCES OF THE WORD ARE FOUND IN THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.

In fact Solomon uses the word:

Vanity	36 times
Vanities	4 times
Vain	1 time

41 times the word is used

Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived, concluded that everything in this life except those things that we do in obedience to God and in His service is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

WHAT KEEPS US BACK FROM INVESTING OUR LIVES IN ETERNAL MATTERS?

Solomon the wisest man that ever lived, except for Jesus Christ, said everything you can achieve, everything that you can gain in this life is but vanity.

Anything that you accomplish will someday be vain.

Solomon said in his book that one generation comes and another goes and soon even the best of us and the famous of us will be forgotten.

Usually by 2 generations the average person is long forgotten.

HOW MUCH CAN YOU REMEMBER ABOUT YOUR GREAT GRANDFATHER? Let alone your great great grandfather.

Let's just reason together this morning.

We are not living in 500 BC or even 70 A.D.

We are living in the 21st century and I believe for the most part I am talking to professing Christians, or at least those who have been exposed to Christianity, and know it is what is good and right.

What then keeps us from doing what Solomon says would be the profitable things of this life?

FEAR GOD KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS. OBEY HIM, DO HIS WILL, AND INVEST OUR LIVES TO THIS END EVEN IF IT MEANS SACRIFICING SOME OF THE TEMPORAL VAIN THINGS OF THIS LIFE.

WHAT KEEPS US FROM BEING FRUITFUL AND PRODUCTIVE? I believe it is pursuing vain things instead of eternal things: putting the temporal above the eternal.

What keeps us from fearing God and keeping His commandments?

LETS LOOK AT A FEW VERSES THIS MORNING THAT WOULD EXPOSE HOW WE TRADE THE ETERNAL THINGS FOR THE VAIN THINGS OF THIS LIFE.

PAUL WARNS TIMOTHY ABOUT ENTANGLEMENTS WITH THE VAIN THINGS OF THIS WORLD:

II Timothy 2:4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

What are the vain entanglements that would hinder us from Obeying the Lord and keeping his commandments???

HOW WE GET ENTANGLED IN THE VANITIES OF THIS LIFE:

As we think through the normal course of a persons life, as they live out their three score and ten years it may go like this: “These are the vanities we experience in this life..”

I. IT ALL STARTS OUT IN OUR YOUTH (WITH YOUTHFUL LUSTS):

II Timothy 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

The overwhelming mentality of the world concerning the youth of our country is that we should let them enjoy their youth.

Years ago when I was on a preachers apprenticeship at the Langhorn Terrace Baptist Church, I was out visiting some teens that stopped going to church. I started to witness to them and share my testimony. I was in my 20's at the time and these young teenagers looked at me as I witnessed to them and said, You had your fun let us have ours. A lot of young people look at the Bible and Christianity as an obstacle to their life of fun!

The Bible says just the opposite:

1. Solomon warned that all the youthful pleasures of this world are part of the vain entanglements that will not last..

What are the youthful lusts that we should flee:

A. SEXUAL PROMISCUITY:

The world says let the young people enjoy themselves.

Encourage young people to be promiscuous. Young people not married hugging kissing etc.

I Corinthians 7:1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

I Corinthians 7:2 Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

I Corinthians 7:3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

The less promiscuous that young people have been before marriage the happier their marriage will be.

FEAR GOD KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS AND YOU WILL HAVE A BETTER MARRIAGE.

YOU WILL BE MORE CONTENT IN YOUR MARRIAGE.

YOUR CHANCES ARE THAT YOU WILL HAVE A LONGER HEALTHIER MARRIAGE.

If God by His grace and mercy allows some who have come from the world to survive don't think yourself so fortunate.

Having a promiscuous lifestyle before marriage is like playing Russian roulette with your future.

Solomon says that one of the few things in life that God has given us to enjoy that is not vain is marriage:

Ecclesiastes 9:9 Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.

But those who give themselves to a life centered around lust and promiscuity are foolish.

SO THE ENTANGLEMENTS OF THIS WORLD OFTEN START WITH THE DATING MENTALITY OF OUR GENERATION.

B. YOUTHFUL LUSTS INCLUDES THE DRINKING DRUGGING, PARTYING CROWD:

Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?

Top Killers of young people are Car accidents.

Usually drinking or partying is involved.

Suicide usually immorality involved.

Street gangs usually drugs involved.

