

Ecclesiastes

*& the Quest for Elusive Happiness:
Why Everything is Never Enough*

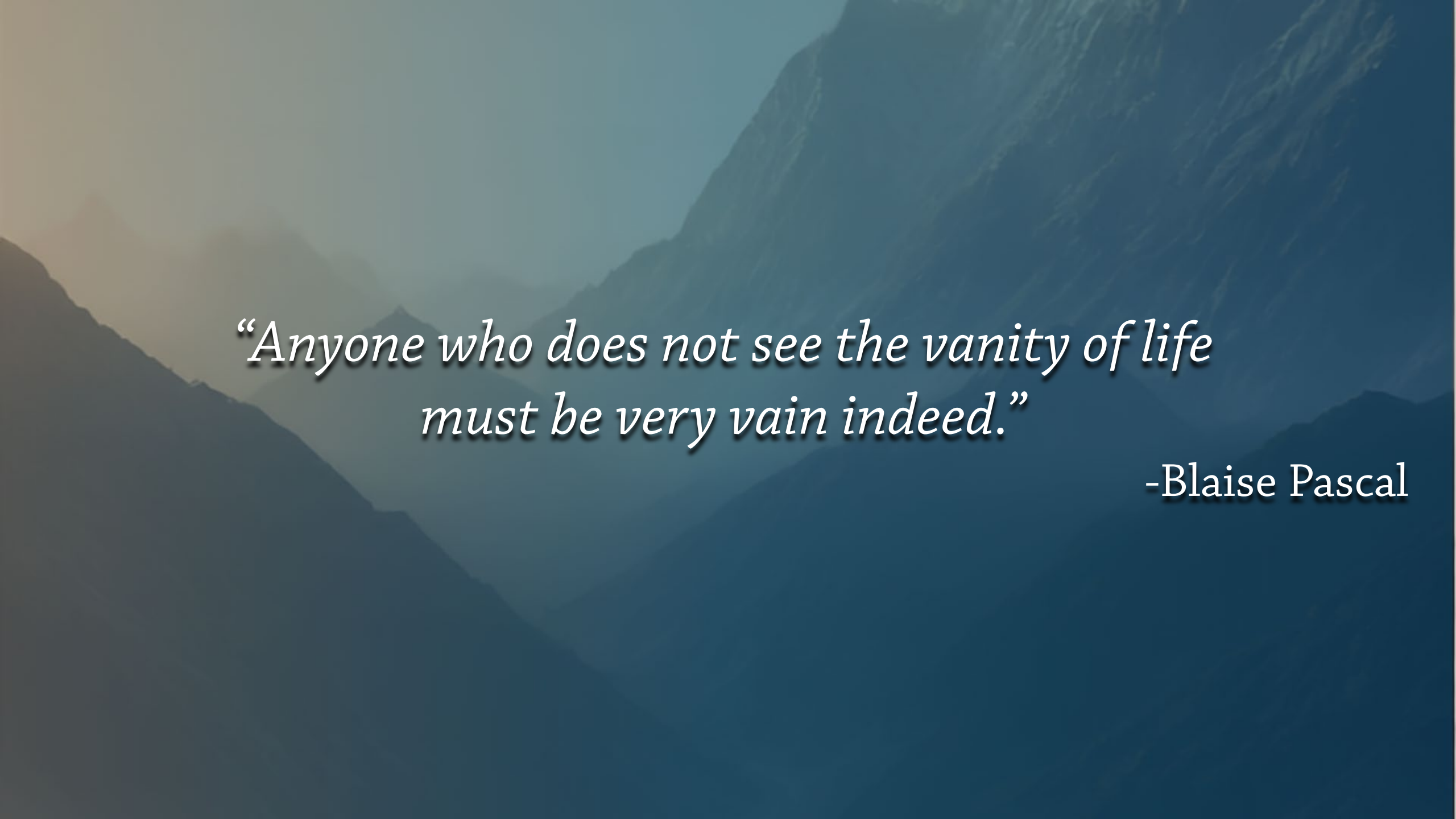
Nothing New Under the Sun

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

Rev. Dr. Jason Carter, Lead Pastor

“You’re so vain. You probably think this song is about you.”





*“Anyone who does not see the vanity of life
must be very vain indeed.”*

-Blaise Pascal



Top Story:

FEAR GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDS

Second Story:

RECEIVE ALL OF LIFE AS A GIFT

Ground Floor:

**EVERYTHING IS NEVER ENOUGH.
LIFE UNDER THE SUN NEVER SATISFIES.**

ECCLESIASTES

Vanity of Vanities:

- Death as the certain and final end of life
- Time as a cycle of endless repetition
- Evil as the perennial and unsolvable problem
- The sameness and indifference of all things

FEAR GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDS

"Fear God and keep the commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil."

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

RECEIVE ALL OF LIFE AS A GIFT



"He should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also I saw is from the hand of God, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy."

Ecclesiastes 2:24-26

EVERYTHING IS NEVER ENOUGH. LIFE UNDER THE SUN NEVER SATISFIES.



WISDOM

PLEASURE



WEALTH & POWER



DUTY AND ALTRUISM



TIME

"Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity."

Ecclesiastes 1:2

ECCLESIASTES 3:12-13

ECCLESIASTES 3:22

ECCLESIASTES 5:18-20

ECCLESIASTES 8:15

ECCLESIASTES 9:7-10

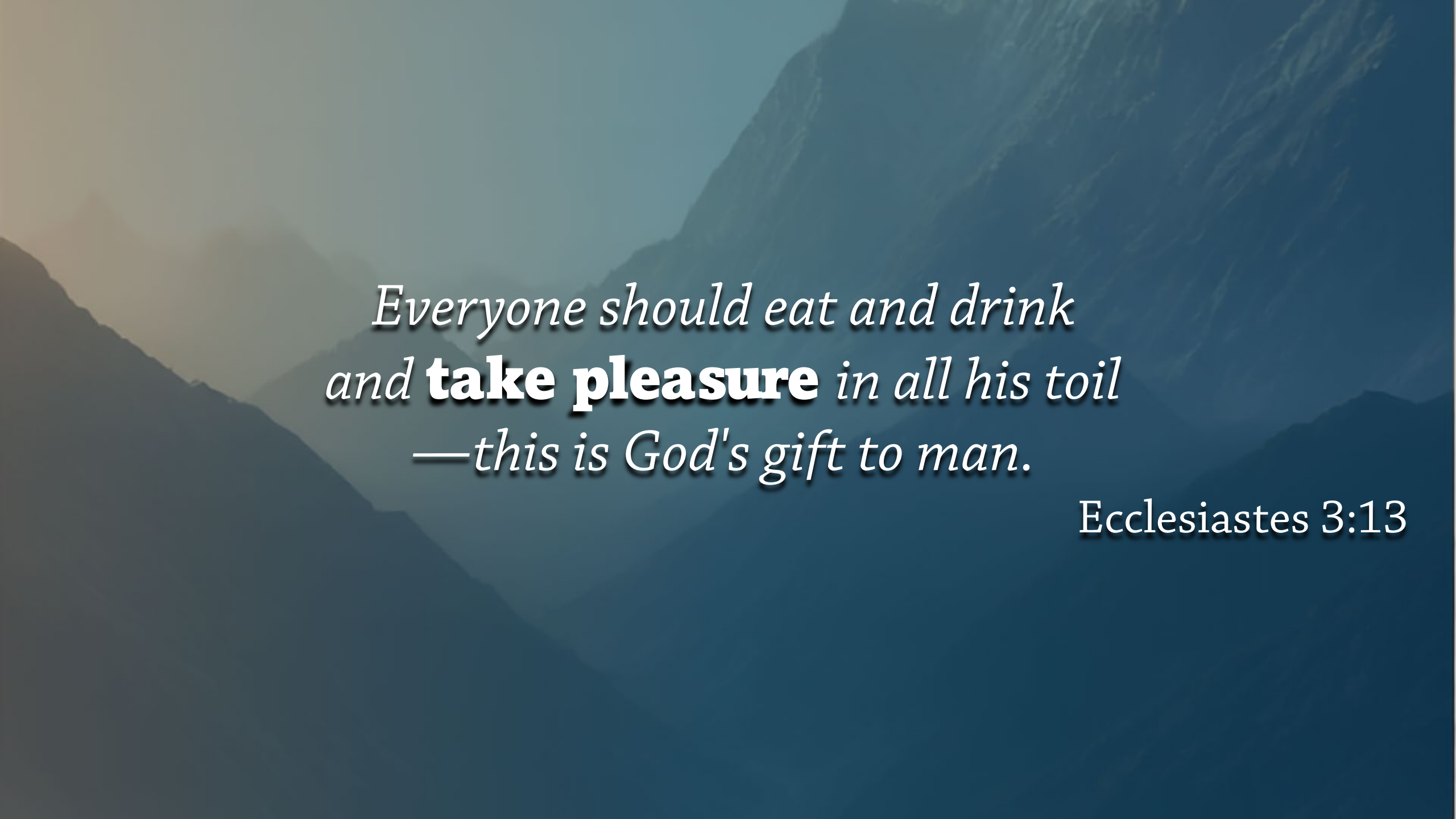
ECCLESIASTES 11:7-10

Boil the complexities of life down to this ultimate meaning and purpose.

