

## **Monday, September 2**

**All passages taken from Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996.  
Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189.  
All rights reserved.**

### **Ecclesiastes 1:1 - 3:22**

**1** **1** These are the words of the Teacher, King David's son, who ruled in Jerusalem. **2** "Everything is meaningless," says the Teacher, "completely meaningless!" **3** What do people get for all their hard work under the sun? **4** Generations come and generations go, but the earth never changes. **5** The sun rises and the sun sets, then hurries around to rise again. **6** The wind blows south, and then turns north. Around and around it goes, blowing in circles. **7** Rivers run into the sea, but the sea is never full. Then the water returns again to the rivers and flows out again to the sea. **8** Everything is wearisome beyond description. No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content. **9** History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new. **10** Sometimes people say, "Here is something new!" But actually it is old; nothing is ever truly new. **11** We don't remember what happened in the past, and in future generations, no one will remember what we are doing now. **12** I, the Teacher, was king of Israel, and I lived in Jerusalem. **13** I devoted myself to search for understanding and to explore by wisdom everything being done under heaven. I soon discovered that God has dealt a tragic existence to the human race. **14** I observed everything going on under the sun, and really, it is all meaningless—like chasing the wind. **15** What is wrong cannot be made right. What is missing cannot be recovered. **16** I said to myself, "Look, I am wiser than any of the kings who ruled in Jerusalem before me. I have greater wisdom and knowledge than any of them." **17** So I set out to learn everything from wisdom to madness and folly. But I learned firsthand that pursuing all this is like chasing the wind. **18** The greater my wisdom, the greater my grief. To increase knowledge only increases sorrow.

**2** **1** I said to myself, "Come on, let's try pleasure. Let's look for the 'good things' in life." But I found that this, too, was meaningless. **2** So I said, "Laughter is silly. What good does it do to seek pleasure?" **3** After much thought, I decided to cheer myself with wine. And while still seeking wisdom, I clutched at foolishness. In this way, I tried to experience the only happiness most people find during their brief life in this world. **4** I also tried to find meaning by building huge homes for myself and by planting beautiful vineyards. **5** I made gardens and parks, filling them with all kinds of fruit trees. **6** I built reservoirs to collect the water to irrigate my many flourishing groves. **7** I bought slaves, both men and women, and others were born into my

household. I also owned large herds and flocks, more than any of the kings who had lived in Jerusalem before me. **8** I collected great sums of silver and gold, the treasure of many kings and provinces. I hired wonderful singers, both men and women, and had many beautiful concubines. I had everything a man could desire! **9** So I became greater than all who had lived in Jerusalem before me, and my wisdom never failed me. **10** Anything I wanted, I would take. I denied myself no pleasure. I even found great pleasure in hard work, a reward for all my labors. **11** But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless—like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere. **12** So I decided to compare wisdom with foolishness and madness (for who can do this better than I, the king? ). **13** I thought, “Wisdom is better than foolishness, just as light is better than darkness. **14** For the wise can see where they are going, but fools walk in the dark.” Yet I saw that the wise and the foolish share the same fate. **15** Both will die. So I said to myself, “Since I will end up the same as the fool, what’s the value of all my wisdom? This is all so meaningless!” **16** For the wise and the foolish both die. The wise will not be remembered any longer than the fool. In the days to come, both will be forgotten. **17** So I came to hate life because everything done here under the sun is so troubling. Everything is meaningless—like chasing the wind. **18** I came to hate all my hard work here on earth, for I must leave to others everything I have earned. **19** And who can tell whether my successors will be wise or foolish? Yet they will control everything I have gained by my skill and hard work under the sun. How meaningless! **20** So I gave up in despair, questioning the value of all my hard work in this world. **21** Some people work wisely with knowledge and skill, then must leave the fruit of their efforts to someone who hasn’t worked for it. This, too, is meaningless, a great tragedy. **22** So what do people get in this life for all their hard work and anxiety? **23** Their days of labor are filled with pain and grief; even at night their minds cannot rest. It is all meaningless. **24** So I decided there is nothing better than to enjoy food and drink and to find satisfaction in work. Then I realized that these pleasures are from the hand of God. **25** For who can eat or enjoy anything apart from him? **26** God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please him. But if a sinner becomes wealthy, God takes the wealth away and gives it to those who please him. This, too, is meaningless—like chasing the wind.

**3 1** For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. **2** A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest. **3** A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up. **4** A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance. **5** A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to turn away. **6** A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to throw away. **7** A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to speak. **8** A time

to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace. **9** What do people really get for all their hard work? **10** I have seen the burden God has placed on us all. **11** Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end. **12** So I concluded there is nothing better than to be happy and enjoy ourselves as long as we can. **13** And people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor, for these are gifts from God. **14** And I know that whatever God does is final. Nothing can be added to it or taken from it. God's purpose is that people should fear him. **15** What is happening now has happened before, and what will happen in the future has happened before, because God makes the same things happen over and over again. **16** I also noticed that under the sun there is evil in the courtroom. Yes, even the courts of law are corrupt! **17** I said to myself, "In due season God will judge everyone, both good and bad, for all their deeds." **18** I also thought about the human condition—how God proves to people that they are like animals. **19** For people and animals share the same fate—both breathe and both must die. So people have no real advantage over the animals. How meaningless! **20** Both go to the same place—they came from dust and they return to dust. **21** For who can prove that the human spirit goes up and the spirit of animals goes down into the earth? **22** So I saw that there is nothing better for people than to be happy in their work. That is our lot in life. And no one can bring us back to see what happens after we die.

## **2 Corinthians 6:1 - 13**

**6 1** As God's partners, we beg you not to accept this marvelous gift of God's kindness and then ignore it. **2** For God says, "At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you." Indeed, the "right time" is now. Today is the day of salvation. **3** We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us, and no one will find fault with our ministry. **4** In everything we do, we show that we are true ministers of God. We patiently endure troubles and hardships and calamities of every kind. **5** We have been beaten, been put in prison, faced angry mobs, worked to exhaustion, endured sleepless nights, and gone without food. **6** We prove ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, by the Holy Spirit within us, and by our sincere love. **7** We faithfully preach the truth. God's power is working in us. We use the weapons of righteousness in the right hand for attack and the left hand for defense. **8** We serve God whether people honor us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. We are honest, but they call us impostors. **9** We are ignored, even though we are well known. We live close to death, but we are still alive. We have been beaten, but we have not been killed. **10** Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We

own nothing, and yet we have everything. **11** Oh, dear Corinthian friends! We have spoken honestly with you, and our hearts are open to you. **12** There is no lack of love on our part, but you have withheld your love from us. **13** I am asking you to respond as if you were my own children. Open your hearts to us!

#### **Psalm 46:1 - 11**

**46 1** God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. **2** So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. **3** Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge! Interlude **4** A river brings joy to the city of our God, the sacred home of the Most High. **5** God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed. From the very break of day, God will protect it. **6** The nations are in chaos, and their kingdoms crumble! God's voice thunders, and the earth melts! **7** The LORD of Heaven's Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress. Interlude **8** Come, see the glorious works of the LORD : See how he brings destruction upon the world. **9** He causes wars to end throughout the earth. He breaks the bow and snaps the spear; he burns the shields with fire. **10** "Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world." **11** The LORD of Heaven's Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress. Interlude

#### **Proverbs 22:15**

**22 15** A youngster's heart is filled with foolishness, but physical discipline will drive it far away.