Look at all the fuss we have in this nation over the threat of covid, but there is almost no record of teens dying from Covid 19 but about 5,000 teens die each year of drinking and driving car accidents. Yet the government wants to mandate school closings while liquor stores are considered essential. I heard John MacArthur preach a message recently saying that there is a shortage of aluminum because of how much beer is being sold because the bars are closed, everyone is buying take out cans of beer. Keep the beer flowing but close down churches and schools.

How many more teens die from overdose of drugs, how many are being killed in street gangs, and how many are committing suicide? Yet look at the fuss we make about the Covid scare while we fight to legalize recreational marijuana use.

FEAR GOD KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS. Those who get entangled with these vanities waste precious years.

C. *YOUTHFUL LUSTS INCLUDE THE WORLDLY FADS AND FASHIONS.*

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Can't have a heart for the things of the world and have a heart for the things of God.

James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

If you want to be fruitful for God repent of these vanities.

If it is in style it is probably wrong. I can't help but think that all this marking of your body with tattoos is preparatory for receiving the mark of the beast.

II. *IF WE DON'T REPENT OF OUR YOUTHFUL LUSTS OUR LIFE BECOMES MORE ENTANGLED WITH THE VANITIES OF THIS LIFE STARTING WITH MARRIAGE.*

After we get through the teen years most people desire to be married.

It is not a bad things to seek marriage, but for many people marriage is not a step of obedience following the commandments of God. It is just another entanglement with the vain things of this life.

Paul's teaching:

I Corinthians 7:6 But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.

I Corinthians 7:7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

I Corinthians 7:8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

I Corinthians 7:9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

I Corinthians 7:25 Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

I Corinthians 7:26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be.

I Corinthians 7:27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

I Corinthians 7:28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

I Corinthians 7:29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

I Corinthians 7:30 And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

I Corinthians 7:31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

I Corinthians 7:32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

I Corinthians 7:33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.

Many a young person has put off service for God.. until they are married..

They are more consumed with finding that right person, than keeping the will and commandments of God for their life..

They are consumed with marriage..

They are going to die if they don't find the right person...

PAUL SAID IT THIS WAY:

I Corinthians 7:29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

I Corinthians 7:30 And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

I Corinthians 7:31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

So for most people marriage is not just another step in a life of fearing God and keeping his commandments..

It is another vain entailment of this world..

What is the proof: if it really is a step of obedience in following the commands of the Lord then after you are married you will become more fruitful.

You will go forward for the Lord.
You will be more faithful in Church attendance.
You will go on and serve the Lord with a greater vigor.

Most people after they are married are less effective for the Lord.
They do not attend Church more.
They slack off in every area spiritually.

It reminds me of a young man who found a girl in Bible College, and they decided to get married. You would think that two people in Bible College would surely have a good marriage. Through the years I have found that not all young people going to Bible College are necessarily there seeking the will of God. You would think Bible College is a good place for people to meet and get married. I have been shocked through the years to find a lot of ungodly young ladies and men have gone to Bible College not being right with the Lord and their marriages have ended in disaster. This is the case with the young man that I am thinking of.

On their honeymoon they got drunk and did things they always wanted to do but their Christian parents wouldn't let them. Marriage was freedom to sin. Not a step towards deeper obedience for God.

This is evidence that they are caught up in a never ending web of vanity and entanglements.

I can testify that I believe that God used marriage in my life to draw me closer to the Lord. Everything that my wife & I did was wrapped around service for the Lord. My wife and I went to Ocean Grove on our Honeymoon. When we entered the town the guard said to us you don't want to come here, this is an old peoples resort. They were so Christ centered that they closed the town on Sunday and you weren't allowed to drive into the town after midnight into Sunday morning.

When we counseled with Pastor Don McCall for marriage counseling, Pastor Don asked us this question. He said, apart from pregnancy do you believe you have to get married. I said yes, and my wife didn't hear the pregnancy part and said, "OH NO.." He looked at her and said I said apart from pregnancy. Then she got it and said oh yes yes. In other words do you believe that to be more effective for God you believe that you need to be married? So many people don't have God in the equation at all. Usually in my pre marital counseling I share the gospel and a lot of things I believe by conviction. In fact I share what I might say at the wedding. I tell the bride and groom that I believe that marriage is to be between a man and a woman by design. By design the man was made first and is supposed to be the leader of the home. The wife is to be like the church and the man is be like Christ. I go into great detail and pretty much when I am done if one or both of the people are not saved they will not want me to do the wedding.

