

HOW SHOULD WE NOW LIVE?
Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:8
1/15/17

Many people think that God wants us to live dry boring lives.

We will see this morning that the opposite is true.

God wants you to enjoy life.

1. Enjoy life. 11:7-10

This is the 6th time in Ecclesiastes that God has told us to enjoy life.

We have already seen that seeking joy and pleasure does not bring us lasting happiness.

- ◆ When we think that we deserve them we are not grateful.
- ◆ When we look to them to bring us happiness, they won't.

But when we recognize that each new day as a gift from God we can rejoice and be thankful.

It is God who gave you your life to enjoy.

It is God who gives us the ability to enjoy life.

b. Rejoice when you are old. vv. 7-8

- Old age can be a blessing for those who have lived life well.
Proverbs 16:31 A gray head is a crown of glory; It is found in the way of righteousness.
- We can enjoy life even with the increasing limitations that come with aging.
- We can still praise God for all the beauty, goodness, and pleasure that He gives us to experience
 - ◆ Enjoy the sweet taste of honey, the first rays of sunshine on a mountain lake, a rainbow against dark clouds, the blaze of a campfire, the beauty of sunlight on new fallen snow
- But remember that life includes dark times as well as light.
 - ◆ We suffer loss, disappointment, injustice, and grief.
- Studies reveal that many experience older people feel:
 - ◆ **Loneliness and depression**
 - ◆ **Uselessness**- of being a bother
 - ◆ **Guilt**- "I have totally messed up my life."
 - ◇ "If I could only live my life over, I would raise my kids differently."
 - ◆ **Self-pity**- my life has been so hard and I have it so bad.
 - ◆ **Fear**- poor health, dying, being left alone, losing their mind
- But don't let the darkness blot out the sun.
 - ◆ Don't let it consume your life.
 - ◆ Don't let it take your joy away.

c. Rejoice while you are young. v. 9

- Enjoy your strong energetic bodies
- Enjoy this time of life while you have fewer of the cares that come with adult responsibilities.
- *Follow the impulses of your heart and the desire of your eyes*
 - ◆ But don't recklessly abandon yourself to sinful pleasure.
 - ◆ Enjoy life within the moral boundaries established by God
- Remember that choices have consequences.
 - ◆ Sin brings destructive natural consequences
 - ◆ God's active judgment in this life
 - ◆ God's final judgment
- Enjoy life, but don't sin.

d. Remove vexation from your heart. v. 10a

Grief and anger is a translation of one Hebrew word that describes a variety of emotions that reflect a troubled soul

Grief, anger, sorrow, worry, anxiety, depression, etc.

- Stop being a worrywart.
 - ◆ It takes the joy out of life.
 - ◆ Most of what you worry about will never happen.
 - ◆ So what if you fail!!!
 - ◇ Know that God will be with you whatever the future brings.

Philippians 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- Stop dwelling on your grief.
 - ◆ There is a time and place to grieve over a loss.
 - ◇ Jesus did. John 11:35 cf Matthew 23:37
 - ◆ There is also a time to let it go and enjoy the life that God has given you.
- Deal with your anger and bitterness.
 - ◆ Deal with what you can deal with and leave the rest to God.
- Stop feeling sorry for yourself.
 - ◆ Rather than dwelling on all the things that are wrong, count your blessings

e. Put away pain from your body. 11:10b

- Don't do risky things that may kill or seriously injure you and cause long term physical pain.
- Don't do sinful things that will bring you lasting emotional pain.

- ◆ Sexual immorality creates spiritual and emotional wounds that will take a long time to heal.
- ◆ Drugs and alcohol begin with ecstasy but lead to misery.
- God wants us to enjoy life.
- On a scale of 1 to 10 how would you rate your enjoyment of life?
 - ◆ What hinders us from enjoying life?
 - ◇ Is it fear or fretting? Anger or bitterness?
 - ◇ Are you so goal oriented that you can't enjoy the present?
 - ◇ Are you waiting until you accomplish your goals?
 - ◇ Are you waiting for a person who will fulfill your life? (Spouse? Baby?)
 - ◇ Are you waiting until you have all the things you have always wanted?
- God wants you to enjoy life.

2. **Remember your Creator. 12:1-8**

a. Remember Him in everything you do. v. 1a

- Remembering involves more than storing away a thought.
- Remembering means that we are to be mindful of God in everything we do.
 - ◆ Include Him in all your plans
 - ◆ Praise Him for all His blessings
 - ◆ Pray to Him through all our troubles
- Take God into consideration in everything you do.

b. Remember Him in the days of your youth. v. 1b

- Don't wait until you are old.
 - ◆ Remember Him while you still have a whole lifetime to live for His glory.
 - ◆ Remember God when at home or at school
 - ◆ Remember Him in the classroom and on the athletic field
 - ◆ Remember Him in the great outdoors and in the confines of your bedroom
 - ◆ Remember Him at work and at play
 - ◆ Remember Him while you are planning your future and deciding what to do with the gifts and abilities that God has given you.
 - ◆ Remember Him before you make a lot of bad decisions that you will regret later.
 - ◆ Actively serve Him while you still have the strength and energy to do so.

c. Remember Him before the evil days come. vv. 2-8

Evil days here does not refer to wicked living but to the difficult days of old age and physical deterioration.

v. 3 **Watchmen of the house** are weak and tremble (arms)

mighty men stoop (legs)

grinders stand idle because they are few (**teeth**)

those who look through windows grow dim (eyes)

v. 4 **doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low** (deaf ears)

arise at the sound of a bird (easily wakened and inability to sleep)

daughters of song (The ear and voice that once loved music)

v. 5 **afraid of high places** (unstable on their feet)

Afraid of terrors on the road- unable to defend himself

Almond tree blossoms- white hair

Grasshopper drags himself along (impaired mobility)

Caperberry is ineffective- loss of desire or ability to be sexually intimate
(Aphrodisiacs don't help.)

vv. 6-7 various metaphors and descriptions of death.

v. 8 If all we live for is this life, then everything is ultimately futile.

◆ The vanity of our existence without God is dramatically expressed in a 35 second play by Samuel Beckett entitled, *Breath*.

◇ As the curtain opens, there is a pile of junk on stage. It is illuminated by a single light which dims and then brightens a little before going completely out. There are no actors, only a sound track with a human cry followed by an inhaled breath, an exhaled breath, and another cry.

◆ If there is no God then Beckett had it right. Life temporary, meaningless, of no lasting value

◇ There is nothing of lasting value or gain for all our toil under the sun.

◇ Whether we are wise or foolish doesn't matter because in the end we all die.

◇ Pleasure makes no sense; there is nothing to gain.

◇ Power, position and possessions are vain because of all the trouble it takes to get them and then to keep them.

◇ Death is the last and ultimate of all vanities.

◇ Dust we are and to dust we shall return.

3. God's existence changes everything.

a. We can rejoice because every day is a gift from our Creator God.

And it is God who gives us the ability to enjoy them.

b. Our lives have meaning because our Maker is also our judge.

The message of Ecclesiastes is not that nothing matters, but that everything does.

◆ Everything we ever do, say, or think has eternal significance.

- ◆ What we do, how we do it, and why we do it all matter.
 - ◆ It matters how we used our time on earth
 - ◆ It matters how we used our money.
 - ◆ It matters what we do with our bodies.
- c. We have hope because the God who made us invites us to cast all our cares upon Him because He cares for us.
- d. We have hope for life after death because Christ died for our sins and rose the third day from the dead.
- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raise on the third day . . .
- 1 John 5:11-13** And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. ¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.
- John 11:25** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,