

# Youth, Decline, Striving After Wind

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, we've been traveling through the book of Ecclesiastes over the summer, and there have been times that we've been dipping into some very dark moments, some very dark teachings. And I joked with a few of you, as we gathered together to pray before the service, I joked with a few of you that, you know, if you felt that Ecclesiastes was depressing before, just wait till this sermon, you know.

So, we've been dipping into the subject of death, into the subject of our mortality. That death is this great equalizer, death is this thing that undoes all human achievement, all human aspirations, all the things that people in our culture work for and hope for and stress out over and worry over. Death undoes it all. And today, we're in, this is our second to last week in the book of Ecclesiastes. Next week is going to be the conclusion of our series, Ecclesiastes, Striving After Wind. And today is when, you know, today is when that darkness reaches its peak. Ecclesiastes chapter 12, if you have read it, is, it ranks up there, I would say, in the top five most dark passages in scripture.

[ 1 : 18 ] Psalm 88 probably wins in my book. But this is really one of those incredibly dark, incredibly difficult, and at the same time, so beautiful and heart-wrenchingly beautiful passages in the Bible.

The preacher is going to be warning you and me that we are gradually aging. We are gradually declining, gradually decaying, gradually dying. Now, earlier this week, I posted on our church's private Facebook group, I posed a question that you could ask to your friends, to your neighbors, to your colleagues.

And the question was this, what about growing old and aging makes you the most apprehensive? What about growing old and aging makes you the most apprehensive? Kind of worries you. It troubles you the most. And most of the answers I got, I got answers from several folks, and most of the answers I got really fit into well, fit in well with a lot of what we've been talking about over the last few months.

So one person told me, the thing that troubled him the most is he said, you lose the ability to do the things that excite you. This is a man who loves going out into the mountains, loves going out on adventures, and loves just enjoying life in that way.

[ 2 : 33 ] And he knew that as he was getting older, that wasn't going to be possible anymore. Another person told me, sent me a message that said, the thing that worried her was the idea of losing independence.

The ability to get around on my own, driving or walking. And she said, Lord, help me to age gracefully. She knew it was going to be a very difficult challenge to age well.

Another man sent me a message, and he said, I checked with two colleagues asking them about their concerns for growing old. One said that they would surely be gone when their granddaughters would be getting married, and that made him sad.

He would have liked to have been there to bless and encourage them. Another colleague said that they feared the lack of mobility and the lack of communication. The ability to hear and see, perhaps even the ability to understand.

That's something that I get myself. My own grandfather is, as he experiences Parkinson's, the mental decay I see in him. He's just a shadow of his former self at this point.

[ 3 : 35 ] The man continued, for myself, my concerns would be similar to the last one. Another person said, My fear of growing old is simple.

I fear a life of pain. Pain that I feel right now won't stop for the rest of my life. Not only is it likely to be the same, but as I get older, it will probably get worse. We're going to encounter that today.

And of course, there was a certain wise guy among us who simply answered, Can't remember. Now, I just love that dark humor, right?

Over 2,000 years ago, there is an Israelite sage. He's a man who referred to himself in the book of Ecclesiastes as the preacher or as the teacher, depending on your translation.

And this man expressed his fears, expressed his apprehensions about the process of aging, about death not staying confined to a future event, but death encroaching in on his life.

[ 4 : 53 ] And this preacher had words for those of us who are still young. And he has words for those of us, for everybody in this room who has not yet succumbed to death.

And here are his words. We're going to read them in the pages of Scripture in Ecclesiastes chapter 11. And we're going to start in verse 7, Ecclesiastes chapter 11, verse 7, and read through chapter 12, verse 8.

Light is sweet. And it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun. So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all. But let him remember that the days of darkness will be many.

All that comes is vanity. Rejoice, O young man, in your youth. And 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.

But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. Remove vexation from your heart and put away pain from your body. For youth and the dawn of life are vanity.

[ 5 : 58 ] Remember also your creator in the days of your youth. Before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, I have no pleasure in them. Before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain.

In the day when the keepers of the house tremble and the strong men are bent. And the grinders cease because they are few. And those who look through the windows are dimmed and the doors in the street are shut.

When the sound of the grinding is low and one rises up at the sound of a bird. And all the daughters of song are brought low. They are afraid also of what is high. And terrors are in the way.

