

The "Better Than" Approach To Life

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[0 : 01] Good morning to you today, wherever you're watching and joining us for this service. I trust that you're well and safe, and we trust that God will bless us as we come to worship again together through this online service.

We're going to begin by praising God from Psalm 31. Psalm 31, that's in our Sing Psalms version, page 37. And we're singing verses 19 to 24, and the tune is Walton.

Your goodness, Lord, is very great, prepared for those who fear your name. You show your goodness openly to all who your protection claim. And so on, we'll sing down to the end of verse 24. Your goodness, Lord, is very great, prepared for those who fear your name. Your goodness, Lord, is very great, prepared for those who fear your name.

You show your goodness openly to all who your protection claim.

[1 : 27] Your presence hides and shelters them from those who plot to take their life.

And in your tent you keep them safe from evil plans that stir up strife.

The Lord be praised because he showed the wonder of his love to me.

When in a city I was trapped, surrounded by the enemy.

In my alarm I rashly said that I was hidden from your eyes.

[2 : 49] But when I called to you for help, in grace you listened to my cries.

O love the Lord, call you his saints. The faithful will be kept by God.

That he will give the proud their due. Be strong, take heart, hope in the Lord.

Let's now read from God's word. And we're reading today from the book of Psalms for our first reading. The book of Psalms and Psalm number 90. Psalm 90, a prayer of Moses, as it says in the title.

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, wherever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

[4 : 08] You return man to dust. And say, return, O children of man. For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past. Or as a watch in the night.

You sweep them away as with a flood. They are like a dream. Like grass that is renewed in the morning. In the morning it flourishes and is renewed. In the evening it fades and withers.

For we are brought to an end by your anger. By your wrath we are dismayed. You have set our iniquities before you. Our secret sins in the light of your presence.

For all our days pass away under your wrath. We bring our years to an end like a sigh. The years of our life are seventy or even by reason of strength eighty.

Yet their span is but toil and trouble. They are soon gone and we fly away. Who considers the power of your anger? And your wrath according to the fear of you?

[5 : 06] So teach us to number our days. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray.

Let us pray. Amen. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us. And for as many years as we have seen evil.

Let your work be shown to your servants. And your glorious power to their children. Let the favour of the Lord our God be upon us. And establish the work of our hands upon us.

Yes, establish the work of our hands. Amen. And may God bless this portion of his word to us today. Now let's join together in prayer.

Let's all call upon the Lord together in prayer. Almighty God, we give thanks today that we have this facility and ability to worship you through your great mercy and grace.

[6 : 08] We thank you, O Lord, that your word has guided us already into aspects of your greatness. Your majesty, your authority, your sovereignty over us.

Your government as you rule. Everything that takes place in the universe and in the lives of human beings. We thank you today, Lord, for the light that your word gives us on our condition, on our relationship with you.

And on eternal things. We bless you today that you have come in this word that we have read. To confront us with our mortality. Our sinfulness.

With the brevity of our life in this world. And with the many years that you give us. And yet, even though they be many, they are fleeting. And we are soon gone. Teach us, Lord, we pray, as Moses prayed.

To apply our hearts to wisdom. Teach us to number our days. Teach us by the things that take place in your providence. Such as this virus that has overtaken the world.

[7 : 15] Teach us the things that we ought to focus our minds upon. Teach us the important things. The eternal things. Teach us the things of righteousness. And justice and peace and love.

Rather than those things which are offensive to you. And bring your own displeasure and wrath upon us. Teach us, Lord, as a people.

To be submissive to your word. To prize your word. To return to your word. Teach us, Lord, we pray. All the things that your word counsels us to hide in our hearts.

To live by in our lives. We ask today, Lord, that your word will have this effect through the blessing of your spirit. That our lives truly may be anchored and firmly grounded in your truth.

Turn us away, we pray. Turn us away, we pray, from any thoughts that our own human wisdom is sufficient for us. At any time. Let alone a time of crisis. Such as we as a country and the world is facing.

[8 : 17] Lord, deliver us, we pray, from all alternatives to you. And we know that we have offended you and continue to do so. By erecting for ourselves other gods.

By hewing out for ourselves the broken cisterns of our own wisdom that cannot satisfy our souls. That cannot meet with the deepest need that we have.

Lord, we pray today for your forgiveness. We pray that you would turn us in repentance to yourself. Help us, Lord, on this day that we as a church have set apart as a day of prayer.

