

NORTH HILLS NOTES

GET REAL! – “Nothing New”

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This timeless question confronts every human being: What does my life mean? My answer becomes my life philosophy, the engine that drives my whole life.

Solomon in his experience plays out four options:

1. HEDONISM: "Nothing means anything."

"I said to myself, 'Come now, I will make a test of pleasure; enjoy yourself.' But again, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, 'It is mad,' and of pleasure, 'What use is it?' I searched with my mind how to cheer my body with wine—my mind still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, until I might see what was good for mortals to do under heaven during the few days of their life."

Ecclesiastes 2:1-3 (NRSV)

2. NIHILISM: "Something means nothing."

"I said in my heart with regard to human beings that God is testing them to show that they are but animals. For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and humans have no advantage over the animals; for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows whether the human spirit goes upwards and the spirit of animals goes downwards to the earth?"

Ecclesiastes 3:18-21 (NRSV)

"Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. The wise have eyes in their head, but fools walk in darkness. Yet I perceived that the same fate befalls all of them. Then I said to myself, 'What happens to the fool will happen to me also; why then have I been so very wise?' And I said to myself that this also is vanity. For there is no enduring remembrance of the wise or of fools, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How can the wise die just like fools? So I hated life. . . ."

Ecclesiastes 2:13-17 (NRSV)

"The same fate comes to all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to those who sacrifice and those who do not sacrifice. As are the good, so are the sinners; those who swear are like those who shun an oath. This is an evil in all that happens under the sun, that the same fate comes to everyone."

Ecclesiastes 9:2-3 (NRSV)

3. MATERIALISM: "Nothing means something."

"I made great works; I built houses and planted vineyards for myself; I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit tree. I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house; I also had great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and of the provinces; I got singers, both men and women, and delights of the flesh, and many concubines."

Ecclesiastes 2:4-8 (NRSV)

4. THEISM: "He means everything."

"Remember your creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come, and the years draw near when you will say, 'I have no pleasure in them'. . . . The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil."

Ecclesiastes 12:1, 13-14 (NRSV)