



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
AND
IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
www.mzluth.org and immanuelshirley.com

August 3, 2025

Pastor David Ruddat

8th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Colossians 3:1-11](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 90 CW⁹³

Second Lesson/ Sermon Text: [Ecclesiastes 1:1-2, 12-14, 2:18-26](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 12:13-21](#)

UNDIVIDED ATTENTION

On Useful Resources

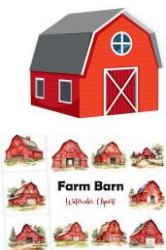
IF EVERYTHING IS VAPOR, WHERE IS THE SILVER LINING?

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

CHILDREN'S DEVOTION



We had a story of a man and he had a beautiful field. Do you guys know what crop this is? Does this look like corn? No, it's not corn. Does this look like wheat? Yes, it's wheat. He's got this big crop of wheat. It looks really like a lot of everything he produces.



What would you call this? What does that look like to you? Does that look like a barn? Yes, that's a barn. There is the barn and he says, "You know, that barn is not big enough for all of this, so I'm going to build..." What's he going to do? Do you see that up here? He is going to build a lot more barns. He's going to put all this stuff in there. Then he says, "I'm going to relax and take life easy."

Now this man, there was one thing wrong with his estimation. It's a good thing to look at what God has given you and say "Well, how am I going to manage it?" That's a good thing. His problem was that he didn't think about God at all. God wasn't important to him. He was important to himself. That was his problem. So even though he had this wonderful idea that he was going to take all of this wheat and put it into nice, big barns, Jesus says, "You fool! This day your life will be ended and then who is going to build your barn and who is going to do this?"

So for us, the lesson for you is never to forget about Jesus. Jesus never forgets about you. He's always looking out for you, giving you a home to live in and parents to watch

over you, a church where you can hear about God's Word. He's always looking out for you and sometimes we are always thinking about our stuff. It doesn't matter whether "stuff" is toys or cars or bank accounts, all of us, young and old, can sometimes be thinking about stuff. And that is a distraction from what is most important, which is Jesus.

Jesus is always thinking about you. That's why He went to the cross, to die for you. Your sins are forgiven. All the times when we are thinking about stuff instead of thinking about Jesus, Jesus forgives us for that, because He loves you. Then Jesus gives you this wonderful congregation, a church of God's people, to share Jesus with you; whether it's in Sunday school or whether it's in Christian day school, because that's the one thing that is most important—God's Word.

We pray: Dear Jesus, so many times we are distracted by the things of this life. Thank you for never being distracted for us and living and dying for us. We pray this in your name. Amen.

SERMON

Grace, mercy and peace are yours from God our Father through our Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ.

*Direct us now, O gracious Lord, to hear aright your Holy Word.
Assist your minister to preach, and let the Holy Spirit teach.
Let eternal life be found by all who hear the Gospel sound. Amen.*

Every cloud has a silver lining. Where does that phrase come from? Every cloud has a silver lining. In 1634, John Milton wrote a poem where he says, "Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud turn forth her silver lining on the night? I did not err; there does a sable cloud turn forth her silver lining on the night..." John Milton, in his poem, he was writing that the hero in his story is going through the woods in the middle of the dark night. There are all kinds of scary things in the woods, but she is looking for the silver lining. She was saying, "Was I deceived, or did this sable cloud have a silver lining in the night?" The silver lining is, of course, the moonlight. Even in the darkest point of the forest, the moonlight is shining.

But that's not how we use that phrase. We say "Every cloud has a silver lining." Where does that come from? That comes later, in 1853. A woman by the name of Sarah Payton Parton, known as Fanny Fern, was a very famous author in the 1850s. During the time of Moby Dick, which was written around that time, Scarlet Letter, in 1857 you have Little Women by Louisa May Alcott, so it's about that time period. She was a famous author and she wrote in her book, she had a book and she wrote in the newspapers and she had a poem, and she brought God into this whole picture. So she used a silver lining that John Milton uses, but then she brings God into it when she says, "Every cloud

has a silver lining; and He who wove it knows when to turn it out.” Here she is talking about God. God knows when to bring the moonlight to shine on even the darkest of days. Even in the blackest of clouds, God can bring a silver lining. ([Read more here.](#))

Today Solomon is going to tell us that **everything is vapor**, everything is a cloud. So the question is **where is the silver lining** in Solomon’s cloud? That’s our goal for today as we look at the Book of Ecclesiastes in a summary form.

