

‘What’s the point of life and death?’

I don’t know about you but I have become so reliant on my mobile phone, internet and my car, that I begin to wonder what life would had been like before these things were invented. I’ve become so reliant on my wife to change the bed covers and making me supper, I struggle to think how I would survive without her.

I would like you to write down, **the one thing or person that you couldn’t live without, right not?** using only one word. I would also like you to right down, **what do you think about death?** using one word.

Now we’ll come back to those questions later but for now let me share a story I heard a few weeks ago. **The story about a man who was bored sitting in his house all day and since it was a beautiful day, he decided to go for a walk.** Now you might be thinking **well, what’s the point in that story?** Well the truth is, there isn’t one.

This morning we’re going to try and understand the purpose of life and much like the story I just told you, we’re going to be asking the question, **what’s the point?** When Solomon was getting on in years, he was thinking back on his life and asking himself that very question, **what’s the point?** **Ecclesiastes 1:14 “I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.”**

Solomon says, I’ve been thinking about life, thinking about everything I’ve seen and done over the years and I’ve come to the conclusion that it’s all just a waste of time. If I were to ask you to go outside and catch me some wind, you would think, **‘Yeh no problem’** until you realise that you can’t catch the wind. You would be running around like headless chickens getting nowhere fast.

And that’s precisely what Solomon is saying, it’s useless trying to catch the wind because you never will, and so **what’s the point of even trying?** So, Solomon reflects about all he has seen done in his life and thinks, it’s all a complete waste of time, it didn’t bring him any real happiness.

Have you ever thought what the point is of being a Christian is, when everybody is going to die anyway? **Ecclesiastes 2:15 “Then I said to myself, ‘The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise?’ I said to myself, ‘This too is meaningless.’”**

Solomon says **what’s the point in trying to be wise?** Or we could ask, **what’s the point of being a Christian?** After all everything that happens to people who aren’t wise or those who aren’t Christians is going to happen to us anyway. **James 1:5 “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you”.** God asks us as Christians to pray for the wisdom to live godly lives but **what’s the point?** We’re all going to die anyway, so there’s no point in even trying to live differently from everyone else.

Let me ask you, **are we any different from the animals?** You know some people would have us believe that we’re all just animals with no hope and we’re no better than the animals. Animals are born into the world and die just like us which is something else which Solomon says.

Ecclesiastes 3:19 “Surely the fate of human beings is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; humans have no advantage over animals. Everything is meaningless.” Solomon says, **what’s the point of living and dying?**

When animals live, their life has no purpose and there is no hope of heaven for an animal. And Solomon says that when we live, we have no purpose and we have no hope of heaven. In other words, **what’s the point of living, if life has no purpose?** And **what’s the point of dying if there is no eternal life?** We’re no better off than the animals of this world, being born just to die is a complete waste of time.

He says the same thing in **Ecclesiastes 5:15-17 “Everyone comes naked from their mother’s womb, and as everyone comes, so they depart. They take nothing from their toil that they can carry in their hands. This too is a grievous evil: As everyone comes, so they depart, and what do they gain, since they toil for the wind? All their days they eat in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger.”** You know it would be great if we could live and take our possessions with us when we die.

But Solomon says, you know what, I’ve been thinking about that, when we’re born into this world, we bring nothing into this world and when we die we can’t take anything with us. Solomon says, **we live and work for what?** For nothing but grief, worry, anger and sickness, **what’s the point of living?**

Now one thing which frustrates us as Christians is all the injustice in the world. And we ask the question, **why do good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people?** Now we need to understand that people have been asking this question for centuries. Solomon himself asks this question in **Ecclesiastes 8:14** “**There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: the righteous who get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless.**”

Solomon after looking back on his life says, **what’s the point in trying to please God with my life when bad things happen to me and good things happen to everyone else who don’t even believe in God?** We worship God every week and we try to live our lives in a way which pleases Him, but hey bad things still happen to us. People outside don’t even care about God and good things happen to them. **What’s the point of me being a Christian? What’s the point in even trying to please God?**

And for those of you who are still single, you might not want to go through life alone. You might decide to get married and have someone to share life’s pointless existence with you. That way you both can be miserable and have a pointless existence together.

