Intro- Erma Bombeck wrote a famous book entitled “If life is a bowl of cherries what am I doing in the pits?” I believe this accurately describes the true sentiment and feeling of Solomon who wrote the book of Ecclesiastes. With that in mind I want to preach a message on If life is a bowl of cherries what am I doing in the pits?

Have you ever wondered what is it all about? The Book of Ecclesiastes is a book of Philosophy that’s also filled with wisdom. Herman Melville, the writer who wrote the book Moby Dick said of Ecclesiastes “It is the truest of all books”. The book of Ecclesiastes deals with the Great Questions of life: like Why am I here? What is my purpose? Does Life really count?

This book has the answer to life’s relentless pursuit for meaning and satisfaction. The answer is “nothing in this world will bring true satisfaction”.

ILL- There was once a famous poet by the name of John Berryman. He soared among the elite of his day. John Berryman seemed to be a man who had achieved great satisfaction in life. He was a well loved professor in a
university. He had on his desk a Pulitzer Prize awarded to him for his flawless works of poetry. His widespread acclaim brought him fame, friends and followers. John Berryman seemed to have found the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. But one frozen January day in 1972, he came to the final stanza. This man of great acclaim and achievement, walked across a bridge in Minnesota, waved to a stranger, and leaped to his death in the icy Mississippi River. Why? John Berryman left behind a note that said, “At fifty-five, half famous and effective, I still feel rotten about myself.” (Christianity Today)

ILL- Marilyn Monroe is a name that is still very popular today. She was one of the most famous actresses of all time. She was one of the most beautiful women ever. She was one of the most successful of all time. Yet in spite of her success and in spite of her flawless beauty, in spite of her popularity, she committed suicide because she thought she had nothing else to live for.

The list of illustrations could go on and on showing us that the search for meaning and satisfaction is not going to be found in this world.

How many people go through life SEARCHING to find true meaning and satisfaction for their life? They go from job to job…romance to romance…house to house…trading in car after car…popping pill after pill SEARCHING to find some sort of PURPOSE in life!

A study done at the Johns Hopkins University surveyed 7,948 students at forty-eight colleges. They were all asked the question, “What is the most important thing to you in life?” 16% of the students responded by saying “making a lot of money” was at the top of their list. A whopping 75% said their first goal was “finding purpose and meaning to my life.”

Dr. Hugh Moorhead, philosophy professor at Northeastern Illinois University, asked the question “What is the meaning of life?” He sent the question to 250 famous philosophers, scientists, writers, and intellectuals. Some offered their best guesses; others admitted they made up their response; still others honestly admitted they were clueless. Several of the intellectuals wrote back to Dr. Moorhead asking if he knew the purpose to life.

Helen Keller said Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.

Benjamin Franklin said Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of.
Carl Sandburg said *Life is like an onion: you peel it off one layer at a time, and sometimes you weep.*

By way of Introduction let’s look at:

1- **THE NAME OF THE BOOK- “ECCLESIASTES”**

It comes from the Greek word “ekklesia”, which means is where we get our word for “church”. It carries the idea of a preacher speaking to an assembly of people.

2- **THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK- “SOLOMON”**

Solomon wrote 3 books of the Bible. He wrote the Song of Solomon in the **morning time** of his life when he was in love with a young Shulamite woman. He wrote the book of Proverbs in the **noontime** of his life. The book of Proverbs is a book of heavenly rules for earthly living. He wrote the book of Ecclesiastes in the **evening time** of his life. He was an old man getting ready to die and knows he will soon give an account for a wasted life. As Solomon begins to write you can sense the feeling of a life full of regrets.

Thomas Carlyle said- *life is that little gleam of time between 2 eternities.*

(As we walk through the book of Ecclesiastes, may we learn to avoid living a life that only brings regrets!)

Chuck Colson said of life: *We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that people act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude.*

3- **THE AIM OF THE BOOK- “Life Under the Sun- NOW WHAT?”**

Solomon looks at life with all its mysteries and madness. He sees the endless toil of labor, only to be left behind to another, and ask the question “Is life worth living?”

