

Rejoice And Remember

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] Good morning to you all and thank you for joining us today for the service from Stornoway Free Church. Let me begin by wishing you a very happy new year, those of you especially who weren't able to come to or attend or be listening in on our New Year's Day service.

I do trust this year will be full of God's rich blessing for you and may we find better times in this coming year than in the past year with its COVID complications.

We're going to begin our service today singing in Psalm 106. That's in the Scottish Psalter and the version we have there, Psalm 106, page 378 of the psalm books.

And the tune is done firmly and we'll sing verses 1 to 5. Give praise and thanks unto the Lord, for bountiful is he, his tender mercy doth endure unto eternity.

God's mighty works who can express or show forth all his praise. Blessed are they that judgment keep and justly do always.

[1 : 06] Verses 1 to 5, Psalm 106. Give praise and thanks unto the Lord, for bountiful is he, his tender mercy doth endure unto eternity.

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Remember me, Lord, with that love which thou to thine dost pay.

With thy salvation, O my God, to visit me, drawn years.

[2 : 35] That I thy chosen's good may see, and in their joy rejoice.

And may with thine inheritance triumph with cheerful voice.

Now let's read from God's word in the book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes chapter 11, we're reading from verse 7.

Down as far as chapter 12, verse 8. So Ecclesiastes 11, from verse 7. 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 all 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.

[3 : 49] 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.

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 of 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.

When the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises 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.

[5 : 01] 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.

Vanity of vanities, says the preacher, all is vanity. Once again we pray that God will follow with his blessing, and apply with his blessing, these words to our heart.

Let's now engage in prayer. We're going to call upon the Lord in prayer. O Lord our God, unite us, we pray, as we come before you today to worship you.

Unite us now in prayer as we call upon you, that we may use that access that we have to you, to the best of our advantage, and to the glory of your name.

You have given us this great privilege of being able to speak directly with you, through our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you today that he is that new and living way for us, by which we are able to approach you and come into your presence.

[6 : 16] Lord bless us, we pray, in this our gathering today, as we give thanks for the way in which we are enabled to come together in this way. So we give thanks, O Lord, for your goodness.

For it is from your goodness that all blessings flow. We thank you today for your goodness. We know your goodness from day to day. We confess, Lord, at times that we don't attribute the things that we do rightly enjoy to your goodness.

Help us, we pray, to take pauses in life, to pause each day to reflect upon the source of our blessings, the source of all the good things that we enjoy in life.

And help us to rejoice in them, in the way in which you have called upon us to do so, even through these words we have read, so that whatever stage of life we are at, we may learn to properly rejoice, to reflect upon those things that are of great advantage to us, and not to be diverted from a path of following you and seeking to glorify your name.

This is why you created us, O Lord, as your word makes it clear to us, that we may glorify you and enjoy you forever. We pray that as we come before you today, we may know something anew of that enjoyment of spirit, that our hearts may rejoice in your presence.

[7 : 44] And even as we come to confess our sin, which we need to and which we do, Lord, help us to rejoice in your forgiveness, in the salvation that you offer to us through Jesus Christ, in which you give in abundance to all who come in repentance and faith, who come confessing their sin, their unworthiness, their need of you, their need of your grace.

And yet who come, Lord, also receiving gladly the provision that you have made in the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks, O Lord, today for all the things that enrich our lives on the way through life.

And as we have been reading in your word, help us, we pray, to take stock of these before the days come when our faculties fail and when we will no longer be able to have pleasure in them.

Grant us your blessing, we pray, to follow your word, to apply your word. We thank you again for your word, that we begin this new year by looking to your word to guide us through it as in years gone by.

We thank you that while we change and we experience change in the passing of the years, we thank you that neither you nor your word changes. We pray that we may always maintain it in our own thoughts and in our practice as a word that you have given us, suitable as it is for all generations.

[9 : 11] Lord, we ask that wherever there is the temptation to adjust it, to add to it, to take from it, that you would grant us, Lord, to prevent doing so and that you would help us, Lord, as we come to look out on the world where some who confess your name have obviously departed from your word and have added to it certain practices that your word neither approves of but also condemns.