Find Joy despite the toil in this fallen world.

Observe life "under the sun."

ECCLESIASTES



*Everyone should eat and drink
and **take pleasure** in all his toil
—this is God's gift to man.*

Ecclesiastes 3:13



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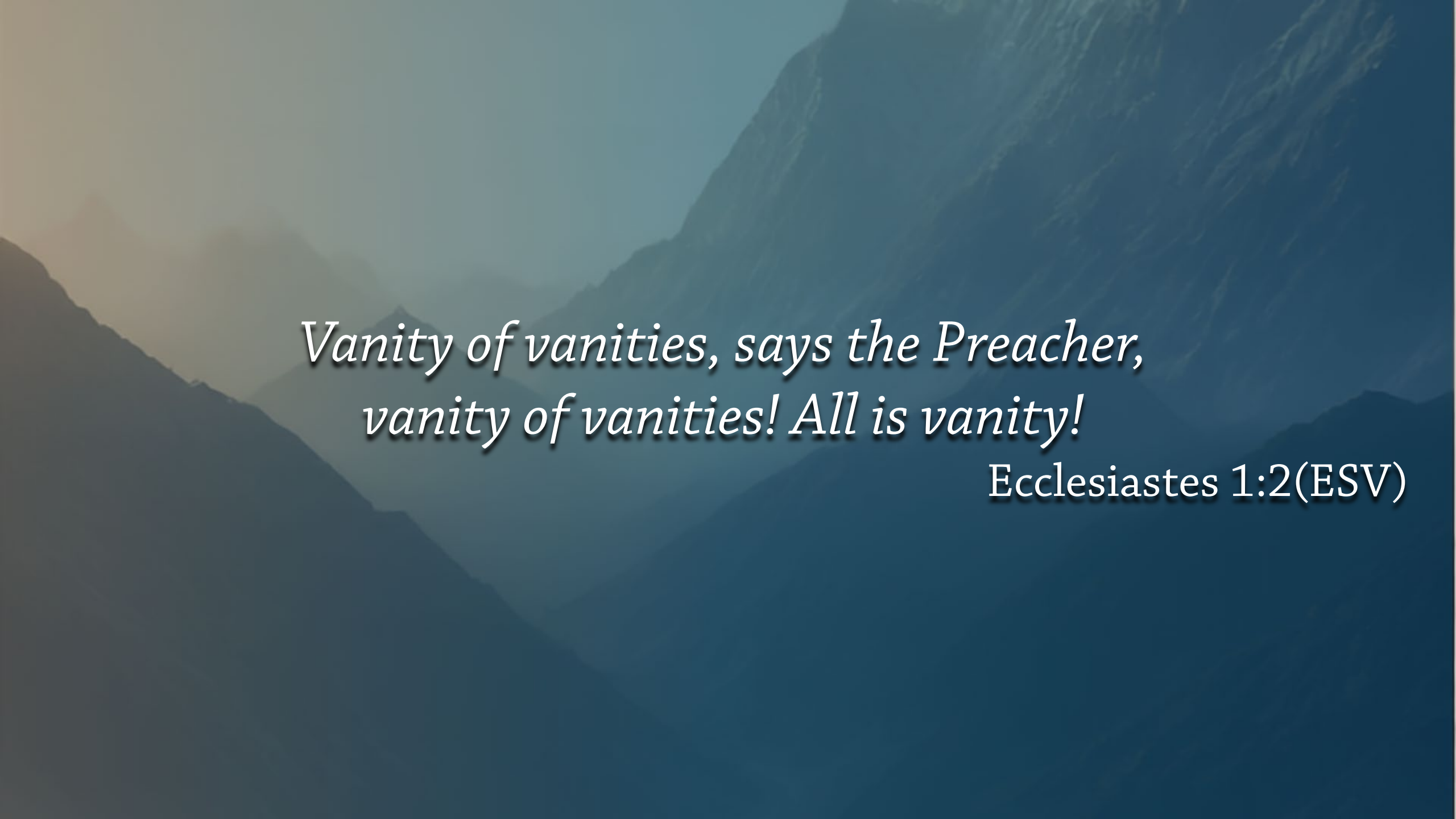
Fear God. Obey the Commandments. Judgment is Coming.

*Now all has been heard;
here is the conclusion of the matter:*

***Fear God and keep his commandments,
for this is the duty of all mankind.***

***For God will bring every deed into judgment,
including every hidden thing,
whether it is good or evil.***

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14



*Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher,
vanity of vanities! All is vanity!*

Ecclesiastes 1:2(ESV)

<i>Hebel</i> – Meaning	Reference (New American Standard Updated version – NASU)
Vain	2 Kings 17:15
Foolishly	Job 27:12
Emptily	Job 35:16
Nothing	Psalms 39:6
Futility	Psalms 78:33
A mere breath	Psalms 94:11
Vapor	Proverbs 21:6
Fleeting	Ecclesiastes 9:9; 11:10
Idols	Jeremiah 10:8
Worthless	Jeremiah 10:15
Useless	Lamentations 4:17

Hebel (Hebrew)

**literally means a “breath, vapor,
mist, or a puff of smoke”**

**which emphasizes the
transitory nature of human life!**

*Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities!
All is vanity! - ESV*

*“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher, “Utterly meaningless!
Everything is meaningless.” - NIV*

*Temporality of temporality, says the preacher,
transitions of transitions. Everything is transitory!*

-Walt Kaiser

*The merest of breaths, says the preacher,
the merest of breaths. Everything is a breath.*

-David Gibson

*O Lord, what is man that you regard him,
or the son of man that you think of him?*

*Man is like a **breath** [**hebel**]
his days are like a passing shadow.*

Psalm 144:3-4

*Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths,
and my lifetime is as nothing before you.
Surely all mankind stands as a mere **breath [hebel]!**
Surely a man goes about as a shadow!
Surely for **nothing [hebel]** they are in turmoil;
man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather.*

*surely all mankind is a mere **breath [hebel].***

Psalm 39:5-6,11

Life is Short. Life is Elusive.

“How long does the puff of smoke last? You can smell it and see it. It’s very real. But it is also transient, temporary, and vanishes quickly.

*Proverbs 31:30 (NIV) – ‘Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting (hebel).’
Joan Collins once said that the problem with beauty is that it’s like being
born rich and then becoming poor.*

*Life is elusive. Try and grab the smoke?
Put a bit in your pocket? Save it for later? Good luck.”*

- David Gibson

A chiastic structure (or chiasm) is a Hebrew literary device where the sequence of ideas, words, or themes is presented and then repeated in reverse order, forming a symmetrical mirror pattern.

The term comes from the Greek letter chi (X) – because the first points mirror the ending points.