Solomon goes on to say in **Ecclesiastes 9:9+10** “**Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.**”

Solomon says, hey if you’re going to be miserable every day, get someone to go through that misery with you. Then you can both enjoy all the trouble that life brings together. You can both work hard all day for nothing. And hey, not only can enjoy being miserable on a daily basis, you can be miserable on a yearly basis, **how cool is that?**

Ecclesiastes 11:8 “**However many years anyone may live, let them enjoy them all. But let them remember the days of darkness, for there will be many. Everything to come is meaningless.**” You can live to be one hundred years old but you’re still going to die. And when you die, well, there’s nothing, nothing to look forward too, so **what’s the point of living in the first place?** Solomon who was one of the most powerful, richest and wisest men who ever lived, looked back at his life and thought to himself, **what’s the point of it all?**

Now I don’t know about you but I’m finding this sermon very depressing, **aren’t you?** And so far, you might be thinking, **‘wow, Mike you’re not giving us much hope here’**. But do you know what loved ones, that’s exactly what life without God is like. You’re born, you live and you die, life is a waste of time because life has no real meaning and you have no hope for the future.

What’s the point in millions of pounds being sent to Africa for food and medicine if they’re all going to die eventually anyway? What’s the point of us even getting out of our beds every Sunday morning to come and worship? What’s the point of us helping other people in the world? What’s the point in us being here right now?

You see people without God in their lives are a little like **Alice in the fairy tale Alice in Wonderland**. In a conversation between her and the Cheshire cat, Alice asked, **‘Would you tell me please, which way I ought to go from here?’** **‘That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,’** said the cat. **‘I don’t much care where,’** said Alice. **‘Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,’** said the cat.

That’s life without God in a nut shell, it doesn’t matter what you believe or which direction you want to go in because it’s all pointless. Everything you do in life or want to achieve always comes back to the question, **what’s the point?** It doesn’t matter what you do in life because you’re born, you live and then you die.

And so, the real question we should be asking is **which direction do you want your life to go in?** If it doesn’t involve God, then I would say that your life is just going to go around and around and around because it has no real purpose and no real hope for the future.

Now you might be thinking well wait a minute Mike, I work hard all day, I’m happy and my life does have a purpose. Well, if money makes you happy, with one bad investment, it all can be gone tomorrow. If your house makes you happy, with one bad flood, it can be gone tomorrow. If your new car makes you happy, with one accident, it can be gone tomorrow. If your spouse or children make you happy, with one illness, they all can all be gone tomorrow.

In **Luke 12:1** we find Jesus speaking to His disciples and He tells them to look out for those guys, those so-called leaders. And there are thousands of people listening in on the conversation that Jesus is having and it's in **Luke 12:13** we pick up the story.

Luke 12:13-15 "Someone in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' Jesus replied, 'Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?' Then he said to them, 'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.'"

Have you ever been having a conversation with someone, when someone else jumps in and totally changes the subject? That's what this guy does. Jesus has been speaking about vital truths, of divine providence, He's been speaking about vital truths of confession. He's been speaking about the Holy Spirit and while Jesus was talking with His disciples this man spoke up and said, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

Now what does this tell us about the man? Well this tells us that he wasn't interested in spiritual things, his whole heart and life were absorbed with his present life. And so, Jesus said to this individual, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" Jesus bluntly refused to answer this man's blunt question, He didn't want anything to do with a quarrel over family property. And so, this guy comes along and speaks to Jesus to try and get Him to go on his side, in order to get an equal share of the inheritance.

And loved ones, what follows is one of the most severe warnings in the Bible against covetousness and how not to prepare for death. Jesus says in **Luke 12:15** "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed." And this warning covers any and all forms of covetousness.