The almond tree blossoms. The grasshopper drags itself along. And desire fails. Because man is going to his eternal home. And the mourners go about the streets.

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.

[ 7 : 02 ] And the spirit returns to God who gave it. Vanity of vanities says the preacher. All is vanity. This is the word of the Lord.

Now here is what the preacher is communicating to you and me in these verses. These verses are way down on our hearts. First what he is doing. Is he is deconstructing.

The way that we try to go about living what we perceive to be the good life. Because you and I we have this tendency to fret. To worry our days away.

And we have this tendency to always be looking for and craving for something bigger and better. Something that we think will give us lasting significance. Something that we think will get us ahead in life.

Whether you are looking forward to that next iPhone announcement. Whether you are looking towards. And some of you are snickering right. Whether you are looking forward towards getting married or having kids.

[ 8 : 07 ] Whether you are looking forward to finally getting on that career track you have always wanted. Whether you are looking forward to that day when you are finally going to retire. And we are always looking forward to that.

And we are always looking forward and striving forward and craving something that we don't have. Something that we don't have right here and right now. And what the preacher is telling us is this.

The good life is not gained by postponing our opportunities for joy.

The good life is not gained by postponing, by delaying our opportunities for joy. And the preacher is, what he is doing is he is taking this truth and he is washing it over us in three waves.

And so this first wave comes in chapter 11 verses 7 through 8. And here the preacher is warning us that the future holds for you and me. It holds for many of us days of darkness. The second wave comes in chapter 11 verses 9 and 10.

And here the preacher urges you and me that we need to lay aside these mindsets of dissatisfaction, of craving, of worry. That lead us to frustration, that lead us to pain.

[9:16] And then there is a colossal tsunami sized third wave in chapter 12 verses 1 through 8. And here the preacher shows us this dark road of decline and decay and death that does await those of us who live long enough to experience it.

But these three waves, they don't just bring dark water with them. They also bring life, they bring light along with the darkness.

There is the glimmer of the sun reflecting off of those waters. And in these three waves the preacher is not only telling us that the good life is not gained by postponing our opportunities for joy. He is also telling us this.

The good life is relishing our God-given present while regarding our God-given future. The good life is relishing our God-given present while also at the same time regarding our God-given future.

And so what we're going to do is we're going to experience these three waves. We're going to let these three waves wash over us one at a time. And so we're going to begin in chapter 11 verse 7.

[10:19] And so that's where the first wave hits you and me. Chapter 11 verses 7 and 8. And so if we were to sort of give this wave a name because, you know, people name waves. That's a thing they do.

We might call this wave the goodness of youthful opportunity. The goodness of youthful opportunity. Because that's what we read about in verse 7.

Chapter 11 verse 7. Light is sweet. And it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun. And that's something we all get. We really get that here, right?

And I feel like especially here in Squam's. It's just one thing if you live in the Sahara Desert where just the sun's beating down on you all the time. And you've had enough of it. You want to get in the shade. Here the sun is a little bit more introverted.

You know? Hides behind clouds most of the year. Kind of comes out in the summer for a bit and then just goes away again, right? And so on those days, especially in the winter, those long overcast days, that one day when the sun comes out for a few hours, isn't it beautiful?

[11:20] Isn't it good? You can just feel it. It is a good, it is a life-giving thing to see the sun, to feel its warmth. Because what the sun does is when it's out, it just beckons you.

Go outside. Enjoy the day. Take action. Soak up right here, right now. The life, the energy, the warmth. In Psalm 19, the poet King David, he writes that the sun comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber and like a strong man runs its course with joy.

So to walk outside, to feel the sunlight on your face, that is something, this is, it's just so interesting. You read this verse written over 2,000 years ago and it just connects with you, right? This is a universal human experience for millennia.

We've all felt the same way about it. We've all felt that seeing, feeling the sunlight, there's an idea that comes with it. A reality, a truth that comes with it. That we should soak up all the goodness of life.

For every day that God has given us under the sun. We should embrace life. And you and I, we have a tendency to, we're so busy craving for what we don't have right here and right now.

[12:38] We're so busy, our minds are already set on this afternoon. Instead of thinking, what's going on right now? Where I am sitting? We should embrace life not just for what we wish it could be, but for what it actually is.