Poem about the Transitory & Enigmatic Nature of Life (vs. 4-11)

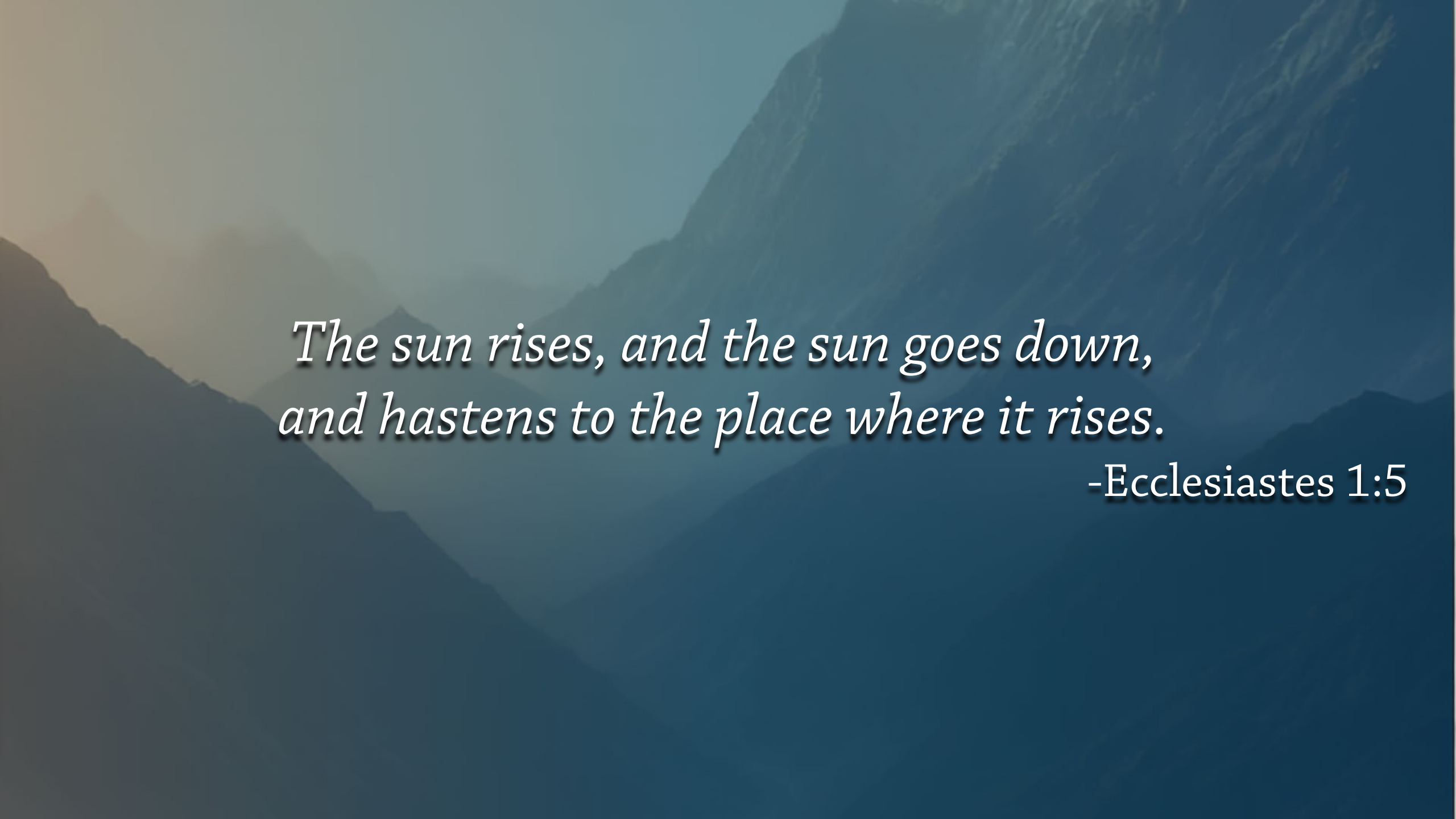
A: Generations Come and Go, but the Earth Remains Fixed (vs. 4) –
implied: what difference does it make?

B: Nature (sun, wind, water) is on a endless repetitive repeating loop (vs. 5-6); *implied: there is nothing new in nature*

C: All things are full of weariness. The senses (eye, ear) are never satisfied and do not bring fullness of life.(vs. 8)

B': History is on an endless repetitive repeating loop (vs. 9-10) –
implied: there is nothing new in history

A': Things/People are Forgotten and Not Remembered (vs. 11) –
implied: what difference does it make?