A businessman who needed millions of pounds to clinch an important deal went to church to pray for the money. By chance he knelt next to a man who was praying for £100 to pay an urgent debt. The businessman took out his wallet and pressed £100 into the other man's hand. Overjoyed, the man got up and joyfully left the church. The businessman then closed his eyes and prayed, 'and now, Lord, now that I have your undivided attention.'

I guess the point is that many people can fall for the temptation of covetousness. But what is covetousness? It's not simply a desire for property. For example, a person can have an excessive and unrestrained desire for food. Someone might say that they are hungry for food and just as some people are hungry for food, some other people may be hungry for gain. In other words, some people have a selfish ambition to want more and more.

And so, after warning against covetousness, Jesus states the reason for the warning. He says in **Luke 12:15** "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." What's Jesus saying? He's saying that life is more than things. He's saying that the success of a person's work can't be measured in terms of what he has been able to accumulate.

And if your still confused to what Jesus means, it's now that He shares 'The parable of the rich fool' to illustrate the meaning. **Luke 12:16-21** "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' 'Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.' 'But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' 'This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.'"

Here was a man whom in the world's eyes was a great success, yet God called him a fool. But why? What was wrong in his life? How did he miss the way? How did he act like a fool? Well this man was a fool because of the important things he forgot. He was well prepared to live in this lifetime but he wasn't prepared for the next.

He forgot 5 things and the 1st thing he forgot was 'other people'. He thought of no one except himself, this is the first thing that leaps out at you when you read the parable. 6 times he uses the word 'I' in the parable, 5 times he uses the word 'My' in the parable. This man was all about self, everything he did, he did for himself.

And other people never even entered his mind, not once did he remember those people who worked for him. **Luke 12:17** says "He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'" Think about it, maybe his neighbour across the field was saying to himself, "What can I do, for I don't have any bread to feed my children."

This guy should have realised that if he didn't have enough barns, there were other places he could have put it. You might ask **where, where could he have put it?** James 1:27 "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." That's where he could have put his crops, he could have put it at the feet of the homeless. He could have put it in the houses of the widows, or he could have put it in the mouths of the orphans and infants.

But Oh no this rich fool didn't think about those barns. All he could think about was his own little world, where there was no room for no one except himself. And loved ones, thinking about 'self' doesn't prepare you for death.

The 2nd thing that he forgot was that 'man is more than what he owns'. You see, he looked on life in terms of the physical things only. And it's here that he makes a tragic mistake, like much of the world makes today. He didn't distinguish between what a man has and what a man is.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way, they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life."

In other words, a person's life isn't the same as his business. You see, it's more important to be rich in good deeds, than it is to be rich in goods. But again, being 'rich in goods' doesn't prepare you for death.

And that brings me to the 3rd thing he forgot, he forgot 'the source of real happiness'. He had a false conception of life and so because of that, he had a false conception of happiness. He thought he could be happy by indulging himself.

You see loved ones, happiness isn't found in things. Money can buy a lot of things but it can't buy a sense of usefulness. Even the Beetles realised that money can't buy you love. It can't buy a clear conscience, it can't buy a mind content with God and man. These are the real riches and without them no one can be really happy. And again, focusing on the 'temporary' doesn't prepare you for death.

The 4th thing he forgot was his biggest blunder, 'he forgot God'. He didn't take God into account at all. There was nothing wrong with him wanting to tear down his barns and build bigger ones because as we know a good farmer must have foresight. But his fatal mistake was that in all of his well-laid plans, he didn't spare one thought for God.

James 4:13-15 "Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'"

Whatever your long-range plans may be, you need to remember that your biggest factor is God. And church if we ever leave God out of our plans, then you can be sure that our plans will end in ruin. And so once again, a life 'without God' in it now, doesn't prepare you for death.

And that brings me to the final thing he forgot, 'he forgot about death'. He thought he was going to live a long life. Luke 12:19 "And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.' And yet God says to him in Luke 12:20 "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you."

