

Sermon Outline 5.25.08

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

I. Why & how to study Ecclesiastes (1:1)

II. The logical conclusion of life if there is no God (1:2, 12:8)

"A myriad of men are born; they labor and sweat and struggle;...they squabble and scold and fight; they scramble for little mean advantages over each other; age creeps upon them; infirmities follow; ...those they love are taken from them, and the joy of life is turned to aching grief. It (the release of death) comes at last -- the only unpoisoned gift earth ever had for them -- and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence ... a world which will lament them a day and forget them forever." Mark Twain

III. The central question of the ages addressed in Ecclesiastes (1:3)

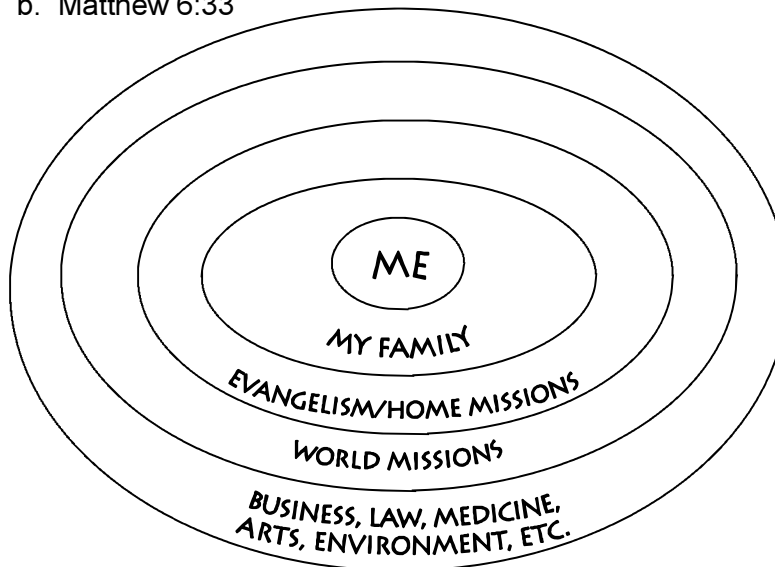
"What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?"

IV. Where the answer is not found:

- a. The humanist says, "I'm here to make the world a better place." (vv. 4-7, 11)
- b. The hedonist says, "Life may be meaningless, but I'm going to seek for meaning by experiencing the daily pleasures of family and friends and work and play." (v. 8)
- c. The existentialist says: "Life may be meaningless, but I'll defy the senselessness of the universe by living a life of courage and morality in the face of the meaninglessness and cruelty of life."

V. Where is the answer found?

- a. John 10:10
- b. Matthew 6:33



"If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise or be unthankful for these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo, or mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death.... I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same." C.S. Lewis