

CITYWEST CHURCH

28TH DECEMBER 2025

TAKE STOCK OF WHAT MATTERS.

Look here, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit.” **14** How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it’s here a little while, then it’s gone. **15** What you ought to say is, “If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that.” **16** Otherwise you are boasting about your own pretentious plans, and all such boasting is evil.

James 4:13-16 (NLT)

Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom.

Psalms 90:12 (NLT)

The end of the year is here, and it’s a time for most of us when things slow down. Congratulations on realising it is Sunday and coming to our gathering today.

We are presented with the opportunity to take stock and look back. This can be helpful or hurtful depending on how you approach it.

The truth is, you have to look back before you can look forward.

Ecclesiastes says: “The end of a thing is better than the beginning.”

Our short few verses are confronting and challenging, to hear your life is but a vapor is not to say it's meaningless, but to say that it is brief in the scope of eternity and that we are not to drift in how we use our time, and remind ourselves that we are not independent, but dependent on God for our next breath.

There is an ancient monastic practice called Memento Mori, which is Latin for remember that you will die.

This sounds morbid, but once again it is an invitation and reminder that we are dependent on God and that life is not on our terms, but his.

“Let us remember that we are mortal, lest we forget that we are dependent.”

Saint Augustine of Hippo

For monks, *memento mori* was about:

- **Urgency** – remembering that life is short, and obedience matters now
- **Humility** – death levels all status, success, and achievement
- **Focus** – stripping away distractions to pursue God and holiness
- **Hope** – death is not the end, but a doorway into resurrection life

Far from a morbid obsession, it is more about spiritual clarity.

In a culture that avoids death and clings to distraction, *memento mori* gently reminds us:

- We are not in control
- Time is a gift
- What we love and serve today shapes who we become eternally

For Christians, *memento mori* is always held together with **resurrection hope**. We remember death not as the final word, but as the reminder that our lives are meant to be **received, given, and trusted to God**.

Dallas Willard says:

“Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life.”

In the stocktake week of our souls, here are three things to consider as we reflect on the year and depend on God for 2026.

1. LIVE TODAY, NOT SOMEDAY.

What have you been postponing—an apology, a conversation, obedience, generosity—assuming there will always be more time?

Memento mori reminds us that faithfulness is always lived now, not later. Ask yourself:

What would it look like to respond to God today rather than delaying?

2. LOOSEN YOUR GRIP

What are you holding too tightly—control, outcomes, success, comfort?

Remembering our mortality invites humility. It helps us release what cannot save us and trust the God who holds our lives.

Where is God inviting me to surrender control and receive grace instead?

3. CHOOSE WHAT WILL LAST.

If life is short, then what truly matters?

Memento mori sharpens our focus toward eternal things—love, faith, people, obedience.

Am I investing my time and energy in things that will still matter in God’s kingdom?

