

# **Remember Your Creator**

**Scripture: Ecclesiastes 11:7 – 12:8**

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**Williamsburg Christian Reformed Church**

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**Evening Service**

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People of God: In one of the many social gatherings of this past week, I mentioned to someone that the best years of my life were my college days at Redeemer College, followed by my days at Seminary. Not high school, but the ten years of post-secondary education. Those were good years. I developed some great friendships during those years. My faith was strong and certain. And I enjoyed the carefree days, when I was responsible only for my own learning, and didn't have the responsibility that comes with being a pastor.

Now I won't say it's all been downhill since those days. I've been to do more traveling around the world than I would ever have imagined doing. But life has changed since my college and seminary days. I've realized that friendship tends to be for a period of time, given how often I move. I develop good friends where I live, but then I move on and I don't keep in touch with them anymore.

My faith is less certain than before. Witnessing the effects of suffering, as well encountering the difficulties of living out the Christian life, has made me less triumphalistic than when I was in school, thinking we could change the world for Christ.

And as I've grown older, I've seen certain character flaws within me that keep emerging that affects the enjoyment of life. When impatience and a cynical attitude gets mixed in with the routines of life, then life gets a little more blue than it ought to be.

While I don't want to say all the best days are behind me, I do think that I have already enjoyed the best years of my life. I don't think I am unusual in having this basic pattern of life. Youth can be a carefree time of life. A time when there is so much potential and opportunity. A time with so few responsibilities and obligations. It's a time when we can follow the heart's desire. But the older we get, the more our choices and decisions

define who we are and what we can do in life. The more we live, the more we experience the brokenness of life, with its disappointments and sadness.

Of course, there are those who are young who do experience the brokenness of life. For example, a young boy may have to deal with the early death of his father. But when that happens don't we think, that's far too early to have to go through such a tragedy?

The Teacher, in the Book of Ecclesiastes, reflects upon life in the real world. We know his constant refrain: "Meaningless! Meaningless! Everything is meaningless!" But that pessimistic outlook is only when we keep focus on the brokenness of this world and lose sight of God. When we do keep God in the picture, then the Teacher is much more optimistic. That's true in the passage that we read this evening.

In this passage, the Teacher calls everyone, but especially those who are young, to remember their Creator, before it's too late, so that they may truly enjoy life. While the focus is on the young, we can all learn from this point. After all, verse 8 is spoken to all of us:

However many years a man may live,  
let him enjoy them all.

Then in verse 9, the key verse of this passage, the Teacher focuses on the young man:

Be happy, young man, while you are young  
and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth.  
Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see,  
but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment.

Now, in many ways, the words of the Teacher in this passage are somber and dreary. Because he warns in 11:8 about the days of darkness and then again in 12:1 about the days of trouble. And then follows a very graphic poem about the aging process, which leads to certain death. We could spend the whole evening unpacking the metaphors and allusions in these verses. For example, "when the grinders cease" (in 12:3) is a reference to the loss of teeth, while "the almond tree blossoms" (in 12:5) refers to the graying of one's hair. Through these figures of speech and other allusions, the Teacher leads us to the ultimate end that will come one day to us all: death.

The days of darkness and trouble. We have experienced that in this past year. Disease and death are the most obvious examples. But they're not the only ones. Some struggled with addictions, others with broken relationships. Some face disappointments at school or at work, while others struggled to make ends meet. The days of darkness and trouble have been experienced by many in this past year.

Now this could remain a dreary and somber message, except that the Teacher, calls us to remember our Creator before all of this hits us, so that we might be able to enjoy the blessings of life. In other words, the Teacher offers a preventative strategy. Knowing what's coming, he encourages us to enjoy the present. And in particular, he wants the young to enjoy life. To live life to the fullest. That's not a dreary message at all.

And so, he begins in verse 7: "Light is sweet, and it pleases the eyes to see the sun." In other words, life is good. Enjoy it. Sure, there is a realistic note to this: Enjoy it while you can. But still, enjoy it. Live life to the fullest.

In verse 9, the Teacher directs this sentiment to the young in particular: "Be happy, young man, while you are young and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see." What are your dreams? Go for it. Don't wait for the future. Enjoy the present moment.

Dangerous words to our youth and young adults? Do these words allow them to run loose in the world? What about the words of Numbers 15:39 that warn the youth to remember "all the commands of the Lord, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your hearts and eyes"? Couldn't these words of the Teacher be misinterpreted, especially on this night, for the young to say: Alright, let's party. Let's get drunk. Let's do drugs. Let's sleep around. Enjoy life to the fullest, right dude?

Well, yes, these words can be misinterpreted. But there is the final line of verse 9 to consider: "but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment." We are accountable to God for what we do. We need to understand that living life to the fullest means living life in accordance with God's design for the created order. Enjoying life does not include death-inviting activities. What might seem like fun can be a disaster. God doesn't want our bodies and minds messed up by drugs and alcohol. He doesn't want us to harm others or ourselves by the actions we do.

But God does want us to enjoy life. The Teacher urges us to "remember your Creator." Not just God, but our Creator. The one who gives us life. The one who gives us this creation. The one who has gifted us with so many blessings and with the ability to enjoy this creation. Remember the Creator. The one who through Jesus Christ is overcoming the groaning of creation. And in Jesus, we can rejoice in all circumstances.

Looking back at this past year, we can indeed give thanks to our Creator for all the blessings he has given to us. For the birth of new children, for the answers to prayers, for the ability to enjoy the creation, for family and friends, above all, for the salvation that we have in Jesus Christ—when

we remember the Creator and what he has given to us, then indeed, we can speak about the goodness of the Lord.

And so, on this last night of 2011, as we reflect upon the year gone by, let us remember our Creator.

To our youth and young adults, let me challenge you seize the day. Enjoy the present. Do so by having God as the solid foundation of your life. That way, you will not only know how best to enjoy the present, you will have a solid foundation so that when the days of trouble come, you will not be shaken.

To those of us, who are no longer in that category of being young, heed the words of verse 8: However many years the Lord may give to us, let us enjoy them all. Yes, we might know the brokenness of the world in ways that the youth cannot thankfully fully appreciate but we can still say: The Lord is good. We are still able to enjoy the blessings of God's good creation, with the boundaries that God designed for our created life.

But this calls us to remember our Creator. To know the Creator, as our heavenly Father, to know how he has saved us in Jesus Christ. To know how we can live in him, through the power of the Spirit. Then whether we are young or old, whether in days of sunshine or days of darkness, we can find meaning in life.

Are your best years behind you? Maybe, in terms on this earthly life. But there can still be plenty of good days ahead. Above all, there are good years ahead in eternity. In the new creation, with God, we will be able to live life to the fullest, without ever having to fear again the days of darkness and trouble. Amen.