



January 16, 2022 ~ Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

OPEN

“Three guys stranded on a desert island find a magic lantern containing a genie, who grants them each one wish. The first guy wishes he was off the island and back home. The second guy wishes the same. The third guy says: ‘I’m lonely. I wish my friends were back here.’” Well, according to University of Oxford researchers, it is considered one of the funniest jokes in the world!

Have you seen the Calvin & Hobbes cartoon where Calvin says, *“Becoming an adult is probably the dumbest thing you could ever do!”* says Calvin? Is that how you feel about adulthood?

On the first Sunday of 2022 we considered **God’s Gift of Grace**. In II Corinthians 8:9 Paul noted that even “bumbling believers” in Corinth knew the grace of God! They had a foundation of faith established by God. Today we consider **God’s Gift of Growth**. In I Corinthians 3:6-7 Paul stated, *“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So, neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.”*

DIG

The new year is a time when we often make an honest self-assessment. If you were to take stock of your progress in following Jesus, what would you conclude? Do you find adulthood often complicate spiritual growth? But if we are honest with the dangers and difficulties of adulthood, we will be in a more humble, dependent posture to continue to receive **God’s gift of growth**.

In his book *Living on the Ragged Edge* (Word Books, 1985, 15), Chuck Swindoll described a traveler who had the time, money, energy, and freedom to embark on a journey to see what would satisfy. The man’s name is Solomon. Swindoll described the book of Ecclesiastes as a **journal** kept by Solomon, documenting his experience in pursuit of wisdom, knowledge, folly, pleasures, labor, accomplishments, and wealth.

What does Ecclesiastes record about Solomon’s encounters with the highs and lows of life? *“Vanity!” “Meaningless!” or “Futility of futilities!”* (1:2) Five times in the first two chapters Solomon described his search as a *“chasing after the wind”* or as Swindoll says it, *“a wisp of a vapor...a puff of wind...a hollow, empty ring...zero...ZILCH!”* (15)

The title “Ecclesiastes” means “teacher, preacher” or it can mean “speaker of the house” (Swindoll, 15). So, this is a cautionary tale. Our text today is **Ecclesiastes 12:1-7**. In this passage the focus is on facing the challenge of adulthood and making spiritual progress. Three challenging statements are found here, built around a single imperative – *“Remember your Creator!”*

[1] In adulthood, change is harder – vv. 1-2

As this passage begins, we are commanded to draw near to God in our youth. The Hebrew term for “remember” is very robust. It goes beyond mere mental recollection. It also implies declaration, recitation, invocation, commemoration, and confession. We might say that the command here in v.1a is to establish God as the foundational Person of your life. Build your life upon Him! Why? The answer is found in verses 1b-2: in time you will discover the frustration and futility life has to offer.

Young lives are more pliable. A great image here is of a tender new tree. Now if it is pruned and shaped and trained early on when the branches are flexible, it can grow effectively and even very ornately. However, if it has experienced and reacted to many years of harsh weather and such, it will be much harder to train up.

In adulthood, change is harder. According to [Barna](#) research in the U.S., “people who embrace Christ before the age of 13 are more likely to remain absolutely committed to Christ in their adult years than are people who accept Christ in their teenage or adult years.” So, remember your Creator now!

[2] In adulthood, fears are stronger – vv. 3-5

On October 23, 2021, the Vancouver Canucks played the Seattle Kraken in their new arena. Seattle fan Nadia Popovici, a medical student, was seated behind the Canucks bench. She noticed a concerning mole on the neck of equipment manager Brian Hamilton. She put her phone to the glass with a message. It was cancer and Hamilton was successfully treated. [READ MORE](#)

Cancer is certainly a fear. We can also be anxious about natural physical deterioration, as Solomon described what comes in the latter stages of life.

- **Limbs** – “keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop”
- **Teeth** – “grinders cease because they are few”
- **Eyes** – “those looking through the windows grow dim”
- **Ears** – “the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades”
- **Mobility** – “when people are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets”

What is the point of listing these fears? It is a continuation of the reasons for the command found in verse 1. We must remember our Creator now because there will come a day when we face the challenge of failing health.