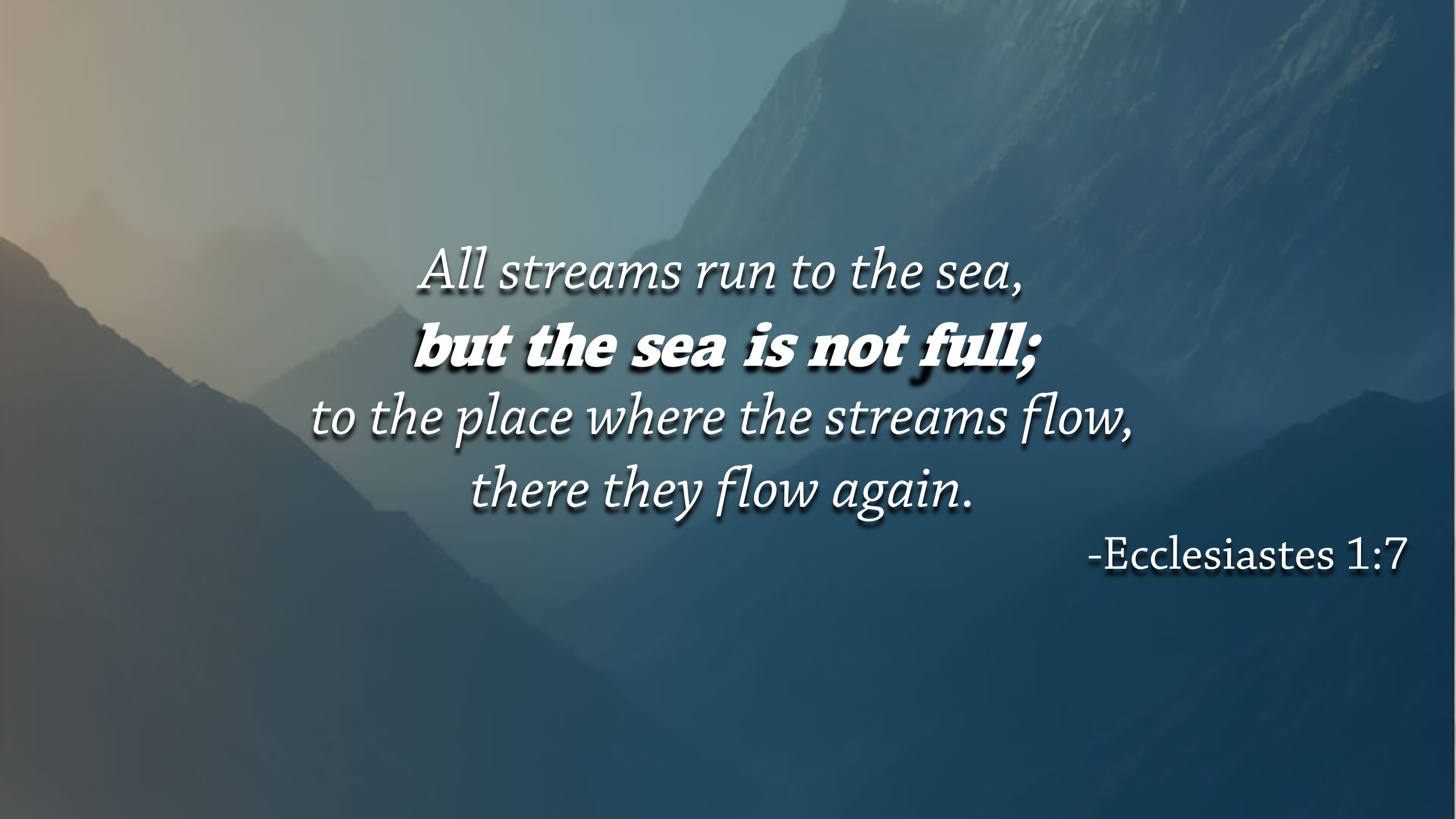


*The sun rises, and the sun goes down,
and hastens to the place where it rises.*

-Ecclesiastes 1:5

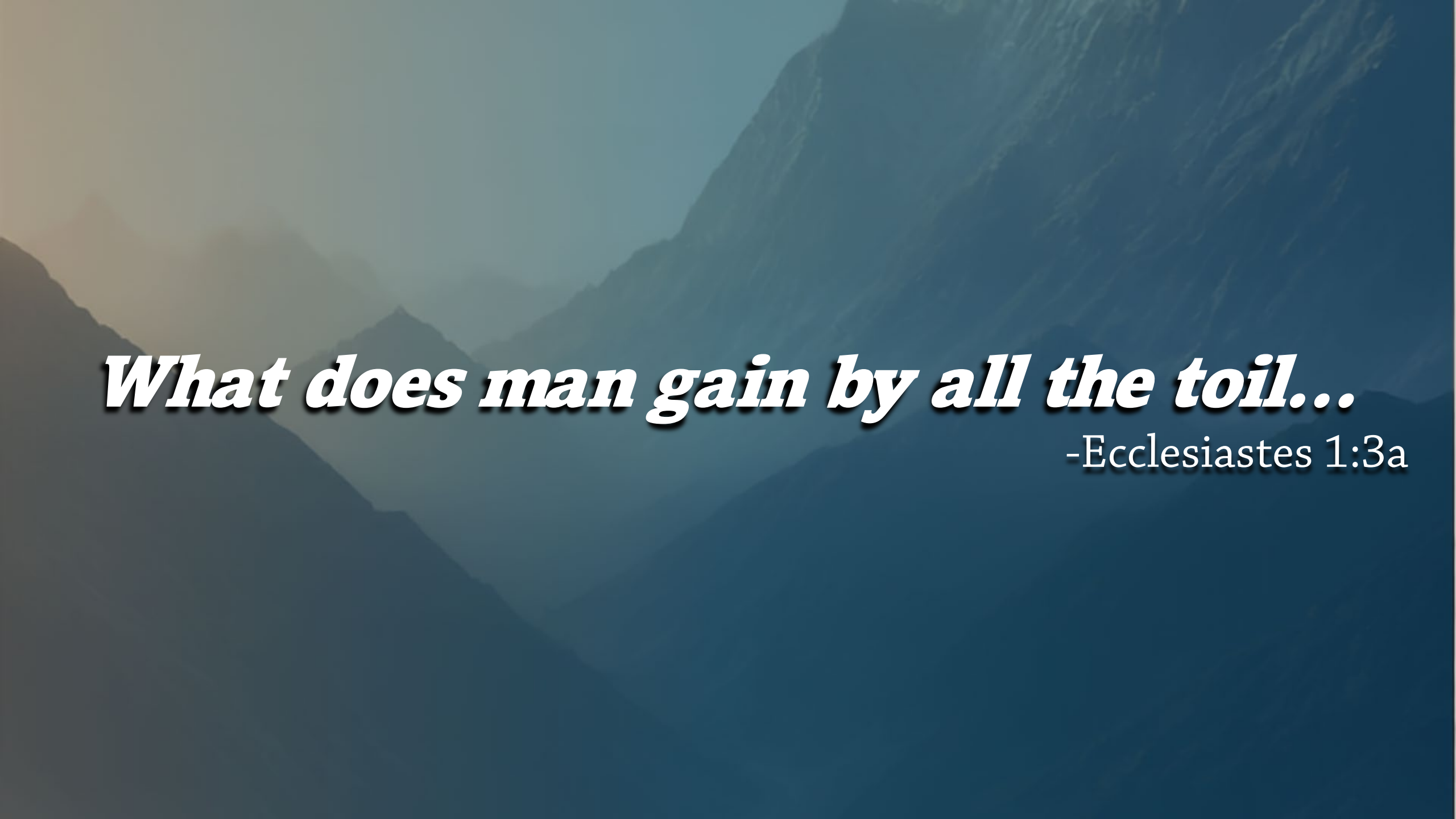
*The wind blows to the south
and goes around to the north
around and around goes the wind,
[implied: what's the point of all the repetition?]
and on its circuits the wind returns.*

-Ecclesiastes 1:6



*All streams run to the sea,
but the sea is not full;
to the place where the streams flow,
there they flow again.*

-Ecclesiastes 1:7



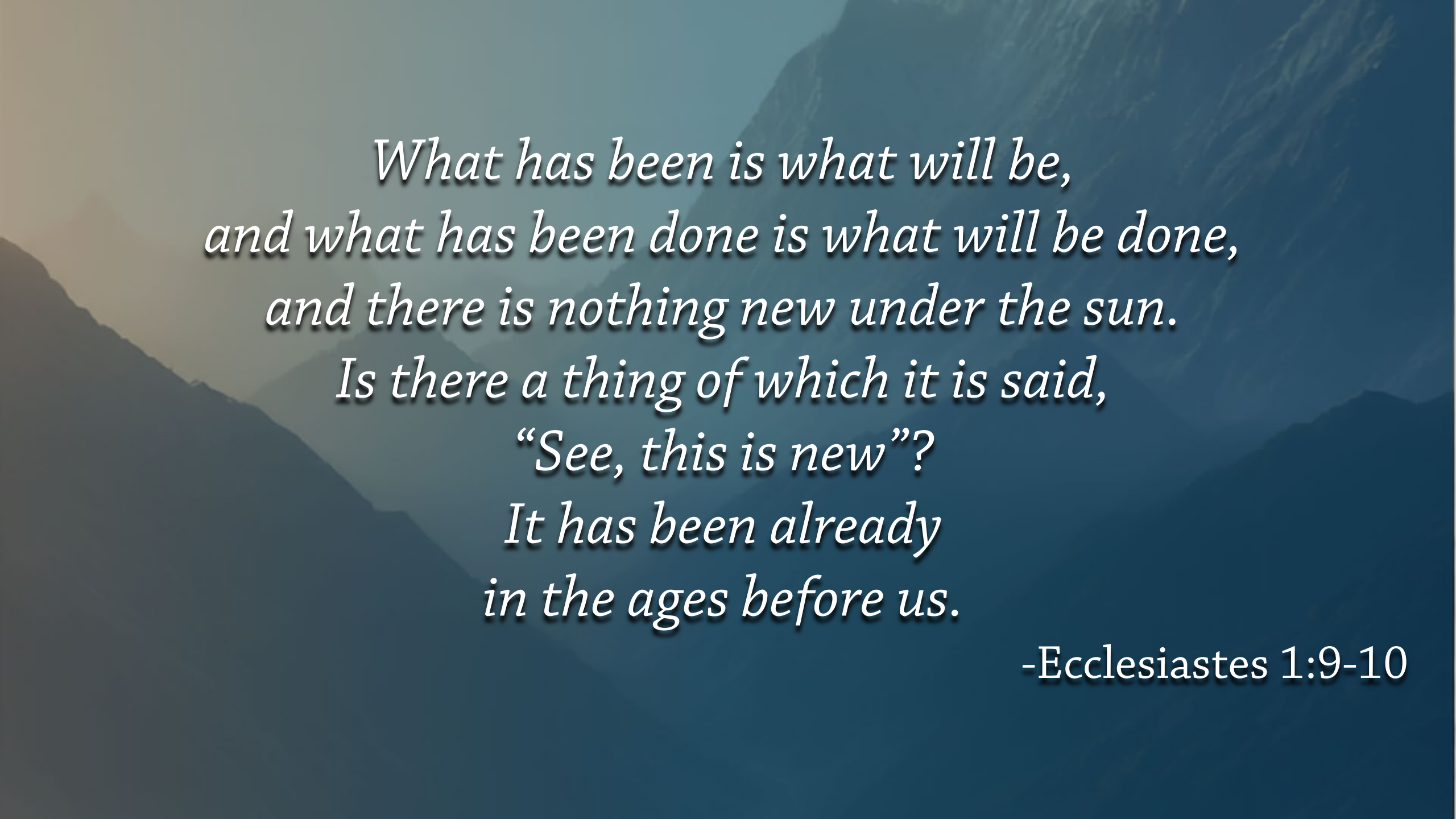
What does man gain by all the toil...