What God has actually given me right now. Where God has actually put me right now. And so the preacher writes in verse 8.

So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all. But let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.

And so the preacher encourages you and me. He encourages us not to say something like this. You know, once I have that one thing I'm looking for. Once I have that thing.

Once I have that one relationship. I want to recover. Once I live in that one place that I want to be at. Then I will be happy.

[13:44] Then I'll be happy. And the preacher encourages you and me not to tie our happiness to things that don't yet exist. The things in your life that you don't have.

That you think you're going to get. That you're striving for and trying to work towards. That if they're denied to you, you become angry. Instead, we are to accept what God has given us.

To embrace. To see the good in what God has given us. The allotment that God has given to us right here, right now. Have your eyes on where you are.

And the preacher reminds us that the days of darkness will be many. And now some commentators believe that what he's referring to is this time after you and I have died. The many days of darkness that come after death.

After this brief window of life that we have. I don't think that's the case. And the reason is that the context that follows these verses. Suggests that instead he's referring to days even in the course of your own life.

[14:54] Days to come. Even in this lifetime. The days of darkness will be many. Because as to quote chapter 12 verse 1. There are going to come days and years of which you will say I have no pleasure in them. The preacher wants us to be mindful that there will be many days.

In which that well of joy is going to be running low. It's going to be almost dry. That our opportunities for joy. They're evaporating. To embrace joy now.

We have to be aware of what is to come. We can't ignore. Set aside the future. Try to deny it. Try to live as though it's not going to happen.

We have to be aware of it. And to look it in the face. You know we're in a time of year. To think of this in sort of an illustration. We're in a time of year right now when the days are getting shorter. Right? Winter is approaching. The evenings are getting dark sooner. Now a couple months ago if I had wanted to go on a trail run in the woods. I could get away with just postponing it.

[15:57] Right? Right? Just kind of slacking off. I'm like oh I'll just do it later this evening. I'll do it later. I'll do it later. You know and 8 p.m. rolls around. I'm like okay. Alright. I'll finally go out and do it. And I can go out and run. And I can come back.

And it's still light. There's still opportunity. I can't do it. I can't do it. I can't do that anymore. Because by 8 p.m. The sun has already gone down behind the mountains.

And it gets dark fast. And so it is with our lives. The days of darkness are growing longer. Death is slowly. Like I said it's not confined to the future.

It is slowly breaking into our present lives. Slowly leaking into our present lives. And it's soon going to surround us. So the good life is not gained by postponing our opportunities for joy.

The good life is relishing our God given present. While regarding our God given future. That's the first wave that the preacher sends our way. And the second wave hits you and me in chapter 11 verses 9 and 10.

[16:59] Now if we were to give this wave a name. We might name it the embrace of youthful opportunity. The embrace of youthful opportunity. So here the preacher writes in verse 9.

Rejoice oh young man in your youth. And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart. And the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things.

God will bring you into judgment. So the preacher here is writing. He's got a specific audience. He's writing specifically to young people.

To young men and women. Maybe in their teens. Maybe in their 20s. So I'm going to talk to those of you who are young in your teens and 20s first. And then we'll expand this out to the rest of us.

So if that's you this morning. If you are one of these young people. Here's the message that God the Holy Spirit. This is God's message specifically to you this morning.

[17:56] Take full advantage of life's good opportunities. Take full advantage of life's good opportunities. You know don't sit around. Don't sit around indoors all day.

Don't fritter away your time on worthless pursuits. And things that are just filling the time. Don't let your life be. And on the other hand.

Don't let your life be consumed. By this. By a mindset of grim duty. Like I've got to. You know do this and do this and do this. And suffer now. I'm miserable now. So I can set up a good future for myself.

God wants you to enjoy your life. God is a God of joy. And he wants you to actually enjoy your life right now. God wants the good life for you.

God wants you to enjoy your life. Now the preacher though is warning us in this verse. In verse 9. That the good life is not a life of mindless self-indulgence.

[18:57] And it is not a life of thrill-seeking. The good life is relishing our God-given present. While also at the same time regarding our God-given future.

It is not an either or. That you live entirely in the present moment. And you don't pay any attention to what is to come. It is not that you pay. You're only thinking about the future. About eternity.

About the dark days that are coming. And not paying attention to the present moment. It is both. We have to do both. And that is very hard for us. But we have to. That's why he's telling you.