Solomon wrote this book. He is the second wisest man who ever lived; of course, the wisest person being Jesus. The second wisest man who ever lived, Solomon, wrote this book. He calls himself “Ecclesiastes,” which is a Greek word for the Hebrew word that is in this text. That’s where we get the title of the book, from the Greek word “Ecclesiastes,” which means “teacher” or “proclaimer.” He is proclaiming his wisdom.

Even though he was the second wisest man who ever lived, he was probably the richest man who ever lived. He had that wisdom because when the Lord said, “I’ll give you anything,” Solomon said, “Please give me wisdom. I’m going to be a king.” So God gave him wisdom and wealth and all these other things.

And even though he was the second wisest man who ever lived, he still did not make some smart choices throughout his life. He had extra wives and concubines, which led him astray. And at the end of his life, he is writing the Book of Ecclesiastes. He is trying to convey everything he learned, not just from wisdom but from life experiences, to us. And his big piece of wisdom—under the sun, everything is vapor. Everything is meaningless. It’s like a cloud that vanishes.

Without Christ, truly, everything is meaningless. And for us, as Christians, it’s easy for us to jump over this and go right to Christ, but I think it’s good for us to spend some time in what Solomon has to say because what Solomon identifies is the world that we are living in. It doesn’t matter whether it’s a thousand years before Christ or a thousand years after Christ, it doesn’t matter what time you’re in, without Christ, without a relationship to God, this is existence. It doesn’t matter if you’re a Christian or not, everyone is wondering “What is the purpose in all of this? Why am I here?” And Solomon is going to throw some cold water on it. It’s good for us to know this because these are the people we are living around. They are chasing things. Their attention may not be focused on the right thing but they still have this same frustration that he conveys. Let’s go into it.

He says: ***I, Ecclesiastes, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. I applied my heart to seek out and explore with wisdom everything done under the sky. (What a burdensome task God has given the children of Adam to keep them busy!) I have seen all the actions done under the sun, and, look, it is all nothing but vapor. It is all chasing the wind...*** He references the “burdensome task God has given the children of Adam.” That takes us back to the Garden. When God gave Adam and Eve the

Garden, He gave them this thing called "work." In a perfect world, Adam and Eve were to work in the Garden. Work was a good thing. You could accomplish things. Think of it in terms of a Minecraft world. The world was theirs. They could make whatever they wanted.

But then they fell into sin, and that brought death. And death brings—well, if you're working for all this, eventually you're going to die. So who gets all the stuff you built? Who gets everything you have accumulated? What is the point of it all? That's the curse of work now. God told Adam and Eve there was going to be thorns and thistles in their work and this is exactly what Solomon identifies. The burdensome task God has given the children of Adam to keep them busy. What is the point of work? What is it? The entire world has been working. What's the point? Solomon says "It's all vapor. It's all a cloud." And here is why.

He says: ***I also hated all the results of my hard work, for which I worked so hard under the sun, since I must leave it all to the man who comes after me. And who knows—will he be wise, or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the results of my hard work, for which I worked so hard and so wisely, under the sun. This too is vapor that vanishes.*** For Solomon, as he is thinking about all the things he is doing, all the work that he is accomplishing, he is thinking of his legacy. He has no control over the next generation and how they manage what he has worked for. So what is the point? Solomon is saying "If I do all these things..." Think of everything Solomon built. He built the wonderful, beautiful temple, and he says "That's all vapor because I have no control over what is going to happen to it after I die." And that is true of all of humanity. People are working and striving, building houses, and building cabins and trying to create a life for themselves, but then, they die and it goes onto the next person and you have no control over how they are going to use it.

