

All right. Shall we open our Bibles this morning to our text in Ecclesiastes 3:12, as we continue with Solomon - trying to find life "under the sun" apart from God?

It was nearly forty-four years ago, it was July 20, 1969, when Buzz Aldrin and Neal Armstrong landed in Apollo 11 on the moon. They had left Michael Collins in the command module, and they had gotten aboard the lunar module - called the Eagle - and at 8:18 that night, landed in the Sea of Tranquility. In fact, they sent back the *message* in "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed." Quite a day - for our country and for mankind. Six hours later, 2:56 in the morning, Armstrong popped the hatch and stepped out onto the moon with what are now those famous words - "One small step for a man and one giant leap for mankind." Well, they walked around for a couple of hours - they were only on the moon surface for about twenty-one hours before taking off again - but one of the things that both of them couldn't get over was the view that they had of the Earth from the perspective of the moon. You may have seen, as the years have gone by, some of those pictures - just beautiful, right? The Earth and all of its color and splendor, there from the perspective of the moon. It left quite an impression upon them both.

Well, the Earth doesn't always look that good when you get closer to it. Looks all right from a long way away, but you don't always get that same kind of view here, as you look through the crime and the traffic and the pollution and the sinfulness of man and the suffering that that involves. The Earth doesn't look near so good as it did from there. In fact, Buzz Aldrin later suffered a breakdown as a result of his experience. He said that it left him disillusioned - after making the moon his goal of life, once he got there, everything else in life seemed really too commonplace, and it didn't really hold that hope. It was unfulfilling. It was too ordinary. His perspective had been changed. He had spent 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours on the moon, but it left a depression that lasted for him for nearly a decade, as he sought to somehow fill that space that was left by space, if you will. It changed his outlook.

Well, Solomon is kind of like that. He's sort of a spiritual astronaut, you know? He looks around, and he finds a lot of disillusionment on this horizontal plane. He uses the words "under the sun" or "under heaven" to tell us he's looking for life apart

from God. He had grown up knowing the Lord. He had great experiences with God, but he had had his heart turned away, and his relationships upon the planet had got him hooked into it, if you will. And so, he is looking for, trying to make determinations and conclusions by solely what he could see. And then, once in a while - like this morning as well and like last week - he pops up. And he gets to look at life from the spiritual perspective - from the heart that God would have him to have. And the view is magnificent. It is spectacular. It overwhelms him, even if just for a little while, before he, unfortunately, falls back into the kind of humdrum.

In our verses this morning - down through the end of the chapter - Solomon takes both views, and he mixes them together. They almost come out of his mouth at the same time. On the one hand, there is that skeptical, horizontal view. On the other hand, he rises to the heights of life from God's perspective, a spiritual outlook. And it almost sounds like two different people, but it isn't. It's one guy, struggling to know. And in reality, it's much like us sometimes. We are called to maintain a spiritual outlook in a skeptical world. That's our calling. We're to see things from God's point of view while the world can't see God, and so we have to maintain, if you will, our hope and our determination, our confidence - while the world around us has given up years ago. It's quite a challenge. But if God is not involved, and we don't see life through his eyes, we are bound to look at life like Solomon, and it'll be a very discouraging and a very hopeless end.

"I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor - it is the gift of God. I know whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him. That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been; and God requires an account of what is past. Moreover I saw under the sun: in the place of judgment, wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, iniquity was there. I said in my heart, 'God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.' I said in my heart, 'Concerning the condition of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are like animals.' For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. All go to one place: all are from dust, and all return to dust. Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal,

which goes down to the earth? So I perceived that nothing is better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?"

