# / Welcome

## Introduction – Treasure Hunt with an unexpected Guide

I hope you have a paper and pen in front of you so that you can join in later.

# / Opening Song: The heavens, horizons of this earth

# / Notices

Regular meetings – see our website for details.

Coffee Pot on Monday mornings from 10-12 is open to anyone who just wants to pop in and have a chat. You can drop in any time and stay for as long or short a time as you like.

Thanks for feedback on the questionnaire about our online meetings. We are pleased that so many of you seem to be really enjoying them and we’ll look to improve many of the things you mentioned.

## / A Round Tuit?

Anyone got one of these? It’s like me and DIY – “I’ll get around to it”

It’s for people who are very good at putting things off!

Life is so busy – full of things to do, people to see, places to go, fun to be had.

Some of you know that my favourite book of the Bible is a bit of an unusual choice – Ecclesiastes!

We’re going to dip into it this morning to guide us on our treasure hunt.

It was written by probably one of the wisest people who’ve ever lived:-

## / King Solomon.

God famously asked Solomon what gift he would like. He asked for wisdom as the King. Because he had made such a good choice, God gave him everything else he could have wished for too!

Solomon is going to be our guide in our search for treasure!

## / Who likes parties?

Great fun, games, dancing, food, friends and family.

Ecclesiastes has some seemingly strange advice!

# **/ Ecclesiastes 7:2 New International Version (NIV)**

**2**It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting,
for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart.

The problem is that if we spend all our time partying, we don’t get around to reflecting more seriously about life.

So our search for treasure begins here in this strange place.

Lockdown means that life has to be lived at a slower pace

Covid-19 perhaps gives us a bit of an opportunity to reflect more deeply than normal

Many families will have been touched with the sadness of losing someone close to them. We mourn with you.

# / Prayer for all that have lost loved ones in recent days

# / Song: We have sung our songs of victory

## / What gives life meaning?

Teacher talking to a student about plans for life:

* Go to university. And then what?
* Get a good degree. And then what?
* Maybe go travelling for a bit. And then what?
* Get a job. And then what?
* Get promoted to a better job. And then what?
* Meet a girl and get married. And then what?
* Have kids? And then what?
* See them through education? And then what?
* Retire I suppose? And then what?

Having some idea about the next step gives some sense of purpose and meaning.

But what about when we run out of next steps?

The purpose and meaning turn out to be a bit of an illusion.

## Wouldn’t it be good if someone had done some research?

/ Well the good news is that Solomon, who was wise, wealthy and powerful did exactly that!

* Great works – built palaces, parks, gardens
* Amassed great wealth, and possessions, and servants, and wives
* Immersed himself in pleasure of all kinds
* His wisdom was legendary
* And he even played around with ignoring all that wisdom!

And in Ecclesiastes we find that the results are in! What was his conclusion from this research?

# **/ Ecclesiastes 2:11 New International Version (NIV)**

**11**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.

Well I don’t suppose you were expecting that! Not from the wisest man ever to have lived!

It’s a bit like the moment in the Hitchhikers’ Guide to the Galaxy where a supercomputer is working out the meaning of life and comes up with the answer 42!

We’ll unpick that a bit after the next song.

# / Song – There’s a time to live

## / That song is actually based on Ecclesiastes Chapter 3.

It’s quite a well-known poem – made popular by the Byrds “Turn, Turn, Turn” in 1965!

It is a beautiful poem. It sounds great.

But hang on – it makes no sense that there is a right time for completely opposite things to happen!

What is Solomon trying to say to us?

On the face of it, life is just a sequence of seemingly random and contradictory events!

## / But the clue comes in the phrase “under the sun”.

Solomon uses this phrase “under the sun” or “under heaven” throughout the book to talk about where things are at if we leave God out of the equation.

/ If we leave God out of the equation, and an increasingly large number of people do these days, these random and contradictory events can have no meaning.

I wonder, have you left God out of your life?

Solomon guiding us on a treasure hunt, points us in the direction of God. Only when we bring Him into the picture can these seemingly random and opposite events begin to have a sense of meaning and purpose.

Our next song is “Ancient Words”. Solomon’s advice to us was written a long time ago but it is still very much relevant to us today.

# / Song: Ancient Words

## / Our guide, Solomon, has some more help for us in our treasure hunt.

# **Ecclesiastes 3:11b New International Version (NIV)**

**11b**He has also set eternity in the human heart; yetno one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

If we stop to think about it, we’re not really happy that life seems to have no meaning or purpose.

This advice from Solomon suggests that there seems to be something inside of us that expects there to be meaning and purpose – something that rails against the idea of pure random chance.

## / I used to enjoy watching Columbo. A permanently scruffy detective in the 70’s.

Just when you thought the baddie was going to get away with it, he would come up with a killer question! “There’s just one thing that’s bothering me…!” And the question was always something that didn’t seem to make sense.

Solomon’s parting question to us is, a bit like Columbo, “There’s just one thing that’s bothering me. Why do you have this sense that there should be a meaning and purpose to life?”

And he answers his own question: he says that God has built that expectation into you.

It’s a bit like a homing beacon inside each of us that guides us towards God.

But I think it’s a bit like the high temperature alarm on a freezer, it can be difficult to make it out some time. Its only when we quieten down perhaps that we can hear it properly.

## / The Westminster Shorter Catechism – a primer about the Christian faith

The Westminster Shorter Catechism is a catechism written in 1646 and 1647 by the Westminster Assembly, a synod of English and Scottish theologians and laymen intended to bring the Church of England into greater conformity with the Church of Scotland. Source Wikipedia.

“**Man's chief end** is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”

If you’re already a Christian, that’s a really great description of the meaning and purpose of our life!

These things should be your focus, and focussing on these things should bring you a deep peace.

# / Time to see if we can Find the Treasure!

When I say go, take the first letter of each of your objects and re-arrange them to see what the treasure is.

Write this clearly on your piece of paper and hold it up to your camera.

Go!

## / That’s right – the treasure is “creator”.

## / Solomon has some special advice to young people:

# **Ecclesiastes 12:1 New International Version (NIV)**

**12**Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, “I find no pleasure in them”

Don’t leave it too late! Better still, get in touch with the creator whilst you are still young.

## / Jesus told a story about a rich man

# **Luke 12:16-20a New International Version (NIV)**

**16**And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. **17**He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’

**18**“Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. **19**And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’

**20**“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you.“

The rich man in the story was putting off thinking about God.

What about you? Are you going to get around to it one day?

Solomon, our guide, would say that now is the day. Don’t delay.

Remember that God wants to be found by every one of us.

That’s why he has built a homing beacon into us – the search for meaning and purpose.

But he won’t force us to listen; he graciously gives us a choice.

Covid-19 and lockdown may just be God’s way of quietening down the background noise of your life to give you a chance to listen.

If you’re hearing this message and you wouldn’t call yourself a Christian, can I urge you to heed Solomon’s advice and seek God. Don’t put it off. Who knows what tomorrow brings? Do get in touch with us.

And if you are already a Christian, maybe you can think of someone that you pass this message on to that needs to hear it. The recording will be available on our website and its easy to share that on Facebook or email the link to someone.

For our last song, you might want to get up and have a dance around your living room and join in with the actions!

# / Song: Our God is a Great Big God