

REMEMBER YOUR _____, ECCL.12

Something Worth Living For #10

◆Intro: I have some sad news. One of our members is dying. Well, actually, all of us are dying. You've all gotten older since yesterday. Shouldn't we be alarmed? Some don't think so. They rather count up the perks of getting old. Here are some.

◆There's nothing left to learn the hard way.

◆The things you buy when you're old won't wear out.

◆You can quit trying to hold your stomach in no matter who walks in the room.

◆In a hostage situation you're the most likely to be released first.

◆You can start dinner at 2pm, lunch around 10am, and breakfast the night before.

◆The Teacher in Ecclesiastes doesn't see old age with such optimism. He's a realist. You're nearing the end. Your number is up. This is it. It's the second law of thermal dynamics at work on you, your body, your mind. Everything is breaking down. Everything in created reality goes from life and order, to chaos and death. So the author brings our attention back to creation by telling us to remember our Creator. That means we were made. Of stuff. Of stuff that always breaks down.

◆**1. To remember my Creator means to really live I need to deal with my death.** That's right. Maybe each one of us should take an hour and plan our own funeral, or maybe go home and write your own obituary. What will they say next to your casket? Who will come? Who will get your bicycle? I think this is what the

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author is doing as he makes a list of all the things you lose as you get older.

- ◆v2 No more singing "I can see clearly now the rain is gone..." You lose your sight, and it's even cloudy when the rain is gone.
- ◆v3 Your teeth slowly break, get crowns on them, fall out altogether.
- ◆v4 The slightest noise awakens you from slumber, but you still need to put your hearing aids in to hear the birds sing.
- ◆v5 I visited a lady in a retirement home on a beautiful winter's day and she mentioned "Oh I never go for a walk in the winter!"
- ◆v5 Almond tree's blossom pure white, like the hair on older folks.
- ◆v5 *desire is no longer stirred*. In Hebrew its "*the caperberry is no longer effective*" (thought to be either an aphrodisiac or an appetite stimulant.) Modern day translation: cialis and viagra are no longer effective.
- ◆The author takes his time pinpointing piece by piece how we fall apart with age. (Glasses, hearing aids, dentures, canes, L'oreal Superior Shine; full dimension, and bravery in a box.) Why? He wants it to sink in! How many have glasses on today? Take them off and hold them up. Good. Ready? Let's play catch with this hard ball! Wanna?

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- ◆ A family from a remote area was making their first visit to a big city. They checked in to a grand hotel and stood in amazement at the impressive sight. Leaving the reception desk they came to the elevator entrance. They'd never seen an elevator before, and just stared at it, unable to figure out what it was for. Just then an old lady hobbled towards the elevator and went inside. The door closed. About a minute later, the door opened and out came a stunningly good-looking young woman. Dad couldn't stop staring. Without turning his head he patted his son's arm and said, "Son, Go get your mother."
- ◆ If we could only get Cher to "turn back time". And what's the point of looking at all this? Aging teaches us that under the sun there is no happy ending. We shall have to find something higher than the sun. That's why he urges us to remember our Creator, someone higher, more eternal than the sun. Stars eventually burn out too, you know. Created reality is empty without eternal purposes. Age teaches us that. We need a source of power that cannot die. Even if you are a skeptic about Christianity today, I probably don't need to tell you that all of the Christian faith is founded on one thing; the fact that Jesus of Nazareth didn't stay dead. That would be a solid eternal reality!
- ◆ The Christian faith has the one thing that solves the meaninglessness the author of Ecclesiastes finds in ... money, sex, fame, power, accomplishments, wisdom, -all the things we've

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meditated on for the last 10 weeks reading through this book. And all the things that you and I have tried over and over again to make life feel worth living for. The Apostle Paul said in his letter to the First Century church in Corinth, Greece.

