

Another Passage on Joy
Ecclesiastes 11
Pastor Jeremy Cagle, November 28,2021

Please open your Bibles to the book of Ecclesiastes. As you're doing that, I just want to let you know since we are coming up to the end of the year, it's good timing because we're almost at the end of this series on the book of Ecclesiastes, which has proven to be very profitable for our church. It's been a very encouraging study because the theme of the book is vanity. And who hasn't felt that right now? Who doesn't feel like we're in a very vain place in the world today? You go to the store and it's closed due to the restrictions if you haven't had a vaccine. Or you go to the highway and it's closed, least for most of the week. I think some of the other highways are closing again due to the flooding. And it feels like you just can't do anything right now in this crazy world. And that's the kind of thing that Solomon's talking about in this book of the Bible. And if you read in the first verse, just to give you some setting here, the first verse in chapter one says, "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. 'Vanity of vanities,' says the Preacher, 'Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.'" And if you look over in chapter 11, our passage for today, it says,

Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days. Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth. If the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth; and whether a tree falls toward the south or toward the north, wherever the tree falls, there lies. He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap. Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.

Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good. The light is pleasant, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun. Indeed, if a man should live many years, let him rejoice in them all, and let him remember the days of darkness for they will be many. Everything that is to come will be futility.

Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things. So, remove grief and anger from your heart and put away pain from your body, because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.

As you can tell, just by reading, that there's some pretty deep stuff in there. In fact, one of our elders came up to me before the service and said I was resetting this passage this week. And what are you going to do with that? Well, that's an encouraging way to start off a Sunday for a preacher.

But just to say a few words about this, I've told you before that the book of Ecclesiastes was written by a man named Solomon about 6000 years ago in Hebrew. That's why you can't understand all these expressions when you first read them. But he was the wisest man who ever lived, which makes what he says at the beginning of the book so interesting, because he says that even with all his intelligence, even with his great IQ, Solomon could not solve one issue: the problem of vanity. Because he sinned, the whole book is about how he turned his back on God and became a fool. There are several sins that he mentions in here that we've talked about before, like adultery, because he chased after every woman he could find he, like his father, David, by the way. David did a

similar thing, because he married multiple wives and went so far as to have an affair with Solomon's mother, which must have had an impact on him because he went on to do the same thing. But it didn't help him because he left him feeling empty inside.

So then he chased after some other sins, like selfishness and pride and became a very arrogant man, which is a real problem in our world today, because they've done studies on this and found that human beings think about 7000 thoughts per day, and 95% of it is selfish. Can you believe that? The problem with his world is not that we care too much about others problems but that we think too much about ourselves. Solomon did the same thing as well and it left him feeling just as empty inside.

So he gives us advice in chapter 11, verse nine, if you look in that verse, he says, "Rejoice young man during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood, and follow the impulses of your heart yet know God will bring you to judgment for these things." Let me explain this passage more in a moment, but a key word here is the phrase "young man." It refers to a teenager or someone in the prime of life. And the way it's used here, it's placed in opposition to an old man or someone at the end of life, to say that this is how you prepare for that. This is how you get ready for old age as a young man, you need to remember God. You need to keep him in the forefront of your mind because it says God will bring you to judgment if you don't, which sounds scary, but it's actually put in here for to motivate you. Because if you notice how he says this, if you look in verse one, it says, "Cast your bread on the surface of the waters." That's a strange expression that means to cast your bread upon the waters of life. Don't hold back. Don't get lazy, just let it go. Why? Because God will judge you for it. If you don't do that. You only have one life to live, you only have one chance to make it count as a young person. So make it count and don't have any regrets. In verse two, it says, "Divide your portion to seven or even to eight." And that means to pour your life into seven or eight things at once. We would say don't put all your eggs in one basket. Don't put all the cows in one barn. Why? For the same reason? Because you're going to stand before God one day, you're going to appear before the throne. And on that day, he will ask you, what did you do with the world I made? Did you enjoy it? Did you take advantage of it? Did you give it all you had? Or did you stay in your bed and sleep all the time? Did you hide in a corner and take a nap because you were too lazy? But the point is that this is how you deal with vanity now. You need to do it by living life to the fullest. One commentator said to live life is a gift. And so you need to learn how to see it that way. Don't sit around wondering what to do with it. Take the bull by the horns and go. Amen! This is important because so many people don't do this today. Because they're so afraid they might sin if they do so. They don't want to take the bull by the horns and run with life because they think they'll get in trouble. Christians are notorious for this. I remember counseling someone several years ago who said they started skiing on the weekends up in Whistler and they liked it. And they felt so bad about it. Because they grew up in a place where they were told you can't do that because it's sinful. You can't have fun like that. I want you to notice what Solomon says in here. He says to follow the impulses of your heart. Not the bad ones, but the good ones. If you want to go skiing, go skiing. I'm recounting another person who told me that they felt the same way because their business was thriving it was doing so well. And they felt bad about that because they were told it's wrong to be successful. As a Christian you're supposed to live in poverty.