If you are young. He's telling you in verse 9. Know that for all these things. God will bring you into judgment. There's a line from one of my favorite songs.

Where the songwriter says that death puts an unwanted emphasis on how we should have lived.

You and I are going to be called into account for the way that we are living.

[ 19 : 59 ] And what's funny about this verse is. We usually think of that in terms of. If I do something bad. God is going to judge me for it. And that much is true.

And that is true in this verse as well. But God calls us into judgment. Not only for. Not only for. For failing. To do what is right and holy and good.

God. Wants you to live well. God calls us into judgment. If we fail to take these opportunities for joy.

God does not want us to live a life of frittering away our opportunities for good.

God does not want you and me to abandon these opportunities. In favor of just sort of a grim drudgery. God does not want us to abandon the good life. By squandering it away with self-indulgence and thrill-seeking.

And that is why God sent his son Jesus Christ into the world. Because Jesus told his. He told his disciples.

[ 21 : 00 ] He told his followers in John chapter 10. Truly, truly I say to you. I am the door of the sheep. If anyone enters by me. He will be saved.

And will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came. That they may have life. And have it abundantly.

I came. That they may have life. And have it abundantly. And Jesus lived that way. He not only lived a perfect and righteous life.

He not only lived the good life. He not only took full advantage of the opportunities laid before him. He not only came down from heaven.

And endured the decay and the suffering and death that we experience as human beings. But he completely met God's expectations of the good life.

[ 21 : 56 ] And Jesus died and he rose again. So that you and I can be raised to new life. If we believe in him. If we by faith are united with Jesus Christ.

So that by the power of the Holy Spirit. You can have life. And you can have it abundantly. Not only in the resurrection. Not only in the age to come.

Not only in the future world. But now. Because not only does death leak back into our present lives now. But life leaks back into. And the goodness of the coming age is present now.

You can live the good life of righteousness that God has called you to. And the preacher is telling you. In chapter 11 verse 10. He's telling you and me. That harmful mindsets.

Harmful habits. Are old way of living. They are not to be tolerated. They are not to be indulged in. If you belong to Jesus Christ. And he writes this.

[ 22 : 56 ] Remove vexation from your heart. And put away pain from your body. For youth and the dawn of life are vanity. Remove vexation from your heart.

So don't just put up with. The mental frustration that comes with. That comes with indulging. With craving. With worrying. With wanting more. With trying to get ahead.

To trying to get that thing you want. To trying to get that relationship you want. To try to be somewhere you're not. You have to kill off these sinful attitudes. Because they are killing you.

And don't just put up with. The harmful habits of your body. Don't just put up with poor diet.

And exercise. And behaviors that are harming you physically. I had a friend of mine. Who struggles incredibly with insomnia. And barely get any sleep each night. I asked him once a few months ago.

Have you ever thought about going to see a sleep therapist.

[ 23 : 53 ] To help you work through that. And he looked at me like I'd just come from the moon. He'd just put up with it his whole life. Don't do that.

You have an opportunity for good now. You have an opportunity for joy now. You must kill off damaging habits. You must kill off damaging mindsets.

Before they kill you. Here's the thing that is so important to understand. For those of you who are young. As you grow older. And those of you who are older know this. You know it by experience.

And I'm even experiencing it bit by bit now. As you grow older. You will naturally harden. Into a certain shape. Where like clay.

That's been formed into a certain shape. And then out in the sun. It sort of bakes. And it hardens. Everybody does. Right? And it's that daily choices that you make.

[ 24 : 52 ] Those daily choices that you make. Those choices eventually become habits. And become mindsets. And those habits and those mindsets shape you. And mold you. They determine what shape you're going to harden into.

You know that person who said that he. Looks at his father. And he sees a man who is chipper and joyful in his old age. It's because that comes from a lifetime. Of being hardened into a joyful shape. Some people become difficult in their old age.

Because they've spent a lifetime. Being hardened into a difficult shape. Who do you want to be when you are old? What are you doing right now to become that person?

The preacher is warning you. Youth and the dawn of life are vanity. In other words, they are fleeting like vapor. They are evaporating away with each passing day and month and year.

And it becomes harder and harder and harder to change the older you get. It is much easier to change now. It is much easier to seek God's help and to seek the help of your church family now.