He only had one more day left to live and in so many ways we deceive ourselves constantly by thinking that we too have got plenty of time to live. We put off until tomorrow and the truth of the matter is that we don't even know if there will be a tomorrow. You see, Satan doesn't say to us, 'You will not die' but he does say to us, 'You will not die tomorrow.'

But Psalm 90:9+10 says, "All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. The length of our days is seventy years-- or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away."

In the height of this man's prosperity and self-satisfaction, God appeared to the rich man and required his life. **How much will he leave behind when he dies?** He'll leave it all, no wonder he's a fool. He spent his whole life striving for the things he had to leave behind. He neglected the true values of life that he could have taken with him.

Matthew 6:19-21 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Remember the story about **the rich man and Lazarus**. The story about a rich guy who lived in a great big mansion and outside near the gate was a beggar named **Lazarus**. And for years he begged at his gates but the rich man did nothing about it. Now he wasn't unkind to the guy, he never had him thrown in prison or moved away. But one night his soul slipped out from him and all his wealth, all his ease and all his self-indulgences were gone.

But why was the rich man condemned? In **Matthew 25:41-46** when Jesus is talking about the great division on judgement day. He says, "then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' 'They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' 'He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' 'Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.'"

The rich man lost his chance, **Lazarus** was right there in front of him and yet he did nothing about it. The rich fool in the parable forgot about many things and Satan whispered in his ear, "these aren't important." And he's still doing it today, whispering in people's ears, "just look after yourself because nobody else cares about you, don't worry about if God is real, He's not coming back tonight!"

Well, let me tell you loved ones, God does care and He cares enough to come down from heaven in the form of Jesus and give His life. He cared enough to die a horrific death on a wooden cross, so that you don't have to be condemned. He cares and loves you enough that He even promised that one day He's coming to take the righteous home with Him. So, you can run around and keep busy, you can fill your life with work, drugs and alcohol but again, that won't prepare you for death.

So, let me ask you, **who or what's the most important thing in your life right now? Where's your heart at this morning?** Jesus says in **Luke 12:34** "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." **Is your heart set on being rich in good deeds for others for the Lord? Or is it set on getting rich for good things for yourself?**

We used to have a magnet stuck to our fridge door and it's a picture of Winnie the Pooh. And next to Him, there is a pile of books and a little slogan that says, 'When I try to remember I forget.' In other words, when we remember the point of our lives, we will never forget our purpose in life. Because the minute we forget about God, that's when we forget our purpose in life.

When we leave God as a slogan word in our books, that's when we forget about other people. When we take God out of the picture, that's when we forget that a person is more than what they own. When we take God out of our lives, that's when we forget the source of real happiness. When we fill our lives with everything except God, that's when we forget God and try to forget about death.

So, what is the purpose of our lives, if it's more than just buying a new home or car? What's the purpose of our lives, if it's more than just going out and filling our lives with all kinds of junk?

You know even before a child is born, the parents run around getting everything prepared. They buy a pram and clothes, a cot and get the bedroom ready. There's a huge amount of care and preparation goes in place before that baby is born. Now you would think that people would take the same or even more care and preparation time when it comes to their death.

Yes, some people may organise a plot of ground to be buried in, yes, they might have a will written and prepared and have all the funeral organised and paid for but **what about their soul?**

It's kind of like the man who was about to drive over the Forth Road Bridge in Scotland. There were high winds and a sign that said 20 mph. But since no one else was driving across the bridge, he decided to drive at 25 mph. When he got to the other side a police car pulled him over and the policeman asks him, 'what speed were you doing?' To which the man replied, '25 mph'. The policeman asked him if he saw the warning signs, to which he replied, 'yes'. The policeman asked him, 'didn't you read the signs?' To which the man said, 'yes'. The policeman asked him, 'then why did you ignore the warning signs?' To which the man said, 'I didn't expect to meet you on the other side!'

