

Intro: Most of you realize that I am not from Greater Boston. I mean, this is our home now, we love it, we plan on being here indefinitely, but it has only been home for the past two years. People often ask what it was like moving from the Southeast to the Northeast, and to be honest, though the cultures are different, it wasn't as big of a transition as we thought it would be. Pace of Life... People... Volume & Personality (a little rougher around the edges but that has its benefits right. At least you know where you stand with people. People in the south will often be nice and superficial on the outside, just before they stab you in the back. People in Greater Boston will just tell it like it is and stab you in the chest.) Cost of Living !!

One of the biggest adjustments to life in the city for us, and many others we talked to, is learning how to get around. Let's be honest, until you spend some significant time in a particular area of Greater Boston, it's difficult to find your way around. The first month we were here, we tried to find our way around by using our phone or looking up a couple of directions before we left the house. After about a month, we invested in a GPS for our car, and getting around after that was a breeze, at least for the most part. Boston seems to find a way to even fool the 24 orbiting satellites that our Department of Defense placed into outer space. Some of us, not to boast, or anything, only need the GPS for the first trip or two to our intended destination. For others who are more directionally challenged, cough... my wife... cough cough... need it the first 100 times.

Trans: It's one thing to learn how to navigate through a journey in Greater Boston, it's a whole other thing to navigate through the journey of life. Most of us would have to say that our journey through life has taken many twists and turns. Some of them have been pretty, and others have been pretty ugly. The question we should ask is: what could help us navigate our journey through life (reword question)? Well, whether you realize it or not, that's what "The Preacher" of Ecclesiastes has been trying to do. With his words of wisdom he is trying to help guide us through our journey in this fallen world. What he's going to tell us in Ecclesiastes 11:1-12:7, as we move toward wrapping up this book is this...

The Point: Navigate your journey through life with a God-centered compass.

**"God-Centered Navigation"
Ecclesiastes 11:1-12:7
May 13, 2012**

Context: In chapters 11-12, the Preacher is wrapping up his argument and providing what amounts to a call for a decision. You are either going to adopt this view or you are not... He does so by speaking as an old man, full of life experiences and wisdom, and he, like much of the wisdom literature in Proverbs, addresses his thoughts toward the young.

Ecclesiastes 11:1-12:7 serves almost like a letter from the old to the young, but we must realize that there is wisdom for both the young and the old. For those of you who have been blessed to have a quality with your grandparents, you may be able to identify with this in a special kind of way... Granddad... Advice... his study... I would love to pick his old brain and hear stories, some of which I had heard several times before, ...

Trans: So what does the Preacher want to teach us about Navigating our journey through life with a God-centered compass? First, he simply says...

I. Rejoice all the days of your life. (11:1-10).

- Before we tackle the first six verses, we really need to begin in verses 7-8 because verse 8 provides the framework for us to understand our whole passage. Let me explain.
- **Check v. 7-8.**
- Verse 7. "Light is sweet." Nuff said for those of us in Greater Boston, right. Yesterday was nice, wasn't it after all of the overcast weather.

- No, light is a metaphor for experiencing what is good in life. Life should be good and delightful. Verse 8 continues on this theme. He says, “So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all.” [Are you surprised?] This has been a familiar refrain we have heard again and again: enjoy life.
- At the same time, after tracking through the book of Ecclesiastes, we are also not surprised how the verse ends with a note of realism: “but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.” In other words, enjoy life, but realize that there will be rough days, dark days in the fallen world in which we live.
- Now, these two encouragements in verse 8 will be turned into commands, and they provide a framework for us to understand our passage. “Let him rejoice” becomes a command in verse 9, and “let him remember,” becomes a command in verse 1 of chapter 12.

Let’s tackle the first command: Rejoice!