Solomon is a man that has “*Been There- Done That- and says Now What?*”

G. Campbell Morgan summarized Solomon’s outlook on life. *“This is a man that has lived through all the experiences of life under the sun. He is concerned with nothing above the sun, until there came a moment when he had seen the whole of life. And there was something over the sun. It is only as a man takes account of that which is over the sun as well as that which is under the sun that things under the sun are seen in their true light.”*

4- **THE ACCOUNT OF THE BOOK- written about 977 B.C.**

The book can be divided into three divisions:  
1. **PROBLEM STATED Chapter 1:1-11**  
2. **PROBLEM STUDIED Chapter 1:12- 9:6**
3. PROBLEM SOLVED Chapter 9:7- 12:14

Some key words mentioned in the book are: man (47 times) labor (36 times) under the sun (30 times) vanity (37 times) wisdom or wise (52 times).

In Chapter One we have The Evaluation of Life Under The Sun.

I. THE PREACHER THAT WAS PREACHING (Vs.1)

A. HIS POSITION- vs. 1a “The words of the Preacher”

1- HIS ASCENSION TO THE THRONE- (Solomon was 18 years old when he ascended to the throne) Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was established greatly. (1 Kings 2:12)

2- His ACCLAIM ON THE THRONE- And all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David, submitted themselves unto Solomon the king. And the LORD magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel. (1 Chronicles 29:23-25)

Why? How did Solomon achieve such a position? (See 1 Kings 3:5-9)

5 In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. (Solomon ask God to given him understanding that he may discern between good and evil. He asked for wisdom and God gave it to him.)

B. HIS PEDIGREE- vs.1b- “the son of David”

Think with me for just a minute WHO God used to sit upon the throne. It was a baby that was born to two parents that had committed Adultery. After God allowed the son conceived in adultery to die, God gave them another boy, Solomon. Can I just say that there is no situation too hard for God to get the glory out of? Solomon’s pedigree was that he was the son of a King!

C. HIS POWER- vs. 1c- “king in Jerusalem”

Solomon was the most powerful man in the world. Because he was God’s man sitting on God’s Throne as King of God’s people. Solomon would have been a regular on the show Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous.

II. THE PROBLEM THAT WAS PERPLEXING (Vs.2)

“Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.”

A. HIS TONE OF LANGUAGE WAS NEGATIVE- “Vanity of vanities”

Bear in mind that Solomon is a backslid man. Being negative is common reaction from backslid people. Everything is negative to them!
The word vanity means “emptiness”. It refers to things that disappear quickly leaving no satisfaction.

One commentator described Life as *Chasing Pretty Bubbles!* They are here one minute and gone the next.

**B. HIS TAKE ON LIFE WAS NEGATIVE**

Solomon had climbed the ladder of success. When he reached the top he looked around only to see smoke, illusion and emptiness.

Are you striving to reach the top? What do you think is at the top my friend? **ILL- Sir Edmund Hillary was the first to climb Mount Everest.** A reporter asked him precisely what he felt when he reached the peak. Hillary replied there was an immediate rush of triumphal ecstasy--- for a moment. It was quickly replaced by desolation.

**ILL- Another Everest Climber, Jon Krakauer** expressed a similar sentiment in his book *Into Thin Air*. Krakauer said, “*Straddling the top of the world, one foot in China and the other in Nepal, I cleared the ice from my oxygen mask, hunched a shoulder against the wind and stared absently down at the vastness of Tibet…I’d been fantasizing about this moment, and the release of emotion that would accompany it, for many months. But now that I was finally here, actually standing on the summit of Everest, I just couldn’t summon the energy to care…I snapped four quick photos… then turned and headed down. My watch read 1:17 p.m. All total, I’d spent less than five minutes on the roof of the world.*”

**Conclusion:**

Solomon had spent forty years on the roof of history, only to feel that same puzzled emptiness. **Not only is it empty at the top, but it’s empty at the bottom… and everywhere in between.**

**F.B. Meyer** said: “*All the rivers of earthly joy may be flowing into your heart, but they will never fill it. The pleasures of this world after a while become monotonous, and pail on our taste.*”

**Only Christ can satisfy the thirsty soul!**

**How is your Attitude on Life?**

**Are you chasing life’s empty bubbles?**

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