

7th Sun. after Trinity **Ecclesiastes 12:1-8, 13-14**

7/31/22

This past week we had a special time with our young people at the park. We studied some of the proverbs and then ended by reading Ecclesiastes 12 and talking about it. That is such an interesting and meaningful chapter, so I would like to share that with you today. We will begin with the last two verses in the book, chapter 12:13-14

*13 This is the conclusion of the matter. Everything has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments. For mankind, this is everything.*

*14 Yes, God will bring everything that is done into judgment, including everything that is hidden, whether good or evil."*

### **Dear Fellow Redeemed,**

King Solomon was an old man when he wrote this book of Ecclesiastes. He looks back at his life and contemplates the age old question, "What is the meaning and purpose of life?" He considers everything that he had pursued in life and he realizes that it was all vanity. That is a recurring theme throughout the book, "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "All is vanity." He describes it as grasping for the wind. After all your effort you come up empty handed. He sought after riches and amassed way more wealth than he could ever use. He built many grand buildings and fabulous gardens, orchards and vineyards and devised an irrigation system to water them all. He set his heart on mirth and pleasure. He said, "Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure." (2:10)

Now as an old man he realizes that none of that mattered in view of the one all encompassing truth that he states here in the last verse of Ecclesiastes, "Yes, God will bring everything that is done into judgment, including everything that is hidden, whether good or evil." There is a day of judgment. Whether a person wants to believe it or not, it will happen. We can be sure of it because God's word has never failed. As Solomon states, the rich and the poor, the wise and the fool, the lowly and the mighty all die the same and they will all face God on Judgment Day. There is nothing hidden from God. He sees and knows every secret thing. He knows the thoughts and intents of your heart. We can't hide anything from Him.

So what is the answer to life's great question? Solomon gives

**"The Conclusion of the Matter."**

### **-I- Fear God and Keep His Commandments.**

That's it. That is the meaning and purpose of life. That is the one and only thing that has any lasting value in this life. Fear God! The true fear of God comes when we see and know God as He has revealed Himself to us. It is to know Him as our Almighty Creator and that we are simply one of the creatures He has made. Therefore we stand in awe of His power and wisdom and know and honor His authority. He alone can establish the laws for us to live by. It is to recognize that we are finite and limited while He is infinite and with Him nothing is impossible. Therefore we look up to Him and trust Him in all things and to know that His word and His ways are always right.

The fear of the Lord also acknowledges Him as the final Judge of all things, and knows that "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Heb. 10:31 And that, "God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil." Therefore the only thing important in life is to prepare for that day of Judgment.

At the same time we know God as our Loving Father. He has revealed Himself as the God who "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) He is the God who was willing to suffer the just punishment for our sins in our place and give us His righteousness so that we can stand before Him on that day unafraid and uncondemned and we will live with Him in holiness forever. Therefore we cling to Him for that forgiveness and hunger for his righteousness so that we are always prepared for that day. We fear the thought of ever turning to our own ways and losing that gift of forgiveness and

eternal life. We also know Him as the God who promises to be with us wherever we are and to cherish us as His own children. He delights to listen to our prayers and promises to always do what is best for us. Therefore the fear of the Lord becomes the highest reverence of His majesty and treasuring His love and goodness. It is what moves us to “fear, love and trust in Him above all things,” and to pray for His Holy Spirit to strengthen and preserve our faith throughout our life.

With that kind of fear of the Lord, we will also keep His commandments. To say you believe in God or feel close to God but don't keep his commandments is not true faith. The Apostle John puts it very bluntly, “He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.” Our keeping His commandments is not to earn God's favor or to secure a place in heaven. We have failed to keep God's commandments well enough to do that. But we keep His commandments out of faith and love because that is what the Holy Spirit works in us to do. It is simply an act of faith. Fearing God and keeping His commandments is another way of describing true saving faith. And that is “everything for mankind.” Solomon says. Therefore God gives especially our young people this valuable advice through Solomon.