- Look at **verse 9**. “Rejoice, O young man, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth..”
- The Preacher is addressing youth quite a bit in our passage. What does he have in mind when he says “youth”? Is he referring to teenagers? What about people under the age of 30? Or does he have in mind everyone who’s hair is not falling out or turning grey? To take it one step further, is he referring to the young at heart?
- While he specifically addresses his words to a “young man” and we want to consider the implications for our early years of life, we should also notice that verse 8 says to rejoice in all the years of our life.
- So this word is for everyone, though it has a special message for the young of age.
- A person’s youth provides them a unique time of life. The Preacher says to enjoy the life God gives at the earliest possible age. Begin living the life God desires for you, one that is surely filled with joy. Christianity is not a straightjacket, filled with a million rules for us to keep. Christianity is deeper than that. It is a way of life, transformed by our knowledge of God and filled with joy.
- Just two weeks ago we looked at how Jesus died in order that we might have life and have it abundantly. God wants us to be people who live life to the full and live it with joy
- Are you enjoying life on a consistent basis? You may say, I’m not sure. Well, here’s a little gauge for you: how many times a day do you smile? The Listermine teeth whitening commercial says the average person smiles 50 times a day. It should be double or triple that for Christians... Right? I’m not trying to be cheesy here. I really think it’s a good question to ask yourself. How many times did a genuinely smile? That is probably a decent indicator of how much joy you possess and how much you are enjoying the life God has given you.
- [There is a way to have fun and enjoy life as Christians, and I’m talking about more than the contrast between clubbing and getting wasted on the one hand and pounding soft drinks and playing board games and chess on the other... ☺] There is joy in knowing God and living your life for him.
- John 15:11???

With this command, he gives four additional commands that unpack what this should look like:

- “Walk in the ways of your heart & the sight of your eyes...”
 - This is a tricky verse. It sounds like pop psychology or maybe that bad advice you often receive from your friends: “follow your heart, do what makes you feel good.”
 - Listen, your heart is deceitful and apart from grace is destined to lead us to sin and destruction. How’s that for beating around the bush? ☺ You New Englanders are rubbing off on me.
 - We can trust our hearts more and more as we grow in grace and measure everything against God’s word. This is what Augustine meant when he said, “Love God and do your will”
- “But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment”
 - Here’s the caution to the young: enjoying life does not mean to just go bonkers and do whatever it is that you want to do apart from considering the wisdom and will of God. Why?
 - Because for everything, and I mean everything, we will give an account.
 - Jesus says, “every word..”
 - Explain judgment... There is a lot of confusion for Christians concerning the judgment of God. How can God judge me when he has forgiven me of all my sin? Two judgment seats...
- “Remove vexation from your heart, and”

- Whatever is going on in your heart, whether that is anxiety, anger, some sinful response that may be tied to the present, or may stem from emotional scars that you carry through life, the encouragement is to banish it, eradicate it, deal with all of that junk, so that it does not hinder your joy.
- All of the thorns coming out of your heart should be dealt with through the cross of Christ. Can I get a witness from last week?
- Then, he wraps it up by moving from the spiritual and emotional to the physical:
- “put away pain from your body, for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.”
 - Take care of your body, and use it to the full while your young... Why? Because your youth will not last. Your knees and joints will start to ache. You will not be as quick and limber or have as much energy as you once did. Many of us are entering into that stage of life. We’re talking more about the glory days than actually living in them.
 - That’s what he means when he says youth and the dawn of life are vanity. Vanity here refers to that which is temporal & elusive
 - Now, let’s back up and take a quick look at one other wisdom principle from verses 1-6 that should also help us live life with joy.
- Trust in God in the midst of uncertainty.
 - **Verses 1-6.** This section deals with how we respond to the uncertainties of life. In light of the fact, that we do not know what is coming in the days ahead, the Preacher says to invest wisely and work hard.
 - Just because disaster or rain may come is no reason to get cynical and bitter and doubt. God has given us his resources to rest in the certainties of who he is when faced with the uncertainties of life.
 - Don’t miss this: the Christian has the ability to confront and walk through the uncertainties of life because of the certainties of God.

Trans: So the first command we have is to rejoice. The second command is found in chapter 12, v. 1. Which brings us to our second point...