Now, just listening, you can almost see the battle in the mind of Solomon, can't you, as he struggles like a wrestling match. He flips back and forth. In verse 12 and in verse 14, he uses very confident words, sure words - "I know. These are things that I know, that I'm convinced of, that I've learned and that I understood and that I've been taught." Spiritual insights. They are tied to what he said last week in verse 11 that life isn't worth living if you're just looking on the horizontal because God made you with an eternal desire. And if the Lord is factored in, you may not know the end from the beginning - that's God's will - but you'll be able to rest in knowing that He knows, and you'll find life when you factor in the eternal. And so, he continues with that thought here - for the first few verses. But then, he also falls back upon his theorizing, his presumptions, his assumptions, as he looks into the world around him. And you read in verse 16, "I saw under the sun;" "I said in my heart" twice. "What happens?" he writes in verse 19. "Who knows?" he writes in verse 21. "I perceived that no one really can know," he ends the chapter with. And so here's a guy that's duplicitous. He knows the one, and he sees the other, and he's not quite sure where to turn. The same person capable of holding both positions simultaneously, and that shouldn't surprise you. I mean, we do the same thing. If you become confused or doubtful about the things that God is teaching you, and you begin to struggle and don't really have the answers, it is easy to begin to bounce back and forth. You, on the one hand will say, "Well, you know, the Bible says, and I believe that," and then we look out in the world and go, "Yeah, but I see what's going on there, and I believe that too. Now I don't know what to do. I don't know where to turn." Maybe that's happened to you. You're confronted with a challenge to your spiritual position and understanding, and maybe not verbally, but in your heart, you begin to go, "Well, maybe I don't know. I don't really know what to do." And Solomon kind of does that now, too. He knows better, but he's stuck. Some folks live on Mt. Skeptical. They see life cynically. Others can, most of the time, live on Mt. Spiritual - which should be your usual outlook. But sometimes cynicism and pessimism or the experiences you face or the things that you hear or see - you can be left kind of floundering because you have this, for at least a time, dreadfully short view of life. You're not looking at the Earth from the moon - you're right in the midst of it.

Norman Vincent Peale, a guy I think I would disagree with in every point in life, once on an Easter, though, made a great example that I stole. Well Pastor Chuck used to say this to us, "If you're listening to me, and you like what I said, and it ministers to you, go ahead and use it because it's become a part of your life. But if you're trying to fill a sermon, and you don't have an illustration, and you take what I've said, you've stolen it." So, I don't know if I've stolen it because I like the example, so it's part of my life.....forget it. (Laughing) We'll erase the whole thing. But he used a great illustration in an Easter message. He talked about a true story about a coin that was struck in Spain in the 15th century - 1400's - very rare old coin. It was minted, and on it was imprinted a drawing of the narrow strait between Europe and Africa, near Gibraltar. It was called the Pillars of Hercules. So that was on the coin. But at the bottom of the coin, it had three Latin words - "*Ne Plus Ultra*" - nothing beyond. Nothing beyond. Or no more beyond. And to the Spanish at the time, that's how they viewed life. I mean, from all that they understood, if you were dumb enough to sail past this spot, you were going right off the cliff. You're going right off the end of the world - that's all there is! And that's what was on the coin - until Christopher Columbus and other brave folks came, and they sailed out, and they proved that there was a New World. So the Spanish did something very interesting - they re-struck the coin, but they just took the word "Ne" off - "Ne." And now the coin just said "More Beyond." Not "No More Beyond" because we know better now. There's "More Beyond."

Well, that's kind of what Solomon is battling with. On the one hand - with skepticism, as he looks around, he struggles to find hope because he's looking without God. He's Mr. Skeptical, and he should be for what he observes and what he sees. And then, he'll end with a view of Mt. Spiritual because that really is the truth. That's where life really is found, and he'll get back to that eventually, and that's a good thing.

So, I get a choice now. Do we look at Mt. Skeptical first or Mt. Spiritual? I'm thinking we do the skeptical and get it out of the way first, and then we can look at the spiritual - because I would hate to send you home with, "Yeah, life stinks, it's a bummer, and then you die. Hey, God bless you guys. See you next week!" (Laughing) So, we'll try to leave you on a spiritual note.