I want you to notice Solomon doesn't tell you that either. He says to go after the desires of your eyes. So if you want to do well in business, do well in business. If you want to be successful that way, be successful. Just put away grief and anger from your heart and keep your passions in check. But whatever you do, Solomon's counsel here is that you need to enjoy life because that's why God gave it to you. You need to learn how to appreciate it

and savor it and rejoice in it. Because despite what you may have heard, God is not only good, but He's also good natured. And what that means is that He not only wants you to enjoy the world a little bit, he wants you to do it a lot. He wants to let your hair down, prop your feet up, and kick back and relax with your friends every once in a while. If you think about it, this is why the Lord gave a Sabbath to the Jews. That's why Jesus fought with the Pharisees so much. He says that the Sabbath is supposed to be a fun day and you guys are killing all our fun. That's why He gave them festival days and holy days, so they could set aside some time in order to celebrate with their neighbors. Because that's what God does. He's a joyful God, He loves to celebrate. Because that's what's going on in heaven. And He wants you to do the same thing. You know, there's a reciprocal effect here in this passage. And that is that the more joy I experience down here, the more praise I offer up to God for these things. And the more pleasure I get in this world and enjoyment and satisfaction, the more prayers I send to heaven, because it reminds me of Him. Satisfaction doesn't remind me of the devil, there's no satisfaction in hell. Satisfaction reminds me of God, and therefore I should take as much delight in this world as possible. I shouldn't go around feeling gloomy all the time. John Piper says, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." He doesn't say that God is most glorified in us when we're the most miserable, depressed, angry, wretched people on the planet. We need to be satisfied in Him because that's what glorifies Him the most. And this is the only thing that separates a believer from a non-believer at the end of the day, and that is that we have God and they don't. We know the only true source of happiness in this world, everything the world chases after is false happiness. It may last for a day or two, and then it's gone. They have a one night stand and the next morning, they wake up and they feel horrible. That's their life. We don't live that way. We have joy and it continues all throughout this world.

You know, if you think about it, this is so interesting, Solomon says is here, because Ecclesiastes is not a very joyful book when you first read it. It doesn't bring a smile to your face, because it paints a very dark picture of the world. But Solomon's point is to remind you that even in a world like this, you can still enjoy it. If you trust in God, you can still rejoice in this crazy messed up place with all the restrictions and all the flooding and all the disasters. If you put your faith in Him if it's crazy down here, it's calm up in heaven. And that's where your thought should be. This is something the Bible repeats often. Let me just give you some passages here. In Psalm 30 it says to sing praise to the Lord you His godly ones, and give thanks to His holy name, for His anger is for a moment, but His favor lasts for a lifetime. Now, why is that? Why is his anger only a moment? Because He's not an angry God, not toward us anyway. He's a joyful one. It's His nature to have joy, and therefore His favor lasts a lifetime.