Lord, forgive, we pray, where that is the case. Grant that you would return your people all throughout the world and ourselves here to a purity of following your word and to regard your word in its sufficiency as relevant and appropriate for our age and for our lives in it.

We thank you today for the fellowship of your church and while we lament, oh Lord, the providence that has prevented us being together physically so much of the time, oh Lord, help us nevertheless to give thanks that your people are bound by your spirit in bonds that no providence, however grievous, can break.

And help us, we pray, as we look beyond the immediate and beyond this pandemic. Help us to realise, Lord, that it is your providence and that you have your own purpose behind it.

And help us, we pray, to look to you and not necessarily to explain everything about it but to enable us to place our trust in you. So like the psalmist, we will be able to say and to follow out in life these words that he gave us when I am afraid, I will trust in you.

[10 : 59] We ask that you would help us to follow that directive each and every day. Bless, we pray, each of us individually. Bless us in our homes. Bless us as a congregation.

Bless us in all the age groups that we belong to. In all the differences of need that apply to these passing years of our age. We pray, Lord, that you would grant us your own help. We pray that you would give us, we pray the richness of your grace so as to steer us through safely through the issues and temptations of life. We ask today for those who have much grief to contend with.

We pray for those who begin a new year having lost loved ones and grieving over their loss either recently or in reflection of years gone by.

Oh, Lord, comfort our hearts, we pray as we bring our anxieties and concerns and our pains to you. We ask that you would minister to them especially today who find it so difficult to contemplate those who have gone and to contemplate that they have in fact left this scene of time.

[12:14] We pray that you would guide us, Lord, to yourself. You are the one who came into this world and took our nature and humanity to yourself deliberately in order that you might experience our temptations and our pains and especially take our death, the death that we deserved.

We thank you that you have accomplished all that you came to achieve, that you are risen from the dead and set in glory. Oh, help us, we pray, to look to you as the one who rules over all things for the good of your church.

Bless our children, our young people, help them to rejoice in their youth as we've been reading and enable us, Lord, to help them do that. Help us to be an encouragement to them.

Bless the teaching that they receive at home or in Sunday school or by other means that comes to bring your word to them and seek to explain it to them.

We commend them to you and ask that you protect them. Bless, Lord, those who help us in our communities, those who care for us in our teaching, in our young days and in our adolescence.

[13:23] We pray that you bless also those who teach us in our later years of life. Bless, we pray, those who look after our health mentally and physically. We give off their time so readily to those who are ill and to those also who seek to bring comfort and relief and counsel to the bereaved.

Lord, in all of these things, we pray that you would help us to be thankful and we commend them all to you. Bless us now, we pray, as we further wait upon you in our worship.

Hear us and accept this, our prayer, and pardon our sins. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Now, children, today I'm just going to mention a few things about moving from the old to the new.

We know that this is a new year we have entered and I just want to mention a few things to do with moving from the old to the new, not just in terms of moving from one year to the next, but looking at that as something that we need to bear in mind in many aspects of our life.

This is a phone that I used to have many years ago now. It was quite modern at the time. It had a slider like that so that you could lock away the keyboard and then it slides out like that.

[14:39] It had a wee camera on it. It's pretty pathetic now when you think of what's available in a smartphone. And coming from this to the smartphone that I'm using now to video this live stream onto the internet is a huge jump.

You can see that's from the old to the new. I thought this thing, and it was at the time reasonably advanced. It wasn't top of the range, but you could get on the internet too.

They'd begun to build that into mobile phones at that time. So I thought, well, I was back and forth then from Edinburgh quite a bit at committees and I thought it'd be handy to get one of these. And it was at the time very handy, but it's very ancient now in the technology compared to smartphones. And I'm sure in 20 years' time, God willing, that the smartphones we're using now will be seen as really quite outdated and have been overtaken by advancement in technology.

So we're always actually moving from the old to the new through life. And many of the things we use from day to day, we move from the old to the new, not just mobile phones.

