

Ecclesiastes 12

Ecclesiastes 12

APPLICATION

Larry Hartel went to be with the Lord.

Jay Ashcroft - Thursday 6:00

Communion Sunday

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecclesiastes 12:1-14 (NKJV - New King James Version)

¹ Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them":

² While the sun and the light, The moon and the stars, Are not darkened, And the clouds do not return after the rain;

³ In the day when the keepers of the house tremble, And the strong men bow down; When the grinders cease because they are few, And those that look through the windows grow dim;

⁴ When the doors are shut in the streets, And the sound of grinding is low; When one rises up at the sound of a bird, And all the daughters of music are brought low.

⁵ Also they are afraid of height, And of terrors in the way; When the almond tree blossoms, The grasshopper is a burden, And desire fails. For man goes to his eternal home, And the mourners go about the streets.

⁶ Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, Or the golden bowl is broken, Or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, Or the wheel broken at the well.

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

⁸ “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher, “All is vanity.”

⁹ And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs.

¹⁰ The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright—words of truth.

¹¹ The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.

¹² And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh.

¹³ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all.

¹⁴ For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

INTRO

It's been a while since we visited Ecclesiastes, but we will conclude the matter today as we close chapter 12.

- An aged Solomon, the wisest and wealthiest man to grace planet earth, wrote what might be considered the most significant philosophical and spiritual treatise on the meaning of life. These chapters were the memoirs of a man who knew it all, only to come to the end of his life recognizing that the fleeting nature of life makes all of the knowledge, wealth, pleasure, and pursuits of life under the sun meaningless or, as he puts it, "vanity of vanities," and "grasping for the wind."

- Ecclesiastes is the final sermon of a preacher. The sermon he preaches deals with all the subjects people want to avoid. Life is short, and the world is deceptive:
 - The more you get, the more you want.
 - The more you know, the more you recognize how ignorant you are.
 - The more enjoyment you pursue, the more miserable you become.
 - The more justice and good you pursue, the more frustrated you become.
 - Ultimately, if life has no greater eternal value, or God and his ways can't be known, you might as well be glad if you can have one day you get to enjoy the fruit of your labor without the unexpected nature of life ruining it all.

But in all of his observations about life under the sun, he occasionally peaks above the sun and recognizes that the best someone could in life do is bring God into their consideration and the forefront of their actions. there's a hint of faith in some of his words that gives us hope that there's more to life than what meets the eye:

[Ecc 8:12 NKJV] [12] Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him.

APPLICATION

These glimpses ultimately point us to the reality of Jesus. His truth brings us to a place of realizing that despite the injustices, pains, and difficult realities of this short life under the sun, He has conquered death and secured all of God's promises toward us both now and forever. Looking at life through the lens of Christ's death and resurrection allows us to see things that Solomon didn't fully grasp but longed for.

So we come to Solomon's final chapter, he concludes that the realities of life, and how quickly it comes and goes, should inspire us to prioritize obedience and fear of God, especially to those who are in the strength of their youth... because every other pursuit and priority that people give their energy and strength to, ends up being void and meaningless without God.

In Chapter 11, Solomon exhorted those in their youth to put away evil and sorrow from their hearts and to consider God in all their ways. Chapter 12 begins by elaborating on that thought.

Chapter 12 also vividly describes what happens to us with age. You can almost hear Solomon's frustration with how his body and mind can't keep up with his spirit's desire.

BIBLE PASSAGE**Ecclesiastes 12:1 (NKJV - New King James Version)**

¹ Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them":

APPLICATION

I have a 10-year-old son who loves life. Every day is an adventure. He's up early looking for something to build, some fun things to do, a new adventure to explore... Yesterday, I woke up, and it took me 30 minutes to decide if I was going to get out of bed. My back hurt, my ears were ringing, I didn't sleep well, and my body ached from jumping with my son on the trampoline the day before... and I'm only in my mid-40s!

Now I know that life can be what you make it, and attitude is half the battle... but there is a reality to Solomon's words. Paul the Apostle spoke honestly about the fact that "our outward man is perishing..."