Psalm 16 says in His presence is fullness of joy. And what that means is that God doesn't have a little bit of joy. He has a lot of it. He doesn't have a small portion, He has more than enough to spare, which means if you're lacking joy this morning, you've come to the right place. God has it spilling out of Him. He has it raining down from the sky. In Psalm 30:11, it says that God turns my mourning into dancing and clothes me with joy. Romans 15:13 says, "Now may the God of hope fill you with joy and peace and believing." But you get the idea. Our God is a joyful God. And we need to learn from His example. You know, I heard somewhere this week that the Jews have a tradition whereby they say that when Satan was thrown out of heaven, someone asked him, "What do you miss the most about it?" and he said, "The joy. I missed the laughter in that place because that's what it's like to be in the presence of God."

And I think it's something we really need to remember today, which is what we're going to talk about this morning by looking at three tips for living life to the fullest in this passage. We're going to tie this into the subject of joy. Because let's face it, we need a little help in this department, don't we? We all go around being a little grumpier than we should. Maybe it's the weather around here. I don't know. I had a friend from the Philippines visiting me years ago, we went to seminary together, and he said, "Jeremy, it's five o'clock in the afternoon, I'm on my fourth cup of coffee, I can't stay awake here in British Columbia." I said, "Well, you need to have joy." This is a problem, especially today when things are so bad, because you go to the stores and they're closed and go to the hotels and airports and they're the same way. It makes you feel like you can't do anything today. All of life is a wash so you can have a tendency to look at that and complain and feel down and upset and grumpy. But you don't need to that way if you have the Lord.

You know, it's been said it's one thing to sing in the sunshine, but Christians can do something else...we can sing in the rain, because of Christ. We can do it because of what He's done for us. In fact, this has really been on my heart a lot. I've been doing a lot of reading on the topic of joy. And do you know who the happiest people in the world are right now statistically? Down Syndrome people, disabled people. Do you know why? Because they're so thankful for everything they have. They know how to appreciate the simple things in life, like their family and their friends in their church. We could take a lesson from that today. If they can find joy and things like that, we can do the same.

And that's what we're going to talk about in this passage, by looking at three tips for living life to the fullest. And the first one is that you need to see life as an adventure, which means you need to look at it as an exciting thing and something to enjoy, not as something that's here to punish you. And if you look in verse one, this is what Solomon says, "Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days. Divide your portion to seven or even eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth. If the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth; and whether tree falls to the south and to the north, wherever the tree falls, there it lies. He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap. Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of a pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things."

And this is kind of funny, because I just told you that you need to see life as an adventure. But let's be honest, when you first read that passage, it doesn't sound very adventurous does it? A little bit of a letdown. You guys are saying oh boy, Pastor Jeremy is going to tell me something; this doesn't seem so exciting. But when Solomon says all this, he's telling you that life can be unpredictable at times. That's why you have to see it as an adventure. You don't know what you're going to get because he says "Cast your bread on the surface of the waters." And that's a reference to the task of putting your bread and ships in order to sell it. Putting your grain on boats, Israel was a small country. So in order to make a profit merchants would have to outsource their product to other places. And in order to do that they had to sail it by boat across the ocean, which was risky. Put it on a boat, you don't know what's going to happen. Shipwrecks were very common, the technology was pretty primitive. Which is why verse two tells you to divide it up into seven or eight portions. And that means that divided into seven or eight ships at once. We might say today to diversify your investments, for you do not know what misfortune may occur upon the earth. You don't know when disaster will strike, so send it in many places. Then he says, "If the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth. He who watches the wind will not sow." and that's a different illustration there. It's a reference to farming. Because he says it's the same way with that. As we saw last week, when you farm anything can happen. You're at the mercy of the elements. We had a lot of farmers lose their farms last

week. It's the same way in verse five with having children. Because you're at the mercy of nature. When you're having a child you don't know if it'd be a boy or girl. Big, tall, healthier, sick.

Solomon's point in all of this is that life is a mystery. It's a great unknown. No matter how you look at it, you can't figure it out. So the solution is to leave it in God's hands and go on with it. Don't worry about the things you can't change. Don't let it get you down. Learn how to trust in Him and keep going. See it as an adventure. Verse four, in its entirety, says, "He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap." That means it doesn't do you any good to stare up at the clouds all day. It doesn't do any good to sit back and worry about the weather, because they won't do anything, it won't put food on your table, so he says you need to go out and sew something. Put your hand to the plow and work. The weather is going to do what it wants, the rain is going to fall where it pleases. Mark Twain used to say everybody complains about the rain, the weather, but nobody does anything about it. Life is going to go up and down, side to side this way and that, and therefore the only thing you can do is learn how to respond to it in a God-honoring way. That's the message of this passage.

