



Links Players

Toil Under The Sun

The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem: "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun? (Ecclesiastes 1:1-3, NIV)

What do we gain from earthly toil? Well, for one thing, you can knock some strokes off the ol' handicap with time spent toiling under the sun at the practice range. It's not rocket science. You'll eventually find consistency and reproducibility in your shot with enough reps hitting those irons. It's the "Mr. Miyagi" approach.

And putting? You don't even have to toil under the sun. If your floors are carpeted, you can toil under the ceiling fan in your living room, although that doesn't give you the benefit of learning to read breaks in the greens.

I'm not a fan of any of this. I'm stubbornly resistant to the notion of working at my game - practicing. Golf, for me, is primarily a means of tricking myself into getting outside and walking some. Play - not work.

I did make an exception a few years ago when it was becoming clear that I wasn't making much progress on my own figuring out how to get out of bunkers. One session in the cat box with our club pro showed me three things (ball forward in the stance, weight on the left leg, and hit behind the ball with an open club face 2-3) those three things, once learned, is the ticket out. I practiced it for a few days, and I'm out now 95% of the time. A little bit of "toiling under the sun" paid off.

As wise as he reportedly was, Solomon - author of Ecclesiastes - would have known this had there been golf back in his day. He would have known that you could buff your game with some toiling under the sun at the range. But his emphasis in the book of Ecclesiastes is that it's all meaningless since everyone's headed to the funeral home anyway.

Evidence of this is that he presents his credentials in the first verse: son of David, king of Jerusalem. God had previously told David, Solomon's father, that the Messiah would be his descendant. A king of Israel whose reign would be eternal. Solomon would appear to have been the first candidate for this position. He had checks in the "descendant of David" and "king in Jerusalem" boxes and lacked only a check in the "eternal reign" box.

But in the first five verses of chapter 12 of Ecclesiastes, he suggests that "eternal" may not describe his reign. He writes a poetic and eloquent description of the aging process and implies that it's

happening to him. He knows that the result of all this physical deterioration is not an eternal reign - instead, a trip to the cemetery plot.

Ecclesiastes is Solomon telling us that we need to look elsewhere for the Messiah. We need to look for someone who satisfied the “descendant of David” and “king in Jerusalem” requirements but who also could demonstrate mastery over death.

Like Solomon, someone who shows up early in the New Testament - not in the middle of the Old Testament.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the many signposts in the Old Testament pointing to a coming Messiah.

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