

SUNDAY - June 7, 2026

The Grind: Ecclesiastes 9:1–17 - Iterating

SERMON SUMMARY:

Ecclesiastes 9:1–17 frames life “under the sun” as a repeated meditation on meaning, mortality, and posture toward the ordinary. Ecclesiastes uses steady iterations—like a song reworked over time—to press a dark but honest diagnosis: life without appeal beyond the present age looks empty, arbitrary, and often cruel. Nihilism shows up in several forms—existential loneliness, moral relativism, epistemic skepticism, and cultural breakdown—and the text treats each as a current that shapes modern thought and practice. Solomon observes that death levels distinctions: the righteous and wicked share the same end, and social honors mean nothing at the grave.

Solomon pushes the logic of meaninglessness to a blunt conclusion and then counsels a counterintuitive response. The text counsels feasting, enjoyment of one’s spouse, diligent work, and celebration—not as naïve hedonism but as prudent embrace of the gifts available in a limited life. Solomon argues for taking pleasure in ordinary provisions and relationships because time and chance make outcomes unpredictable; fortunes turn by luck as often as by wisdom. The narrative’s brief portrait of a wise man who risks and gives himself to save a small city—and is forgotten and despised afterward—becomes the book’s single declaration of greatness.

Solomon elevates self-giving wisdom over reputation, wealth, and achievement. The story of a nameless rescuer reframes true greatness as sacrificial service for the insignificant rather than accumulation of prestige. The Old Testament portrait points forward to the supreme example of kenotic wisdom: the incarnate King who humbled himself for the salvation of those who could not save themselves. For those anchored in that redemption, meaning and hope outrun luck and the leveling power of death, and present joys become signs of a fuller promise to come.

SCRIPTURE:

Ecclesiastes 9:1-17, Philippians 2:5-8, Ezekiel 3

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. According to the passage, what is the common fate that awaits everyone, regardless of their character or actions (vv. 2-3)?
2. What specific activities does the text counsel people to engage in with all their might (vv. 7-10)?
3. What reason is given for why the fastest, strongest, wisest, most intelligent, or most skillful person might not receive the expected reward (v. 11)?
4. How is the wise man who saved the city treated after his great act, and how does the text evaluate his story (vv. 15-16)?
5. The text presents a seemingly bleak view of life "under the sun." How does the counsel to feast, celebrate, and enjoy one's work serve as a response to this reality rather than an escape from it?

6. Why do you think the story of the forgotten wise man is held up as an example of greatness in a book that often highlights life's meaninglessness?
7. The concept of "time and chance" happening to everyone can feel unsettling. How does this idea challenge common assumptions about why people succeed or suffer?
8. If death truly levels all distinctions, as the passage states, what lasting value can be found in living righteously or acting wisely?
9. Life's unpredictability can lead to anxiety or a drive to control outcomes. What is one ordinary gift—like a meal, a relationship, or a moment of beauty—that you can intentionally celebrate this week as an act of trust in God's provision?
10. The text encourages wholehearted engagement in our work. Is there a specific task or responsibility you've been approaching with half-hearted effort? What would it look like to do it "with all your might" as an act of worship this week?
11. The wise man sacrificed for a small, insignificant city without expecting reward. Who are the "insignificant" people in your orbit—perhaps easily overlooked or forgotten—that you could serve in a practical way without seeking recognition?
12. Our culture often encourages us to build our reputation, wealth, and achievements. How does the example of the forgotten rescuer challenge your personal definition of a "great" life?
13. Gratitude is presented as a discipline that transforms ordinary pleasures into spiritual practice. What one routine part of your day could you reframe through thankfulness to resist despair or entitlement?
14. The passage acknowledges that outcomes don't always match effort or wisdom. How can you maintain commitment to doing what is right when results are uncertain or when others seem to prosper through luck rather than integrity?