And this is so important because as you as you guys know, we just had a major catastrophe here in British Columbia. According to the newspaper this week, we just experienced the flood of the century, we got 156 millimeters of rain in one day, it was an all time record for this area. The previous one was set on December 13 1979, where we got 122 millimeters. This one far surpassed that. In fact, we got as much rain in one day as we usually get in the entire month, which engulfed the area with water. You guys are familiar with the story. But the issue is that nobody saw it coming. We had no idea. And you can contrast that with the fact that we've enjoyed a recent time of prosperity here, even in spite of the Coronavirus, things have been going well, because the economy is thriving and the housing market's booming. population is growing, so are the opportunities for work. And the question Solomon's wrestling with here is, why is it one way one day and one way the next? We don't know. We have no idea. Why are we living high on the hog one minute down in the dirt the next? That's not told to us. We simply don't have that information. So you have to learn how to accept it and press on because that's all you can do. It doesn't do you any good to go around on pins and needles all the time getting frustrated about this thing and that thing because it doesn't help. And it doesn't do you any good to keep dwelling on it and getting anxious and letting it keep you up at night. You need to leave it up to God and let Him have joy and satisfaction in Him. I don't say this to minimize anyone's suffering right now, because last week was a really rough time for this community. And we need to do all we can to comfort those who are hurting. But once the comforting process is over, we have to help them pick up the pieces and carry on. That's all you can do. That's what this passage is saying.

I just told you that life is an adventure, but I didn't tell you that sometimes it's a bad one. I mean, as this passage says, there are days when the rains sweep in, and the trees fall, and there are times when babies die in the womb and ships get wrecked against the shore. It happens in life. But even in the midst of that Solomon's point is that you can still be happy and smile and press on if you put your faith in God because He will carry you through. One Bible scholar said that, regarding this chapter, Solomon tells us that in all the work of humankind, there are certain things that only God knows how to do and not us. And we have to learn how to accept it. To know all there is to know about everything at all times in every way is something that is reserved for God alone. And it is that kind of control that the book of Ecclesiastes is teaching you to surrender. You cannot know it all. You will not know it all. And frankly, you don't have to know it all because God does. And that should be good enough for you. Amen? God knows it all. And He knows how to run the world better than we could anyway.

And just to make this practical for a moment, I know that some of you may be anxious about the tragedy that just happened. Because we're afraid it might happen again; the floodwaters could come back. But to help you with that, I want you to see what this text says. It says that you don't know that. You have no idea. And furthermore, if they did come back, what are you going to do about it? You can't stop it. Being anxious won't fix it. Because God is the One who is sovereign over the weather, not you and you need to put that on His shoulders and trust in Him.

Some of you are familiar with the names of Martin and Gracia Burnham. But they were missionaries to the Philippines who were captured by terrorists and forced to march through the jungle for an entire year before being rescued. In fact, Gracie was rescued but Martin was killed by them in an exchange of gunfire. But right before he died, the day he died, she tells us that he quoted Psalm 100 to her, which says, "Shout joyfully to the Lord all the earth and serve Him with gladness." And he said that means that we need to serve Him with gladness in a place like this. We need to shout joyfully, even when we're starving and being forced to walk through a jungle. You can be glad, even in the worst of circumstances, if you remember that God is on the throne.

And that brings us to another tip for living life to the fullest in this passage, and that is that you need to see life as short as well. The first one is you need to see it as an adventure because it is an exciting thing. I mean, if you're wide awake and paying attention, there's never a dull moment in this world, especially nowadays. Because I don't know about you. But I turn on the news. And I say, oh, boy, what next right? What's the latest catastrophe? I've limited my news watching to once every other month. Well, Solomon says it's always been that way. And it shouldn't bother you because you know the One who was watching over it.

