

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Series: Ecclesiastes
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Live Like You're Dying
Ecclesiastes 9

A Common Destiny for All

1 So I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands, but no one knows whether love or hate awaits them. 2 All share a common destiny—the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not.

**As it is with the good,
so with the sinful;
as it is with those who take oaths,
so with those who are afraid to take them.**

3 This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all. The hearts of people, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live, and afterward they join the dead. 4 Anyone who is among the living has hope—even a live dog is better off than a dead lion!

**5 For the living know that they will die,
but the dead know nothing;
they have no further reward,
and even their name is forgotten.**

**6 Their love, their hate
and their jealousy have long since vanished;
never again will they have a part
in anything that happens under the sun.**

7 Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do. 8 Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. 9 Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun. 10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

11 I have seen something else under the sun:

**The race is not to the swift
or the battle to the strong,
nor does food come to the wise
or wealth to the brilliant
or favor to the learned;
but time and chance happen to them all.**

12 Moreover, no one knows when their hour will come:

**As fish are caught in a cruel net,
or birds are taken in a snare,
so people are trapped by evil times
that fall unexpectedly upon them.**

Wisdom Better Than Folly

13 I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me: 14 There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siege works against it. 15 Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man. 16 So I said, “Wisdom is better than strength.” But the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded.

**17 The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded
than the shouts of a ruler of fools.**

**18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war,
but one sinner destroys much good.**

What do you want? And I want you to, to grab onto the first thing that comes to mind. Okay? First thing that comes to mind. Here, just grab that one, good or bad. But what do you want to do before you die? What’s one thing you want to do before you die? What’s on your bucket list? It’s called a bucket list because it’s what you want to do before you “kick the bucket”. And so, what is something that comes to mind? (Someone says, “Go to Alaska.”) Go to Alaska? It’s beautiful, I had the privilege of going there about a year and a half ago, it was amazing. Somebody over here (JP point to someone in audience. Someone says, “Kilimanjaro.”) Kilimanjaro. Is that, is that Marshall? (People laugh). Yeah? Okay, alright. I’ll join you in the helicopter. It’s going to be amazing. What else? (Someone says, “Holy Land.”) Holy Land is incredible. It’s amazing to walk where Jesus walked for sure. (Someone says, “Walk my daughters down the aisle.”) Daughters down the aisle. Man, everyone goes “aww.” Yeah, that’d be on mine, just to see should they get married. I would love to be there. Anything else?

I’ve got a few. I thought about, okay before I go, right, on my bucket list, like I’d love to see Machu Picchu. (Machu Picchu is on screen.) Right? I mean it’s just... that is eye candy. I see those pictures and I’m like, man, I want to be there, I want to see that firsthand. You know? I

don't know if I'll take the elevator up or actually walk it, but I would love to see that view, capture that, understand the people that live there. Another one, is go hang gliding. I mean I just grew up trying to make a hang glider all the time. We'd get trash bags and tape them together, and there was this one time I jumped off the roof- it didn't go well. But I've never seen a hang glider, I've never met anyone who's been hang gliding, and I just thought, "That would be something that I would love to do before I die." And then another one that came to mind that made my list is just, like, stay in a castle in Ireland. Like, every now and then I'm a sucker for these travel zoo deals. And it'll be like, \$599, you can stay a week in a castle in Ireland, and I'm like, come on that's cheaper than Holiday Inn. I would love to do that. Those are some things that I would like to do, those are on my bucket list. So, before I kick the bucket if you will.

And this is just what Tim McGraw said in his song. There's a narrative where he has this cancer diagnosis, if you will, a limited time to live. He gains perspective. And he says, *"and I loved deeper. I spoke sweeter. And I gave forgiveness I had been denying. And he said someday I hope you get the chance to live like you were dying. Like tomorrow was a gift and you've got eternity to think about it. What would you do with it? What could you do with it? What did I do with it?"* And I think that song went soaring to the top of the charts, because it begged a question that so many of you and I feel. It tapped into one of our greatest wonderings. What do I want to do with my life?

And that really is a theme in this book in Ecclesiastes. Written by Solomon, okay. King Solomon, he has more opportunities than you and I have. He has all of the resources and all of the power. He's the most powerful man in the land. Secular historians would say he's the wealthiest man who has ever lived. And he's searching for the meaning of life. And I started this whole message with this illustration that I'm trying to find my backpack and looking through boxes, and my wife says, "Hey it's not in that one." And my backpacks not in that one, how silly would it be for me to continue to look for something in a place where it's not there? Well Solomon is looking for meaning, under the sun, which means apart from God. In this world that you and I live in, and he's searching through his own boxes, trying to find them. Boxes like wealth, boxes like possessions, boxes like power, like pleasure, like his profession. And he's coming up empty. Saying, "Hey guys there's no meaning in there." So why would you leave here and try to find meaning and significance in this same place that God's word and the most powerful man who has ever lived says, "Hey it's not in there." You're not going to find it there. So, this is poetry he's writing, in his last days. He's facing death. He's coming face to face with death. And he begins writing poetry. And we found his journal. And he is a grumpy old man. I mean he is just venting on the pages and today he is going to turn the corner a little bit to something more positive. We have to start low, but we'll get to the upward tick if you will, where he's going to encourage us to live like we were dying.