### **-II- Remember Your Creator in the days of your Youth**

*“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.”*

So many young people seem to have the attitude, “I'll have plenty of time to get serious about religion when I am older. There are too many other things that I need to do now. I need to establish my career, and there are just so many things to enjoy. Weekends are my time to relax and have a good time after a hard week of work. I'll worry about religion later. The trouble is, when we grow old, difficult days come. Those difficult days cause many to become bitter and angry with God and have no interest in drawing near to him. However, those who do build a relationship with God in their youth, their faith will carry them through those difficult days.

Solomon now goes on to give one of the most interesting and poetic descriptions of the difficult days that come with aging. As we read his description think about how many of these things you can relate to. Let's take it one verse at a time.

Solomon urges us to remember our Creator in the days of our youth “While the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are not darkened, and the clouds do not return after the rain.” The light of the sun, moon and stars have a big effect on our mood. Just think how you feel in the winter after weeks of cloudy, dreary days, and then the sun comes out. Doesn't that brightening your whole mood? When you are young, most people have many bright days in their life, days full of light and hope and joy. When one is old it can seem as if the sun and moon and stars have been darkened as there are fewer bright happy days. When you are young you may have a storm cloud of sickness or sadness but then the sun comes back out and things are bright again. When you are old it seems like the clouds return after the rain. In other words one trouble or sorrow follows after another and there is no break.

Vs. 3 is interesting, “In the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow down.” Solomon now describes our body in terms of a house. “The keepers of house” may be a reference to arms and hands. We use our arms and hands to take care of the house we live in and the house of our body. When the arms and hands begin to “tremble” and become weak, it is more difficult to take care of these essentials. Our legs are the strongest muscles in our body so they are probably referred to as “the strong men.” When they become weak and barely hold us up we bow down.

“When the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look through the windows grow dim.” What are our grinders? When we are old our teeth may cease grinding because they are few. We may lose our teeth and it becomes more difficult to eat, even with dentures.

“And those that look through the windows grow dim?” What are the windows of our body? It is our eyes, right? In old age the eyes very often grow dim making it hard to see.

Vs. 4 “When the doors are shut in the streets, and the sound of grinding is low.” If the windows of our body are our eyes, the doors might be thought of as our ears. When the doors are shut we don’t hear the noise in the street as much. The next phrase clues us in that it is talking about our hearing as the “sound of grinding is low.” In spite of the fact that we may not hear very well, Solomon says, “When one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of music are brought low.” In other words they don’t sleep very well anymore and wake up at the slightest peep. But they can’t really enjoy music.

vs. 5 “Also they are afraid of height, and of terrors in the way.” The elderly tend to be more fearful. They are afraid of falling and are more defenseless against those who would prey on the elderly. Solomon adds, “When the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and desire fails.” Almond tree blossoms are pink but quickly fade to white. Apparently my almond tree is in full bloom (pointing to my hair).

“The grasshopper drags himself along.” When we are young we typically have lots of energy and hop around like a grasshopper. When we get old we drag ourself along. And finally “Desire fails.” We lose the desire for many things because it is just too difficult.

Then comes death! “For man goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets.” vs. 6 & 7 give a number of different descriptions of death: “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. Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”

Does any of this ring true for any of you? Life gets more difficult as you get older. Aren’t you glad you received your faith and trust in God when you were young and you continued in that faith? Now you have your Lord and Savior in your heart and by your side. You have experienced God’s faithfulness all your life. Throughout your life He has allowed troubles to come and He has been with you through them all. By that He has built up your faith to be able to handle the more difficult times at the end of life. You know He will not forsake you. You have also come to know for certain that in Christ you have an eternity of joy and peace with God in heaven.

In that, you are a great example to us all of the great value of remembering our Creator when we are young. You show us the power and blessing of living with God all your life. When you handle the difficult days with confident faith and trust in God, that is an inspiration to the rest of us to pursue the Lord and His righteousness now.

Seeking the Lord is the one and only thing that is NOT grasping for the wind and will not leave us empty handed in the end. The life of faith with God lasts forever. Not only that but when we live a life of faith with God and enjoy a relationship with Him, then we are able to truly enjoy the other blessings in life with a thankful heart.

By God’s grace you have been given faith in Christ. Let us all devote ourselves first and foremost to developing that faith and growing in our relationship with God every day. There truly is nothing more valuable in life than that.

Amen.