

Remember your Creator

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[0 : 00] once more before we come to it together. Father, we thank you once more for your word that speaks truth and grace into our lives. We pray now that you would speak to each and every one of us here through it.

May we all, by your Spirit, comprehend the height and breadth and depth of your love for us. And may we grow in our love for you. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Amen. I think the teacher of Ecclesiastes would have a perhaps peculiar appreciation for the midwinter days of northeast Scotland.

If you look at that first verse of this evening's passage, we've just read that's verse 7 of chapter 11, you'll see the teacher introduces us to light.

Doesn't he? Light is sweet. Light is a good thing. And we know that, don't we? When the days shorten and the sun's not yet risen, when we wake up in the morning, we don't think, ah, wonderful darkness.

[1 : 16] Light is sweet. When the sun starts to peek over the horizon, it brings joy, doesn't it?

No one has pictures in their houses of the sea or mountains or fields covered in complete darkness, do they? But the sun edging above the vast expanse of the open sea or shining down on fields of yellow and green or causing the shadows of great mountains to stretch forth, that's sweet to the eyes, isn't it?

Those places are beautiful only when we have the light to see them. Light is sweet.

It brings joy when we see the sun. And light is sweeter still because we simply need it, don't we?

Even for those who cannot see, light is sweet because by light we have life.

There is no life in a world with no light, is there? And that is the imagery the teacher is playing right into here.

[2 : 34] Light is sweet. He draws us in. We know that feeling of the warmth of the sun on our faces. And it is good. And in the world and the Bible, light is life.

Without light, there is no life. When God created the heavens and the earth, before he called into the being living creatures, he said, let there be light.

Those wonderful verses that I can read for us earlier from John's Gospel, we read, don't we, that Jesus is the light of the world. Why is he the light of the world? Because he is life.

That's the connection we see there between verse 7 and 8. Light is sweet. Therefore, enjoy life. But that's not the end of the light imagery in the passage we just read.

And this is where I think the teacher would be maybe one of the few to appreciate a December day in Aberdeen. Because while the sun is pleasing to the eye, before you know it, it's gone, isn't it?

[3 : 55] The days are short. I have a desk at home. And it's in one of the rooms that kind of face north. And one day this week, I went in there. And I couldn't see very much at all.

So I flicked on the light I've got on the desk. And I looked at the clock. And it was half past two.

That's just a bit sad, isn't it? Light is sweet.

But it doesn't last long. Just look there at verse 2 of chapter 12. There is a day coming when the sun and the light and the moon and the stars go dark.

The light that is sweet fades away. The sun that gives it starts to become dim. For 12 chapters now in Ecclesiastes, the teacher has been taking us through, hasn't he, all the ups and downs of life.

And he is teaching us how to live life well under the sun. How to live life well under the sun. And now, as he nears sort of the end of his sermon, he looks at life under the sun, and he sees that it is good.

[5 : 14] But that the sun that we are under is quickly setting in the distant sky. And one day soon, it will not rise again.

That is life under the sun. It is sweet. It begins full of brightness. But every day is a minute closer to sunset.

After all he has said, the teacher shows us one final time with the dimming of the lights, that life is but a breath.

And there are two final instructions he wants us to go away with as we face the fading light. He calls us to rejoice and remember.

Rejoice and remember. First of all, rejoice. Rejoice while the sun is shining. Verse 8, however many years anyone may live, let them enjoy them all.

[6 : 22] Verse 9, you who are young, be happy while you are young. And let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth.

The light will fade, end of verse 10, youth and vigor are meaningless, a breath. But while the sun is shining, make the most of it.

To those who have the ability to enjoy life, even if you feel like that ability is diminishing, the teacher says, make use of it. Live life to the full.

Enjoy time with friends and family. Celebrate birthdays. Enjoy good food together. I think what's really striking about this verse is that it is, it's something the teacher commands.

I wonder what jumps into your head when you think of commands in the Bible. I bet it's not, enjoy life.

[7 : 39] Rejoice. Be joyful. Be happy. But that's exactly what it says. We've seen, haven't we, as we've gone through Ecclesiastes, that life is a gift given by God.