Help us to make use of the opportunity to do so. Enable us to draw near to you. And, oh Lord, assure us that as we do so, you are pleased to draw near to us.

We pray that you would open our ear to our cry. To the cry of your people throughout the world in this time of adversity. Lord, we know there are many people who are praying to you and crying out to you.

[9 : 17] And doing so out of the conviction that unless you lead us out of this crisis. Truly, Lord, we are undone. Oh, gracious one, hear us, we pray. And turn us into your ways.

For we know that we have offended you greatly. We know that we have spurned your ways. And turned aside from your laws. We know, gracious one, that we have erected for ourselves false gods.

Gods of our own making. Idols which cannot in any way provide for our needs as human beings.

Oh, Lord, we recall the many times in the history of your people Israel.

When you appealed to them through the prophets. To turn from the ways of idolatry and selfishness and human wisdom. Into the ways that you had set out for them in your truth.

Oh, Lord, we read how sadly so often they refuse to listen. And refuse to see the way of wisdom as better for them. Be pleased, we pray, to turn us into that way for ourselves.

[10 : 23] Remember us today, we pray. In all our concerns as a congregation, as an island and as communities. And indeed, oh Lord, throughout our nation. Again, we appeal to you for those who rule over us.

Or we know how difficult their situation is. When they need to make, come to conclusions. Based upon advice that they receive from medical and health experts.

And from others, Lord, who give them counsel in regard to this COVID-19 pandemic. We pray for them. We pray especially for them, Lord.

That you would help them to look to your truth. That whatever people may think of them. Or of their counsel, of their leadership. We ask, oh Lord, that they be led by your spirit.

That they be led into these avenues of your truth. That will exalt themselves and lead us as a nation. To be exalted in righteousness. For our sin is a reproach to us.

[11 : 25] We pray, oh Lord, for them. We pray that you bless all who today have anxiety in regard to their loved ones. And care homes and hospitals and hospices.

They cannot visit when they cannot. But, oh Lord, see them from afar. Or be in touch by phone. Oh Lord, we pray for all who have the virus.

For all who are separated from families. For all, oh Lord, who have lost loved ones at this time. We pray that you would be pleased, oh Lord. To bring us your comfort.

To bring us your guidance and your grace. And to fill us with strength. And with assurance that if we trust in your word. And turn our face to you. You will be merciful to us.

And you will hear our cry. We ask, oh Lord, for those who have anxiety over their work. For those who have lost jobs. For those businesses that have had to close permanently, some of them.

[12 : 23] We pray, oh Lord, for all families. Remember our schools and our teachers. Remember those who work in the health services. All, oh Lord, who provide public services at this time.

Be pleased, we pray, to bless us and to bless them. Hear us now, we pray. As we offer to you our worship and prayers. We do so, Lord, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Knowing that as we come claiming his merit, you are pleased to receive us for his sake. And we pray that you would do so now. And we ask it all in his name. Amen.

Now the children's address today is focusing on one of the I am sayings of Jesus. I want to spend some time, God willing, to look at these I am sayings with you as children.

And to look at them for ourselves as adults as well. They're so important. And begin by, in John chapter 6, they're all in the Gospel of John. And in John chapter 6, we find Jesus saying, In verses 35, 48 and 51, that he is the bread of life.

[13 : 28] I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. And whoever believes in me shall never thirst. Bread is something that we're all very familiar with.

It's one of our most basic and most nourishing types of food. But perhaps we don't appreciate it very much, seeing we don't live in a time of great scarcity of food, like they do in other parts of the world where there is poverty, and where there is famine indeed, where there's not much food available.

And at all times when you see video of that on the news, or other videos of people in poverty and the distress, and the lack of food that you find in these situations, one of the things that people always try to provide for them is bread.

Because bread is nourishing. Bread has so much that satisfies our bodies when you can't get access to other food. If you are really, really hungry, you would not choose anything like candy floss, or something sweet like that kind, like chocolate.

You would not actually choose that instead of bread. You would go for bread because that's what really satisfies you, and really nourishes at that sort of time. So when you read about bread in the Bible, you have to remember that very often in these times and in these places, there was a scarcity of food, and bread was very, very precious.

[14 : 58] And when Jesus describes himself as the bread of life, he wants us to think about the bread that God provided for his people in the wilderness. It was called bread.