So let's start at verse 16. We'll cover all the verses, but we'll kind of pick and choose what Solomon said as far as his up and his down, if you will.

Verse 16, "Moreover I saw under the sun:" and remember that phrase, right? He's looking around now. "In the place of judgment, wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, iniquity was there." Here's Solomon's first view from Mt. Skeptical - life is unfair. Life's unfair. Notice that Solomon kind of sees a substitution of sorts in this verse. He finds one thing in a place where he fully expected to find something else. And he was surprised that he didn't find what he expected to find there. Looking at life "under the sun," he began to hopelessly come to the conclusion that life wasn't fair because where equity and fairness and honesty ought to be, he found wickedness and iniquity and sin. He found it in the courts. He found it in the places of judgment. In fact, the word "*mishpat*" in Hebrew means "judgment." So he went to the judicial places where a case should be decided in fairness, where you should find truth and the love for the truth and a lifting up of the truth. But instead, he said he found "*resha*" - "wickedness, evil." Things had changed. There was no longer truth; there was evil. There was no longer right; there was perversion of right. There was unfairness and corruption and favoritism, and it had invaded the very place that he believed justice should be found. And so he looks around, and he said, "The very things that you would hope to find in the world, a place of honor and right - I found sin and corruption and unfairness." I mean, how often have you done that in just looking at life? Skepticism - because life's not fair. The people who get away with it. How many times have you lamented about a guy who was obviously guilty as could be but yet some technicality or some slick lawyer or some little court scheme got him off, and you go, "Well, what in the world is wrong with us?" You know? That McDonald's has to put on a hot cup of coffee, "Hot - be careful" - so they don't get sued. It's hot coffee, for crying out loud! Be careful! Should be a given, but now it's the place of a lawsuit. We've lost our minds, haven't we? We've gone nuts. And we go, "Life's not fair." It's ridiculous. People will not help folks in need on the street for fear of being sued later. They'd rather just walk by and let you get killed, I guess, than to risk having to get myself involved. Life's not fair. Lawsuits that make the innocent pay and the corrupt count their money. Unfair. The fellow that drives 70 in a 65 gets a ticket. The fellow going 120 - somehow he gets away with it. Where's a cop when you need one? How many times have you seen a guy going by at 150, "I hope the Lord catches him right now! Oh, I hope somebody's around to see him!" (Laughing) Not fair. We see, so often, faithful wives divorced by unfaithful husbands, who now have no resources to fight the husband's accusations - because they've stayed home to raise their children, and they have no money for an attorney. And the guy goes whistlin' Dixie, and the poor woman suffers, and she's the innocent party in all of that. Injustice. Unfair. Evil is rewarded while

good is punished. "No good deed goes unpunished." Solomon looked around, he goes, "Man, I see that. I see that all around me." And from Mt. Sceptical, it's easy to conclude life is not fair, and that should be enough proof to anyone that God doesn't exist. He doesn't exist. There's no influence. It's one of the most repeated arguments from unbelievers that you'll see - that the life, the way it is around them, is the argument of evil. If God is all-powerful, then He could stop evil. And if God was all good, He would! But because He hasn't, and He didn't, He must not exist. That's the big argument. Short-sighted, but it's a view held by many, and Solomon got it too. He looked around and went, "Oh, life's not fair! It's unfair."