And the ability to enjoy life is a gift given by God. Just think for a minute, Christmas is coming soon, isn't it?

What do you want done with the gifts you give to people? Maybe you've got a niece or a nephew or a son or a daughter or a grandchild, a cousin, maybe the child of a friend's family.

Well, when you buy them a present, when you buy them a toy, what do you want them to do with it? Do you want them to grumble and complain that it's not quite good enough, it's not really what they're after?

Of course not. But neither do you want them to be so careful and precious about it and fearful of breaking it that they never dare play with it.

[8 : 45] No one wants to see their present sit pristinely on the shelf for years, do they? So it is with the gift of life that God has given to us.

Gifts are given to be enjoyed, not preserved for as long as possible, not grumbled about for their imperfections, but used to the full, every ounce of joy squeezed from it.

It's a wonderful thing to be able to enjoy life while you can. It means if you can climb a mountain, go and climb a mountain.

If you can run, enjoy running. If you enjoy looking at good arts or beautiful landscapes, go and enjoy them while your eyes still work.

Enjoy wonderful music. While your ears can still hear it. Make great things with your hands before they start trembling. Make the most of the good gift that God has given you.

[9 : 59] Verse 8 and 9 are commands to enjoy the gift of life that you have. And that means, end of verse 9, God will demand an account of what you've done with it.

I gave you so much goods. I gave you foods. I gave you drink. I gave you a family. I gave you friends. I gave you work. I gave you energy. I gave you a mouth that sings, limbs that dance, ears that enjoy beautiful sounds, eyes that behold beauty.

I gave you so much goods. You did enjoy it, didn't you? You did enjoy it, didn't you? You did make the most of all the years of your life under the sun, didn't you?

God will call to account what we have done with the life we have been given. And his expectation is that you will have enjoyed it when you could. That's why I think the teacher says to banish anxiety and troubles in verse 10.

Not so that we would be careless with our lives, but so we would neither fearfully protect it at all costs, nor worry about what tomorrow holds. Rejoice while the sun is shining.

[11 : 21] Just to be clear, the teacher is saying this, isn't he? in light of everything that he has already seen and said in the book of Ecclesiastes. And he has seen the brokenness of this world, hasn't he?

He's seen the suffering and the injustice. God knows what we go through and not every season is one for rejoicing. We see that at the end of verse 8, don't we?
Remember the days of darkness. So if you feel downcast this evening because of pain or tragedy in your life, don't hear this as, well, you'd better put a happy face on it.
The teacher knows and God knows that there are times in life where joy is not the appropriate response. But the wonderful truth of the matter is that for many of us, most of the time, by God's grace, life is a gift full of goodness, isn't it?
that we can and we should enjoy. So, number one, rejoice while the sun is shining because life is a good gift from God worth enjoying.
[12:38] And then secondly, he calls us to remember. Verse 1 of chapter 12, remember your creator.
again in verse 6, remember him. Remember your creator. Well, let me just ask two questions of this command.
Why and when? Because I think this command both reaches back to what we've seen previously in Ecclesiastes, that's the why, as well as going forward into the following verses.
And that's the when. So, first of all, well, part one of point two, why should we remember our creator? Well, off the back of what we just read, it is what we need to do if we want to rejoice, if we want to enjoy life to the full.
To enjoy life, we need to see it as a good gift. We've already mentioned that, haven't we? But we'll only remember it as a gift when we remember the creator who gave it.
[13:56] when we remember our creator, we remember that he sets the agenda for our lives, and part of that agenda is enjoyment.
But I think this command is even more all-encompassing than that. Because remembering our creator is the foundation, the starting point we must begin from if we want to know how to live well in God's world.
As the teacher kind of draws together his concluding remarks, I think he ushers this command that reaches back not only into the verses we've just considered in chapter 11, but right to the beginning of the book.
How do we find meaning in a world that will soon forget about us? We remember our creator, who will never forget his creatures.
How do we find satisfaction under the sun? We remember our creator, who made us to find contentment in him, not in the things of this world.
[15:10] How do we deal with injustice? We remember our creator, who will judge justly when we cannot. not. How do we live for we, not me?
We remember our creator, who made us as fellow image bearers, dependent on community. How do we approach the house of God? We remember that he is our creator, and we are his creatures, and so we quieten ourselves and listen to him.
How do we live in a world where we never know what's waiting for us tomorrow? we remember our creator, who holds everything in his hands, and is working all things according to his plan.
Every question we've bumped up against in this wonderfully real book can be answered at its root with this simple command, to remember your creator.
So why does the teacher tell us to remember our creator? because that is how to live well in God's world. It is how we will enjoy seasons that can be enjoyed, and it is how we can endure seasons that would otherwise break us.
[16:28] Remember your creator. The other question I want to ask you is when, right? And that's really the focus of verses 1 to 7 of chapter 12.
When should you remember your creator? Just look through those verses with me. Verse 1, before the days of trouble come. Verse 2, before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark.
Verse 6, before the silver cord is severed and the golden bowl is broken. enjoy life when the sun is shining.
Remember your creator before the sun starts setting. Remember him before it's too late because guess what? Life is a breath, and it will be gone before you know it.
Your body is a breath that will start breaking down before your mind realizes what has happened.
Verse 2 to 6 here of chapter 12 is this really powerful poem about the decay that awaits every one