[15:48] You have it in other things that you use in your home, televisions, you have it in cars, you have it in all sorts of other things that we use. So moving from the old to the new is something we're very familiar with as we go through life.

And of course, we've mentioned moving from one year to another. We think of leaving the old year behind. We often refer to it that way. And we always, as we tried to do today, to wish people a good or a happy new year.

It's a new year because the calendar we follow begins with the 1st of January through to the 31st of December. So it's a new year and we acknowledge the passing of time in that way.

The Bible also speaks about moving from the old to the new in a rather special way. because in 2nd Corinthians, for example, chapter 5 and verse 17, we find the apostle Paul writing, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. And he goes on to speak about the reconciliation that God has brought about through Jesus Christ coming into the world and dying the death of the cross and rising from the dead.

[17 : 08] The reconciliation is a big long word which basically means God bringing us back into friendship with him, having mercy upon us and providing salvation in which we have friendship with himself given to us.

So we're moving from the old, the old lifestyle, the old life before we came to know God as our friend and moving from there to being in Christ and therefore being a new creation.

God brings it about through his spirit. He changes us inwardly. He gives us a new heart. He gives us a new mind, a new way of looking at things, a new way of understanding and all of that belongs to being a new creation.

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. And that's an amazing thing because it takes the power of God which created the world and the universe in the beginning, it takes all of that power too to change us from the life we have as sinners, as lost sinners, to the new life of having salvation and being in Christ.

And that's something that you, as children, I want you to try and understand that but also to have that life for yourselves. Jesus, you remember, said to Nicodemus in John chapter 3, except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

[18 : 46] He cannot be saved, can't enter into salvation without being born again. And that's another way of saying that we are made a new creation, that God changes us from inside, from the heart, so that it affects all of our lives.

Now, that doesn't mean that all we need to do is just not bother about life but wait until God comes and does this to us. The Bible tells us that we are to seek the Lord while he is to be found and call upon him while he is near.

In other words, God comes near to us, especially in the gospel and in his word and we are to seek him, we are to reach out to him, we are to accept the saviour, Jesus Christ, while he is near to us through the gospel.

So, here is from the old to the new. Something much more important than going from my old mobile phone to a new smartphone.

Something more important even than going from an old year to a new year. The importance of going from an old life to a new life.

[20 : 02] And it doesn't matter how old we are today and I am speaking just now to the young people, to the children especially, but I am speaking also to myself and to everybody else.

It doesn't matter how old we may be, we are never beyond the need to be born again, to have a new life if that's not already something that's happened to us.

So, from the old to the new. Remember that in your own lives, young people, and seek the Lord that you too will have that new life that God can give you.

through his spirit. Let's now say the Lord's Prayer together. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

[21 : 09] Amen. We turn back to a reading now in Ecclesiastes, and I want to look at this passage from Ecclesiastes 11, verse 7, through to verse 8 of chapter 12.

Just to look at the main points of teaching in this passage. We're all conscious of the fact that we do quite a bit of pretending throughout our lives.

Really from the earliest days, we're involved in what you can call pretending. You have seen a little girl putting on a mother's high heels and clonking her way through the house.

You've seen a boy putting on his father's boots and pretending he's going out to the tractor or to whatever it is his father used boots for. It's a pretense. It's trying to just act the part of being an adult.

But you've also seen people who are 65 plus like me, struggling into skinny jeans, having had face tucks and goodness knows what else, just to try and pretend that life isn't really at the stage it's at. [22 : 19] It's interesting, isn't it? When we're younger or in our childhood, we really look to being older, to acting older than we are. When we reach older years, we wish in some ways that we are back to childhood and to the simplicity of childhood.

A great feature of Ecclesiastes is the realism it brings to us about life. It describes life as it really is. And there's no room for pretense in what Ecclesiastes is bringing to us. We've seen that already as we've gone through the book that in many of the passages the realism is obvious. It tells us things as they are. It brings us an emphasis as we have here on rejoicing, but also it counters that or it accompanies that with an emphasis on the other side of things. The weaknesses, the limitations, and indeed death itself ultimately at the end of our course in this world. Now the key to our passage today you could say is in verse 1 of chapter 12 Remember also your creator in the days of your youth before the evil days come.