-Ecclesiastes 1:3a



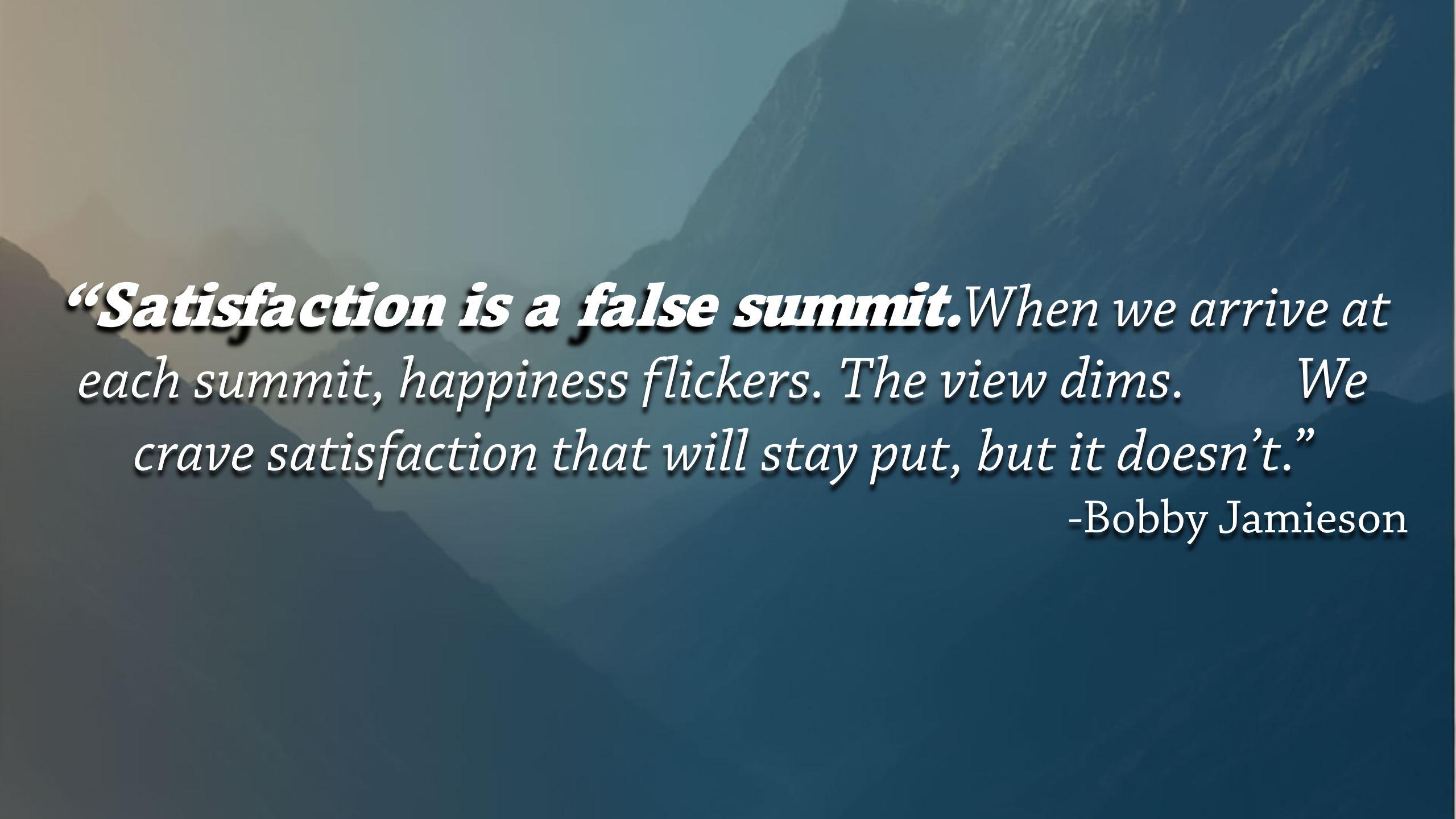
"Somewhere along the way I pictured adulthood differently. Turns out it's mostly just standing in front of the fridge trying to figure out what's for dinner. Every. Night. Forever. Until you die. Nobody put that in the brochure."

"Being an adult is realizing your biggest decision of the day is whether to cook or just embrace the microwave as a life coach."

The background of the slide features a scenic view of mountains. The foreground shows dark, silhouetted mountain peaks. In the distance, lighter-colored mountain ranges are visible under a hazy, blue-toned sky. The overall atmosphere is serene and majestic.

*What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what will be done,
and there is nothing new under the sun.
Is there a thing of which it is said,
“See, this is new”?
It has been already
in the ages before us.*

-Ecclesiastes 1:9-10



“Satisfaction is a false summit. When we arrive at each summit, happiness flickers. The view dims. We crave satisfaction that will stay put, but it doesn’t.”

-Bobby Jamieson

Poem about the Transitory & Enigmatic Nature of Life (vs. 4-11)

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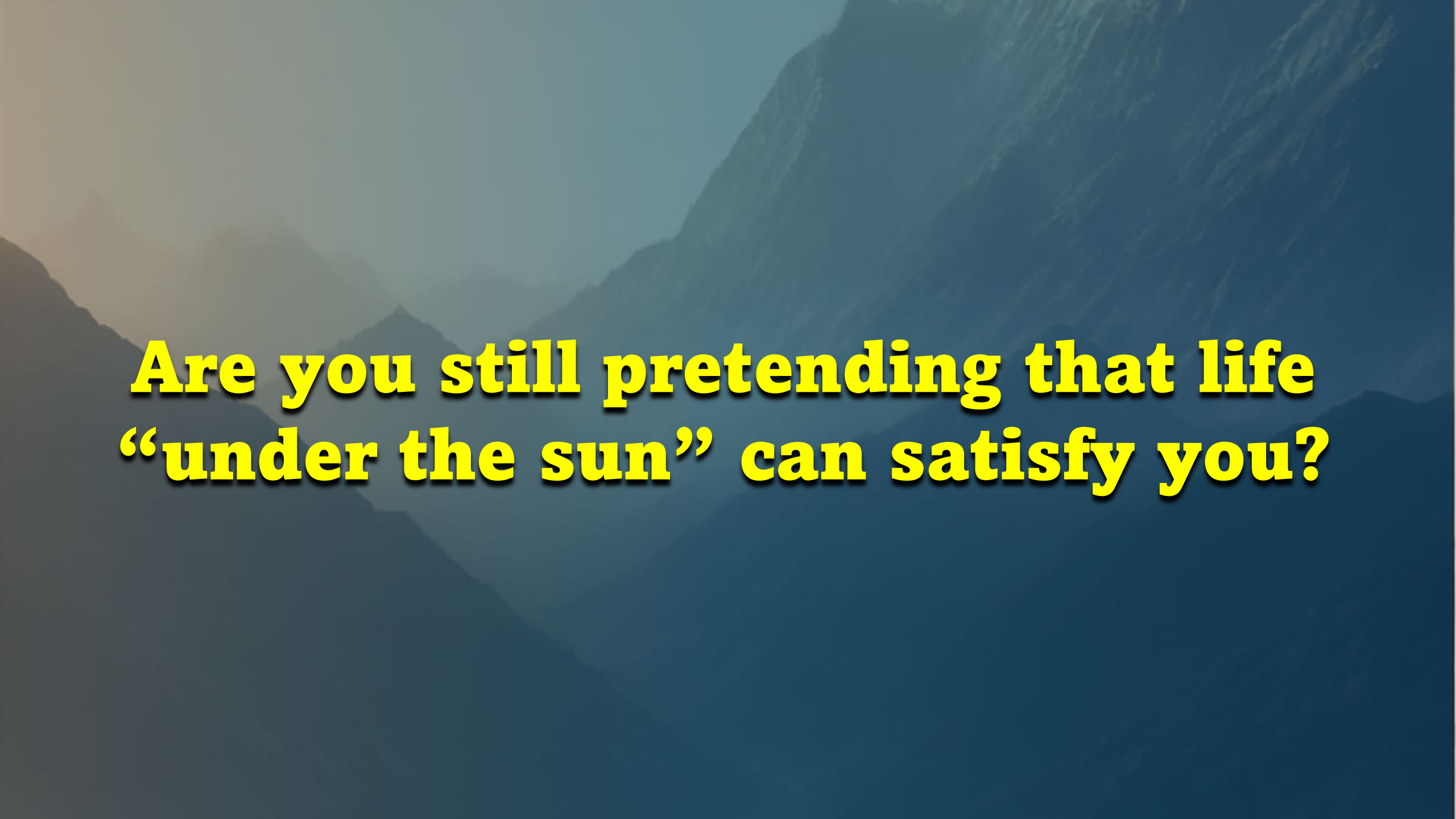
A': Things/People are Forgotten and Not Remembered (vs. 11) –
implied: what difference does it make?

“All things are full of weariness.”