I mean I go through thought salvation, I go through the meaning of baptism, I go through how marriage is a picture of the church and they should want to reflect that in their marriage. I tell them I am going to say before everyone that this woman is a picture of the church and this man is a picture of Christ. I tell the couple that if you do not believe what I am saying you do not want me to marry you because I will be lying and you will be lying before all your friends and relatives. Then I ask them to consider if they believe what I am telling them. If that couple does not want me to say the things I am saying before all their friends and relatives than they do not want me to marry them. I never say I will not marry them. I say to them you will not want me to marry you because I will embarrass you in front of your family and friends. I had my nephew ask me to marry he and his girlfriend. I went through this marriage counseling with them. My nephew called me back and said, Uncle Frank, we want to know one thing before you marry us. I said what is it. They said, we know you said that marriage is to be between one man and one woman and we believe that, but my wife works with some women who are lesbians and they will be coming to the wedding. Will you be saying anything about this thing that marriage is only between a man and a woman? I said, I probably will. They called me back and decided not to have me marry them. I said, no hard feelings, you probably do not want me to marry you. This is the way I handle marriage anymore. If people will believe what I believe about marriage and what I tell them in the premarital counseling then we can go into the second counseling session about the marriage itself. THIS IS FIRST. IF YOU CANNOT BELIEVE WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT MARRIAGE YOU DO NOT WANT ME TO MARRY YOU. I am not in the business of marrying people, I am in the business of preaching the gospel and every wedding is a beautiful opportunity to preach the gospel. Now if people lie to me and say they believe this and don't that is on them. But this is how I handle it. I do not turn anyone down as long as it is their first marriage, and they will allow their marriage ceremony to be an opportunity to proclaim the gospel. Because that is what marriage is. Marriage is a beautiful picture of Christ and His church. In fact, we read this in the Bible.

Genesis 2:22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

Genesis 2:23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

Genesis 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Then Paul says this in Ephesians 5:

Ephesians 5:30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

Ephesians 5:31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

Ephesians 5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Paul says that when God brought Eve to Adam He had in mind sending His son into this world to purchase a bride to Himself. Every godly wedding should be an opportunity to preach the gospel. That is what I do! If someone does not want that to happen at their

wedding I tell them right up front get someone else to marry you because I only have one wedding ceremony. I do not turn anyone down, but they are free to turn me down. It is like salvation, would I turn anyone down for salvation? There are some who after I witness to them say no.. I never say no, Christ never says no. The reason they say no is because they love darkness rather than light.

I have seen so many people who enter marriage in vanity. This is why so many marriages do not stay together. The reason why, is because they do not put Christ first.

So marriage can be one of the vanities that keep people from serving God. Your earthly marriage is temporal, your marriage to Christ is eternal. If you do not put the eternal first, then don't be surprised of the temporal marriage ends up in vanity and distress and heartache.

So what are the first vanities that keep people from serving God?

- I. Youthful lusts. NOT TOO LATE TO REPENT.***
- II. Marriages outside of the will of God. Not too late to repent.***

Salvation can restore any of these vanities. God is in the restoration business.

I know a lot of people that got tangled up in the riotous living of this world but today are fruitful for the Lord. I know many people who got married for the wrong reasons but the husband and wife get saved or dedicate their lives to Jesus and now they are living a fruitful and godly life. They are serving Christ. God is in the saving and restoring business. There is hope for anyone who will come to Christ. It is not too late.

After a person is married there is a never ending web of worldly entanglements of materialism:

III. SOLOMON WARNS ABOUT THE ENTANGLEMENTS OF MATERIALISM.

After a person is married:

- 1. THERE IS A NEED FOR HOUSING.***
- 2. THEN A BABY COMES ALONG AND THERE IS A NEED FOR A BIGGER HOUSE.***

Ecclesiastes 2:4 I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:

More time spent on this endeavor than serving God. God knows this is a real need. Sunday is the only day we have to shop for a house.

So they find that perfect house, then the high mortgage requires working overtime.

Sunday becomes the only day you have to cut the grass around the house, and do the chores you need to do.

So the house becomes something that keeps you from serving God.

3. *Now the house needs to be landscaped: Again this costs money.*

Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:

Again vanity and vexation of spirit, more chores to do, more work.