- There is a season in life when you are physically, emotionally, and mentally at your peak, and life seems full of endless possibility and potential. Then, there is a time when natural decline starts to set in, dreams seem more impossible to fulfill, opportunity feels like it has passed, and the body creates more pain than pleasure... It's not that you're fatalistic or want to die, but the possibility of thriving seems to be overshadowed by the effort it takes to simply endure.
- From a physical standpoint, Solomon observes that the older you get, the less pleasure you derive from the physical things in life. The good news is that you can still experience spiritual richness because your spirit doesn't decay like the body, but physically, you can't enjoy certain things as you once could.

This is why it's so important to remember God when having the opportunity to both spiritually and physically thrive. Knowing, fearing, and walking with God will only enhance the joy and meaning of your life when you are younger and give you internal wealth that will remain when you get older.

In verses 2-7, Solomon gives the most accurate poetic description of the aging process that has ever been penned.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecclesiastes 12:2 (NKJV - New King James Version)

² While the sun and the light, The moon and the stars, Are not darkened, And the clouds do not return after the rain;

APPLICATION

In other words... while you can still see!

- There comes a time when it doesn't matter if it's day or night because your eyesight is failing. Solomon was writing before the invention of glasses and laser surgery.

The clouds do not return after the rain:

- When you get the occasional storm, it's nice to have some reprieve of sunshine. But apparently, there comes a time when you get older that things don't ever seem to recover. The moment you get through one physical ailment, the storm clouds of the next one are on the horizon. Your body used to heal, and your energy used to return, but now, it seems like nothing but one storm to the next.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecclesiastes 12:3 (NKJV - New King James Version)

³ In the day when the keepers of the house tremble, And the strong men bow down; When the grinders cease because they are few, And those that look through the windows grow dim;

APPLICATION

Next, Solomon paints a picture of an aging, dilapidating estate:

- The house used to have beautiful solid pillars upholding the structure, but now they are bowing and crumbling.
- There were strong young men in the household who kept up with the daily tasks, but now they lack the strength to maintain basic functions.
- There was once activity from the grain grinders, producing flour, but now only a couple are functioning.
- The windows held the glow of daylight and optimism when children would run to greet the morning, but now they stand empty.

It's a picture of the aging body:

- **The keepers of the house and strong men** - you lose muscles and core strength, and your hands and legs seem to shake no matter what you do. The strong men bow down - you lose your posture. What was once strong and upright begins bending.
- **Grinders** - you lose your teeth. This was before dentures when you didn't get back what you lost, and had to eat with the few teeth you have left.
- The windows of your eyes grow dim. Dimwit?

12:00



BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecclesiastes 12:4 (NKJV - New King James Version)

⁴ When the doors are shut in the streets, And the sound of grinding is low; When one rises up at the sound of a bird, And all the daughters of music are brought low.

APPLICATION

He moves from the eyes to the ears:

- The sound of grinding is low because you can't hear it anymore. This year, I've bought myself saying, "Huh?" more than ever.
- Rises at the sound of a bird, daughters of music brought low - You can't hear a thing to be able to enjoy it, but the slightest disturbance in the middle of the night wakes you up.

I love music, I used to be the one constantly saying, "Turn it up!" Now I'm frequently finding myself saying, "It's just too loud!"

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecclesiastes 12:5 (NKJV - New King James Version)

⁵ Also they are afraid of height, And of terrors in the way; When the almond tree blossoms, The grasshopper is a burden, And desire fails. For man goes to his eternal home, And the mourners go about the streets.

APPLICATION

Afraid of heights and terrors - You become more vulnerable and don't look to take risks like you once did when you were younger. Instead of chasing adrenaline, you're chasing an afternoon nap! The word "Roller Coaster" sounds like a nightmare waiting to happen.

Almond tree blossoms – Almond blossoms are beautiful. I remember seeing them a lot when we lived in Georgia. **After they blossom, they all begin to fall.** You had a nice full head of brown hair at one time, but now it's all turned white, and like the blossoms, they all fall off the tree.

Desire fails – Most scholars agree that the language indicates that sexual desire and appetite no longer function the same way. It could also indicate that it takes more to motivate you to stay active in life.

After your body fails, the end of this life comes and will never return.

BIBLE PASSAGE**Ecclesiastes 12:6-7 (NKJV - New King James Version)**

⁶ Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, Or the golden bowl is broken, Or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, Or the wheel broken at the well.

