

To the Young and Old: Rejoice and Remember

Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:14

1. Introduction.

a. Controlling commands:

i. Rejoice (11:9).

ii. Remember (12:1).

b. Apart from the final conclusion of the book (12:9-14), all other commands in the passage either support or expand the commands to rejoice and remember.

2. Rejoice! (11:7-10).

a. Vss. 7-8.

i. Solomon shifts his language from “under the sun” to “seeing the sun.” This is a statement in reference to the fullness of joy that life can bring.

ii. Solomon’s reinforcing the idea that it is good for people to see and experience joy. It is God’s design.

iii. This is especially important to remember, as most of life is defined by difficulty (v.8).

b. V. 9.

i. This command in 9a should be read in light of Solomon’s “carpe diem passages” (2:24; 3:22; 5:18; 8:15; 9:7-10).

1. It’s important not to interpret this verse through a Western lens. It’s not a call to pursue your dreams and fulfill all that feels lacking in your soul.

2. Rather, it’s a statement about finding joy in the monotonous details of life—food, drink, labor, etc.

ii. One of the ways to protect against pursuing joy in a sinful way, where you make pleasure the ultimate goal, is to heed Solomon’s reminder that God is going to bring you to judgment for how you pursue your joy (9b).

c. V. 10.

- i. One of the best ways to pursue joy, especially when you're young, is by not wasting your youthful energy and vigor on worrying about everything you can't control concerning the future.
- ii. Life is fleeting and tomorrow is not promised.

3. Remember! (12:1-8).

a. V. 1.

- i. This command controls how a wise person obeys the previous command to rejoice.
- ii. Solomon is intentional with using the term "Creator." He wants to remind us one last time that we're simply creatures living in the Creator's world.
 1. The reality bound up with what it means to be a creature is the reality of finitude—one who has a beginning and an end.
 2. It's easy for us to begin to think that we're sovereign over our lives when we are young. As a result, we tend to throw off wisdom and forget to live our lives in light of one great end—judgement.
- iii. He describes "youth" as a time before "the evil days" come.
 1. "Evil" (רָעָה) is a common term throughout Ecclesiastes. It represents misery, injury, wickedness, etc. It's an incredibly strong term.
 2. Solomon attaches the definite article ("the") to "evil days," meaning he has a very specific time in mind.
 3. This time is described as a time of hatred for life. Its very experience is a daily reality that can only be defined as a kind of evil.

b. Vss. 2-7 – Poetic imagery describing aging and death.

- i. Vss. 2-5 describes the aging process leading to natural death.

- ii. Vss. 6-7 describes unnatural, indeed, early death.
 - c. V. 8—Solomon’s final cry of vanity “hebel.”
- 4. The Value of God Given Wisdom (12:9-12).
 - a. Solomon declares that Ecclesiastes is not a product of his words, but God’s!
 - b. It’s a statement about the value of understanding Scripture as divine. He uses the language of shepherd to describe that God’s words provide protection and care.
- 5. Fear God and Keep His Commands (12:13-14).
 - a. Nothing under the sun can fulfill what you were truly created for. Only God can give you this. Therefore, pursuing ultimate meaning, purpose, or happiness in anything under the sun is nothing more than an exercise of futility—we must live with reference to that which is above the sun—God!
 - b. The test to knowing if you live with a proper fear of God is to ask yourself if you are a person in the consistent state of keeping God’s commands.
 - i. Keeping God’s commands doesn’t earn you favor with God
 - ii. Keeping God’s commands is the natural overflow of fearing Him.
- 6. Conclusion.
 - a. Since God is going to bring all things to judgement, live with reference to Him (i.e., remember Him).
 - b. Then rejoice in His good gift of life. For He is your great God and Shepherd who cares for you and delights in withholding no good thing.

Small Group Questions:

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. Without being too morbid, explain how thinking on your own death has perhaps affected you?
3. Think on the major areas in your life (e.g. school, marriage, children, work, retirement etc.)—within those areas, what do you think will be rewarded at judgment, and what do you think will be burned up as waste? Why?

4. In light of the previous question, how often does the judgment of God play an active role in your decisions regarding those various areas of life?
5. How can a sermon like this (i.e., the brevity of your life) create more urgency in the need to prioritize being missional?