of us.

[17 : 47] We live, don't we, in a culture that is obsessed with youth. We don't venerate the elderly like our ancestors did. Instead, we try desperately to cling on to our youth for as long as we possibly can.

But it's all a vain attempt to mask the reality, isn't it? Sometimes it's quite literally a mask people put over the reality. Because the truth we all know is that every one of us is on a journey to being the very person the teacher describes in these verses.

as the sun sets in the short years of this life, verse 2. What happens? The keepers, verse 3, of the house, they start to tremble.

That's our hands. The strong men, our legs, they start to stoop. The grinders, our teeth, they stop working because they become few.

Our eyes, those looking through the windows, they grow dim. The doors, our ears to the street are closed and we can no longer even hear the crunch of our own teeth.

[19 : 03] The ears don't work, the teeth are gone. You wake up first thing in the morning but you can no longer hear the sound of the birds outside. Every sound you do hear is fearful, every dark corner a place of terror.

is a powerful picture of where we are all going. Maybe for some here it feels very close to home.

Maybe for others it feels like an eternity away. But for every one of us it is a day that will be here before we know it. Just think how quickly the years of your life have passed up to this point.

Like a breath, isn't it? This day that the teacher is describing is not far away, no matter how young you might think you are.

And one day soon the very life will spill from us. The lights will go out. The golden bowl broken, the vessel that holds our life will one day be shattered.

[20 : 15] And so the teacher calls on his audience one last time, remember your creator before that day.

Because the sooner you do so, the sooner you do so, the more you will enjoy the short days of this life. life. And the more ready you will be for the life to come.

When I was younger, there were moments where I thought Christianity was something I could leave until later in life. It was a problem for future me. there were a lot of mistakes I was making there, but one of them was thinking that enjoying life and being a Christian were sort of antithetical, but the two didn't go together, and that I had to enjoy life, and then, once I'd enjoyed life, then I could maybe go and give my life to Jesus.

how wrong I was, but I bet I wasn't alone in that thought. Obviously, in Ecclesiastes, how wrong that is, this is a book, isn't it, showing us how the Christian life can be and should be the most joy-filled of all lives.

If the fear of losing out on life's joys is what's holding you back from giving your life to Jesus, and you think it's better to leave it near the end, let me give you two words of warning.

[22 : 00] The end will come much sooner than you think. The end will come much sooner than you think, and in that day, you might not have the capacity to remember your creator then.

But also, ask any Christian in here this evening whether they'll have a happier, more enjoyable life before or after they gave themselves to Christ.

And I can guarantee you the answer will be the same every single time. Christian life is a joy-filled life.

That is why remembering your creator is the best way to live now. But not only does remembering our creator enable us to live well in the present, it prepares us for where we are going next.