It was manna, a special kind of food that came down every single morning, apart from the Sunday, apart from the Sabbath. And they had to go out and gather it all the time that they were traveling through the desert, on the way to the promised land.

It was called manna. It was very difficult to describe it, but it tasted something sweet, something like the flavor of honey, but it was also obviously very, very nourishing.

It was God's food provided for the people in their desert journey. And that's the background to what Jesus is actually saying here in John chapter 6.

When you go on to verse 48, he says, So Jesus is saying to them, In the past, during the days of going through the desert, God provided manna, which was very nourishing, and yet it meant, it didn't mean that you didn't die, as we all die in this life.

[16 : 27] Everyone who ate the manna still died at some point in their journey. But Jesus is saying, If you eat of me, if you take me as the bread from heaven, the bread that meets your soul's need, you shall live forever.

In other words, he's talking about eternal life. And just as bread was given miraculously in the desert by God, so the bread of life that Jesus is, has been provided miraculously by God.

God willing, we'll soon be coming towards Christmas, whatever kind of time it's going to be at Christmas, but it's one thing for sure, we will be remembering, as we remember other times too, how God provided salvation for us, and how the Lord provided that in Jesus Christ.

Jesus, the Son of God, came miraculously into this world by taking human nature and being born like one of us, like we all are, from a human mother.

And when he comes to speak of himself as the bread of life, he wants us to think how miraculously he came as the bread of life from heaven into this world to bring us eternal life.

[17 : 42] So that if we believe in him, if we trust in him, if we accept him, his promise is, that's really what he means by eating of this bread, by taking Jesus himself into our souls.

Well, his promise is, if we do that, we will live forever. We will go, when we finish this life, to be in heaven with God.

And so it's so important. Jesus often used very simple things, very basic things, to describe the most important things that we need to know. Very few things are more simple than bread.

And yet that's what Jesus is using to speak of himself. And I hope today, as children and as adults, that today we're eating of this bread that Jesus is. That we have accepted the bread that came down from heaven, that Jesus himself is, so that we too will live forever.

Now we're going to say the Lord's Prayer together. Let's once again join together in saying the Lord's Prayer. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

[18 : 52] 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. Amen. We're now going to read again, this time in the book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 7.

Book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 7. And we're reading verses 1 to 10. And that's going to be the passage that we will give our minds to for a little time this morning.

Ecclesiastes 7, verses 1 to 10. A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth.

It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by a sadness of face the heart is made glad.

[20 : 02] The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better for a man to bear, to hear the rebuke of the wise, than to hear the song of fools.

For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of fools. This also is vanity. Surely oppression drives the wise into madness, and a bribe corrupts the heart.

Better is the end of a thing than its beginning, and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools.

Say not, why were the former days better than these? For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.

And as we go on to look at this part of chapter 7 and continuing our studies in Proverbs, which we've seen as a search for the meaning or the purpose for life, or life in this world, looking at this passage today, we can see that there's a change in the kind of narrative, the kind of style of words or writing that he's using, because he's now coming, the writer is coming to use something more like what you find in the book of Proverbs, for a while at least in this passage, so that you have a series here of Proverbs, but they're not a loose collection, as if they're not really joined together, just thrown together any old way.

It's very much tied together by certain threads and by certain themes. The main thread running through it, or one of the main themes or threads, are these words, better than.

[21 : 45] We're looking at this passage today as the better than approach to life. And what he's saying here is better than, better than, better than, all the way through, you find him saying certain things are better than other things.

And some of them we'll see are rather strange or even very challenging indeed as to why he's speaking in this way. And it's designed in many ways to shock us.

You know, the Bible's really like that. One of the great things about the Bible that sometimes it just brings things out to confront you in a way that really surprises, in a way that really shocks you.

Just look at verse one there. A good name is better than precious ointment. And you walk into that and say, yeah, I accept that. That's easy to see. That's easy to accept. A good name, a good

character, a good reputation.

Yes, it's better than precious ointment. I can go into that. I can feel comfortable with that. But then you see the second part. You walk into the second part and it's like walking into a door. And the day of death, better than the day of birth.

[22 : 50] You can't read that without being somewhat shocked and at least asking the question, what on earth is he talking about? Why is he putting it in those terms? Why is it just that blunt?

That's what the Bible sometimes does. Because God is concerned as we read our Bibles, as we listen to the preaching of the gospel, as we study the Bible for ourselves, whatever it is, to get the truth of the Bible.