[23 : 34] So the theme of the passage is to really maximise the days when we are at our best physically or mentally and it speaks to adults as we'll see in verse 8 there, a person who lives many years, but it also speaks a lot to young people and that's a great thing about this passage.

For all you young people today this is a passage of the Bible that in many ways is specially addressed to you as young people. Remember also your creator in the days of your youth.

So what it's really saying to us is we have to rejoice in the times that we have when we are at our most able, when we can do things which in later life prove impossible for us to do.

And it's not just saying make the most of your young years, it really is emphasising rejoice in them, enjoy them, because the days are coming when as you get older and especially in old age you're not able to do the things that you enjoyed doing in your younger days.

And we're going to follow the passage through by just looking at three words that are repeated in which we find that theme broadened out for us. There's first of all the word rejoice.

[24 : 57] Look at verses 8 and 9. If a person lives many years let him rejoice in them. And then rejoice in verse 9. Rejoice, O young man in your youth.

That's the first word, rejoice. Second word is the word remove. In verse 10 remove vexation from your heart and put away or remove pain from your body.

Rejoice, remove and thirdly remember. Again that's the word repeated in verse 8. You find the word remember that the days of darkness will be many.

In verse 9 it's the word know but it really means the same thing. Remember that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. And then of course there's the first verse in chapter 12.

Remember also you're created in the days of your youth. So let's follow these three words and some of the teaching built around them in the structure of the passage. Rejoice, remove and remember.

[25 : 58] So here's rejoice first of all beginning with verse 8. So if a person lives many years let him rejoice in them. That is especially for the older generation.

He talks here about a person having lived many years without specifying how many. But if we're of an older generation we can relate to that. Now he began at verse 7.

Light is sweet and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun. And that's a verse which you could say represents the good things of life and perhaps even the time when we are in fact at our maximum ability to enjoy the good things of life.

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. It's a picture of really going out on a lovely sunny day looking around at the creation and enjoying the scenery and enjoying the light instead of being in the darkness and seeing the sun and feeling the warmth of the sun in your back and enjoying as you're able these wonderful conditions.

And it follows through into what it's saying about enjoying life. If a person lives many years let him rejoice in them. There are many many things in our older years even that we can enjoy in life.

[27 : 22] I know that and indeed the passage will actually remind us that there are things in life which are not so enjoyable or easy to enjoy. there are things which impose limitations upon us but by and large as we get older and especially as you get into the years towards and into retirement we are in a position to enjoy life more than when we had so many other responsibilities in earlier times.

We can enjoy more of nature itself. We have more time to enjoy the world around us to actually go places and to see and take in scenery which perhaps we were just going past too quickly in days when the children were fighting in the back of the car or whatever.

It's telling us here that life is to be enjoyed even as the years go on and anyone who has come to have the pleasure of grandchildren will know that that's one of the pleasant things one of the sweet things it says in verse as it calls it in verse seven light is sweet many sweet things in life and that's just one example of it.

In fact it's one of the car stickers I came across at one time said grandchildren are great I should have had them first and you can follow the logic of that because you enjoy being with the grandchildren but you always give them back when it gets a bit too much.

