

Greed and toil comes to nothing in the end — no one can take anything with them into eternity; this reflection begs the question, what are the things over which one ought to toil?

**A reading from the Book of Ecclesiastes: 1:2, 12-14, 2:18-23**

Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

I, the Teacher, when king over Israel in Jerusalem, applied my mind to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven; it is an unhappy business that God has given to human beings to be busy with. I saw all the deeds that are done under the sun; and see, all is vanity and a chasing after wind.

I hated all my toil in which I had toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to those who come after me -- and who knows whether they will be wise or foolish? Yet they will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. So I turned and gave my heart up to despair concerning all the toil of my labors under the sun, because sometimes one who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by another who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. What do mortals get from all the toil and strain with which they toil under the sun? For all their days are full of pain, and their work is a vexation; even at night their minds do not rest. This also is vanity.

*The Word of the Lord.*

## **Psalm 49:1-11**

- <sup>1</sup> Hear this, all you peoples;  
    hearken, all you who dwell in the world, \*  
    you of high degree and low, rich and poor together.
- <sup>2</sup> My mouth shall speak of wisdom, \*  
    and my heart shall meditate on understanding.
- <sup>3</sup> I will incline my ear to a proverb \*  
    and set forth my riddle upon the harp.
- <sup>4</sup> Why should I be afraid in evil days, \*  
    when the wickedness of those at my heels surrounds me,
- <sup>5</sup> The wickedness of those who put their trust in their goods, \*  
    and boast of their great riches?
- <sup>6</sup> We can never ransom ourselves, \*  
    or deliver to God the price of our life;
- <sup>7</sup> For the ransom of our life is so great, \*  
    that we should never have enough to pay it,
- <sup>8</sup> In order to live for ever and ever, \*  
    and never see the grave.
- <sup>9</sup> For we see that the wise die also;  
    like the dull and stupid they perish \*  
    and leave their wealth to those who come after them.
- <sup>10</sup> Their graves shall be their homes for ever,  
    their dwelling places from generation to generation, \*  
    though they call the lands after their own names.
- <sup>11</sup> Even though honored, they cannot live for ever; \*  
    they are like the beasts that perish.

Those called to live as Christians are called to an entirely transformed life; the prescription is simple, even if it is not easy.

**A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Colossians: 3:1-11**

If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. But now you must get rid of all such things-- anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

*The Word of the Lord.*