One of the things, one of the main things that God is asking us to do is to think. And to think seriously and deeply. To think from the root of our being.

To give our minds really seriously and wholly to what the Bible is saying to us. And that's one of the ways in which God confronts us with his truth. He really shocks us, if you like, into a way of thinking, thinking deeply.

And that's running right through this passage as we'll see. And the key to it, in many ways, as you see that thread, better than, the key to it is really the reference to wisdom or to the wise.

[23 : 57] And that's repeated also throughout the passage, certainly all the way down as far as verse 11. Talks about wisdom, talks about wise. That's really the key to understanding life under the sun.

We've been seeing how life under the sun equates to leaving God out of the picture and trying to make sense of life without God being involved, without God being in a reckoning. And what he's saying, of course, is if we do that, then we end up with futility, with vanity, with meaninglessness. So again, the key here is wisdom, the wisdom that God gives, the wisdom we get from God's truth, the wisdom we get from our Bibles, the wisdom we get from God's teaching, from his Spirit telling us and teaching us and guiding us into the truth of God.

That's the key to understanding what he means by the better than approach to life. Three of these we're going to look at. We're going to take the first four verses together because they're very much closely related in that he talks about death and mourning and so on and sorrow.

So the first thing is the wake is better than the wedding reception. The wake is better than the wedding reception. Verses one to four.

[25 : 10] Then, verses five to seven, being rebuked is better than being amused. Being rebuked is better than being amused.

Then, verses seven to nine, the long road is better than the shortcut. The long road is better than the shortcut. There is another one we haven't time to go into today.

In verse 10, say not, why were the former days better than these? For it is not from wisdom that you ask. The key, again, is looking at it from the point of view of wisdom.

Let's leave that one and just come back to the three we've mentioned. First of all, verses one to four, the wake is better than the wedding reception. Now, there's a connection very closely between verses one and two and what follows down to verse four.

A good name better than precious ointment. We can perhaps read it this way. As a good name is better than precious ointment, so the day of death better than the day of mirth, because it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting.

[26 : 17] For this is the end of all mankind and the living will lay it to heart. Then things follow on from that. Precious ointment is always spoken of in the Bible as expensive and very much to be desired, but also not affordable by so many people.

And of course, it's still the same to this day, I'm sure. But he says here, a good name is better than precious ointment. Just because ointment was so expensive, those who had it really saw it as really precious and valuable.

And if you guys want to buy your wife a little bottle of Chanel or whatever, you'll soon see how expensive it is. What he's saying is, it's actually out-perfumed, however wonderful the perfume of an expensive ointment or perfume is, and it is.

Perfume is wonderful, but what he's saying is, that's out-perfumed by a good name. However beautiful, however wonderful in fragrance a perfume may be, however precious, however expensive, however much to be prized it is, a good name is better than that.

He means by that, of course, a godly character, the kind of reputation that pleases God, the kind of character that you get from following God, from depending on God, from valuing God's own truths. [27 : 48] He's saying, that's better than precious ointment and that's easy enough for us really to follow out. But then you come to the second part of verse 1, and the day of death than the day of birth.

How come? How is that so? Well, you need to read right through without stopping to the end of verse 4. Let's do that. The day of death is better than the day of birth.

It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.

The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. What's he doing? He's comparing festive occasions, you might call them, because he's talking about more than just the house of feasting.

That's why we've said a wake is better than a wedding reception. Think of the occasion of a wedding and a wedding reception. It's a wonderful occasion. It's right to be glad. It's right to celebrate it.

[28 : 56] It's right to be happy. It's right to enjoy that occasion. Full of excitement, full of anticipation, full of so much that makes that such a very happy occasion.

But you don't, and it's not appropriate within that really to, it doesn't fit the occasion if you're going to give a speech about death, about judgment, about eternity. It wouldn't necessarily always be out of place, but it's not in keeping with that occasion.

It's a time for celebrating. It's time for really thinking of that which gives you joy and gladness in this life. Then you see, he's comparing that with the wake.

When you go to the house of mourning, it's different to the house of feasting because your mind is then upon what he calls here the end of all mankind, the end of our course in this world, the reality of death, the reality of eternity, the reality of God's judgment.

It's a different perspective. It teaches you different things. It has something which is really more akin to our spiritual need than you get at a wedding reception. Glad and right though it is to celebrate that wedding and that gladness, it doesn't really provide the occasion when you can give your mind to the more serious business of life which a wake actually does.