Now remember the Old Testament never promises eternal life to anyone, it's not until Jesus comes on the scene and presents the Gospel that all this talk of eternal life comes into light. **2 Timothy 1:10** "It has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

Please turn your Bibles back to the **Book of Ecclesiastes**. Solomon writes **Ecclesiastes 2:3** "I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was good for people to do under the heavens during the few days of their lives."

And then he goes on and talks about all the wonderful things he achieved in life and in **Ecclesiastes 2:11** he says, "Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."

Like we saw earlier, Solomon after looking back on his life and thinking living is a waste of time, working is a waste of time, getting married is a waste of time, dying is a waste of time. He looks back and says, yes everything is a waste of time, but the story doesn't end there.

Ecclesiastes 12:13+14 "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil".

Solomon says yes everything is a waste of time, unless God is in your life. With God in your life, everything makes sense, everything is worthwhile. With God in your life, you not only have a reason for living but you also a reason for dying. With God in your life, your well on your way to being prepared to die. Solomon says the reason you are here today and still alive.

The reason why all of mankind was created in the image of God. The reason for our very lives is **1. To fear God**. In other words, as humans we were created to revere God, to hold Him in awe. And the very reason we live is **2. To keep His commands**. **Proverbs 22:4** "Obey the Lord, be humble, and you will get riches, honour, and a long life."

In other words, we are to reverently obey God, or as **Acts 9:31** tells us 'we are to live in the fear of the Lord', this is the purpose of life and the key to true happiness. Solomon has observed everything under the sun and says those are the reasons why we live. And he says, God is going to judge everything we do, good or bad, things done publicly and things done in secret.

Loved ones, many people have often searched for the meaning of life, from the philosopher, to the common man. And I know when I was younger, when I wasn't a Christian I used to lie under the night sky and look at the moon and the stars and ask myself, **why am I here? What is my purpose for life?**

Sadly, many people have concluded that there is no purpose, and fallen into despair. But a search that begins with the wrong assumptions, invariably leads to the wrong conclusion. People who are assuming that the theory of evolution is real. People who believe that there is no God, nor life after death. All these people if they are honest with themselves, will always come back to the question, **what's the point?** The way to prepare for death is to live in awe of God and keep His commands today whilst you're still alive.

Now just before we finish, I want you to think about the two questions I asked at the start. **What is the one thing or person that you couldn't live without? What do you think about death?** We looked at Solomon's theology about life and death, now let me show you the apostle Paul's theology about life and death. **Philippians 1:21** "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

When it comes to the one thing or person you couldn't live without, most people usually put their family, their friends, their home, their job etc. But loved ones, all those things can be gone in a moment, all those things will be gone when Jesus returns. When it comes to death, most people think of the words, fear, uncertainty and tragic.

But if you were to ask Paul, [what is the one thing or person that you couldn't live without?](#) He would say Christ. If you were to ask Paul about [what he thought about death?](#) He would say it's a gain. [Why?](#) Because Christ not only gives us a reason to live but He gives us a reason to die.

Christ not only gives us life abundantly here and now, but He gives us life eternal with Him when we die. And so, when we invest our lives in Christ, we also gain from His death. And the only way something can be a gain is, if the reward you get is bigger than the investment you put in.

[Remember in Acts 16 when Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown in prison. Remember when they were miraculously released from their chains? Remember what the jailor was about to do? Acts 16:27+28 "The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"](#)

And if you read on you'll see that the jailer and his household went on to become Christians. You see, the jailer went from having no reason to live, to hearing and accepting Christ as his Saviour because Christ gave him a reason to live. And Christ still gives us a reason to live and die today.

If you're not a Christian this today and you're tired of chasing after material things, or maybe you think life is meaningless. Or maybe the thought of dying today is frightening to you and you want to be prepared to meet your Maker. Or maybe you're just looking for a purpose or some meaning to life.

If that's you, then please just ask any member of the church here and they would be happy to share with you the reason why we believe there is a reason for living and a reason for dying.