4. *Every family needs a swimming pool: Recreation. The kids say please please can we get a pool.*

Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:

5. *Then you need a better job to pay for all these things. Taxes go up.*

Ecclesiastes 2:7 I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:

Ecclesiastes 2:8 I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

Ecclesiastes 2:10 And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.

6. *Then there is the let down:*

Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

Jesus said, that everything in this world is vain, He put it this way.

Matthew 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

Matthew 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

All your treasures on earth are going to rust, or be corrupted, or be stolen from you.

I was moving a piano from a rich doctor's house in the Poconos and the caretaker of the property gave us a tour of the facilities. The caretaker said to us, if you were given this property free and clear you could not afford to own it just because of the taxes and upkeep. I agreed with him.

I have seen many people work and work for their dream house and when they get it they realize it is just vain.

I moved a piano to this house in Tunkhannock one time, and as I went up the driveway, it was this beautiful white house up on a hill, surrounded by a white picket fence with horses grazing in the fields. Beautiful barns and pastures, as I climbed the driveway to the house we unloaded the grand piano into the house and the mother of the woman who called us was there to greet us. She gave us a tour of the house. The house was beautiful inside and out. She pointed out the radiators. She said these hot water baseboards were specially imported from Europe. She said, my son in law took off work for a year to personally build this house. I marveled at how beautiful it was. Then she said, it is so sad, the day after he finished the house he looked at his wife and said, I'm leaving. He just picked up and left his family. You see so many people think:

If only I can get married it will fulfill my life.

If only we can have children I will be fulfilled.

If only I can get the right job.

If only I can get the right house this will be the answer.

If only only If only and they are chasing rainbows.

SOLOMON SAID, VANITY VANITY VANITY. ALL THESE ARE VANITY.

7. IT DOES NOT HAVE TO BE THIS WAY. JESUS MENTIONS SOLOMON AS AN EXAMPLE OF VANITY OF GETTING GAIN IN THIS WORLD.

This vain cycle of letting things keep you from serving God does not have to happen.

Young people let youthful lusts keep them from serving God.

By the way, many times in order to try and get young people in the church, churches cater to the silliness of youthful lusts and foolishness.

People have the excuse of thinking when they get married then they will serve God. It never happens.

People say, well after I get my dream job I will serve God. It never happens.

People say, when I start my family and have kids I will serve God. It never happens.

People say, When I get my dream house then I will serve God. It will never happen.

People say, when I, when I.

NO NO NO.

READ THIS:

Matthew 6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Matthew 6:27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

Matthew 6:28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

Matthew 6:29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

While you are serving God, God gives the marriage, God gives the children, God gives the Job. God gives the house.

SEEK TO SERVE GOD FIRST.

Look, here is what Jesus said to do.

Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Put God first and all these things will be added.

When I came to the Elkdale Baptist Church in 1983, I had no false dreams and ambitions. I just wanted to serve God and do a work for God.

We came to the church and lived in a two bedroom mobile home and then in 1984 my wife had twins, a boy and a girl. We had 2 girls and a boy in a 2 bedroom mobile home that the church owned and had a mortgage on. I prayed and asked God if He could give us a bigger home. So I prayed and decided I would buy a double wide mobile home. The church was making payments on the other mobile home for \$400.00 a month. So I told the church that we should pray about selling the single wide and I would buy another mobile home and they could pay me the \$400.00 a month as a housing allowance. Perry Codington in Clifford agreed to sell me a new double wide for a few thousand dollars above cost. So I went to the bank to talk to Jerry Franceski who was the president of Community Bank in Forest City. I told him what I wanted to do and

needed to get a loan and keep the payments at \$400.00 a month. I had \$13,000 to put down. Jerry said to me, with \$13,000 down you can easily buy a home anywhere in the area, your interest will be lower and it will be a better investment for you. I said, I have three children all under the age of three and I need to be in the back yard of the church. At the time we had a Christian school, and I had to be at the church every day, we heated the church with wood, which needed to be feed three times a day. My office was in the church, and I saw no way I could get my family ready for church, do all I needed to do and be effective in the ministry and not live right near to the church. I needed to be close enough to walk over to the church. Many a night I would be in the church till midnight studying. We had an intercom system in the church and if my wife needed help with the kids all she had to do is call me. So it may not have been a wise worldly investment but it was what was needed, to seek first the Kingdom of God.