[30 : 18] A funeral, a time of death. That's why Moses, as we read in Psalm 90, speaks the way he does. He's talking there as you remember of God and how God is calling us to account saying return to dust O man, return O children of men.

Comparing it with God's endless life, we've swept away like the grass in the morning, a very short life. We've brought to an end by your anger, by your wrath, we are dismayed.

You set our iniquities in the light of your presence and all of these points are built up really giving a very dark picture but the reality, they are the things that are consequences of our sins, of our rebellion against God.

Then he comes in verse 12, so teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

That's really what Ecclesiastes is doing as well in saying the wake is better than the wedding reception.

It's much more likely to teach you wisdom the wake than is the wedding reception. And you know, one thing, just to say this in passing, the importance of our tradition and one of the things that we miss very much at this time is the service that takes place in the church itself at a wake or at a funeral service, but a wake is also important because during that time you contemplate what it is you're at, what it is that brings you to a wake, what it is, what is a wake about, what has happened to bring this about, what you're doing in joining together with a family.

[31 : 55] And I really hope that soon we can get back to that because that's the time that we think deeply about these issues, these serious issues. And in our tradition it's so precious that we still have that, that we join together with those who mourn, not just to be with them in their mourning, but to try and help them in their mourning and support them, but to contemplate for ourselves what the source of mourning is about.

Because that's what really we should be doing at a wake, thinking as verse 2 says, this is the end of all mankind and the living will lay it to heart.

Now I've been advocating for many years that people should actually go to the cemetery where a burial takes place. Whatever tradition has been, whether male or female, that's something that's important.

I know some people don't find it easy. Nobody, I'm sure, finds it easy, especially those who are near to the person who has died. But you see, the most powerful sermon in a cemetery is the coffin being lowered into the grave.

more than the words of any minister or anyone can say. I think that that is the most powerful moment when the coffin is lowered into the grave.

[33 : 14] The living will lay it to heart. It tells us something supremely important that that is the end of all mankind. That's the end of our course in this life and we have to take death seriously.

That's why he continues now the same theme in verses 3 to 4. He's continuing this point. Sorrow is better than laughter for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.

The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It's the fool that says I don't really need things like wakes or funeral services.

I know what death is about. I know someone has died and maybe worked with that person as maybe someone even in my own family but I don't want to wake. I don't want to think about death too much. Here is wisdom saying to us you have to do that because that's what's coming to you and it's the wise person that says I really need to contemplate this.

I need to prepare for this. I need to ask what has God given me what has God provided for me against death? If I just go to death with nothing but myself and my own ability and my own wisdom and my achievements in this world whatever they be what use is that compared to having Jesus in your heart compared to having Jesus in your arms as it were as you go towards death in his righteousness with all that he has achieved to take the sting out of death to gain victory over death that is yours from the moment you trust in him.

[34 : 54] nobody can take that off you not even death itself because you go through death as a Christian as a believer as one who's trusting in Christ you go through death still joined to him and you are immediately with him in heaven in paradise that's why the wake is better than the wedding reception now we're in a pandemic as you well know and this is a day of prayer that we as a church have set up what are we going to pray well let's ask another question what has the pandemic taught us what has this worldwide crisis taught people what is it you still see people doing despite the fact that God is speaking loudly through this terrible virus that's taken the lives of so many thousands millions perhaps of people what has it taught myself what has it taught yourself hasn't it taught you to take death seriously to take life seriously hasn't it taught you that this is the end of all human life in this world hasn't it brought you above the sun to think about Jesus and all that he has provided and continues to provide through the gospel what are we going to pray on this day of prayer well we're going to pray surely for our people for our nation indeed for the world lord make the living lay it to heart bring it home to people that you are speaking to them that this is serious and that it is a provision that has been made despite the fact that there's so much death and solemnity and darkness about it the advantage if you can call it that is that it gives us to confront the realities of eternity the things of death of judgment of righteousness of our need of meeting with God of where we're going to spend our eternity pray that our leaders will come to think more seriously about those issues that we ourselves will do because that's what this passage really is saying to us the wake is better than the wedding reception because it makes us wise unto salvation or it should do knowing the gospel as we do secondly being rebuked he says is better than being amused verses 6 to 7 verses 5 to 7 for it is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools for as the crackling of thorns under a pot so is the laughter of fools this also is vanity now it's important we notice the contrast here he's not just simply contrasting he's not simply contrasting wise people with foolish people he's not simply contrasting being rebuked with singing songs what he's saying is it is better to hear the rebuke of the wise not just any old rebuke but the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools not just any old song but the song of fools remember in the bible the fool is usually not somebody describing someone who is not intellectually very bright the fool in the bible is almost always the person who says there's no god or spiritual things aren't really important i don't need to think about eternal issues i don't want the bible i don't want the gospel or it doesn't really plan for eternity like the man in luke chapter 12 who was saying to himself i've got all of these goods what am i going to do with them well i'm just going to get more of the same just like we've been seeing earlier in ecclesiastes putting your trust in riches what did god say to him he said