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

APPLICATION

Before death is on your doorstep, get right with your creator! Here, Solomon describes the process of death in 4 ways that describe the physical breakdown of the body leading to death. He describes four items that all are very useful until they break:

- Silver chord is loosed – The silver bands were used in construction to hold up pillars. This could be nervous system or circulatory system giving out.
- Golden bowl broken – The brain ceases to function.
- The pitcher shattered at the fountain - it's too old to hold water anymore, so it shatters. Just as the pitcher draws the water from the well, the heart brings up and distributes the blood through the body.
- Wheel broken at the well – This could be the lungs that no longer bring the flow of oxygen to the brain.

The dust will return to the earth - everything in your physical body is made up of nothing more than the elements of the dirt. Here, Solomon also acknowledges the separation of natures between the physical and the spiritual. Your physical body decays in the ground to dust, but the spiritual being goes into the hands of God, either to everlasting life or everlasting condemnation.

POEM

I'm fine I'm fine.

There's nothing whatever the matter with me.

I'm just as healthy as I can be.

I have arthritis in both my knees,

and when I talk, I talk with a wheeze.

My pulse is weak, and my blood is thin,

but I'm awfully well for the shape in

my teeth eventually will have to come out

and I can't hear a word unless you shout

I'm overweight. I can't get thin,

but I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in

I have swelling in both my feet

and I'm hardly able to walk down the street.

Sleep is denied me every night

and every morning I'm really sight.

My memory is faint and my heads a-spin

and I practically live on aspirin

and I'm awfully well for the shape of men,

the moral is as the tail unfolds
that for you and me were growing old.
It's better to say I'm fine with a grin
then let people know what shape we're in

BIBLE PASSAGE

[2Co 4:16-18 NKJV] [16] Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. [17] For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, [18] while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. [2Co 5:1-2 NKJV] [1] For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. [2] For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecclesiastes 12:8-11 (NKJV - New King James Version)

⁸ “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher, “All is vanity.”

⁹ And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs.

¹⁰ The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright—words of truth.

¹¹ The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.

APPLICATION

Talking of the decaying body and death brings the preacher to another pinnacle of frustration! Vanity!

- But even in the vanity and brevity of life, Solomon records that his legacy will be of one who sought to make people wise in this life.
- Notice how he refers to words of wisdom. They are like Goads and well-driven nails.
 - Goads were pointed rods that were used to guide sheep and poke them a little when they were out of bounds. When Saul met Jesus, he was asked, "Why do you kick against the goads?" Why do you resist the prodding to God to get you onto the right course?
 - Well-driven nails as opposed to poorly driven nails. I'm not very good at nailing things. More often than not, my nails bend halfway in! A poorly driven nail isn't useful, but a well-driven nail holds things together. **God's word is like a nail that fastens us to the path of righteousness.**
 - Given by one shepherd - God is the giver of wisdom. He offers wisdom to guide us through the journey of life toward eternity.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecclesiastes 12:12 (NKJV - New King James Version)

¹² And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh.

APPLICATION

Verse 12—When I was younger, I used this as a biblical excuse for not reading a lot. This is not an excuse for skipping homework or studying your Bible! So what is he saying?

Sometimes, the most valuable thing isn't gaining more information but living out the wisdom you already know. Sometimes, Philosophers become the weariest and most confused people because they've read so much that truth has escaped them. Sometimes, the most learned men will come out the most miserable if they've never anchored themselves in truth.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 (NKJV - New King James Version)

¹³ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all.

¹⁴ For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

QUOTE

“ The Poet and playwright TS Elliot once wisely observed:

Where is the life we have lost in living?

TS Elliot

APPLICATION

Life under the sun appears on the surface to be nothing more than a puzzle with missing pieces that don't seem to form a coherent image.

In the core of our being, we long for more, almost with the inherent knowledge that we exist for more than we see and experience in the short time between our conception and death.

Solomon concludes his thesis on life with a bang: Under the sun, eat, drink, and be merry... Above the sun, live with the knowledge that God is real and that we will give an account of our lives.

This is man's all = This is what makes man complete.

John 1:4 NKJV - In Him (Jesus) was life, and the life was the light of men.

COMMUNION

[Jhn 7:7 NKJV] 7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.

The last supper:

- A night of servanthood - washing feet
- A night of sacrifice -
- [Jhn 15:19-22 NKJV] 19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. 22 "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.