And that brings us to another tip for living life to the fullest: you have to see life as short, which means it's a brief thing. This life only lasts for a little while. So you need to learn how to make it count. And if you read in verses seven through eight, Solomon says, "The light is pleasant, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun. Indeed, if a man should live many years, let them rejoice in them all, and let him remember the days of darkness for they will be many. Everything that is to come will be futility."

Just to explain this one. As Solomon moves on in the text here, he adds to what has previously been said, by telling you that not only should you enjoy life, because it's uncertain and adventurous. But you should also enjoy it because one thing is certain, and that is that you're going to get old. If you notice in verse eight, he says, "Remember the days of darkness are coming." And that phrase "days of darkness" is another way of referring to old age, or the time when you can't see the sun anymore, because it's too bright, hurts your eyes. It's dark in that sense. So you just stay inside and rest and watch TV. Or do crossword puzzles. He contrasts that with what he says early in verse seven, where it says the light is pleasant, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun. That may seem kind of like a strange expression, but it's a reference to youth. Or the time when the sun is still visible to you because it's not dark, you're strong enough to see it and go out and play. Some of you remember the days when you could wake up before the alarm goes off in the morning. That's what this is referring to. He got out of bed before you even had to. And Solomon says at a time like that, when you're young, there's a lesson you have to keep in mind. And that is that it will not last forever. The days of youth won't be there for long because the days of darkness are coming. Even if you live for several years, you have to remember that most of them will be dark in this sense. You're going to spend more time as an adult than you will as a child or a young person, young adult. So the time to enjoy it is now because the time is coming when you can't. You need to make hay while the sun is still shining in life. You know when he says that the days of darkness will be many he means that that's how they will seem to you. They'll feel like they go on forever. When he says that everything to come in verse eight will be

futility is the same idea because he's not saying that old age is bad. It just feels bad, right? He's not saying that it's wrong. It just feels wrong for your body to fall apart, so his advice here is that you need to take advantage of your younger years while you still have a chance. This is important and we've all known people who waited their entire lives to retire early just so they could relax and travel only to get sick in the last minute and die in their 50s. I have a neighbor who did that. During his entire life he saved up all kinds of money just so he could see the world, got sick and saw nothing but a hospital bed. We've also known people who tried to make enough money so they could quit early and spend time with the grandchildren only to find out that they work so hard doing that, that they didn't even know their grandchildren anymore. They had no relationship to them. Solomon says you don't want to do that either, because you need to spend time with your loved ones now while you have chance.

Just to give you some background on this, I've told you before that the Rabbi's commentary on the Old Testament says that Solomon wrote this book at the end of his life. It tells us he wrote The Song of Solomon at the beginning of his life, he wrote the book of Proverbs in the middle, and then he wrote Ecclesiastes at the end as his final memoirs to Israel. And in it you can almost picture him in this book rocking with a grandchild on his knee by the fireplace, and he's telling him to spend his time wisely because it'll be gone in the blink of an eye. I was young, like you were son, I was your age at one time. And now look at me. That's the theme of this passage. You know, one newspaper said it like this, he said, "How do you know that you're getting older? Well, everything buckles, breaks, blisters, sweat stains and slips to the floor. Because you sink your teeth into a steak and they get stuck there. Can't get them out. Or you sit in a rocking chair, and you get stuck in that because you don't have the strength to stand up anymore. So someone has to help you. And worst of all, you don't even know when it happened. You wake up one day, and you're old." I want to mention this because as I look around the room, this is what I see, I see a lot of young people in our church blessed by that. See a lot of young families in their 20s and 30s, young women, young men, which means that a lot of you are still at a time of life when the light seems pleasant to you. You have the strength to go out and enjoy it. I talked to some of you and you do crazy things, you know, jumping off cliffs and rock climbing and stuff. I don't have the energy to do that anymore. I'm too tired. But I'm also reminded of the fact that many of you are spending your youth doing one thing and that's working because the cost of living is so high here. It's so expensive to stay in British Columbia. I read recently that the average price of a home in Chilliwack right now is somewhere between \$700,000-\$800,000 which means you have to work a lot in order to afford that. And so for some of you, it's just work, work, work all the time. All you do is sit at a desk and punch numbers. And your children see that. And what Solomon is saying is that if you're not careful, it can send the impression to them that that's what life is all about: work. It can send the idea that that's all that matters is your job because they never see you do anything else. And it shouldn't be that way. You need to show them that the light is pleasant. And that means it's an exciting thing. It's fun to go outside and let your hair down every once in a while. Sometimes my wife will ask me when's the last time you smiled. I said I'm smiling right now. It's just not as far up as it used to be. It's good for the eyes to see the sun.