[3] In adulthood, death is closer – vv. 6-7

These final two verses make it clear that death itself is the final reason we should remember our Creator now. We must be honest about the reality of our final destination. Verse 6 portrays death as a broken bowl, pitcher, and wheel. Verse 7 reminds us that our physical bodies will return to dust.

In his classic, *The Imitation of Christ* (trans from Latin, Bruce Publishing, 1940, 39-40), Thomas À Kempis wrote,

Oh, the dullness and hardness of a heart which looks only to the present instead of preparing for that which is to come!... What good is it to live a long life when we amend that life so little?...Blessed is he who keeps the moment of death ever before his eyes and prepares for it every day. If you have ever seen a man die, remember that you, too, must go the same way. In the morning consider that you may not live till evening, and when evening comes do not dare to promise yourself the dawn. Be always ready, therefore, and so live that death will never take you unprepared. [READ MORE](#)

This is not about a morbid obsession but living with honesty about death. Remember your Creator now!

REFLECT

Did you like the opening joke? David Robson explains why it is regarded as so funny in his article "[The curse of the people who can't stop making puns](#)" (BBC Nature blog, March 2016).

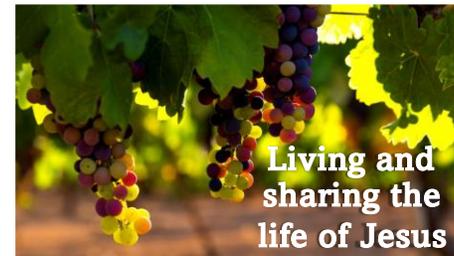
[The joke] is built around an "incongruity" in the punchline, and your brain must jump through a series of hoops to unpick the logic...you need to place yourself in the shoes of the people stranded on the desert island...there's an element of surprise as you realise the twist in the tale. Resolving that puzzle tickles the brain's pleasure centres, making us laugh (or at least, smile politely). "The 'ha ha' moment is not very far from the 'aha' moment," explains Jason Warren at University College London.

In Ecclesiastes 12:8 Solomon declared "Meaningless!" Yes, there are many incomprehensible incongruities in life. There is also joy and meaning to be found when we remember our Creator. Solomon concluded "*fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.*" (v.13b)

This challenges each one of us individually. Also, there is a collective responsibility to engage the next generation with the Gospel.

- **It takes a village** – if we are going bring up followers of Jesus, we must think in terms of multiple mentors, not one superstar youth pastor.
- **It takes an investment** – this is about a cost now for future reward. Making disciples is long-term living and sharing the life of Jesus.
- **It takes humility** - there is no statute of limitations on remembering your Creator. Ideally, do it early in life...but do it now!

Will you remember your Creator now? As Derek Kidner writes, "*To remember Him is no perfunctory or purely mental act: it is to drop our preens of self-sufficiency and to commit ourselves to Him.*" (Swindoll, 349)



Here is another reason to remember your Creator now. He is in your future! He can be trusted with "[All Of Our Tomorrows](#)". Take some time to listen and reflect on these lyrics by Dave Fournier (Sovereign Grace Worship).

*This spinning world by Your own hand hurls ever on around the sun
The seasons march at Your command the old departs, the new year comes
And though celestial is Your gaze You search and care for all our ways
We offer up to You this day and all of our tomorrows*

*May zealous youth and cautious age determine not the steps we choose
Great Shepherd, guide us through each day, oh, how we want to follow You
Come Living Way, our way make clear let perfect love drive out our fear
Be Thou our vision, now and here and all of our tomorrows*

*When winter makes us reminisce of warmer days so distant now
Of cherished saints the sun once kissed whose beauty passed behind the clouds
Let all our fond and longing tears remind us we are pilgrims here
We trust You, Sovereign of our years with all of our tomorrows*

*Hands to the plow, we're pressing on and running hard to win the prize
Empowered by the love of God with grace before and grace behind
For lo, what hope before us stands You finish all that You began
Eternal joy is in Your hands and all of our tomorrows*