That's really in a sense what it's saying here but rejoice in your older years as well make the most of them and the things you can do that you were not able to in your younger years you have more time to do it usually and you're more experienced as well in bringing what you've learned in your younger years to bear upon the stage of life that you're now at that we're now at I'm including myself and the older ones of course we have more experience of life we can apply the things we've learned to the things that we now experience to our daily life and so here is a call for us to rejoice in these days to rejoice in our adulthood to rejoice in the many things that God does give us to enjoy in life but then there's a caution or a caveat you might say it says but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many all that comes is vanity there are certain things all through life that are far from sweet in fact they're sour they're difficult they're challenging and we're all aware of that and especially when it comes to old age then we have additional difficulties and we'll see that in chapter 12 when we come to that magnificent picture he has of the derelict or decaying house now he's not saying this either here or as we'll see speaking to the younger people he's not saying remember that the days of darkness will be many that you have difficulties throughout your life that you're going to have further challenges in your old age he's saying that but he's not saying that so that that will dampen the enjoyment of the days when you can really rejoice in the things of life what he's doing is basically telling us make the most of the days that you can enjoy life make the most of the conditions that your younger days give you make the most of your conditions where your ability is not hampered by the things of old age so that you can actually then consider that coming to old age you have brought all of that rejoicing into it with you it's not the kind of thing that the ecclesiastes is saying well rejoice in them all but don't rejoice too much because I want you to dampen that down because the days of darkness will be many it's not a spoiling of our joy that's introduced there it's actually the contrary it's really saying this to us so that we will actually make the most of the days that we have be they few or many or whatever content they will have so if a person lives many years let him rejoice in them there's rejoicing for the older generation but there's also rejoicing for the young rejoice in verse 9 oh young man in your youth let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes it's particularly addressed to youth not necessarily excluding children but that in between time especially between childhood or younger childhood and actual adulthood but what it's saying is at that particular age young people youth rejoice in your youth it says oh young man it includes young women as well of course rejoice you young people he's saying in your youth because that's where you have the freedom that's where you have the vigour that's where you have the strength that's where you have the less complicated things of life and one of the terrible things about the world we live in is that life has become so complicated even for younger people and so much of an attempt is made to [32 : 49] try and impose things that really belong to adulthood upon children and upon young people that's not good he's saying here rejoice in your youth let your youth be youth and those of you who are children today enjoy your childhood don't be in a hurry to grow up you'll have plenty of years if God spares you to actually have the complications of life to deal with rejoice in your childhood rejoice in your youth they're there to be enjoyed these years where you have most freedom and most energy and most vigour when he's saying here walk in the ways of your heart it doesn't mean just do as you please because it then says but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment what he's saying is rejoice in the things that are really good for you rejoice in the things that are not sinful enjoy life but not sinfully keep straight and that's why he says here God will bring you into judgment it's just a reminder that we have to keep to a certain pathway in life as young people or adults because to stray from that into ways that are sinful will not be to our advantage will not do us any good ultimately however attractive they may be remember Moses

when in chapter 11 of Hebrews Moses is described as somebody who chose to be a member of God's people even though they were badly treated in Egypt rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time the world for you young people has a vast number of the pleasures of sin for you to enjoy to enjoy in a sinful way this is saying to you don't do that don't let yourself be led away by other people or by the devil or by the ways of your own heart into things that are not good for you things that are not pleasing to God a lifestyle that God does not approve of so for the young people rejoice in your youth but rejoice in a good way rejoice in a proper way rejoice in a holy way rejoice in a way that enjoys life but not sinfully because joy belongs to those who follow God those who walk in the ways of

God those who have God's salvation in their hearts that's the greatest joy you can have and this is really counseling us both in our older days and in our youth to really enjoy God himself and the ways of God the salvation that God brings to us and the benefits that he brings to those who trust in him so here's rejoicing first of all rejoicing for the older generation in the ways that are legitimate rejoicing for the young as well and as I said to the young people especially enjoy your childhood enjoy your youth they're gone far too quickly they're over before you know it and other big responsibilities come into your life once you start work maybe you have a family have children to look after all the worries that that brings so enjoy your youth make sure that you really enjoy being a young person and especially a young person who knows