-Ecclesiastes 1:8a
(ESV)

**“All of life is far more boring
than words could ever say.”**

-Ecclesiastes 1:8a,b
(Contemporary English Version)



**Are you still pretending that life
“under the sun” can satisfy you?**

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“under the sun” can satisfy you?**

*“Being a Christian doesn’t stop this being true.
Rather, it should make us the first to
stop pretending that it isn’t true.”*

-David Gibson

**Are you still pretending that life
“under the sun” can satisfy you?**

***Solomon “is not just saying there’s no gain after
we’ve chased the wind; he will insist that there’s no
need for the chase in the first place.”***

-David Gibson

**Are you still pretending that life
“under the sun” can satisfy you?**

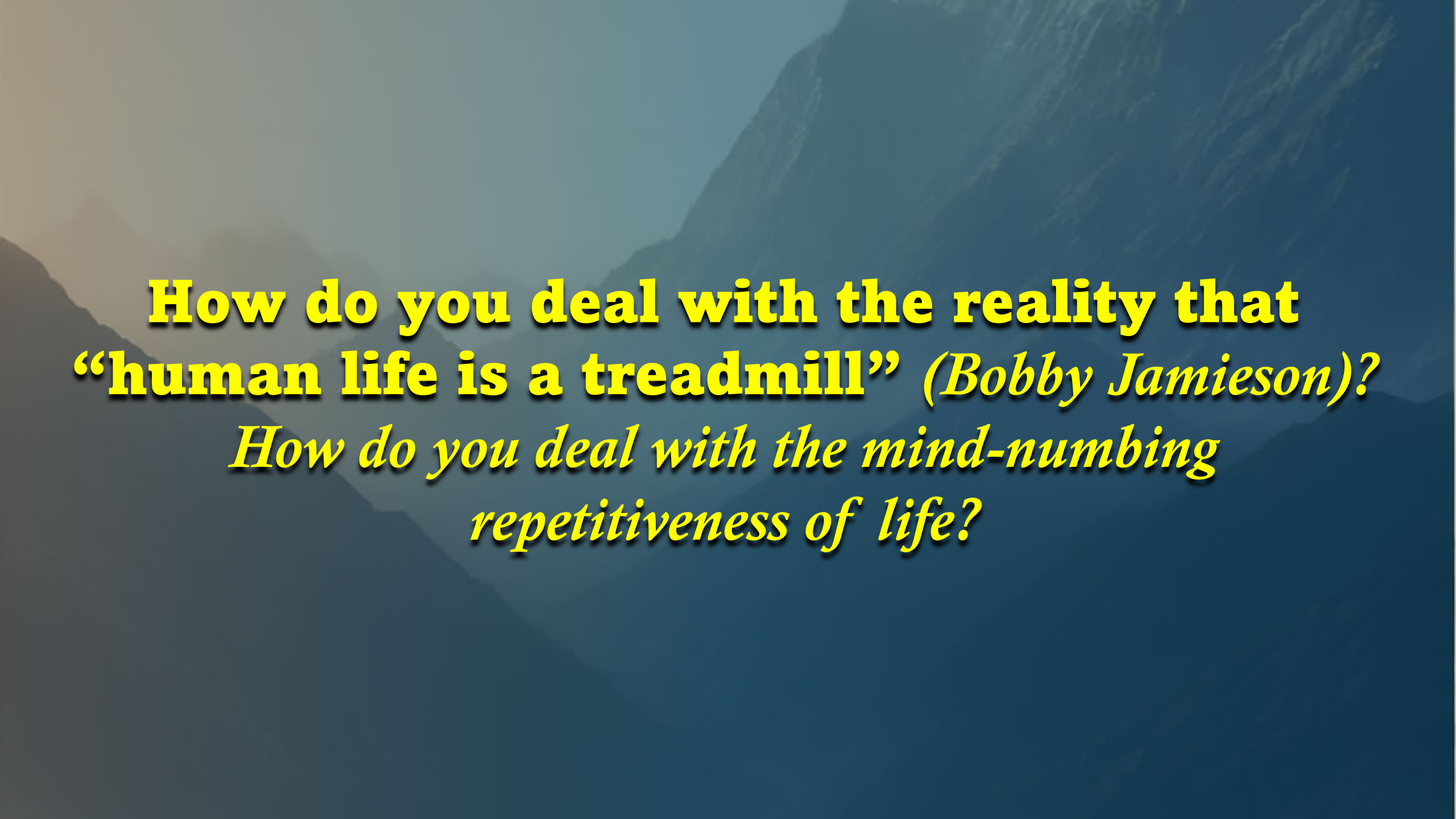
For to set the mind on the flesh is death...

-Romans 8:6

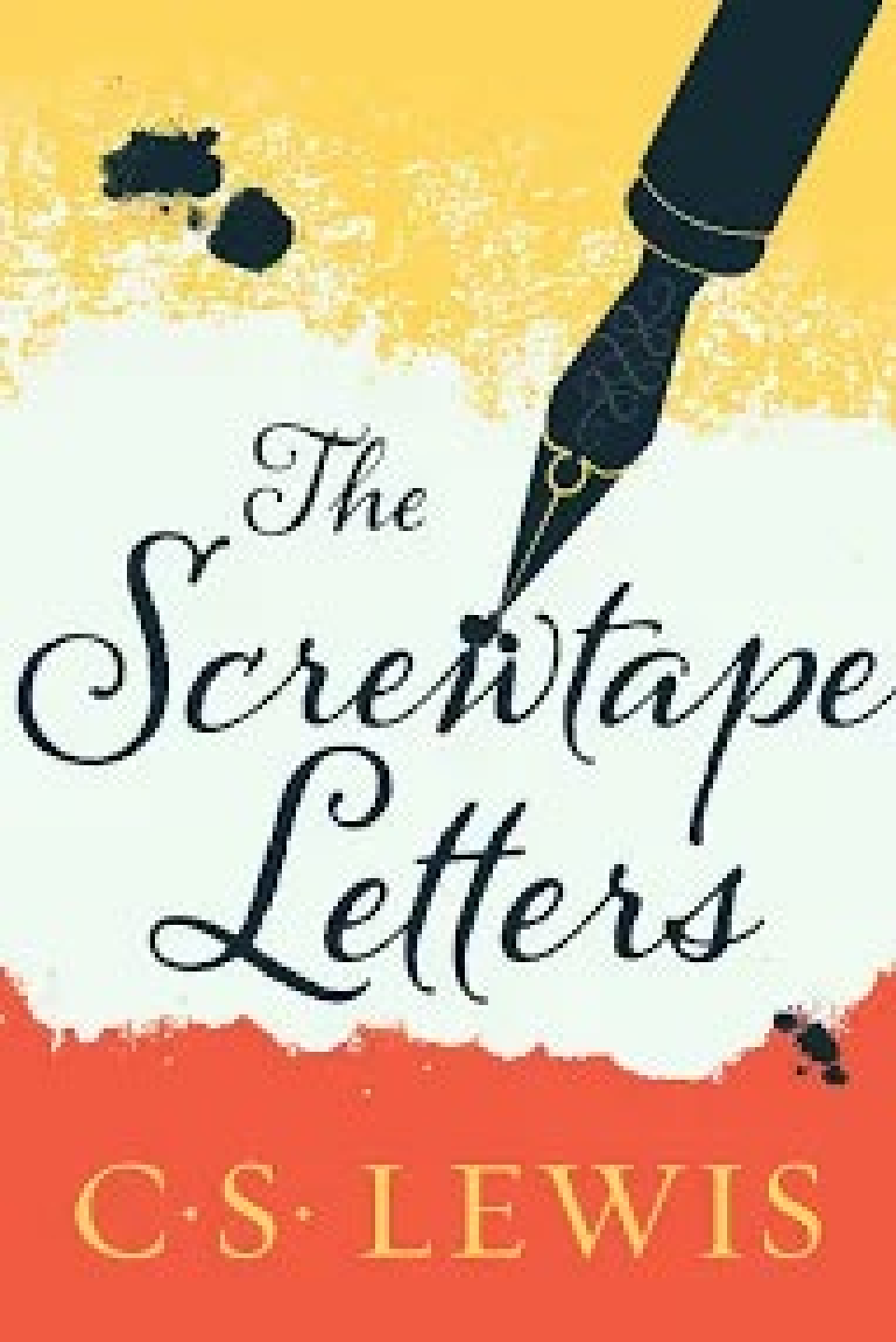
**Are you still pretending that life
“under the sun” can satisfy you?**

*“The very fact that we are **weary of life** is pointing us to
the fact that only God can satisfy our souls.”*