He says even indeed, if a man should live for many years, let him rejoice in them all. That means let him celebrate in his years. He needs to know how to relax. The most important thing is you need to be balanced in this; you have to keep it in perspective. Because yes, you need to work hard, we see that in the verse right above this. And yes, you need to plant your seed and sow and farm and harvest, but at the same time, you need to enjoy the fruit of it as well. You have to appreciate the rewards of your labor. So take a day off every once in a while and go fishing. Nothing wrong with that. Don't feel guilty about that. Put your phone on hold, leave it at the office and pick up your skis and head to Whistler and go skiing or snowboarding or ride a moose or whatever they do up there in the mountains. But whatever you do make this a priority in your life.

I don't know if you've ever thought about this, but there's a reason why God made strawberries so sweet. And that's for you to enjoy them. I mean He could have saved Himself the trouble and made them all the same flavor. But he didn't. And there's a reason why he made dogs so fun and that is for you to play with them. Now I want to be clear, I said dogs and not cats...can't really play with cats. It's a different analogy there. I'm sure I'm going to get some nasty emails this week after that one. Moving on.

There's a reason why He made the mountains so beautiful around here and the ocean so majestic. There's a reason why He made the forest so green in the water so blue. There's a reason why He made the sky so pretty dusk and the stars so bright at night because he wants you to enjoy them. He could have given you an ugly planet, but he didn't. He wants you to see all that and give Him praise. But the point is that you have to do that early in your life. Don't wait until later because it may be too late. I'll never forget the time I was talking to an older man who told me that, you know, everybody's making their bucket list right now. Because they're talking about the things they want to do before they die. He said, "You know what I want to do? I want to go to the beach again and put my toes in the sand." But I can't I can't even get out of my wheelchair. Young people I want to tell you, you can still do that. You're still at an age when you can go to the beach and dip your toes in the sand, and Solomon's advice is to go. Have a good time. Which brings us to another tip for living life to the fullest here, just to review these other ones. The first one is you need to see life as an adventure. And secondly, you need to see it as a short thing because it's brief, you're only here for a little while and then it's over. So Solomon's advice is to enjoy it.

You know, as Bible believing Christians, we have a hard time with that because we think the world is bad. And we're right because it is bad. And it's a fallen world. But we forget if you get your theology, right, you'll know that at the same time, God created the world so perfectly, that even in spite of its fallenness is still a wonderful place. It makes you wonder what the resurrected heavens and the earth are going to be like, right? I mean, if strawberries tastes this good in this life, what are they going to be like in the next one? You have to make the time to enjoy your life.

And that brings us to one more tip for living life to the fullest and that is you have to see it as a humbling thing as well. A third tip for looking at life this way is to remember that you need to see life as a humbling thing, which means you need to see life as something that you don't deserve, because it is a gift from God. And if you look in verse nine, he goes on. Solomon says this: He says, "Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things. So, remove grief and anger from your heart and put away pain from your body, because childhood in the prime of life are fleeting."

