

JUMP IN!, ECCL.11

Something Worth Living For #9

◆ **Intro:** I decided once to search the internet for wisdom on prosperity. Here's some of what I found.

◆ "Money is better than poverty, if only for financial reasons."

– Woody Allen.

◆ "A bank is a place that will lend you money if you can prove that you don't need it." – Bob Hope.

◆ "It's money... I remember it from when I was single." – Billy Crystal.

◆ "October: This is one of the peculiarly dangerous months to speculate in stocks. The others are July, January, September, April, November, May, March, June, December, August, and February." – Mark Twain

◆ That wasn't particularly helpful, so I decided to read in the Bible. Here's what I found. (read Eccl.11) I wonder if God has any wisdom we can learn from in this. As you know, the writer of this book set out on an adventure of trying everything he could think of to arrive at life that doesn't feel meaningless. He tried women, building projects, learning, fame, pleasure, wealth. As we near the end of his journal, he starts to urge us in particular ways. I want to pick out a handful of principles that revolve around the theme of jumping into life, or investing in a prosperous life.

◆ **1. Principle of Prosperity:** According to our text, God has no desire for you to live a miserable, or even just a blah life. Did you notice the commands?

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◆v1 Cast it out there! This could be a reference to shipping trade which King Solomon engaged in. The Phoenician people at that time were famous for it! He even hired them. It could also mean to throw good deeds out there as some other cultures have similar statements. (Egyptian proverb: "Do a good deed and throw it in the water; when it dries you will find it". Arabic proverb "Do good, throw your bread on the waters, and one day you will find it.")

◆v6 Sow your seed! (one caution: it does not say "wild oats.")

◆One thing is clear, God is constantly urging us to live the adventure. Many folk naively assume that getting involved with God is automatically no fun. But to the contrary, when you start to seriously line your life up with God through faith, you start to knowingly live on risks. Risks taken because you trust someone bigger than your world.

◆*Col 3:23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, (cf Eccl.9:10)*

◆When we talk of prosperity in biblical terms, we are not talking about merely increasing your standard of living. Our writer has already ruled out money as a source of meaning (Ch.5). Biblically speaking, prosperity is a state of being, not a state of having. True success is the spiritual condition of contentment, peace, and satisfaction. I realize this will seem odd to anyone who rejects Christianity. But one of the reasons Christians give a lot of

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money away is because they live the adventure of trusting God, and loving people in need.

◆**2. Principle of Investment.** This is already apparent in the opening verses, isn't it? Invest. Try something!

◆v3-4 basically remind us that we have no control over nature. If you wait for the perfect conditions you'll never do anything at all!

◆Jesus taught the same in the parable of the talents. Three servants are told to invest different amounts of money. But one just buries it so as not to lose any. The master reprimands that one as foolish for at least not putting in a bank! Do you realize that God wants you to do something with whatever he gives you?

He gifts everyone with abilities, finances, opportunities. He's reminding us to jump in to life and try, if we don't want to experience it as meaningless like so many do.

◆Investing requires discipline of course. You can't just spend your whole paycheck if you want to invest. You won't have anything to invest if you waste your life in front of a screen.

◆**3. Principle of diversification. v2.** Here we learn not to put all our eggs in one basket because if you trip and drop it, you'll lose all the eggs. So be wise, diversify. Now this can apply to finances and portfolios for sure, but also to your involvement with people. There is nothing wrong with having life-long friends, but the God follower is urged to think beyond herself. What about neighbors? What about befriending the not-popular kids in class?

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What about sitting with the lone person in the cafeteria? God is telling us, "Don't live in a rut. Be open to new ventures, new people, new needs."

◆ Now there's a resource built in for people like that. They are more likely to have connections that will help them when they are in need!

◆ Try. Diversify. Help others and they'll help you. And don't worry. God has a way of bringing it back around for you. v1

◆ *Prov. 11:25 A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.*

◆ **4. Principle of trust. v5** Verse 5 reminds us that we "don't know what disaster might come." In fact that's a theme in Ecclesiastes: cf v2,6. Lets just page back to 10:14; 9:12,1; 8:17,7; 7:14.