II. Remember your Creator all the days of your life . . . (12:1-7).

- What we have going on in verses 1-7 of chapter 12 is an encouragement to spend our early days wisely because they will pass by in the blink of an eye. After the initial command to remember our Creator in the days of our youth, he tells us why it’s so important in the rest of the passage and the word “before” helps us to see how his thought progresses. Look at these **verses (1-7)** as I read them.
- So, he says, “Remember your Creator, before the quality of your life progressively gets worse to the point where it eventually expires.”
- At this point I probably should apologize, because just a couple of weeks ago when we were in chapter 9, I told you that we wouldn’t hear more talk of death. Well, I got ahead of myself. Here we go again, but the thrust here, even though it so graphically pictures a person’s final years and days, is really on what it looks like to maximize the days God gives! That’s why he says “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth.”

Let’s break this down. First, what does he mean when he says, “Remember your Creator”?

- To remember means much more than intellectual acknowledgment of God as Creator in our life. It involves us allowing the knowledge of God as Creator to shape our whole outlook on life and our daily experiences. (Bartholomew)
- How should the knowledge of God as Creator influence our lives practically? Here are a few thoughts:
- **1) It should promote humility and undercut pride.** God is the Creator. We are the created. God is self-existent. We exist because of him. God is self-dependent. We depend on him for our next breath. God is completely and perfectly powerful. We are not.
- **2) It should motivate us to depend on his power.** God created *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. The Bible says he spoke the word into existence. I’d say that’s a fair amount of power. Well, as we looked at on

Easter Sunday, God's power is available to us through Christ. If there are dark days that we walk through in this life, and there are, don't you think God has the power to walk with you through them.

- **3) Finally, it should lead us to worship.** Derek Kidner says, "At its best and strongest, remembrance can be a matter of passionate fidelity..." When we remember God as Creator, we are recognizing that our highest allegiance belongs to him. If he is the one true God, then no one or nothing else should receive our worship. This is what Paul was saying in Romans 1 when he describes our depravity and says, "**they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!**" (Romans 1:25)
- This is what we have done, and this is exactly what we've seen in the book of Ecclesiastes. A man, with the world at his disposal, tried it all, seeking to find the key to life through worshiping the cheap gods of money, sex, pleasure, work, power, you name it. Remembering God as our Creator should lead us to keep him at the front and center of our lives. We were made to bring him glory!
- We desperately need this God-centered focus to our lives, and the Preacher understands this.
- Our knowledge of him should shape and influence everything in our life. Our lives should be centered on the reality of God and his will for our lives.
- We want to be a radically God-centered church at Redemption Hill! God is the hero of our story. God is the focus and goal of everything we do, because at the end of the day, it's really all about him.
- Remember your Creator, and we have specific instruction to...

Remember your Creator, "*in the days of your youth.*"

- The older we get, the more we realize just how quickly time passes. Just pause and take a look back on your life. **P**. Weren't you just in elementary school? Wasn't that you in high school just a few short years ago, or so it seems. **P** A person reaches 50,60,70 years and wonders where in the world their life went!
- So the Preacher, says, "Make the most of your days!" Redeem your youthfulness. Live with all of the vigor and passion you can muster while God gives you days and strength. Here's a secret: when time passes, you can never get it back. Never.
- It's no secret that we are a pretty young church. We are seeing increasing generational diversity and praying for more, but this is a word our church needs to hear. Let's not say: I'll really get sold out for Jesus when I have this, or do this, or turn this age. The preacher is saying, "Now! Now! Live for God now!"
- Address the young: children, teenagers, college students, young professionals... Get to know God. Live for God. It is the one pursuit that will deliver two things: no regrets and lasting worth.???
- App: Parents, and especially mothers, our kids need to know God in their youth, so that they can remember him all the days of their lives.

[If we can get last week's message: heat, thorns, cross, fruit and this week's message: radically God-centered, we're going to be on our way...]

Conclusion:

Walker Percy, in his novel *Lancelot*, has a great line from one of his main characters on making the most of every day, whether we are young or old: "To live in the past or future is easy. To live in the present is like threading a needle."

The gospel enables us to thread the needle. The gospel frees us to filter everything through a God-centered, cross-centered lens. The gospel enables us to live for the reason we were created! Have you embraced Christ ?