We come across some really striking words towards the end of chapter 12. Throughout this whole book, the teacher has focused our eyes on life under the sun, hasn't he?

[23 : 17] He's looked on the short days of this life, that the lack of control we have over our own days, the fleetingness of life's pleasures. We like to think we're really important and influential.

We like to think we're in control. We like to think that we'll have lasting satisfaction when we finally achieve life's goals. but the teacher has undone our thinking as we've gone through this book, hasn't he?

And his primary teaching tool has been showing us the brevity of everything. Life's pleasures are good, but they won't last.

Wealth is good, but it will not last. Life is good, but it will not last. A breath, a breath, everything is a breath.

He's not let us forget it. He's drilled this thought into the deepest depths of our heart. He's shown us in black and white the truth we love to run from.

[24 : 16] Under the sun, everything is a breath and your body will decay like a crumbling house. But then what? Look where the teacher ends in verse 5 of chapter 12.

Look where the teacher ends in verse 5 of the verse 5 of the life. Once the sun has set, then you will go to your eternal home.

When the sun sets on the short years of this life, that is not the end for you. it is the beginning of forever.

We are all heading towards our eternal home, the place we are going to spend forever. I wonder if that is a thought that fills you with joy or with fear.

It is true. That's not up for debate. Our souls last forever. It's a truth every person knows even if they try and suppress it because the thought of it terrifies them.

[25 : 48] We have a home we are going to, where we will dwell not for a moment, not for a breath, but forever and ever and ever.

So remember your creator. Remember you're a creator. Who is your creator? Let me read again some of that passage I can read for us earlier in the service.

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. Through him all things were made.

Without him nothing was made that has been made. Remember you're a creator. Who's your creator? The word of God is your creator.

God is your creator. And in him was life. And that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness.

[27 : 01] And the darkness has not overcome it. To those who believed in him, he gave the right to become children of God.

Where is your eternal home? to those who believe in the word made flesh, Jesus the son of God. Your eternal home is God's eternal home because you are his children.

We're going to celebrate communion together shortly. And what we do here is we remember and we rejoice. We remember the word who created us becoming flesh.

the light of the world who shines into the darkness. We remember and we rejoice because his is a light that never fades or dims.

The sun will set on our earthly bodies, but the sun will never set on our life in Christ. The teacher knows that we can only truly enjoy the short years of this life in this broken world.

[28 : 12] When we live remembering that there is a far greater joy to come, when we forget that, we demand a lasting satisfaction, don't we, from this world that it simply cannot give.

And we will go on living in search for more, but when we remember our creator and look forward with great joy to our eternal home, we can hold lightly onto the moments of joys in this world and hold tightly to the promises of the world to come.

For there is a joy to come in a world that is not ruined and tarnished by sin or sickness or death or disease. There is a home where you and I will rejoice forever and ever and ever, where we will enjoy God's good gift of a good life and a good creation for all the days to come if we remember our creator.

If we remember the light of the world who came into the darkness and shed his blood and broke his body, that we might share in his light and his life.

That is the hope we all have. hope. And I imagine that that hope is all the richer as the years pass by and the body begins to give way, as the strong men stoop and the grinders cease.

[30 : 17] How wonderful a hope our eternal home is when we learn that all else is a breath, a breath. everything is a breath, the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our gods will stand forever.

Remember and rejoice in him. And so enjoy the short years of this life, knowing that your eternal home is secure in Jesus.

Let us pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Our Father, we thank you for the wonderful gift of life.

We pray that you would give us the gift to enjoy it in the seasons when you have showered upon us many good gifts and blessings.

May we rejoice at your goodness to us. may we rejoice by enjoying what you have given us. But help us to remember too that there are days of darkness.

[31 : 37] Help us to remember our creator and know that the days of darkness will not last, but the eternal light, the Son of God, the Word of God.

is preparing for us a home that will be eternal. And so we ask that you would help each and every one of us to rejoice and to remember that we might live to your glory and praise in all that we do.

In the precious name of Jesus we pray. Amen.