◆ Get the picture? You are limited. You are not in control of this world or even your own life. So look, you have to trust somebody if you aren't in control of everything. And you aren't. Our text has directly brought God into the picture again. There's a parallel here. Verse five refers to the "wind" (ruach) as in nature which no man controls, and also the "wind" (ruach) as in "spirit/life" enters a fetus and makes it alive. So, that which makes a human a living being instead of a blob of tissue, you have no power over. And nature, creation, the weather, is also something you can't bend to your will or control. But there is a power that directs these.

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◆ *Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.*

◆ Think about it. So many folks live uptight, worried, anxious lives. They're anxious about financial matters whether they are poor or rich! I know retired people worth millions of dollars who live anxiously about having enough. People live crabby, people work crabby, people even play crabby -often because of the pressure they live under believing their destiny is up to them. But check this out:

◆ *Joshua 1:8-9 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. **Then** you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.*

◆ **5. Principle of work. v6** A farmer can't guarantee the harvest. But if you don't put the seed in the ground you can guarantee there won't be one. For your life not to be meaningless, you have to act. If you want something worth living for, change your attitude toward work.

◆ The comic strip Dilbert by Scott Adams pokes fun of our attitudes toward work. His mottos are...

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- ◆ *Don't be irreplaceable. If you can't be replaced, you can't be promoted.*
- ◆ *When you don't know what to do, walk fast and look worried.*
- ◆ *If you're good, you will be assigned all the work. If you're really good, you will get out of it.*
- ◆ It's funny but in reality if that's the way you think, your daily life will not be meaningful. That's not God's advice on finding something worth living for. Don't replace work with government handouts. Don't replace work with piled up credit until you're hopelessly behind and declare bankruptcy. Don't even replace work with enduring it.
 - ◆ 2 Thessalonians 3:7-13 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right
- ◆ You see, God-followers get up in the morning to make a life, not a living. This is how you find meaning. You realize that true prosperity is a spiritual state of being.

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◆ **6. Principle of Perspective.** v7-8 Lots of people assume that God's way of living is anti-joy, gloom and doom and doing without. If you like it, it must be wrong. Etc. Sometimes people are afraid to seek God because this is what they were told! But it's so far from the truth! The Apostle Paul wrote the young pastor, Timothy saying that God "richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment"! We've seen the 7 fold repeated theme in this book is his constant refrain "if you can eat and find good in your labor, this is God's gift."

◆ The perspective in 7-8 is that there will always be good and also evil, joys and struggles in this fallen world. You can live, but you will also die. Someone once asked JD Rockefeller's estate manager how much money he left with he died. The manager replied, "All of it." That's good perspective. Look carefully on the joys from youth up, so you remember who they come from and have perspective when struggles come.

◆ That little 4 year old who got himself all dressed and says "Look Daddy" with a smile as wide as the room.

◆ The marvel you feel as the golden flood of grain pours from the combine.

◆ The warmth you feel when someone calls to say they were thinking of you.

◆ Recognize the beauties, store them up in your heart, and know where they came from. It will be fuel to face life when it feels meaningless.

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◆ **7. Principle of accountability.** 9-10 Many young people today sense a meaninglessness in life. And no wonder because many folks today think they are accidents of molecules that just happened to turn into them instead of into asperges. I've got good news for you. You are important, and purposed. You were put here by a loving God. He's at the core of it all. Everything and everyone answers to him. (v9) This is the principle of accountability. Gold is not the "standard". God is. The difference between God and Gold is one single letter "L". Get the "L" out of there! God is the standard to which every man and woman answers. But this is good news! Accountability means you have meaning, and life has purpose, good purpose!

◆ **Conclusion:** I called this message Jump In, because the principles in chapter 11 of Ecclesiastes 1) urge us to LIVE, to act, to do good, to work, to try, to risk. And 2) remind us it's safe to jump in with both feet because we have a God on our side. (This we'll dig into further next week.) Jesus said the same thing:

◆ *Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."*

◆ In other words, don't limp through life. This my friends is exactly how our Savior is!

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- ◆ Hebrews 12:2. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
- ◆ He jumped into human existence, to die a human death, for the joy of giving humans forgiveness of sin and everlasting life. He is our trail blazer for living a meaningful life.