

The New Year has begun. Once again, the months went by at their steady and surprising pace and the year cycled over into 2021. I hope you get the hang of writing the correct year when you date your homework for school. The beginning of a new year should remind us of the constant speed of time. Listen to the clock rhythmically ticking each second. Watch the sun rise, climb to the height of the sky, and set; the earth is in constant motion. Time continually marches forward whether we are paying attention or not, and we are carried along with its tramping feet each day, month, and year. You are getting older. You will continue to get older until you stop living. I know that these are obvious truths, but I am reminding you of them because they are tremendously important, immensely powerful, and often neglected truths.

We must live in light of our mortality. You must remember that you are going to die—unless the Lord returns first. In every age and corner of the earth, mankind has recognized that we are doomed to die, and has asked in response, ‘Since my death is inevitable, how then should I live? What is the best way to spend my life while I still have it?’ We only have a limited amount of days, and we should want them to be spent well and wisely. Mankind has also taken a particular interest in living in light of one’s death while being young. Youth is the flower of life; it is often seen as life at its best—while one is in his or her prime. We do not just want to spend our life well, but also our youth well. If you have been to Chuck-E-Cheese, then you know that after you win some games in the arcade, you earn a certain amount of tickets. After you feed your tickets into a munching machine which tells you the grand total of tickets, you then can spend that amount on toys and candies worth so many points. You have to decide how you want to spend your tickets wisely to get the most and best trinkets with what you have. You want the biggest bang for your buck. We can compare the limited amount of tickets to the limited amount of days to our life. In our life, we want the biggest bang for our buck. We want our days to be filled with the best there is to offer.

So what is a life spent well? What would you consider a life well lived, if you were looking back across the years as an elderly person? How is one’s life spent well while one is young, while one’s life seems to be at its best? The world has answered these questions. We hear some of their answers in songs like “Live While We’re Young” by One Direction and “Only the Good Die Young” by Billy Joel, which essentially say to do whatever makes you happy while you are young, and do not let anyone stop you from seizing what you want. You will hear this all of your life from celebrities, friends, teachers, and even family. Through all the noisy answers to

the question of ‘what is a life spent well and wisely?’ we must listen to the voice emanating from the pages of an old book.

Please read Ecclesiastes 11:8-12:8. In this passage, like the rest of the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon says that **“all is vanity”** (12:8). Here, ‘vanity’ means ‘empty, or meaningless; like a breath.’ Solomon is instructing us that all of life is like a breath on a cold day: it billows forth from your mouth and within seconds is gone. When considering the fact that everyone is destined for the dirt-filled grave, Solomon commands us by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, **“Remember also you Creator in the days of your youth, before evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, “I have no pleasure in them””** (12:1). Contrary to what we are told by songs, movies, and peers, we should live for God while we are young. We must remember our Creator, even while we are young and are tempted to sow our wild oats while we can and do anything we want our senior year of high school.

Notice that it says that we should especially remember God in our youth, **“before the evil days come.”** The passage then goes on to detail these evil days, which are pictures of what it is like to become very old and have the body begin to shut down. The verses talk about losing one’s sight, hearing, teeth, strength, stature, beauty, and desire—these losses are experienced by many elderly folk. You will get old, getting gray and white hairs. You might shrink; your back may hunch; your muscles will grow weak; and your skin will wrinkle and sag. You will easily bleed by simply brushing up against something, and you will easily fall simply by going down a step. I do not say this humorously, so do not smirk. You will probably lose some teeth; your appetite will fail; your sight will weaken; you will become hard of hearing; you will have difficulty forming words and thoughts; and your precious memories will vanish. Think of the things you love to experience and do now. Now try imagine you getting to do them your last years of life—if you live to be very old. As for the things I love, I will not be able to read, paint, play music, sing, and walk outdoors if I get to be very old. I will be in a chair for the last period of my lifetime. Though this is bleak, there is still dignity, loveliness, and value in old age.

The loss of what we love is what God has allotted to us. He has cursed us to this sort of end because we have disobeyed and disregarded him. We are full-blooded children of Adam and Eve. Yet, God graciously tells us that we should remember him while we are young. We must remember our Creator all the days of our life, but the best time is in our youth—that is a youth well spent. It best to delight in God to the fullest degree while we have our strong senses, a sharp

mind, a strong body, and a stout heart. Do you really think you can put off faith in him until you are old, when your mind is not as good and your heart is set in your sinful habits? Our hair, skin, bones, and spirit have been made by God; we are his creatures. We do not own ourselves, but we belong to him and have been created for a specific purpose. If we forgetfully forsake God, then we are abandoning the very core of our existence; we are abandoning life abundant and life eternal; we are abandoning fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore; we are abandoning peace, comfort, and rest; we are abandoning virtue, wisdom, and faith. If we do not spend our life—especially our youth—honoring God, then we lose.

We want to look back upon our life and be pleased with what we did. While this is important, it is infinitely more important that God looks upon our life and is pleased with what we did. Does he think our life, which he gave to us, is well spent? The only way that God will be pleased with us is if we lived by faith in Jesus Christ the Lord. The only way to please God is through Jesus. No life is perfectly pleasing to God, except the life of the Son of Man. We need his righteous life to cover us so that we can be accepted by God. A life well spent is a life spent loving Jesus well. That truth sings a different tune than the world's song. Jesus said **“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die”** (John 11:25-26). Although we are destined to die, for those who believe in Christ, death is not the end. No, the eternal life that we have in him cannot be stripped away from us, even if everything else we hold dear is stripped away from us as we age. Though we die, we go to be with him, and he promises to raise up our body on the last day. The biggest bang for our buck is to know Jesus.

So how should a Christian live? How should a young Christian live, knowing that he or she will become old, will die, and will be raised to live in the new world with God forever? With just looking here in our passage from Ecclesiastes, we can discern a few answers. First, we should do what we desire—as long as it is truly desirable: that which is not sinful. We see this in Ecclesiastes 11:9. Within God's law, we can do the things we want to do, because God has given us freedom to enjoy his manifold gifts. Second, we must remember that all is vanity (11:10). While we pursue the job or the mate that we want, we must keep in mind that all is passing away, so we cannot love the things of this world more than God. Third, we must remember that all is judged (11:9). Whatever we decide to do or become, God will judge us for it. We do not want to be judged as a foolish servant. Finally, we must remember our Creator every day.