[ 26 : 06 ] While you are young. Now for those of you who are older. We have to take this to heart too. Because you know, we're not as flexible as we once were. Both physically, right?

You know. We're not physically as flexible as we once were. But we're also not kind of mentally, spiritually in a lot of ways flexible as we once were naturally. We've hardened over the years and decades.

And the character, the shapes that we've hardened into. Some of them have been good. Some of them not so good. It becomes harder to change, doesn't it? It becomes harder to become who you were meant to be.

It becomes harder to find that enthusiasm and that energy that you once had. But if you believe in Jesus Christ, I don't want to leave you without hope. Because if you believe in Jesus Christ, you have the Spirit of God at work in you.

And God's Spirit does not stop working on you as you get old. He changes you. Some of you, I know some of you right now, are experiencing the Spirit's work new and fresh.

[ 27 : 10 ] Even though you're not as young as you once were. Because he gives life and he gives youth to you. The Apostle Paul once wrote about his experience proclaiming Jesus Christ.

About his experience of the Holy Spirit empowering him in Colossians chapter 1. And he wrote, him, that's Christ, him we proclaim. Warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

For this I toil, a man in his middle age. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy. That he powerfully works within me.

As he got older, Paul had less and less energy to call his own. But that was okay. Because he had the energy and the power of God the Holy Spirit. You can be.

You can be the man or the woman that God made you to be. You can change. You still have the opportunity. If you are breathing right now.

[ 28 : 21 ] And you all seem to be. If you are breathing right now. You still have the opportunity to find the good life.

You still have the opportunity to live that life of righteousness. That God wants you to enjoy. Some people talk about living this life of righteousness.

Living for God's law. As though it's like this thing that constricts you. And keeps you away from joy. Do you think the conductor on a train engine thinks of the tracks as restricting his train?

No. It's those tracks that allow him to go where he needs to go. For that train to become everything it is meant to be. God's way of holy living.

Is the way to joy. It is the way we are meant to live. The good life is not gained by postponing our opportunities for joy. The good life is relishing our God-given present.

[ 29 : 26 ] While regarding our God-given future. And that is the second wave that the preacher sends our way. And now the third wave is going to hit. And this one is going to hit. Like I said, like a tsunami. This is a great wave.

And if we want to call it something. We might call it the demise of youthful opportunity. And this is where things get really dark. So hang in there. There is hope and there is light.

The demise of youthful opportunity. It's here that the preacher delivers just one of these. One of the most powerful. One of the most memorable. People. Pieces of all of literature. And especially in

scripture.

Chapter 12 verse 1. He introduces it. By saying, remember also your creator. In the days of your youth. Before the evil days come.

And the years draw near. Of which you will say, I have no pleasure in them. So the preacher is once again. He's explaining. Reiterating. How we find the good life.

[ 30 : 24 ] How we embrace. Opportunities for joy. And he says that the way that we embrace the good life. Is to be mindful of our creator. To be mindful.

That we are his creation. That we have creaturely limits. That we have mortality. And that he is the one who rules. He is the sovereign one over all. We are to be mindful of the future that awaits us. A future that does include decay, death, judgment. And so this tells us what kind of joy we are meant to have. As Christians.

As followers of Jesus Christ. This is the joy that human beings are meant to have. It is not a shallow and frivolous joy. It isn't the laughter of wild parties and a foolish self-indulgence.

It is not the momentary shouts of adrenaline and thrill-seeking. The joy that we are meant to embrace is a sober and solemn joy.

[ 31 : 23 ] It is a joy that runs deep. It's not a joy that is snatched away at a moment. It's the way so many counterfeit joys. It's the joy that the people of Squamish want to sell you.

It is not like that. It is a joy that cannot be taken from you. It is a joy that is tempered and honed and polished. By the recognition that we are God's creatures.

And that he has subjected us to mortal limits. So now we have to listen carefully to what the preacher writes in chapter 12. Verses 1 through 8. And as I read it. There's going to be a lot of things in here.

There are a lot of images in here. If you're like me. Your first instinct is you want to analyze it. You want to pick apart the meaning of each word.

And there is a time and there is a place for that. But in this case. First of all. I think we'd be better served if we first of all just let this wave wash over us. To take it all in at once.

[ 32 : 23 ] To take what we are reading to heart. So beginning in verse 1. Remember also your creator in the days of your youth. Before the evil days come and the years draw near.