◆ *1 Corinthians 15:17-19* *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.*

◆ He's saying, "Hey, don't bother with church, sacred writings, god-things, etc. if it doesn't promise life after death. Does what you're living for promise life after death? Do you have a solution to old age, white hair, no teeth, and a coffin? A little later he writes...

◆ If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

◆ If all there is is what we have while we're alive, there is no descent, philosophically poignant reason not to get drunk every night, or to pick up as many babes as you can. This is all you got. Might as well feel good on the way to death. You have to face dying if you really want to live.

◆ **2.** One more recommendation from God's Word. The author urges us to think about these things now. **We need to live now in the constant awareness of our Creator.** It's clear enough from his address to the youth (11:9; 12:1) In other words, think

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about and live attending to the reality of your God *before* you get old and fall apart.

◆ But why? What if I just “party hardy Dude” (do they still say that? They did back when I didn’t have glasses or crowns) and have a nice talk with God just before I croak? Well a couple of reasons to consider.

◆ A. There is no guarantee that you will wisen up when you get older.

◆ “Think about people who find themselves in religious ruts. They discover a number of things about themselves. They will find that they are getting older but not getting any holier. Time is their enemy, not their friend. The time they trusted and looked to is betraying them, for they often said to themselves, “The passing of time will help me. I know some good old saints, so as I get older I’ll get holier and better. Time will help me, purify me and revive me.” They said that the year before last, but they were not helped any last year. Time betrayed them. They were not any better last year than they had been the year before.” Citation: A. W. Tozer

◆ Time alone makes no one holier or better. People don’t change because they exist longer. People change by getting near God.

◆ B. You will miss the full joy of eternal meaning in Christ all those years you waste. Jesus said in John’s Gospel *I came that you might have life to the full!* We’ve seen this all along in Ecclesiastes theme (7x).

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◆ *Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labour under the sun during the few days of life God has given him--for this is his lot. Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work--this is a gift of God. (Ecclesiastes 5:18,19, NIV).*

◆ Jesus can change the way you relate to your kids. God's presence in your life opens your eyes to beauties you never noticed before. Jesus can change your marriage if you'll include him in it. You don't know what you're missing.

◆ Ken Coleman was an older gentleman who began attending our church in IA, and became a follower of Christ in his 60's. He was a butcher for years at the local Hy-Vee grocery store. I'd seen him many times, since there was only one grocery store in town. Soon after conversion he got cancer and was dying. One day as I visited him in the hospital, he said to me. "You know, all my life I thought I was happy. But now I know I wasn't. I know, because now I really am." He died not long after that. And I had the honor of leading his funeral. But Ken missed a lot all those years.

◆ C. You very well may miss out on greater joys in eternity. God's book clearly and repeatedly enjoins us to set up treasure in heaven. We are repeatedly told that even the smallest of kindnesses done because we love God will be rewarded in

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heaven. What that looks like I'm not sure, but God repeatedly promises it. It's not earning God's love, it isn't merit. But God freely lavishes reward on his followers on top of salvation!

◆ *To remember my Creator means to live with and before him daily.* When the Teacher in Ecclesiastes says "remember" he's using a Hebrew term that means to recall and act on it. It doesn't mean merely to think about it. It means to think about it and let it affect your actions. Like when on your anniversary your wife says in shock as you hand her flowers, "You remembered." Not like you saying, "I remember having a '62 Ford Falcon" when you see the antique drive by. Verse 13 says

◆ Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

◆ This is what remembering God is. Live your life as he designed it. It's always the best practice.

◆ **Conclusion:** How many here know their great-grandfather's name? Your great-great-grandfather? So who will know you three generations from now? Nobody. But there is one who can keep your name alive for ever. He knows everyone's name. All paths end at his judgment seat. And he has appropriated his only begotten Son to pay the cost of your eternal life.

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◆ 1 Corinthians 15:22-23 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the first-fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

◆ Ecclesiastes keeps concluding that everything is meaningless. But it means everything under the sun, disconnected from God -that's meaningless. But when reconciled to God, everything in your life has meaning.

◆ 1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.