If you remember, this is the text that we looked at earlier. But as Solomon moves on in here, he gives you two commands that show you how to be humble as you go through life. And the first one is to rejoice. That's the Hebrew word *samach* which means to rejoice or be glad or take delight in something. And if you look in the text here, he tells you to do that in your childhood. You need to rejoice at the fact that you're still young and have the energy to go outside and play. But I meet so many young people today that are frustrated and angry. And I kind of want to take them to a nursing home and let them meet the people in there. And you'll be happy. That's the idea here: you need to be humble. In order to do this, he tells you to rejoice young man during your childhood. Let your heart be pleasant and follow the impulses of your heart and desires of your eyes. That phrase "impulses and desires" means to follow the yearnings or wishes of your heart. Pursue them as much as you can. Only, do it, he

says, knowing at the same time that God will bring you to judgment for these things. And the idea there is that God is not interested in whether you follow this or that desire. He doesn't really care if you go skiing or snowboarding or not. He wants to know why. What led you to do that? He's not concerned with this or that impulse. He wants to know what's the motivation behind it? Are you doing it for Him? Or are you doing it for something else? This verse is important because it holds the rest of this passage in check. Because so many people read this passage and they say, Oh no, Solomon is teaching debauchery here! He's telling our young people to go out and get drunk, but he's not doing that. He's telling you to have fun with God in the picture. He's telling you to do it while at the same time putting away your sin, which leads to the next command here and that is to remove. If you look in verse 10, he says, "Remove grief and anger from your heart", which means take them away as quickly as possible. The first sin is grief, which refers to the sin of self-pity. This is not godly grief or godly mourning. This is sinful grief. The kind that says I'm feeling sorry for myself now because God is being so mean to me. God is such a bully. In anger, that's the sin of being mad because you think you should get more than you are. You think God is holding out on you. Solomon mentions these sins here because this, this is what steals your joy away. This is what makes your heart bitter. The attitude that says I should get so much more than I'm getting in life. And

I just want to stop here for a moment and say that this has really struck me as I was reading this passage, because if I could summarize the modern church today, after counseling for several years, I would put it in these two words, grief and anger, because the church, not our church, but the church in general, is full of angry Christians. It's full of self-pitying ones, which explains why we're also medicated today. This is the reason why the church today is on more drugs than any other time in history, because everybody is so frustrated with how their life has turned out, that it's giving them indigestion and upset stomach. As I meet people and talk to them, I'll tell you, the most common question that they asked me is, why is God doing this to me? Why is He being so cruel? They don't do it out of a tender heart that's not spoken out of a humble spirit. It's a spirit of frustration. I think God is shortchanging them. They think he's playing cosmic chess, that He looked at the entire universe and he said, "I'm going to pick on that person right there." Kind of like Job thought. And they say, "Well, why does so and so have it so easy? Why do they have it so much better than me?"

I read an article this week that really highlights this, and I just want to read this to you. It's kind of long. But you'll see why I'm doing this. It's called "How to be the perfect Christian parent on Facebook." And it gets better. And it says, "How can you tell everyone that you're the holiest parent on earth? How can you be the perfect Christian parent on Facebook? Well, I'm here to help. This scorecard will help you gauge your status and compare yourself to others. Because isn't comparison and judging what Christian parenting are all about? Here's a scorecard. You get four points if you post a theological statement from your child. Example. Wow, I didn't expect Bobby to use the word eschatology at dinner. Where did he get that? Look out? We've got a regular John MacArthur on our hands. You get two points. If you complete the post on social media with Oh, my heart. Example, Miles just gave half his candy to a sister because he said he wanted to be like Jesus, oh, my heart. You get two points. If you say Be still my heart, and you get four points of Daddy completes the post with Oh, my heart, which has never happened in all of human history. You get seven points. If you post pictures of your child's sermon notes, three points. If the sermon notes contain corrections to the pastor's sermon notes, you get six points. If you post about how excited your kids are to go to church. Oh, finally, 25 points.

But I mentioned that because when you see something like that, and we've all done this before, it makes you jealous, right? You don't have a family like that. Nobody does. That's not real. I'm not saying families don't do some of those things. But nobody has a perfect family. And Solomon's point here is that it's wrong to get obsessed

with that and to say that God owes that to me, because God doesn't owe you anything. It's proud. I mean, that's the issue here. It's arrogant because it puts you in the place of God. It makes you His judge and not the other way around. In fact, if you look back at this passage, you can tell that there's a contrast being made here between judgment and anger. Because in verse nine, it says, "Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for these things. So remove anger from your heart." And that means you need to remember that God is the One judging you and not the other way around. You have to realize that He's the one standing over you, you don't stand over Him, which means you're in no place to question Him. You're no place to get angry and shake your fist at heaven and say, "You should give me more than this!" Because it's just not true. And the only way for you to deal with that is to be humble. You have to put your pride aside and remember that you're down here and God is up there.