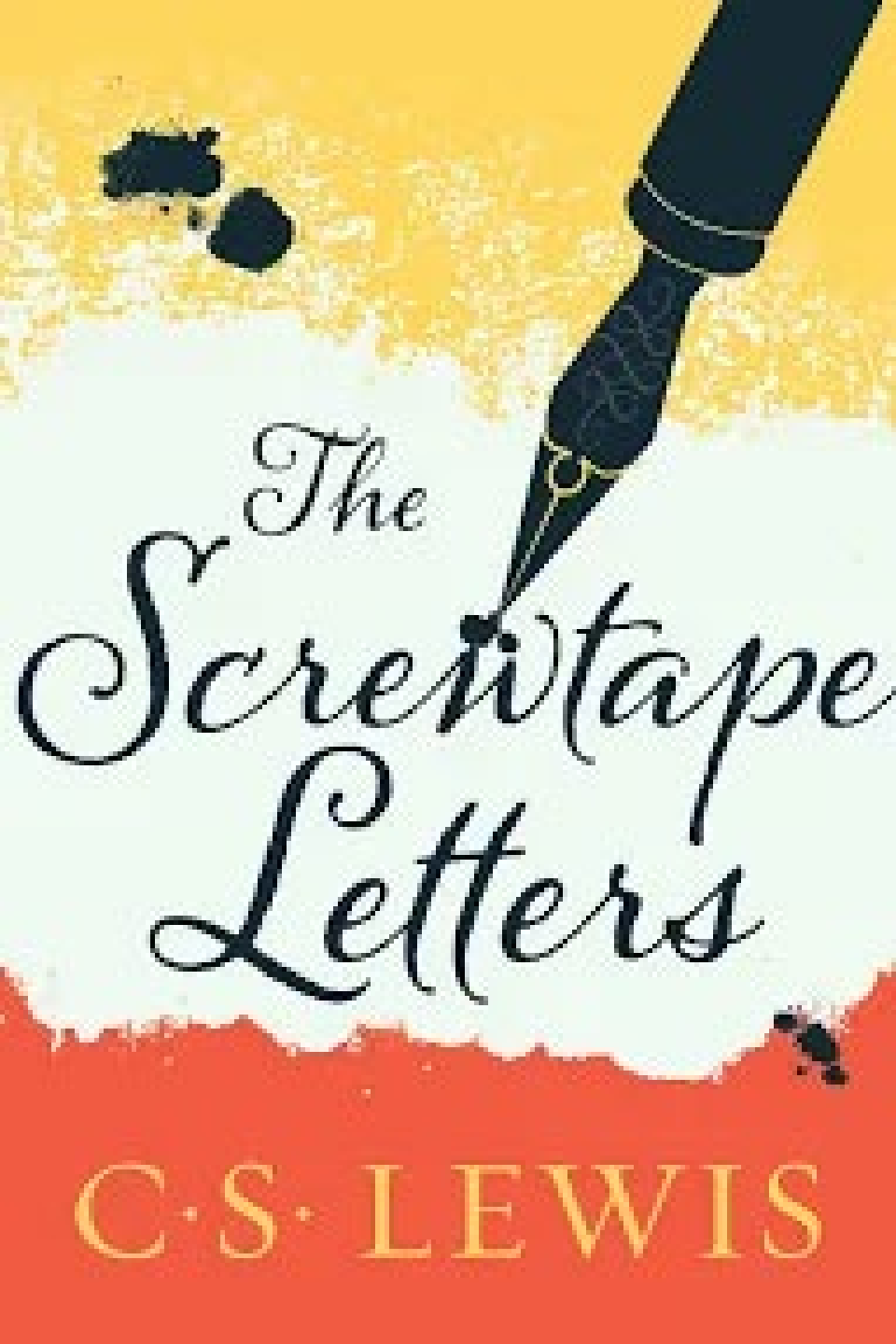
-Philip Ryken



**How do you deal with the reality that
“human life is a treadmill” (Bobby Jamieson)?**
*How do you deal with the mind-numbing
repetitiveness of life?*

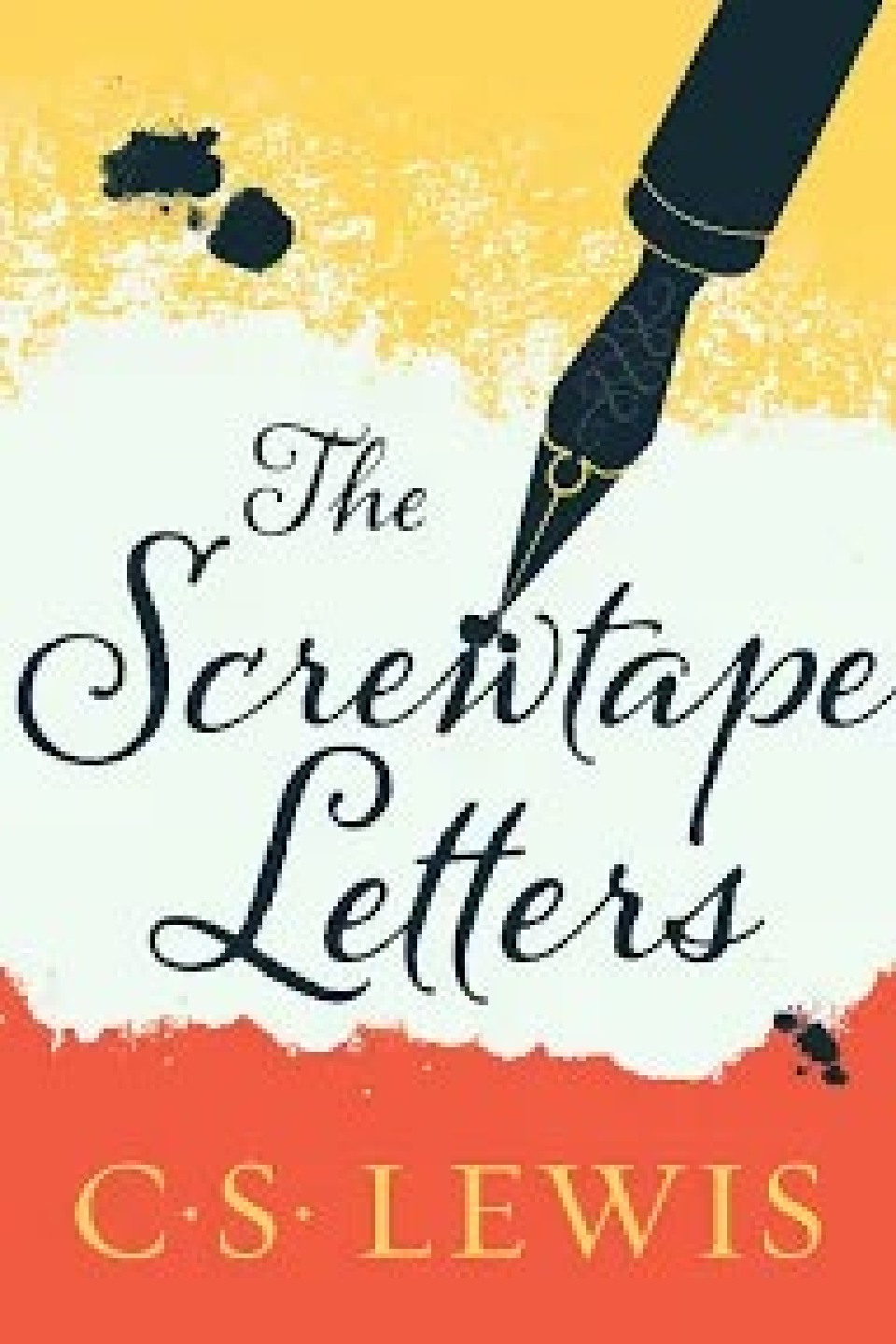


“The horror of the **Same Old Thing** is one of the most valuable [devilish] passions we have produced in the human heart – an endless source of heresies in religion, folly in counsel, infidelity in marriage, and inconstancy in friendship.”