Second of all, verse 18, "I said in my heart," (here he is, thinking out loud again) " 'Concerning the condition of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are like animals.' For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust." Life is unfair was his first observation of life. His second one is this - life ends here. Really no difference between an animal and me. Man is nothing more than a highly developed animal, and Solomon began, in his mind, in his view, in his watchfulness and his observation, to make some of those conclusions. We both breathe the same air. We both die. We both end up in the dirt. We both turn to dust. Pretty much - we're animals. Now, it is that view, certainly, that gave birth to the evolutionistic outlook that all of life eventually emerged from some single cell or from some big explosion. Look, the fossil records don't support that. But you don't need facts if your mind is made up. In fact, facts only mess you up. But the fossil records don't support that. There's no transitional life form - from any kind of change from one species to the other. Not one! After all of these supposedly millions of years, you'd find some half bird-half fish, wouldn't you? Some bird-fish. Wouldn't you have a bird-fish somewhere? But you don't. Why is that? Because it's an untrue postulation is why. Man and animal are not the same. Besides that, paleontologists will tell you, if they're honest, that all of the higher life forms - complex vertebrates, mammals, birds, primates - they all appear on the scene at the same time. Not billions of years apart, as you would need to have if there was this slow change of evolutionary species. No, they all pop in at the same time. It's problematic. I love the comment I heard once and I always remembered, that if evolution really worked, why do moms still only have two hands? (Laughing) And I thought, "That's right. They're so busy, they should have eight by now." It would

be the natural way for you to kind of adapt and adjust. This is an outlook of life without God, right? That's what Solomon sees. We're all the same - the animals and we. Hinduism is born with that philosophy of mind - that humans and animals operate on the same plane, and in some cases, the animal is exalted over the human; that everything has a soul - animals and plants and microorganisms; that many are deified; and that humans, if they have an edge, only have an edge because of the place that they've come to after years of life's coming and going and doing well. But they'll, in the same breath, tell you if you mess up one time, you go back to the beginning, and you've gotta have that long journey up again. It is this same outlook that most animal rights groups will use to argue with you for their position that animals have souls and need to be protected in the same way humans are. Now, don't get me wrong. The Bible teaches that care of animals and kindness to them is a godly trait - give you good explanation for that, biblically. However, there is no teaching in the Scriptures that animals have souls or that they are on the same level as you. Animal welfare is one thing. Animal rights might be something entirely different. It's a stretch, but it's a view from Mt. Sceptical. Right? It's a view from life "under the sun." This is all I know. I don't know God. So not only is life unfair, life ends here. Just like watch the dog, watch the cat, watch the parakeet - life's unfair. Life ends here.

Thirdly, verse 21, "Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth? So I perceived that nothing is better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?" Third, and maybe more nebulous and more ethereal, his conclusion is this - life is unexplainable. In other words, literally I have no answers for life apart from what I see. Right? After death, how do you know the difference between a human and an animal. You just don't know, you just can't know. Now if you ever had a biblical argument with folks that are true atheists, they will invariably pull this verse out because they feel like it supports their opinion. They will say to you, "Do you believe the Bible?" To which you'll respond, "Yes." "Do you believe all of the Bible?" "Yes." "Is all of the Bible true?" "It is." And then they will take you to this verse and say, "Well, you know the Bible says you can't know anything beyond the grave. Gotcha!" "Well, no, you don't got me at all!" "Is there a contradiction in the Bible?" "There's not." "Is the Bible inspired of God?" "It is." The Bible is absolutely inerrant when it comes to the recording of the truths found in it. However, some of the people who speak in the Bible lie - come up with false conclusions. They are accurately recorded, but they are not taught as truth. They

are written down truthfully - else you would have to believe every lie of the devil recorded there. But we know that he's a liar and the father of it. We'd have to believe the lies of Pharaoh. "Who is God that I might know Him? I won't obey Him!" "Oh yes you will!" Did he say it? He did. Did it work for him? No! Accurately recorded. The false teachers, the false prophets, the false kings - they all had opinions about God that were absolutely wrong, but they are written truthfully though they are manifestly false. So Solomon has a conflict here within - because he grew up knowing the truth, he knew the God of his fathers, he knew Almighty God, he was given wisdom by God and blessings by God. And he learned it from his father, David. But his conflict is - he's been walking away from God and questioning what he sees in the world and hopes to find answers there for the meaning of life and formulating outlooks, and he can't find them there. So he espouses the agnostic view. The word "gnosis" in Greek means "to know." You put an "a" before any Greek word, and it makes it a negative - so "agnosis" means "I don't know" or "without knowledge," if you will. "I just don't know about God. I don't know about life after death. Who knows?" And he throws up his hands. Who knows? Look out there.