Of which you will say I have no pleasure in them. Before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened. And the clouds return after the rain. In the day when the keepers of the house tremble.

And the strong men are bent. And the grinders cease because they are few. And those who look through the windows are dimmed. And the doors on the street are shut. And the sound of the grinding is low.

And one rises up at the sound of a bird. And all the daughters of song are brought low. They are afraid also of what is high. And terrors are in the way. The almond tree blossoms.

The grasshopper drags itself along. And desire fails. Because man is going to his eternal home. And the mourners go about the streets. Before the silver cord is snapped.

[ 33 : 21 ] 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.

Vanity of vanities. Says the preacher. All is vanity. How are you feeling? I don't think this passage for me ever stops being hard.

It brings with it sorrow. It brings dread. It brings despair. I think back to my college days. Which is kind of the first time. You know maybe I'd read it before. Just in the course of reading the Bible. But that was kind of the first time I stopped. And let this wash over me. You know what? I didn't understand all of what the preacher was saying. But here's what I. Because I didn't look at the context carefully.

You know what I thought the preacher was talking about? I thought he was talking about the end of the world. I thought he was talking about the end of the world. I wasn't wrong.

[ 34 : 31 ] In a way he is. Because he is writing about the ending. And the decay and the end of your life and of mine. If we live long enough to experience old age.

He's talking about the end of a world. That's not the only place in scripture that God talks about a person's demise. In that way. You can look at for example Ezekiel chapter 32.

Where God tells Pharaoh king of Egypt. When I blot you out. I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark. I will cover the sun with a cloud. And the moon shall not give its light.

All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you. And put darkness on your land. Declares the Lord God. Ian Proven has an excellent commentary on Ecclesiastes.

And this is what he writes about chapter 12. The end times for the individual human being are here pictured. The end times for the individual human being are here pictured then.

[ 35 : 33 ] In terms of the end of the world. Darkness. Terror. Cessation from normal activity. And ecological nightmare. It is in this manner that a man goes to his eternal home in the grave.

Mourned by those who knew him. Now. We were to go over and pick apart all the symbols. All the imagery of the verses. We could do that. If you are reading.

If you happen to have the New Living Translation. And you were reading these verses for example. You would find that the translators insert explanations into the text. And so they will throw in comments. Things that say.

Things like for example. Verse 2 refers to failing eyesight. You know all of everything growing dark. Verse 3 refers to weak legs and shoulders and missing teeth. You know all of these things.

And it sort of like gives explanations of what all of these symbols are. Here's a couple problems with that. I mean I'm really tempted to go with like a half hour excursus on translation philosophy.

[ 36 : 35 ] But probably not best for our purposes right now. First a lot of that is speculation. Some of it I think is pretty solid. Others is you know we're not quite sure exactly what is meant by all of these symbols.

Because of that. That's the sort of thing that's better. Less. It really shouldn't be in the translation. In the text itself. It's best suited to be set aside in study notes or in a commentary or something like that.

Second. I think that sort of analysis harms this poem. I think it robs this poetry of its power. Because we are meant to take in this tsunami.

This great wave of darkness all at once. And we are meant to weep. For the ruin. That death has brought into the world. And the ruin that death has brought into your life and into mine.

And it captures so well the nature of the book of Ecclesiastes. This captures so well the feelings of the preacher. This sense of ruin. Here's kind of the tone that I felt.

[ 37 : 40 ] Like I'm trying to think of how do we best capture the feel. The tone. The atmosphere of this whole book. And I think the best. The best illustration that I know of for the tone of this book.

Because it's like watching one of those movies. One of those post-apocalyptic movies. Those movies set after the destruction of the civilization we know and love. Set in this post-apocalyptic future.

It's a movie about a weary old man. And he's sifting through the ruins of a shattered world. And he's recognizing there was once a far greater glory here.

That is lost. And the great plot twist of the movie is this. It is our own world. It is our own world here and now that is the one in ruins.

And we are sifting through the rubble. Of a world that was once beautiful and glorious. And now is lost. As a preacher wrote in chapter one.

[ 38 : 41 ] I have seen everything that is done under the sun. And behold, all is vanity and is striving after wind. Then he says, what is crooked? That's this whole world and everything.

