

Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:14

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[0 : 00] Hi, my name is Robert Kinney and I serve as the University Minister at Holy Trinity Church in Hyde Park. You've downloaded this audio file hoping to hear the final sermon in a series on Ecclesiastes, and you will in just a moment.

But you're hearing my voice because the first few minutes of the sermon didn't get recorded and it's all my fault. I forgot to hit the record button. Sorry. Oops.

Anyway, here is Dave Helm with Ecclesiastes 11-7-12-14. Hope you enjoy it. To say things like, the heart is deceptively wicked.

But look at the positive construct on which he plays. Let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes.

And again, verse 10, remove vexation from your heart. This wonderful, finishing flurry that affirms the desires of the human heart.

[1 : 10] In the opening chapter, it was his heart that made him seek out wisdom. In the second chapter, it was his heart that gave itself to wine and to pleasure.

It was his heart that studied agriculture and architecture and the forming of canals and the making of gardens. He pursued life according to the desires of his heart.

I don't know that there's another word that's repeated more often in Ecclesiastes than the heart. Certainly no fewer than 25 times.

And here, at the close, all these words bundled together in the most positive construct possible. It is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Let your heart cheer you. Walk in the ways of your heart. Put vexation from your heart.

[2 : 20] I like to think of the human heart as internal Velcro. It holds fast all your hidden desires.

Your real wants. The things which really please you. Yet, unlike Velcro, the human heart has a pulse.

And it pumps. And it takes those wants. And those real desires. Those things you really, truly long for. And it throws them out from you into the real world.

The human heart is the best indicator of what holds you fast. And it's the starting place for all those things to which your feet will run.

And here, in our chapter, it is completely affirmed. I think of it in terms of those of you who are young.

[3 : 27] I mean, the writer has revealed, in the most clear terms possible, his intended audience. It's those who are young.

He brings them forth at the very close of the letter. Now, as if we are hearing the voice of the aged man who has warned you with dissonance throughout, but who pauses at the end and thinks of the brevity of life and says, Oh, it is good to see the Son.

Rejoice and give yourself to the desires of your heart. Do you see the youth there, verse 9? Oh, young man, in your youth.

You see him again in verse 10. For youth and the dawn of life are vanity or a vapor fleeting. Again, chapter 12, verse 1.

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth. And so, I don't think that the writer could more clearly affirm things like the pursuit of wisdom, the desire to do meaningful work in the world, the laying down of words with great care, the disciplines of logic and rhetoric and grammar, the pursuit of music, architecture.

[5 : 04] Think of the ancient trivium. Think of the four disciplines that are added by medieval times that make up the liberal arts, education, geometry, arithmetic, music, astronomy.

Think of all the things that you in your own heart want to pursue. He says, in your youth, give yourself fully to the desires of your heart.

What a wonderful affirmation. But, he never lets us loose from reality, does he? For he says there, at the end of verse 9, but know that for all these things, God will bring you into judgment.

Just like an aging father who tells his children to go out through the doorway into life. He likewise says, everything you do will be called to account.

It's like a father who lets his daughter out on a date with a young man and says, oh, have a great time. Go, go enjoy yourselves.

[6 : 32] And I'll be here when you get back. Waiting for a full account of everything that took place. Yes, the writer is wise.

He's not a killjoy. He's all for the liberal arts. He's all for you pursuing life as you see fit.

But he will not allow you to follow in a way that frees you from the reality of a judgment that is to come.

So this great initial anchor in the first half of the text, rejoice, oh, young man in your youth.

And this commendation to pursue what God has put in your heart to do is followed in 12.1. Remember also your creator in the days of your youth.

[7 : 42] Notice it says in the days of your youth. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in the fourth century lamented the fact that men in particular would postpone Christian baptism until they were aged.

for they knew that once they went under the waters of baptism life change would be required. And they wanted in a sense to be of the world while they lived in the world from their youth.

But the writer here has it right. Days of your youth are your choicest years. give them to God also.

Yes, pursue the desires of your heart. But remember also your creator and that in the days of your youth. What a folly to pursue life and to leave God aside.

And so this is the dual calling. To rejoice in the days of your youth pursuing all the things he's given to you knowing that you will one day stand before him and therefore remembering him also.

[9 : 12] I don't know where many of you will go once we go through those doors. You'll be back literally across the world. Rejoice and remember God.

God. The two reasons for remembering God are certainly listed in the text. The word there at verse 2 before that same word continued again in verse 6 before.

Remember your creator in the days of your youth before before what? Well, before you don't have much energy for anything at all. verses 2 through 5 are this poetic portrayal of how fast life moves and how quickly it goes downhill.

It moves to darkness. It returns to darkness. 3 to 5 almost has the imagery of a house that's in ever-increasing need of repair.

repair. And so it is with the human body and as the years go on. And since you are a home, a temple, then give God your choice years because those are the years you're able to give it to him.

[10 : 43] There will come a time when you won't have the energy to give him much of anything at all. Billy Graham was asked by a university student what was most surprising in life.

His answer was simple and wise. I am most surprised by the brevity of life. my dad is now 81.

He often speaks to me of that narrow window in which you have to live life fully for God accomplishing great things and giving yourself to the desires of your heart.

It is really a narrow window. hope. And people won't remember you when you're gone and deceased and indeed this is the second reason you ought to remember your creator in the days of your youth not only because life goes downhill so fast where the grinding is low where the grasshopper is dragging itself along but verse 6 before and these are all images of death before the silver cord is snapped or the golden bowl is broken or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain or the wheel broken at the cistern and the dust returns to the earth as it was and the spirit returns to God who gave it vaporous of vanities says the preacher all things move that fast remember God in the days of your youth because life will quickly go downhill and because death will overtake us all and with that he is completed he leaves it for writers like

Paul the apostle to speak about the judgment day when we will all give an account to our Lord Jesus Christ he leaves it to the New Testament times to see that the truly wise shepherd the one whose words are worth following and pursuing is indeed Jesus of Nazareth but for him and here his work is complete he really has given you all that he has to give you notice how the book closes with this great commendation of the writer verses nine and ten but then this understanding that there's not much more he could say verse twelve my son beware of anything beyond these beyond the words I've given you I've given you everything you need to know life is short life without God is vain pursue what he's put in your heart to do you work from his approval not for it and never forget that he comes with you and along beside you each and every day there will be many books written on how to live life and live them well but there is a weariness to them all and not much more could be said the end of the matter all has been heard fear God keep his commandments this is the whole duty of man for God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing whether good or evil

[14 : 31] I leave you with these anchors rejoice oh young man in the day of your youth remember also your creator in the day of your youth our heavenly father as we close this book and prepare for the summer I do pray for many who are here that these words would be carried by them for decades that there would be a whole hearted devotion to what you place in their heart to do a rejoicing a pleasure in the rising of the sun and a remembering of you until we stand before your son in whose name we pray amen■