

Ecclesiastes

Living in Light of the End

Living in the Reality of Our Frailty

Ecclesiastes 7:1-14

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / July 23, 2023

I. Stop Trying to Ignore Death and Start Learning from It

“For those who live neither with religious consolations about death nor with a sense of death (or of anything else) as natural, death is the obscene mystery, the ultimate affront, the thing that cannot be controlled. It can only be denied.”

~ Susan Sontag, *Illness As Metaphor*, ch. 7

When you try to ignore death, you don't learn what you need for life. Coming to grips with death can shake us and wake us to what life's really all about.

Ecclesiastes 7:2 “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting...”

The person who knows how to live is the person prepared to die because it frees you up to take risks, to love deeply, and to live courageously. The man or woman most fully alive is the one who looks death in the face and laughs because of the resurrection of Jesus!

II. Stop Rejecting What's Happening and Start Accepting Where You Are

A. Raging Against Your Circumstances Will Ultimately Destroy You and Everyone Around You

Ecclesiastes 7:8-9 “Better is the end of a thing than its beginning, and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. ⁹ Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools.”

Pride and anger are companion sins that feed off one another. Pride is what often fuels anger and creates a sense of blind entitlement that causes a man or woman to lose touch with reality as they plow ahead in anger.

He says in verse 9: “...anger lodges in the bosom of fools.” In other words, if you let yourself go down this path, anger stops being something you do and starts being who you are!

B. Romanticizing the Past Will Actually Distract and Disable You

Ecclesiastes 7:10 “Say not, ‘Why were the former days better than these?’ For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.”

Glorifying the past only keeps you from living effectively in the present.

When God put eternity in our hearts, it ignited a longing for home! You think you're longing for the past, but what's actually pulling on your heartstrings is the future – what lies ahead in heaven!

Wise people don't try to go back when they feel nostalgic. Instead, they let the feeling point them forward as they look up and long for their eternal home!

III. Stop Trying to Control It and Start Trusting in God

Ecclesiastes 7:13-14 “Consider the work of God: who can make straight what He has made crooked? ¹⁴ In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other...”

Solomon reminds us that despite the brokenness, our lives are in the hands of God, being ordered by God, so that nothing comes into our lives that doesn't come through His hands first! That includes both prosperity and adversity! He's in control of it all!

When you have a God-given revelation of His sovereign, loving, wise control over all things, you can move forward with hope, joy, and expectation, even without a detailed explanation for why it's all happening.

"Having lost a sister and both of my parents to death, I thought I understood what grief was like, but none of those prepared me for the death of a spouse. Every aspect of my daily life was impacted...and it still is, at times, excruciating.

But I patiently wait as God unfolds His plan for me, and I lean on Jesus to comfort and guide me...I read my Bible every day and begin by asking God to open me to His Word and to open His Word to me. I'm listening to a daily podcast of scripture read aloud and commentary on what was read. I had read through the Bible several times in the past, but now it seems far more real and intense than I ever imagined it could be.

Truth preached from the pulpit has me saying 'amen' in my heart over and over. The growth in my faith, especially during the last 5 1/2 months, is setting the stage for something. Scripture, songs, prayers, and sermons are more meaningful and poignant than ever before. Even in grief, and maybe because of it, my faith is changing and growing.

I often turn on YouTube when I get home from Sunday worship and catch even more from the worship songs and sermons the second time around! God's Word, His people, and worship have contributed greatly to my healing. I learned through Grief Share that it may be a long, and at times difficult, journey but 'mourning to joy' is possible and I'm hopeful for what lies ahead."

~ GFC Member

Ecclesiastes 3:11 "He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, He has put eternity into man's heart..."

Because God has put eternity in our hearts, we don't really know what it is we're longing for until we encounter for ourselves a sovereign, loving, all-wise, and breathtaking God, in His Son, Jesus Christ.

"The tragedy of the world is that the echo is mistaken for the Original Shout. When our back is to the breathtaking beauty of God, we cast a shadow on the earth and fall in love with it. But it does not satisfy. The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust them...for they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited."

~ C.S. Lewis, *A Mind Awake: An Anthology of C. S. Lewis*, ed. Clyde Kilby

John 7:37-38 "...If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"