

**Hungering for God**  
**Hungering for Purpose**  
**Ecclesiastes 1:1-18, 12:13-14, 1 Corinthians 15:50-58**  
**Sermon Outline**

**Introduction:** One of the things we hunger for in life is purpose. What does the Bible make of this hunger?

**I) Our hunger for purpose is legitimate**

**A) Ecclesiastes 14.14: God will bring every deed into judgment...**

Comforting: God notices, even if no-one else does

*Eccl. 3.11: God has put eternity into man's heart*

**II) We will be disappointed if we try to create significance for ourselves**

**A) The word from the "Preacher"**

*Searching and working 'under the sun'*

Utterly meaningless

A cosmos that does not notice

Like the sun racing to no place in particular

Like the sea never satisfied

'Solomon's' personal story: No meaning anywhere, no real progress, no remembrance

**B) What do we do?**

**III) God grants significance in Christ**

*1 Cor. 15.58: ...Knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*

**A) Why is this so?**

**B) How do we become part of this?**

**Take away:** Don't force significance and remembrance, just be faithful

### Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Human beings all try to make their lives count. Where do you see this hunger for significance in your own behavior? Where do you see it in grand cultural movements?
- 2) Read Ecclesiastes 12:13-14. This text (especially v 14) is sobering. But it is also very comforting in the light of the message of Ecclesiastes 1. Why is it comforting?
- 3) Ecclesiastes describes the emptiness of trying to create or find significance from the vantage point of our experience “under the sun.” List at least five discoveries that the Preacher has made. Identify parallel discoveries in your life. How have you dealt with these discoveries?
- 4) Reflect on the following: “We are made to work. Education, learning skills, facing new challenges, receiving recognition for good work—none of these things are bad. The mistake—the sin—is seeking to use work, accomplishment, or recognition as a God substitute—to justify our existence.” Identify ways in which you have made this mistake.
- 5) Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58. Notice the challenge that v 58 is to the claim of the Preacher in Ecclesiastes 1. What has happened to offer us the possibility of lives and work that are not ‘in vain?’
- 6) What in practical terms does it mean to “labor in the Lord [Jesus]?” How does laboring ‘in the Lord Jesus’ differ from laboring in general? How can you know if you are doing it?
- 7) What is the ‘work of the Lord’? How expansive (how limiting) is the concept? It will help to draw your answer, for starters, from the entire letter of 1 Corinthians which describes in great detail the messy business of life together ‘in the Lord’.
- 8) Reflect on the following: “We do not have to force our significance in Christ. It is a given. What we should rather do is to be faithful (‘steadfast’, v 58) wherever God has put us, leaving our recognition and success in the Lord’s hands.”