But what if your kids are okay? What does Solomon say? He says: ***So I changed my course, and my heart began to despair over all my hard work at which I worked so hard under the sun. Sure, there may be a man who has worked hard—wisely, aptly, and skillfully. But he must hand over whatever he accumulated by all his hard work to a man who has not worked hard for it. This too is vapor. It's so unfair!*** So Solomon says "Even if it's the next generation, what about the generation after that?" The truth of the matter is without Christ, without a relationship to God, everything we accumulate, everything we do, if it has no connection to Christ, it is vapor. That's some cold water, isn't it?

We are living, we are surrounded by a society that wants to have legacy. "We'll always remember him..." "They're always with us as long as we remember them..." And we go, "Nobody remembers the next generation. Nobody knows who Sarah Payton Parton is. Maybe people don't even know who John Milton is." What's the point of it all? Without Christ...vapor, meaningless.

The next thought would be "Well, if I can't pass it on, maybe there is just joy in the work itself." What does Solomon say? He says: ***For what does a man gain through all his hard work, through all the turmoil in his heart, as he works so hard under the sun? Pain fills all his days. His occupation is frustration. Even at night his heart does not rest. This too is vapor.*** But even if someone were to say "Well, maybe just the joy of work itself," and Solomon says "Really? Work is hard!" Even for a man who is wealthy, who is the king—he has his entire agency at his disposal and it still was hard for him. Even though he was the second wisest man who ever lived, it was still hard. It was painful. Is that really the reason why we are here? Is that really the purpose for existence, just to work and enjoy the work? No, work is cursed.

So what is the point? We have to bring Christ in here, right? And here it is, in Verse 24. ***There is nothing better for a man than to eat and to drink and to find joy in his work. This too, I saw, is from God's hand. For who can eat or enjoy himself apart from him? Yes, God gives wisdom, knowledge, and happiness to the man whom he considers good...*** There is Christ. Why does God consider you and me good? No one is good except for God alone. God considers us good because of Jesus Christ; because Jesus worked perfectly on our behalf. He was not affected by the curse of sin. He did everything perfectly and then He died on the cross for you and for me, so that one day we would be freed from this world of sin and this cursed world and we would be in a new heaven and a new earth—a place where there is no sin and we can enjoy this thing that God created, called "work." Jesus did that all.

And because of that relationship that God has with you, you and I can truly find joy in our work, joy in the eating and the drinking because we are recognizing this all comes from God's hand. It's different than the fool. The fool is saying "Eat, drink and be merry without God," but it doesn't accomplish anything, as Jesus says, in the parable. He dies that night and then what? What is the point of that? That's what the end of Ecclesiastes says here, too. The unbeliever dies, he gives his stuff to the believer, but what really is the point of that? That still is vapor. That's not the point. The point is the relationship with God. Without a relationship with God, everything is vapor. There is no point to existence.

But with Christ, with Him, that's where the joy comes in because we are saying "Lord, you've given me my job. You've given me my possessions. How can I use these to your glory? How can I manage them to take care of who you put in front of me? How can I do good things?" We talked about this in the Fruit of the Spirit Bible class last week. What is it, what is this thing called "good"? Going back to Genesis when God created the world and light and He said "This is good." Then after the end of every day, what did God say? "This is good." And when He gets to the end of it, He says "This is very good." Because as God is looking at Creation, Creation isn't just sitting there. It's a machine. It's doing things. It's providing. The grass is growing. The animals are eating the grass. Plants are growing, and Adam and Eve are to eat and to take part in Creation. It's always going to be producing more than just sitting there.

You and I are given this world back to us. God says "Here, this is your job. Here is your responsibility. Here are your vocations. Here are your blessings that you can enjoy because of your relationship with Christ." Without Christ, it's all vapor. But with Christ, that relationship has been restored. We get to do the things that we do, recognizing that it's not the point of existence.

The point of existence is that more people would know about Jesus and they would also have a relationship with Christ, so that we can enjoy not just Creation with the new heavens and the new earth, but also enjoy one another's company as well. So our silver lining, if everything is vapor, the silver lining is found in Christ and in a relationship with Him. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.