

Rejoice & Remember (Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:8)

Summary of the Preacher's Main Points So Far:

1. **The Whole of Life is *vanity* – a mere breath in which none of our personal accomplishments or legacies will survive or be remembered** (Ecclesiastes 1).
2. **Even those specific things that are precious to us, that we hold onto so tightly and invest so much in, also have little or no lasting satisfaction** (Ecclesiastes 2).
3. **Life is not about struggling to gain; but rather letting go, and learning to simply receive and enjoy life as a gift -- accepting this is the beginning of true Joy, Hope, and Freedom** (Ecclesiastes 3).
4. **A) Making life about “ME” is the source of most pain.**
B) Making life about others -- you will find true joy and contentment that cannot be matched elsewhere under the sun (Ecclesiastes 4).
5. **Religion, like any other pursuit, is vanity if approached for personal gain, rather than as a platform for giving** (Ecclesiastes 5).
6. **Don't try to control your life, or you will suffer the tragedy of never finding contentment** (Ecclesiastes 6).
7. **Let Death be your teacher and learn to live life backwards and choose wisdom over escapism; but know that even wisdom is limited** (Ecclesiastes 7).
8. **Learning to respect authority and doing what's right even when it seems to make no difference has significance beyond life under the sun** (Ecclesiastes 8).
9. **Life is a gift, not Gain. But be careful to worship God and not the gifts** (Ecclesiastes 9).
10. **Life under the sun is full of Wisdom, uncertainty, and irony** (Ecclesiastes 10:1-11:6).

We come now to the epilogue of the Preacher's message.

Here the central themes of the book are poetically embodied and summarized in two words before the final conclusion is offered in **12:8-14**.

- ***Rejoice***
- ***Remember***

Rejoice!

Ecclesiastes 11:7-10

⁷The light is pleasant, and *it is* good for the eyes to see the sun. ⁸Indeed, if a man should live many years, let him **rejoice** in them all...

⁹**Rejoice**, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things.¹⁰ So, remove grief and anger from your heart and put away pain from your body, because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.

- **The Bliss of Being Alive**
- **God's Expectation (Command) That We Find and Grab Onto the Joys of Life**
 - **But Joy Eludes Us**
 - Instead of enjoying Life as a Gift with open hands
 - Ironically, we lose sight of the Joy of Life in our pursuit of Gain
 - (Matthew 16:24-25)

Deuteronomy 28:47

"Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things..."

"Human beings are supposed to enjoy life to the full because that is their divinely assigned portion, and God calls one into account for failure to enjoy...Enjoyment is not only permitted, it is commanded; it is not only an opportunity, it is a divine imperative" -- C.L. Seow, Ecclesiastes

"He's a hedonist at heart. All those fasts and vigils and stakes and crosses are only a façade...He has filled his world full of pleasures. There are things for humans to do all day long without him minding in the least!" – C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

- **The Older Preacher's Advice to the Younger Person: In Life, Aim at Joy**
 - Vigorously search for and follow after your desires and what brings you Joy in life
 - Begin with the ordinary, everyday, "little" things
 - Do it while you can, because one day it will begin to diminish, and eventually come to an end – because life is fleeting.
 - **12:8**
...And let him **remember** the days of darkness, for they will be many. Everything that is to come *will be* futility.

Remember!

Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, “I have no delight in them”;² before the **sun and the light, the moon and the stars** are darkened, and clouds return after the rain; ³ in the day that the **watchmen of the house** tremble, and **mighty men** stoop, the **grinding ones** stand idle because they are few, and **those who look through windows** grow dim; ⁴ and **the doors on the street** are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low, and **one will arise at the sound of the bird, and all the daughters of song will sing softly.** ⁵ Furthermore, men are **afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road**; the **almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and the caperberry is ineffective.**

For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street. ⁶ **Remember Him** before **the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed;** ⁷ then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

- **Remember Your CREATOR**

- **He could have easily said “Remember God...” Instead the Preacher uses the title Creator – Why? Remembering God as Creator means:**
 - Remembering that God created the world – and it was good, not evil
 - He didn’t spoil it.
 - It reminds of how it was meant to be, and to live in the light of that.
 - The creation imagery **(12:2)** helps us to understand why “life under the sun” is as it is.
 - What was *made*; is now being *unmade*
 - Taking my appropriate place in the world

You may consider yourself autonomous, but you are incapable of knowing what should be done, incapable of knowing what wisdom is. You are a creature...Our problems do not stem from our failure to stay in the garden...All the evils, and I choose my words carefully, all the evils of the world stem from our taking ourselves to be the Creator.

– Jacques Ellul, *The Reason for Being: A Meditation on Ecclesiastes*

Ecclesiastes 5:2

“Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on earth; therefore let your words be few...”

- That I am not in charge of my life nor can I control my circumstances
 - My life is reduced to anxiety and fear when I succumb to the idolatrous belief that I am in charge, and control my destiny, for Gain.

- **The Fall of a Great House (One's Aging Body)**

- "The watchman of the house tremble" – **Hands**
- "Mighty men stoop" – **Legs**
- "Grinding ones stand idle because they are few" – **Teeth**
- "Those who look through windows grow dim" – **Eyes**
- "The doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low" – **Ears**
- "One will arise at the sound of a bird..." – **Light Sleeping and Early Waking**
- "Afraid of a high place or terrors on the road" – **Loss of Confidence**
- "The almond tree blossoms" – **White or Graying Hair**
- "The grasshopper drags himself along" – **Loss of Agility**
- "The caperberry is ineffective" – **Loss of Desire**
- "The silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed" – **Hanging Lamplight (Spark of Life) that falls, breaks and is extinguished...**
- "Pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed" – **Water (Life) inside is Lost**

12:7 Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

The preacher is gently taking you by the hand and showing you that the day will come when you will be undone. Whether it comes in old age, or by disease, or by accident, his question for the young man or young woman, or even one who has not yet entered this last phase of living...is

"In light of this certainty, before this day comes, how will you live?"

Old age is the harvest of all the years that have gone before. It is the barn into which all the sheaves are gathered. We are each, in all our earlier years, building the house in which we shall have to live when we grow old. And we may make it a prison or a palace. We may make it beautiful...or we may make our house very gloomy...So it comes about that this whole question must be settled from within. The old man like the snail, carries his house on his back..."

David Gibson, *Living Life Backwards*