God who knows the ways of God who loves the people of God who takes advice from the people of God and who enjoys all the good things that God has given us to enjoy in this life that's the first word rejoice the second word is the word remove that's in verse 10 remove vexation from your heart and put away pain from your body for youth and the dawn of life and vanity the word vexation there has to do with bitterness and I think it's saying to us really that there are so many things in life life is full of things which hurt us the ways in which we experience hurt are many disappointments sorrows illnesses bereavements so so many things in life that are hurtful that bring pain into our lives that bring disappointment or discouragement but what it's saying to us is don't become bitter don't actually be irritable over that don't let that make you a complainer you know one of those people that you come across that live life as if they're always sucking lemons they're always trying to complain about this or that or that person or this person nothing really seems to satisfy them at all and they go around complaining and always showing some elements of anger they're irritable they make other people irritable and bitter they're difficult to be with he's saying to us don't be that kind of person life is to be enjoyed even amongst the difficulties of life put away bitterness put away irritableness keep on enjoying God enjoying life in fellowship with him and with his people accept the things of life as of

God's arrangement I know that's easy to say but I have to say it to myself too for all the ways in which we have disappointments and challenges and difficulties in ministry this is one thing the Bible teaches us live what you preach try and live out what you're saying to others in the teaching of the word of God and the New Testament as you know expands on that and it really brings us to the kernel of how we actually do this when it says here remove vexation from your heart that's really bringing us to the point where we're putting the Lord first in our lives remember for example the famous passage in Matthew Matthew 6 where Jesus is countering this whole mindset of worrying or of anxiety or of things which lead to bitterness or irritableness or complaining and all the way through there from verse 19 to the end of the chapter there in Matthew chapter 6 he's dealing with that subject as part of his Sermon on the Mount and it says that the secret of it really the key to it is this do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven that's the key to it he says don't live for this world don't live for material things even though you have to use them don't put them first in your life put God first as he says later seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you don't be anxious about your life what you will eat what you'll drink what you'll put on your body don't be like the world that just hankers after those things you have God you have God's love you have

[40 : 18] God's care you have God's provision and what he's saying to us here in Ecclesiastes is really pretty much the same remove vexation don't go for the things that will make you irritable don't leave in place in your life the kind of thinking that will make you a complainer and just angry about everything and you have Paul saying very similarly you remember in his letter to the Philippians words we quote very often in chapter 4 sometimes we just begin at verse 6 there don't be anxious about anything but it's important to begin at verse 4 rejoice there's the Ecclesiastes note rejoice in

the Lord always and again I say rejoice do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God and and what and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus that would make a great difference if we if we just had in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known to God but there's another word there isn't there and in many ways that's the key to it as well in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving by all means supplicate God appeal to God pray to God ask God seek blessing from God seek guidance from God but he's saying do it with thanksgiving even in the midst of your anxieties you have so much to be thankful for we have so much to be thankful for make the thanksgivings prominent in your dealings with God and as you make the thanksgivings prominent in your dealings with God he said so the peace of God will be a guardian of your heart what a wonderful expression that's what he's saying in Ecclesiastes to remove vexation from your heart don't become bitter don't let the things that are difficult and challenging your life make you that sort of bitter or irritable complainer in life and of course that includes as well we're just saying this in passing really because the time is passing so fast it is also giving us here in verse 10 what you might say is a biblical argument for proper medical care it's not just saying remove vexation from your heart it's also put away pain from your body there are legitimate ways where medical expertise can be applied to causes of pain and you know that's such an important matter when we're dealing with what seems to be an increasing drive towards legalizing euthanasia one of the arguments against that is the advance that has been made and continues to be made in palliative care a place like Bethesda hospices throughout the country that deal with great pain in terms of cancer and cancer treatment and other ailments as well and here is God giving us grounds for dealing legitimately with the removal of pain and the palliating of pain in medical care because it's saying in verse 10b for youth and the dawn of life are vanity it doesn't mean there vanity in itself of no purpose and what it's saying is take care to not become bitter over the things that come into your life as life goes on because youth and the dawn the beginning of life are fleeting they're just like a mist which this is literally what it means it's like a vapour it's not there for very long and then it vanishes and you can't recapture that you can't go back and live as if you were still a teenager when you're in your 60s or even younger we have to accept the reality the realism that ecclesiastes gives us and the key to it all is really dependence on God and living in fellowship with God and having the friendship of God rejoice remove and remember is the third word there are a number of times as we said particularly to the younger ones remember also your creator in the days of your youth let's just say God it says your creator the one who made you and because he made you so he will continue to look after you when you trust in him so the argument really again is put God first in your life and the best way to do that is to begin when you're young to start it in your youth and that continues through into your adult life remember your creator remember where you came from remember that your father and mother are not your creators God is your creator he's the one who made us who fashions us as the psalmist says in Psalm 139 where he's praying to God and speaking to God of how he was formed before he was born you formed me you formed my parts you're the one who actually have given me that form that human form that human life and that's what Decclesiastes say remember your creator in the days of your youth because it then gives two wonderful pictures and I don't really have time to go into as much as I'd like to but we'll do it as far as possible two pictures of how we actually see things coming for which we have to prepare in the days of our younger days or our youth or even our young adulthood because he says before the years come the evil days the days of bad things and the years draw near of which you will say I have no pleasure in them here's where as we'll see things have really come to a decline physically or mentally and the first picture is one of a gathering storm before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain there's a gathering storm you see it on the horizon the sky is getting dark you see in these places where there are hurricanes especially you see what they do before the hurricane actually arrives the forecaster tells you it's going to be there in a couple of days time it's over the