you fool that's how the bible describes

foolishness foolishness that rejects the gospel and that rejects god's word as god's truth what are you saying here the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning and following on it's better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise and to hear the song of fools the imagery of the uses in verse 6 there is very illustrative isn't it as the crackling of thorns under a pot so is the laughter of fools you know what it's like when you have a campfire you go around looking for sticks you put the sticks under it under whatever it is you're putting on the fire the fire springs up it crackles it makes bristling noises but it doesn't last very long and it really doesn't have much heat in it unless you've got proper seasoned wood to make a fire what he's saying here is that's what the laughter of fools is like that's what it's like if you live for entertainment only in this life that's what it's like if you're really living a life that doesn't really take the bible seriously or take spiritual things seriously and we have to say that it fits in with what we as christians come to realise when god teaches us when god's wisdom actually is given to us when we accept the wisdom of the bible itself much of the entertainment that you get whatever way it comes to you this is really what it's like it's just full of frivolity and worse than that crudeness and lewdness and blasphemy and sexual immorality and ridicule of people who have problems in life so much of what's called comedy that passes for entertainment that people laugh at that they guarantee sometimes thousands to laugh at it's such horrible frivolity and crudeness and lewdness and it's short lived and it's no substance you laugh for an hour or two in a theatre and then you're outside and that's it gone it's like the fire made from these crackling of thorns it has no substance to it there's no life to it there's no soul food in it now it's not wrong to be entertained it's not wrong to see entertainment in its own right as valid there's nothing wrong with fun there's nothing wrong with healthy fun and healthy entertainment what he's doing is making again a comparison it's better to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools as crackling of thorns under a pot soars the laughter of fools no soul food there you get the soul food food from wisdom from the rebuke of the wise none of us likes a rebuke but when it's the rebuke of the wise and when it's the rebuke especially of scripture of god himself in the scripture addressing our pride addressing our own sense of our own importance addressing what we usually give our minds to as human beings instead of his word the rebuke of the wise is designed to keep us right and the gospel itself contains many rebukes but think about the pandemic think about this as a day of prayer what are we to pray for what is this pandemic to us well isn't it in its own way a rebuke from god isn't it a rebuke against our godlessness our ungodliness our spurning of his day our trampling of his laws under our feet in supposed human wisdom that we have a superior supposedly isn't this really itself for those of discernment

even a grain of discernment can't you hear the voice of god in this pandemic saying turn to me come back to me come back to my truth think about real wisdom turn away from those things that can never possibly feed your soul for eternity pray to god today that people will come to have a serious mind about eternal things that they will actually place that ahead of entertainment ahead of the frivolity and the frothiness that only lasts for a moment and even then does you no lasting good people will come to hear the teachings of the bible the teachings of god the rebuke of the wise they will have their hearts turned to wisdom that they will be taught to number their days and I and you with them so the wake is better than the wedding reception and this is how being rebuked is better than being amused thirdly the long road is better than the shortcut verses 8 to 10 there verses 8 to 9 better is the end of a thing than its beginning and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit be not quick in your spirit to become angry for anger lodges in the bosom of fools the long road is better than the shortcut

I well remember to this day coming back from primary school I don't know probably about age about eight or nine walking back home a mile and a half from where the school was in tongue and deciding one day instead of following the road which would come to an abrupt 90 degree turn and then left and all the way back home I thought well I'll cut out that corner and I'll just go through this bit of ground here and then I'll go up this croft and I'll take a shortcut and it'll be quicker that way and of course when I did that I didn't realise that the ground I was going to walk through was actually very boggy that's why it wasn't part of a croft it had just been left there by itself and I had started walking through it and then I was up to my ankles and up to my calves and mud and I tried to walk on the more solid bits but eventually I got through it wasn't very long but by that you can just imagine what state my shoes and socks were in you can also imagine what it was like when I reached home what a telling off