Now I find that sometimes true amongst Christians who know the Lord and are having some trouble with doubt. Rather than pursuing answers, they kind of fall to this kind of, "I don't know....." - they just kind of give up. And those who do that, when they're unsure about their faith, you will find something happening to them. They will stop being a light. It's hard to say to people, "Man, God'll answer prayer" when you're just not sure now. Or talk to them about heaven or hell or salvation or anything - because you're kind of wobbling yourself. Life is designed by God so that you can know for certain, not for you "hope so." Look at all that He has made. The Bible says that God's creation cries out Creator. To these goofballs who want to tell you there's no God, I say to them, "Make me a tree. No, don't start with a tree - just make me a tree." The stars in the sky, the planets, the oceans, the tides. Look at all that God has made. It doesn't scream out accidental circumstance. It screams out Creator - intelligent design. There's no way around that. Be reasonable with yourself. They would have you to believe that if you walked out in the flower bed, here in the front, and kicked the dirt every day, eventually you would come back, and a Rolex would be laying there waiting for you. It'll just have happened. But it won't happen. You'll just have dirt on your shoes. Because things don't just move up, they move down. They deteriorate. They don't move up and become greater. God did that. And Creation itself cries out to us - not that we might hope so, that we would know so. Yet if you view life from "under

the sun," from Mt. Sceptical, life will be grossly unfair, and it'll look like everything ends here, and your bottom line of hope will be, "Well, who knows anyway? I don't know. I don't know." No hope for life after life exists at all. All right, well that's Solomon the bummed-out guy.

Verse 12, let's look at Solomon the spiritual man. Because though we are not fully able to understand all of God's plans, verse 11 ends with by faith in serving Him and looking to Him, we can find real joy and perspective in life - the spiritual view of life.

Verse 12, "I know that nothing is better for them" (for man) "than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor - it is the gift of God." And he says it in part of verse 22 before he kind of trips back into his discouragement again. God has made us to find fulfillment in the eternal - that he says in verse 11. However, knowing that, we can then greatly rejoice in the life that we have here because God is in charge of it, God is overseeing it. Though we may not fully always understand what He is up to, we can find joy. So, here's Solomon's perspective from Mt. Spiritual - life, according to God, is to be enjoyed. Right? Isn't that what we read there? This is God's gift to man - that he could enjoy and rejoice in his life, that he could enjoy the day-to-day of his life. Now I don't know how many Christians actually live this way - that life is a gift from God. But you should. Do you exclaim, "Oh, Lord! I love the experiences of my life and Your involvement in them! Every day is a good day!" Or do we find ourselves constantly complaining to God about the life that He has given us and the work that He is doing in it. That would be a problem. Solomon is right. Life is a gift from God. And from Mt. Spiritual, you can have God in your outlook and His Word in your heart, and it will change what you see. I don't know if you have been reading at all, or have contact with or have communication with Frank Pastore's wife, Gina, but she's regularly been putting out her little updates to family and friends about how she's doing. And she's doing really well. Now, she's not doing really well emotionally. How could you? But, she's doing very well spiritually, and her eyes are upon her Lord - her and her kids. She is doing as good as anyone could do in the circumstance, and she's hanging onto the Lord because of His promises. And it shows. And she's able to let God be God in her life. She has a beautiful perspective.