[47 : 04] Atlantic it's making its way towards you what do you see them doing they're battenning down their hatches they're battenning down their homes they're putting stuff over their windows and they're making sure that everything that can move as far as possible is tied down because the storm is coming the storm of life is coming too if God spares you and I we're going to be older at the end of this year than we were than we are just now but that doesn't mean just the passing of time it

means very often the waning of strength and even today you people who are young you people who are in your youth or even in your childhood should as we've said remember that doesn't last too long you have to prepare for your older years and you do that in communion with God in following God's own teaching in his word and the second picture is probably in many ways the most superb poetic picture we have in the

Bible of what it means to grow old and come towards death because it talks about it gives you a picture of a decrepit or a decaying house a house that's been derelict and is just falling apart and that's a description of our human being our human frame and it tells us these things so that we can apply them to our human life let's go through it very briefly he says here this this house this is what it looks like the keepers of the house tremble the keepers of the house are your arms they were once strong but they're now trembling for the least thing the strong men are your legs they're now bent they can't take the weight the same as they used to the grinders are your teeth because they are now very few so they can't grind the same way as they did those who look through the windows are dimmed your eyes are going dim your sight begins to fail and the doors on the streets are shut your ears your hearing is not what it used to be the sound of the grinding is low one rises at the sound of a bird you don't have the same sound sleep you once had all the daughters of song are brought low your voice is not what it used to be especially if you're in the practice of singing you know that your voice doesn't keep up that same quality as life goes on and then you say also they are afraid of heights

I was walking I was on the ice just yesterday when it's very icy like that in my younger days I would have skated over that ice I would have just gone and slid I would have enjoyed making a slide as we used to say in our young days and sliding along and not being afraid of falling over but yesterday there I was just bit by bit tiptoeing over the ice making sure that I didn't fall because I was afraid of falling you're afraid in your older days of what will happen if you fall and also terrors are in the way we become afraid of things that we once used to accept and get on with very easily it's not as easy to drive anymore especially in heavy traffic we become as the years go by we become intimidated by certain things we're afraid of things that we once used to take in our stride and it goes on the almond tree blossoms almond tree in blossom is a wonderful white fluffy thing and this seems to be a description of white hair you've reached the stage where in life your hair goes white if you've got any hair left at all well some of us maybe are a bit of an exception but generally that's what happens white hair is associated with old age and the grasshopper drags itself along we don't have the bounce we once had we're actually dragging our feet through life as old age proceeds and desire failed we lose our appetites not just for food but for doing other things why because man is going to his eternal home and the mourners go about the streets in other words death is getting nearer we're seeing its approach the signs of it are all there you know