So in 1985 we bought the double wide house and it was a blessing for our family and living in back of the church was what was needed for God's work at that time. SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

Then as my kids starting getting older, especially my girls we started to have some of the kids in the neighborhood hanging out around the church. These teenage boys used to skateboard in the parking lot. I don't think they were interested in skateboarding as much as looking at my daughters. Then as I was working late at night in the church I would have this one young lady show up late at night seeking counseling. All of a sudden I was in my office late at night and this young girl would come to my office weeping and crying about this and that problem in her life. It was then that the Lord led us to build our house up on the hill. Being in the back year of the church was no longer good for the Kingdom of God. It was better for the ministry to be separate from the church property.

Again, seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you. Again, before we built the house, I went around looking to see if we could buy a house in the area. We found houses down dirt roads, and in each case a house that was big enough for our family we could not afford. Still our housing allowance was only \$400.00 a month. The doublewide was paid, and the \$400.00 per month housing allowance was freed up. This time I went to see Randy LaCroix who was the branch manager at the Community National Bank in Clifford. I had purchased the property our house is on from Selwyn and Marion Schmitt in 1989, and that was paid off. I then asked Randy how much money I could borrow for \$400.00 a month. He said \$60,000.00. So I got approved for \$60,000.00. I sold a piano and built the road going up to our house.

So we borrowed the \$60,000 and built the shell of the house. It was framed out, sided, put in the rough electric, basement floor etc., and then it took us two years to finish the inside ourselves. I remember going to Dunnyers one day for milk and someone said to me, boy you built a house over night, all of a sudden there up on the hill was a house. What they didn't know was it was totally empty inside. Nothing.

Again, God used it for the ministry.

Now it doesn't matter if you live in a trailer if that is what advances the kingdom of God.

It doesn't matter if you live in a doublewide mobile home if that is what is in the will of God.

If doesn't matter if it is a house on the hill if that advances the Kingdom of God. SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

I have seen too many people put their house before the Lord only to experience sorrow and heartache.

We are put here on this planet earth for one purpose. That is to advance the Kingdom of God on earth. PUT THAT FIRST IN YOUR LIFE AND GOD WILL GIVE YOU WHATEVER IS NEEDED TO ADVANCE HIS KINGDOM.

I have seen people put house, jobs, homes, family children before the Lord only to experience heartache and problems.

YOUR FAMILY NEEDS TO SEE THAT YOU PUT GOD FIRST.

God comes before your job, your home, your kids, your wife, Jesus put it this way.

Matthew 10:37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

Matthew 10:38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

Matthew 10:39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

If your life is wrapped up in anything in this world first above the Lord you are living a life of vanity, and you someday will be disappointed.

I will never forget many years ago, a man was coming to our church and I preached from the text in Matthew 10:37-38. I said you need to love Jesus more than you love your wife, you need to love Jesus more than you love your children, you need to love Jesus more than you your job, your career, even your own life.

Luke 14:26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

The word hate is a comparative word meaning, you put the Lord before them. Who you put first is the Lord, so at times it may seem you forsake all others for the Lord.

So this man came up to me after the service and said, Pastor I don't think I can put God before my wife and son. I don't know how God could expect me to love him more than my family. That was many many years ago that man said that to me. A while after that his wife died, then a little while latter his son died, and finally he died. Now after they died what did he have?

Ultimately, it is God who gives you your wife, your children, yeah even your very life. Is it too much for Him to ask of you to put Him first? You say I can't! No, you won't. I say, if you won't some day you will see you lived a vain life. SEEK YE FIRST. FIRST. FIRST COMES THE LORD.

How many people I know who put their work above God. VANITY.
How many people I know who put their family above God. THIS IS VANITY!!!
How many people put their job above God. THIS IS VANITY OF VANITIES!!!!

SO ALL IS VANITY: Except serving the Lord.

Youthful lusts.
Marriages outside of the will of God.
Yuppie Lifestyle. Unending getting of things.

IV. Then There Are Middle Age Entanglements:

MEN OF EXPERIENCE AND WISDOM SYSTEMIZE THEIR LIVES MEN OF WISDOM.

Ecclesiastes 2:12 And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done.

Ecclesiastes 2:13 Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.

Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.

Men in their 50's 60's Now become proficient and successful.
in business. In education.

House is paid. Learned from their mistakes.
Or some make a change of careers and go back to college. They become the learned wise ones.

The white haired men.