In fact, if you're a Christian today, you have to remember there's no reason for you to think this way at all because God has done so much for you. I mean of all the people on the planet, you should be the most grateful because He's given you Christ. He's given you His Son. As the son of God, Jesus became a man and lived a perfect life, which means He kept all of God's law; He never broke any of it. And with that life, died on the cross and rose from the grave. So the all the judgment you deserve would be placed on Him, all your sins and evil and debauchery and wickedness would be paid for in His blood. But the fact is, you can only have that if you're humble. You can only receive that salvation if you're low to the ground. This is really the only way to overcome anger. By the way, if you're an angry person, I want to remind you it's a spiritual thing. It's not caused by your circumstances only because you can take two people and put them in the same room and one's angry and one's not. The difference is not the room the difference is their soul. And the good news is that Jesus came to save souls. He came to forgive them, if you ask Him to.

In the fourth century, theologian Augustine was once asked what is the secret to a happy life? And he says, "It's found in three things. You need to be humble, humble, humble, because you need to believe in Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, not yourself." Believe in Him. You know, Jesus said this Himself. He said, "These things I've spoken to you, so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." In other words, how do you get joy? You believe in Jesus! How do you get misery? Believe in anything else. Because He's the foundation for everything. He also said in John 16. He said, "Ask in my name, and I will give you joy." How do you get joy now? Well, you ask for it. Don't work for it. You don't pay for it. You don't earn it. You don't come to church and give a million dollars and say a bunch of Hail Marys and go to confession, you cry out to His name. And he'll give it to full and free. So will you do that today? I can think of no better way to respond to a passage like this than to trust in Christ.

In fact, I think if Solomon were here with us today, he would tell you the same thing, you need to rest in the Messiah. In my preparation for this week, I came across a story of the time that reformers built a church in France that had a very strange layout to it. As you walk through the door, about a third of the pews had the word "law" on them. And the phrase "you shall love the Lord your God" carved into the wood. Every pew just had that there. And then as you walk further, the next 1/3 of them had the word "gospel" on them and the phrase "for God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son" scribbled on there. And then as you came up to the front, closer and closer to the pulpit, the last set of pews had the word "joy" and the phrase "for the Lord is my strength and my song, he has become my salvation," to remind you of the fact that this is what the gospel does for you, it brings you joy. You start with the law, and you end up with Christ. You begin with the commandments and the fact that you broke them and you couldn't keep them and you failed. And you end up with salvation full and free. And as you do that, you have no other choice, but to rejoice. You have to sing about it. So will you do that with us this morning? Let me pray that we would sing out of a heart filled with joy.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank You, Lord, for the words of this passage that we've studied this morning. And they are an encouragement to us because as Christians, we are so prone to waste our lives. And we forget how happy of a God you are. You are a God of judgment. You are a God of who punishes sin and evil and wickedness. But you're also a God who rewards those who trust in you. And that's the foundation for everything for us.

Lord, I pray for my friends here today. I know they have been beat up this past year, and they have gone through a tough time. But that's when our joy is to shine the most. And that's when people are looking at us and say what's up with them? Why are they different? And we pray for that this morning. I do pray if there's any who have not trusted in Christ, and they don't realize what he has done and the joy in him and the hope that he would turn their hearts around. I pray for the believers in this room that they would be reminded of all the wonderful things that are found in your word. Thank you that we read an Old Testament believers saying all of this. And if someone from the Old Covenant could have such a joy and satisfaction, we could have more. So thank you for that. Lord, would you go with us now as we go the remainder of our day. We want to glorify You as we rejoice and we pray this in Christ's name and for His glory. Amen.