You should go to work tomorrow, if you go in to work, and say, "Thank You, Lord. I have a job! And that I'm working and that I'm healthy to go to work." You

shouldn't be there going, "I hate this place. Every day." No, look, you've given your life to the Lord, who does all things well. Enjoy your life and all that God gives you. Some people go to restaurants and, oh, I love eating with Pastor Chuck. Pastor Chuck would describe food while he ate. (Laughing) And we sat with him in Hawaii one time - Debbie and I, with he and his wife - and he would make food taste better, just listening to him talk about it. And then when we were done, he'd go, "Oh, now the dessert!" And you'd go, "Oh, all right, man!" (Laughing) He would get you excited about life. He enjoyed it. He ate with joy. I want to emulate him.

There are others who complain about the food and the service and the selection and, "Oh, nothing's right, nothing's good, and this is too expensive." Hey, enjoy your life! It's a gift from God. Life is good with God, and God is good all the time. You could say, "I wish I hadn't married this person." What you should really say is, "Thank God someone was actually willing to marry you." (Laughing) You can count your griefs, or you can count your blessings - count your gifts. Man, God has given us much, hasn't He? And there's much more waiting for us. How good could it be? How much better could it be than that?! And if you live like that, God will give you something else if you'll look to Him - He'll give you eternal life, found in the broken body of His Son.

Secondly, besides life is to be enjoyed, verse 14, "I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him." Second of all, this life is a test. Life is a test. Now notice what Solomon says here. He says (a) whatever God does, He does permanently. He does it completely. He does it thoroughly. Things won't be changed at a later date. Things aren't going to be recalled, there won't be an addendum, there won't be an update, there's no 2.0. God didn't do something in your life and go, "Oh, I messed up. I'll get it right next time." No, everything God does is permanent. He's wise, He sees all, He knows all, He's got a purpose for all. And what He allows and what He does and what He accomplishes will never have to be recalled. Everything that you face here, everything that you experience here, everything that life is brought to you by God's hand is only for one purpose - and you can read it at the end of verse 14 - it is so that it may develop in you a fear of the Lord, or a reverence for God. Everything you go through, God intends to bring you to your knees so that you might make Him Lord of your life. That's what He is interested in. He wants you to know that He loves you and that He has a plan for you. He wants you to know that His ways are life, and that He is the way, and He is the truth, and He is the life. And that you were made by Him for all of eternity,

and you only have this life and then you die. Right? You only have this life. Between now and the time you die is the time you have to get saved. You have to be convinced God is right. You have to submit your life to Him. You will not get another chance. Life's a test. God can't be changed or influenced, but He does everything that He does to draw you to Himself. And you may sit around sometime and say, "Well, why would the Lord allow?" or "Why would God?" or "If God was, why would God?" And I have no answer, except to say He does it to bring you to Himself. "Well, He could have done it another way." I'm sure He could have, but He doesn't apologize for the way He does things. He does them well, completely and permanently. He starts with that - whatever God does, it's forever.

You can't really help Him by adding to it. You really can't correct Him by taking away from it. What He does is perfect, and He does it perfectly to get you to Himself. That's His will. That's His plan. Life is a test. And our response should be that we would fear before the Lord - not shake in fear but stand in awe. That's what God wants. That's what God wants. Life is a gift to be enjoyed. It is a test so that you might be brought to your knees before Him.

And finally, verse 15, "That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been; and God requires an account of what is past." Skipping over his view of the substitution of judgment and the wickedness for the righteousness, he says in verse 17, "God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work." Third point that he wants to make as he views life from Mt. Spiritual - God involved - is that life has a record. Life has a record. We are all going to report for the way we have lived our life - one day. The Supreme Court will be called and convened. It will only consist of one Judge - Jesus. And to Him, you will give an answer for your life. Note with verse 16 stuck in the middle of these two verses, that Solomon brings comfort in the fact that it won't be the kind of unfair, skewed judgment that you view upon the Earth. The judgment that God will bring will be sure, will be solid, will be fair, and will be righteous. And then it will be that, before God, what is past will be answered for by every man. The wicked will stand there, the righteous will stand there - to give an account. And God will straighten things out, and the books will be balanced, and if you've seen anything unfair in this life, I guarantee you it'll be made fair then. Ecclesiastes 8:11 says, "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." In other words, God doesn't act quickly in judgment. He waits to make sure that you'll have no excuse on that day. You won't be able to say, "I didn't know. It was a rash

decision." No, no, no. It'll be a lifestyle of decisions that you will be standing before God for.