Now you would think that it is time for these men to do something for God.

Will they now be free to fear God and make his commandments their life's ambition?

NO, INSTEAD THEY BECOME MORE ON DEMAND.

The aged carpenters are booked two years in advance.
The aged teachers become the principals.
The aged doctors become the lecturers and teachers.
No time for God.

What does Solomon say about all this:

Ecclesiastes 2:15 Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 2:16 For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool.

Ecclesiastes 2:17 Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Solomon said, it was vain to excel in knowledge and wisdom, do you think that as you enter the golden years of your life that now you can finally do something with your life?

How many people look forward to retirement. Now they can finally do what they want to do.

But what happens? The Bible says, you are a fool if you think that you can wait till you get older to serve the Lord.

How many men, plan to retire and go into the ministry. After they have a nest egg stashed away then they can finally serve the Lord. If you are not serving the Lord now you will not serve him when you get older.

I remember a fellow who was a successful engineer who wanted to go into the mission work. He was entering retirement age. I remember one day I called him about a need we had in the church. It was about 9:30 P.M. at night. I called him on the phone and he reamed me out for calling so late. He said, don't you know I have to get up for work in the morning? Do you know many a night I received a phone call about 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning asking me to go to the hospital? I would go. And then had to meet with our school teachers for devotions at 8:30 A.M in the school. Many times I would be in my office all hours of the night praying and studying for Sunday morning messages. Many a time I stayed up all night to write a musical for our church. Now many years later this same engineer called me up asking if he could present his ministry to the church. He was looking for support to go into the ministry.

The ministry does not start when you have support the ministry starts when you get a call 9:30 P.M. from a preacher to ask you advice about a problem he is having with his building in the church.

What is the ministry?

Paul described it as follows.

II Corinthians 11:23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

II Corinthians 11:24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

II Corinthians 11:25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

II Corinthians 11:26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

II Corinthians 11:27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

II Corinthians 11:28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

II Corinthians 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

II Corinthians 11:30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

II Corinthians 11:31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

II Corinthians 11:32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:

II Corinthians 11:33 And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

II Corinthians 12:1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

II Corinthians 12:2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

II Corinthians 12:3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

II Corinthians 12:4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

II Corinthians 12:5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

II Corinthians 12:6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

II Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

II Corinthians 12:8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

II Corinthians 12:9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

II Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Look. What is the ministry? The ministry is serving, sacrificing, working, giving, laboring, and there are very few that have a heart for it.

There is plenty of room at the top for people in the ministry when you are willing to serve at the bottom.

V. THE FINAL VANITY:

Ecclesiastes 2:18 Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.

Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.

Ecclesiastes 2:20 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2:21 For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil.

Ecclesiastes 2:22 For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?

Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.

It's time to make out your will.

Now what will be done with the house.

What will be done with the business.

Who can these things be left to?

How many men have left their hard earned and built business to their children who have wasted away everything they built?

So now it is time to wind down.

Is their repentance from youthful lusts?

Is their repentance for that marriage that never brought either of you closer to God?

Is their repentance over the worldly entanglements?

Now we see this grey headed man/woman who's life is wrapped around one doctor appointment after another, one pill after another.

NOW WILL HE/SHE FEAR GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS?

Oh they reply, can you really expect me to be involved in church work at my age? I am sick and tired. It is hard for me to make it out to church I am sure the Lord will understand.

Then:

Solomon writes:

Ecclesiastes 12:8 Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.

Let me give you a bit of Advice:

TO THOSE WHO HAVE THE STRENGTH TO SERVE GOD...

Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

Ecclesiastes 12:2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:

Ecclesiastes 12:3 In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,

Ecclesiastes 12:4 And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low;

Ecclesiastes 12:5 Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:

Ecclesiastes 12:6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Ecclesiastes 12:8 Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 12:9 And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.

Ecclesiastes 12:10 The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

SO HOW MANY HAVE GONE DOWN TO THE GRAVE IN VANITY?

But will you listen to the preacher? I hope so.

When is the time to start serving God, obeying God, doing for God?

The best time is right now. Don't delay, don't put it off. Don't wait.

Serve the Lord while you can. Live for God while you can.

Put God first while you can!

Conclusion:

Everything in this life is fading away and decaying.

Jesus said it,

Matthew 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

Matthew 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Everything in this life is winding down. Our bodies are falling apart, our material things are decaying. Why will we live for these things? Give your heart and life to Christ