I got from my mother because we prefer by nature as sinful human beings we prefer to run our own lives we think we can run our own lives we think we can do it better than the Bible what the wisdom of God sets out for it we don't have the patience by ourselves till God teaches us to wait for God to see God's way as best you see that frequently in the Old Testament the people of Israel weren't very long out of Egypt and into the desert what were they doing they're complaining to Moses why have you led us out into this desert there's no food here like we had in Egypt there's not even much water that we can use no patience you see to wait for God to think that God's way is best that's what he's saying here don't be quick in your spirit to become angry to get frustrated to prefer things your own way and your own wisdom that's why he's saying the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit my word we have a lot of pride in ourselves there's so much there of pride that needs to be gotten rid of that needs to be ejected and it's a very difficult thing what will do it for you the holy spirit alone will do it for you having your life changed by

[46 : 56] God alone will do it for you being born again is the source of the ability that God gives you in wisdom to overcome the pride that's in our life the self assertiveness the self righteousness the self confidence all the things that you find here he's saying better the end of a thing than its beginning in other words when you think of trying to take a shortcut it's far better to take the long way if it's God's way of doing it than to try and take a shortcut and you apply that to the pandemic as well and to to prayer and to pray in this situation there is not much evidence really is there patience acceptance of taking of taking the long road far too much in our communities as far as they're reported at least anger of frustration of quickness of spirit not to accept advice not to accept counsel and reject the advice that comes from health authorities or people who know better than we do ourselves pray that as a people we will submit to

God we'll submit to taking the long road and even through this pandemic supposing it does take another few months that's going to be frustrating that's going to be difficult it's going to be difficult to keep our anger in check we have to replace our pride with humility our self righteousness with God's righteousness our own sense of what's right and wrong with God's truth because better is the long road than the shortcut after all in all of these things Jesus is our great example whether we're thinking about our approach to life and to death Jesus knew and taught about that whether we're thinking of being rebuked than being amused well Jesus was in some way rebuked by Mary's mother and Joseph they found him disputing with the doctors in the temple when he was 12 what do you read about him went home and was submissive to them and he knew the long road to be better than the shortcut because after all in the desert when he was tempted by Satan that's what he was offered he said he said in the kingdoms of the world and all their glory and he said all these I will give to you if you just do one thing if you fall down and worship me in other words the devil was reminding Jesus if he needed to be reminded that the promise given to him as the Messiah was that he would indeed roll all the kingdoms of the world that he would be path that was set out for him and what the devil was doing really was offering him a shortcut you don't need to go that long road you don't need to go through with the difficulties the challenges you don't need to go through with death and all the resurrection and all that's associated with that the pain and suffering I will give you all of these all you have to do is worship me take the shortcut and Jesus said be gone with you for you shall worship the

Lord your God and him only shall you serve and there is the key to us for life under the sun the wisdom that comes from God and the God of wisdom who makes the wake better than the wedding reception and being rebuked better than being amused and the long road better than the shortcut may God bless these thoughts on his word to us now we're going to conclude singing in Psalm 90 we read earlier Psalm 90 and verses 11 to 17 we sing it to the tune Ellers that's in Sing Psalms page 120 Psalm 90 on page 120 from verse 11 the power of your anger who can know your wrath is 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 verses 11 to 17 the power of your anger who can know the power of your anger who can know you are as great as is the fear we are teach us to number all our days are right so will our hearts be filled with wisdom's light retard oh lord how long will you delay have mercy on your sermons lord we pray oh satisfied us with your love always that we may sing rejoicing all our days in place of our affliction make us glad give joy for all the years you made us up to all your servants may your deeds be known and to their children make your glory known now may the faith of almighty god abide on us rich blessings of our lord establish every work our hands have done yes lord for us establish them each one now may grace and mercy and peace from the only wise

god our saviour to whom be glory and honour and power majesty dominion and might may this be
ours in abundance for jesus sake amen well thank you once again for joining us for the service
if you can please again tune in at 630 when the pre-recorded service taken by rev. Kenny I McLeod
will be available to us and may god bless us through the day and keep us of a prayerful mind and
action as we use this as a day of prayer to seek his blessing thank you that please please thank you
a word ■lat ■ Sz ■ steerarg high neck to ■ incredibleiversityIV