So, judgment is coming. There's a record of our life. Paul, when he wrote to the Corinthians, who were so angry with him for saying he was an apostle and he could bring judgment to bear, so to speak, or he had an authority, he said to them in 1 Corinthians 4:3 and 5, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God." When the Lord comes, the judgment will be final. It'll be clear. And lest you think that God doesn't know the whole story, He knows it as a past tense before it happens. He's God. That which is has already been. That which is coming has already been, too. God knows already what's coming. He knows the motivation and the action. He'll have all of the information. He won't mess any of it up. He's got total recall - a great thing if you're a Christian, a terrifying thing if you're not. "Oh, the Lord won't remember." Oh, He'll remember! "Well, I don't remember." Yeah, but He will.

That's the answer that you have to give to the skeptic who says, "What about evil?" Wait, just wait, buddy. The story's not over yet. Just ask those folks in the days of Noah, when God stepped into history and put His foot down. He's going to do it again. Until then, life is a test of whether we would believe in Him and His Word or not. We're not like animals. We have a choice that has to be made, and we will answer for that choice. So what do we do? Well, we better live for Him. We should know that He knows all things and requires that my life will have to be answered for. In the meantime, I should enjoy what God has given to me every day. I should fear the Lord, as one who knows that he must give an account. But I should enjoy, with great joy, that which He has put before me. After all, God knows what lies ahead. He's seen it as past. His work is forever.

Now, I know some of you are going to walk out of here, and you're going to climb Mt. Sceptical to go home. Get the rope out, and you're going to climb up the side of the cliff, you know? "Life's unfair, man. The world stinks. We die like dogs. Who knows what awaits us? Well, just think happy thoughts and hope for the best. I doubt it's going to happen." Well, good luck with that way of life.

You need to let God into your thinking so that you might be confident in Him and able to say, with Solomon when he's in the right place, "I know! Here's what I know! I know that God is for me and not against me. I know that He has come to save me." I think sometimes we won't allow the Lord and our confidence in Him to rule our hearts because being skeptical is more convenient. You see, if I'm able to say, "Well, who knows?" then I'm also not responsible for what God requires, or so I think. I'll read the Bible, someone will quote it to me, and I'll say, "Well, who really knows?" Which allows me to get off the hook, and I don't have to respond to that which God has said. And so, I argue lack of evidence or support, and I keep myself from being morally responsible to the evidence. And so it's easier to just throw up my hands and say, "Who knows" than to say, "Yes, Lord. I will follow You."

I heard a story, years ago, of a fellow who bought one of the earliest microscopes that was available at the World's Fair, and it cost him a lot of money. But he took it home, and he became the celebrity in town. Everyone wanted to come over and look through it. They were amazed at what they saw. And it went on for quite some time. He was just a hit. Then one day, he made the mistake of putting his favorite food under it (Laughing), and he was disgusted. There was movement on the food. Critters. Microorganisms moving about. They have that on all foods. And he didn't know what to do. He loved his food, and he couldn't stop eating. So he broke the microscope, smashed it in bits.

Lots of people live that way. "I don't want to know the truth, so I'm throwing the Bible out. And I don't want God involved, so we're banning Him. There'll be no Bible reading, there'll be no prayer, there'll be no of anything having to do with Him." Because if I can throw out the evidence, it's easier to live my life the way I do than to respond in faith. But you should remember the Spanish coin - "*Plus Ultra*" - there is more beyond. This isn't it. This isn't even the beginning of it.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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