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“Just as we pick out and exaggerate the pleasure of eating to produce gluttony, so we pick out this natural pleasantness of change and twist it into a demand for **absolute novelty.**”



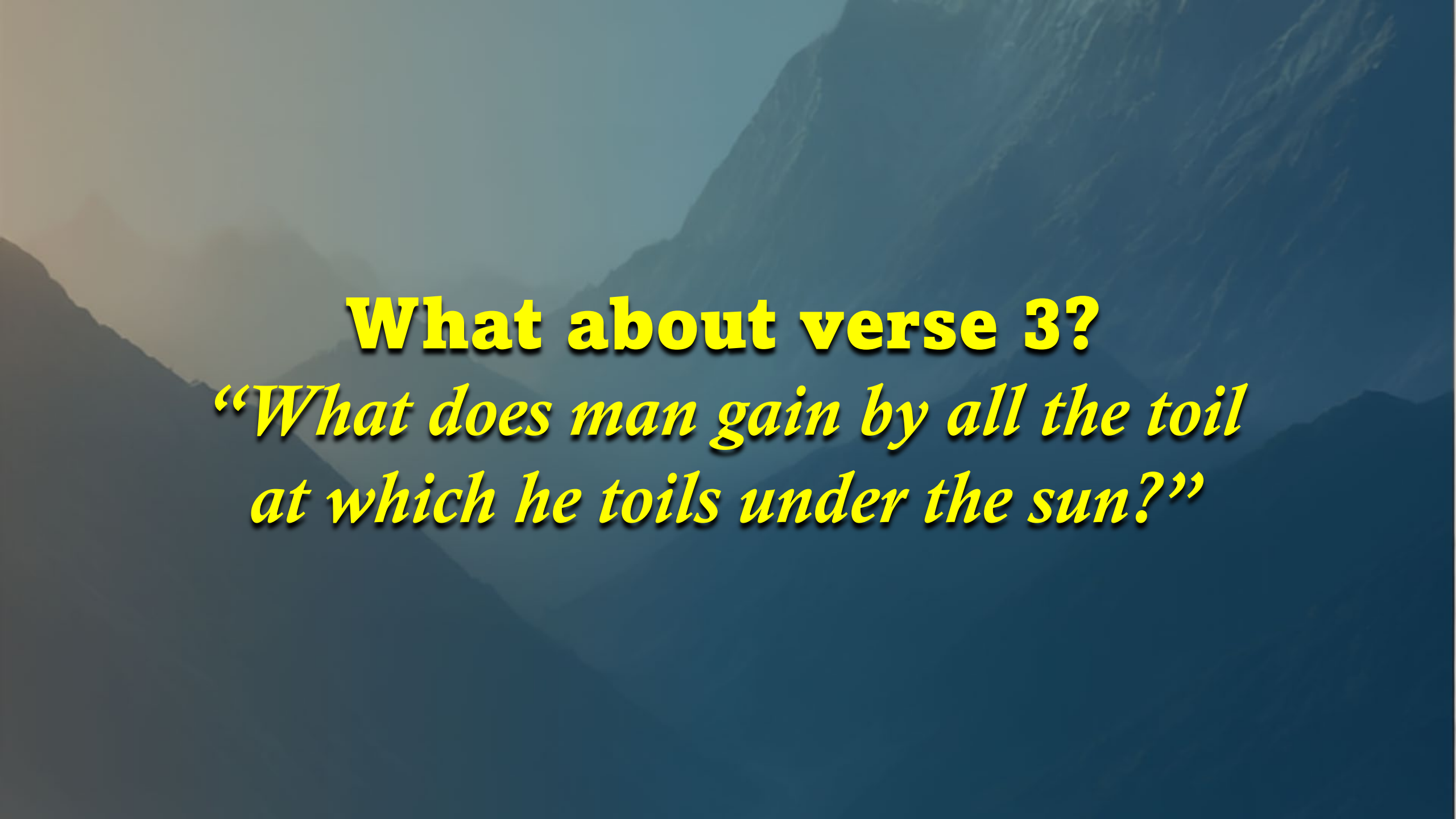
Is a long obedience in the same direction really worth it?

“The *pleasure* of novelty is by its very nature more subject than any other to the law of diminishing returns.”

-C.S. Lewis

How do you deal with the reality that “human life is a treadmill” (*Bobby Jamieson*)?

**In the repetitiveness of life “under the sun”
– can you prioritize **repetitive obedience**?**



What about verse 3?

*“What does man gain by all the toil
at which he toils under the sun?”*



Derek Thompson

The economists of the early 20th century did not foresee that work might evolve from a means of *material production* to a means of *identity production*. They failed to anticipate that, for the poor and middle class, work would remain a necessity; but for the college-educated elite, it would morph into a kind of religion, promising identity, transcendence, and community. Call it workism.”



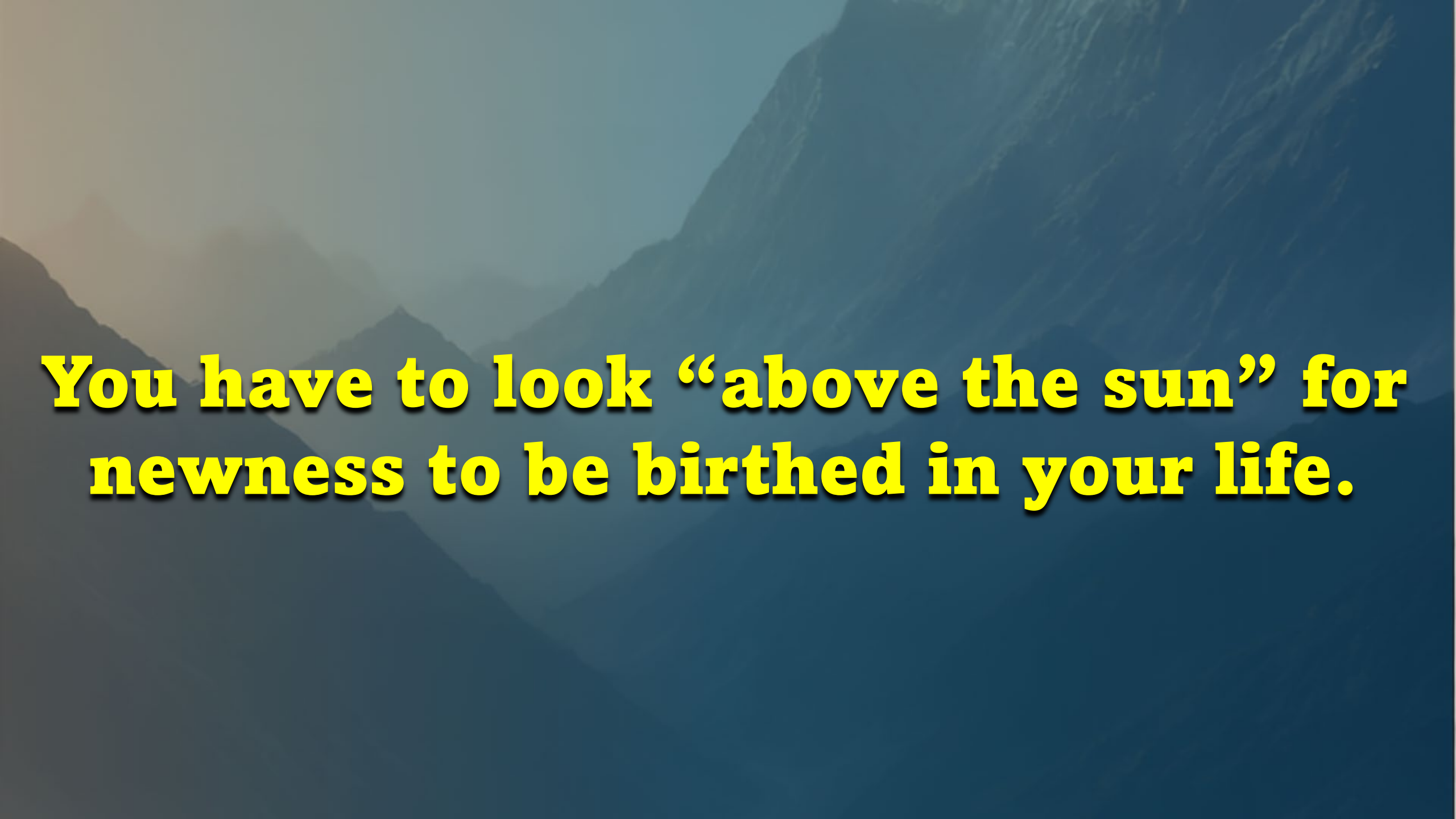
Derek Thompson

Workism – “belief that work is not only necessary to economic production but also the **centerpiece** of one’s *identity* and *life’s purpose*.”

“In the past century, the American conception of work has shifted from *jobs* to *careers* to *callings* – from necessity to status to meaning.”

Are you a functional worshipper of your work?

*This worship leads to “collective anxiety, mass disappointment,
and inevitable burnout.”*

The background of the image shows a range of mountains, with the highest peaks on the right side. The entire image is covered with a blue-to-teal gradient, which is darker at the top and bottom and lighter in the middle. The text is centered horizontally and vertically.

**You have to look “above the sun” for
newness to be birthed in your life.**

Look “above the sun” for newness to be birthed in your life!!

- **New Covenant** inaugurated by Jesus thru his life and death!
- **New Heart** promised to everyone who believes!
- **New Self** as a new creation – *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come.”* (2 Cor. 5:17)
- **New Hope** for the Christian in the New Heavens and New Earth
- **New Vision** – to be *fully and finally satisfied* as we see Jesus in all his fullness & glory & beauty!