Hosea once said God gave him to say to Israel who were just living a life turned away from God and all the signs of coming judgment were there and this is one of the ways Hosea wonderfully described it grey hairs are here and there upon him yet he knows it not when you see your grey hairs you think well I'm much nearer death now than I was I need to make more preparation I need to be sure of my relationship with God because the mourners go about the street means that's just ahead of me death is not that far away compared to my younger days and then it says before the silver cord is snapped or the golden bowl is broken there's a wonderful picture there of still inside this house looking inside it it still has a light hanging from the ceiling on a silver cord and a golden bowl underneath that held the oil that fed that light and then all of a sudden one day it snaps and it crashes to the ground and it is smashed it's gone this light is out or the same thing the picture is shattered at the fountain you go to the well and the bucket or the pitcher that you let down into the well you bring it up one of these days and it's shattered it's broken you can't use it you can't draw the water that you need from it and finally it says or the wheel broken at the cistern the same thing really in a sense you want to use the mechanism that lets the bucket down into the well and the wheel is broken and it doesn't work and you can't use it it's beyond proper use all of that is telling us these are the ways in which we recognise the passing of time the nearness of eternity because man is going to his long home to his eternal home and he finishes this by punching it at us in verse 7 the dust returns to the earth as it was and the spirit returns to god who gave it you see death in a sense is the reversal of the creation isn't it there is the creation of man in genesis chapter 1 and 2 where god took the earth and formed human beings out of it the human being Adam out of it and breathed into him the breath of life death is the reversal of that return to the dust as god said and i often think

as i cast the earth into an open grave onto the coffin and proclaim that that is being now committed to the dust until the day of christ return i often think that's that's what i am i was made from dust to dust i shall return and my spirit will return to god who gave it it doesn't say here anything in distinguishing hell and heaven all it's interested in here you have to go to the rest of the bible for that other places in the bible what it's saying here is this is actually what happens your body goes to return to the dust it decays into the ground there's the crumbling house it's reached it's let's reach the point where it's gone it's fallen in and the spirit goes to god who gave it we leave our bodies behind but we continue we live on we our persons live on in our souls in our spiritual being and we go to meet god and we have to be ready we have to have christ we need to be saved we need to be saved and if it hasn't if we haven't accepted christ before then it'll be too late when your body is returning

to the dust and your soul has gone to meet god we can't then turn back and say lord please save me seek the lord while he is to be found call upon him while he is near before the evil days come when you will say i have no pleasure in them none of this we see you see is so that we will live a gloomy life far far from it all of these things are reminders of approaching death and limitations of old age they're not so that we will live a gloomy life and go around depressed it's so that we will enjoy life to the full in jesus christ in the salvation that god has given us taking account of the fact that we need to do that before we die and on the way through to the advancement of age that's the key to a happy life to remember our creator before these days come when the house that's now perishing will crash and go to the dust may god bless these thoughts to us today let's pray lord help us we pray as your word counsels us to bear our end in mind and we pray that you would teach us to number our days that we may apply our heart to wisdom help us we pray as we reckon with the issues of life and of death that we may indeed know that benefit and that foundation of friendship with you so that when we come to leave this world it will be a step upwards into greater enjoyment and fellowship with god our savior hear us we pray for jesus sake amen let's now conclude by singing in psalm 90 psalm 90 in the sing psalms version of psalm 90 and from verse 11 the power of your anger who can know your wrath is as great as is the fear we owe teach us to number all our days are right so will our hearts be filled with wisdom's light we'll sing to the tune even tide verse 11 to 17 the power of your anger who can know your us as great as is the fear we owe teach us to number all our days are right so will our hearts be filled with wisdom's light return oh lord how long will you delay have mercy on your servants lord we pray oh satisfy us with your love always that we may sing rejoicing all our days in place of our affliction make us glad joy for all the

[59 : 24] years you made us sad to all your servants may your deeds be known and to their children make your glory known now may the favor of almighty God abide on us rich blessings of the Lord establish every work our hands have done yes Lord for us establish them each one now may grace and mercy and peace from

God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you now and remain with you ever more amen well let me thank you again for joining in to the service with us wherever you've been watching from it's been a privilege to have your participation in the service and please do if you can join us again this evening at 630 when Reverend Kenny I Macleod will be conducting the service thank you and may God bless and keep you safe in these days to come