What is crooked cannot be made straight. And what is lacking cannot be counted. The ruin is beyond imagination.

And we can't fix it. No amount of government programs are going to fix it. No amount of self-help techniques are going to fix it. That thing you're wanting to get.

That relationship you're wanting. That place you're wanting to live. They are not going to fix it. We cannot recover what was lost. We can only mourn the destruction of the world as it was.

That world of glory and goodness. In the Garden of Eden. When God walked in the garden. And everything was good.

[ 39 : 40 ] And as it was meant to be. A goodness and a glory beyond our imagining. A goodness and glory. That if we for a moment. Could glimpse it. We would weep.

Because we had no idea. We have no idea how good it was. In chapter 12 verses 6 and 7. The preacher shows us images of a spring.

He shows us images of a well. Of life giving water. The well was the center of community life. Without water you had no life at all. The well was everything. It brought life to a village. Life to you. And at this well there are a broken rope. Shattered vessels. A ruined water wheel.

There is silver and gold there. Like our lives they are precious. But they have been destroyed. And the preacher writes in verse 7.

[ 40 : 37 ] The dust returns to the earth as it was. And the spirit returns to God who gave it. And he reminds us. Of how our world came to be ruined.

How that good world came to be ruined. How we ended up living in this post-apocalyptic world. That was ruined by a curse. When God condemned the first man Adam.

Because he had rejected the good life. And he had corrupted God's good world. In Genesis chapter 3. God said. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.

Till you return to the ground. For out of it you were taken. For you are dust. And to dust you shall return. Our death.

Your death. My death. The end of a world. It is the result of the fall. It is the result of that.

[ 41 : 39 ] The end of an age of glory. Death undoes everything. Death uncreates everything. Death brings everything to ruin.

It is the demise of youthful opportunity. And so the preacher mourns. In verse 8. And he brings back the same words that he first wrote.

At the very beginning of Ecclesiastes. Vanity of vanities. Vanity says the preacher. All is vanity. Ten years ago.

The novelist. Cormac McCarthy. He wrote a book called The Road. It's a book that became one of his most famous. It was made into a movie. And it's a story about a father and a son.

Wandering through a ruined and dead and burned world. Filled with horrors. If you're feeling super awful right now about Ecclesiastes chapter 12.

[ 42 : 39 ] I'll offer one of my. Another one of my book. Don't read this book. Recommendations. Because the road. If you're feeling bad now. You'll probably have nightmares for like a week.

After reading the road. It is. It is intense. But the book ends with these words. Once there were brook trout in the streams of the mountains. On their backs were vermiculite patterns.

That were maps of the world and its becoming. Maps and mazes. Of a thing which could not be put back. Not be made right again.

In the deep glens where they lived. All things were older than man. And they hummed of mystery.

And what McCarthy wrote about in the road. Was that even in a world of utter and complete ruin.

There were still moments of goodness and light. And I was reminded of that this week. I was at the gym. I was talking with a friend of mine there. And this friend.

[ 43 : 45 ] He'd retired a few years ago. And this year both of his parents had died. And it hit him very, very hard. And he told me this on Thursday.

He said, my wife put it into perspective. Losing your parents is like becoming an orphan. It's becoming an orphan. Even when you were older. And then he paused.

And he looked outside the front windows of the gym. And he said, anyway. The sun is shining. And then he smiled.

There was a little smile. And then he walked outside. Light is sweet. And it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun. There is still light.

There is still life. Even in this ruined world. The sun is still shining.

[ 44 : 50 ] And you and I have life. And we have opportunity now. The good life is not gained by postponing our opportunities for joy.

The good life is relishing our God-given present. While regarding our God-given future. And if we embrace the life-giving Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Christ. The very first man to be permanently resurrected to eternal life. To the good life. Then not only is there life, fleeting life right now.

And not only is the sun shining now. But there is overflowing life beyond the grave. And the new heavens and the new earth. Where the glory of God gives us light.

Thusipe that the lake is now administered at his key. Which one shall die. Like the name she's chaser. This is our first happening. And the top one anticrispone community. And I will ■show the flashlight for the powerful whiteigner.

[ 46 : 04 ] Thank you. Once you get styled for the rain. And I will rasa fish in the Nightmare primero. And I will encourage you and oh yeah. The great Padme surgery for the Porcos!". Thank you.