So, I'm taking a page out of Tim McGraw's book, and the subject today is to live like you were dying, and to live like you know there's an eternity. That you're going to be with God forever, that we're not stuck apart from God, under the sun. That one day, much sooner than you think, you're going to be with Him in the fullness of His presence. And so, here's what I want to ask you. Do you realize that God, creator of the heavens and the earth, that He has a bucket list for you? There are things that He wants to accomplish through you, and they're not things like Machu Picchu, they're not things like going hang gliding, or staying in a castle in Ireland. And if

you're like, "well where does he pull that from," I could go multiple places, but one of my favorites is Ephesians chapter 2 verse 10. **"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which He's prepared in advance for us to do."** And if you were to look at the Greek, what it really says is that God made you. Through the firstborn of all creation Jesus Christ, that you are His masterpiece, and there are these moments in times and things that He wants to accomplish through your life, that you would walk in them. That you would walk in those things. And this is His bucket list for you.

And so, if we're going to live as followers of Jesus Christ, believers in the one true God, we should have a death grip on what does it mean to live a faithful life? A full life, Jesus says I have come so that they might have life and have it abundantly. And I think so many Christians flounder here, and they don't really know what that means. Does that mean I should never be sad? Does that mean that I should go and experience all the things? What does it mean that Jesus came to give us a full life? That we would have it abundantly? Hopefully we'll unlock some clues in this chapter.

I'm in chapter 9 in Ecclesiastes if you want to turn there. As I move through Chapter 9, we're going to remember that death awaits us all. That's where we're starting. And really just the exhortation to find joy in living, and then before you leave here this morning to live with wisdom. We'll start in verse 1, Ecclesiastes 9: **"So I reflected on all this..."** The "all this" is a throwback to chapter 8 where he says, "the righteous get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked what the righteous deserves. That's not fair! Why do those who live righteously have bad things happen to them, and those who live unrighteously or wickedly have all the money and the fame and the success and the likes? They get the girl, or they get the guy."

He says, **"So I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands, but no one knows whether love or hate awaits them. 2 All share a common destiny—the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not."** He says, "listen, we don't know what tomorrow will bring. We don't know if it's a promotion or a lay off. We don't know if it's good news or bad news. We don't know if we find love or if we step in a pile of hate. We don't know what it is." Here's what is certain for all of you. Everyone has it coming, the believer and the unbeliever, everyone here, regardless of your background, your ethnicity, your socioeconomic status: death and taxes, man. We all die. We all die. This is the point he's making. **"As it is with the good, so with the sinful; as it is with those who take oaths, so with those who are afraid to take them."**

People do good, people do evil, both people die. Verse 3, **"This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all. The hearts of people, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live, and afterward they join the dead. 4 Anyone, who is among the living, has hope—even a live dog is better off than a dead lion!"** In the culture that he wrote this in, very different than our culture. So, like, dogs were the lowest of lows, okay? 2021, you visit the world from another planet, you're going to think dogs are king, okay? They walk them around. They pick up their poop, it's amazing. But in this world where he wrote this, this day and time, dogs were the lowest of lowest of low. And the

lion is still the king of the jungle. And he makes this point, this illustration, he says, “But wait. Even a live lowest of low is better off than a dead king of the jungle.”

“5 For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even their name is forgotten. 6 Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.”

So, Solomon is at the end of his life, and he’s facing death and he’s reflective. Like, mortality causes us to be reflective.

I had a birthday on Tuesday and, birthdays for me, now that I’ve passed 40, are a really reflective time. You can kind of feel like I’m counting down, and the stakes are higher. That’s what it feels like. I did a wedding last night, and you know, when I do a Christian wedding, they will often say, as this bride and groom did, “Hey, we want you to share the Gospel.” And I’m like, “Don’t worry, I will, I’m going to make much of Jesus.” But I will tell you, that it is—and I know theologically it’s up to the Holy Spirit to save someone, I know that— but weddings, people are distracted. At weddings they’re looking at the bride, they’re wondering where she got her dress, is the groom crying? What is he feeling? What’s the cake going to be like? Is there going to be an open bar? These are the things that are going through people’s minds at a wedding. So that when I’m like, “Hey we’re here, this is a metaphor: Jesus, Ephesians 5.” Often, they’re just like, “What a pretty dress.”

But let me tell you something, at a funeral... Uh-uh. At a funeral you have everyone’s attention. I say, “Hey you’re going to die soon. And six people are going to carry you in a room in a box. What are you going to do between now and then?” And you share the Gospel and everyone’s leaning in a I say, “Hey I can tell you how you can live forever and give your life purpose right now. Because God sent his only son, Jesus Christ, to die for your sins and He raised Him from the dead, giving you the hope for eternal, and the same spirit that raised Him from the dead is available to come and live in your life right now.” And people are like, “I want that!” I’m like, meet me afterwards, let’s talk. And this is what’s happening here. He’s reflective, so this is my first point:

1. *Remember Death Awaits Us All.*

Death awaits us all. Remember, death awaits us all. We have to be reminded of that because we’re not good at what that says, right there. We are not good—Americans in 2021 - are not good at remembering death awaits us all because, in our culture, we’ve outsourced death. We’ve outsourced it to hospitals, and nursing homes, and hospice, right? And that’s not sinful that we do that. That’s not wrong that we do that. But it does have a terrible side effect that we need to be aware of. We don’t think about death like other cultures before us have. I mean, there are cultures where they keep a skull on their desk so that they remember every day that they have. Hourglasses. They have an hourglass there to remind them that time is running out, right? And you don’t have much time.

Here's a question: How much time do you have? You answer. Not out loud, this is one in your head. How much time do you have? What do you got? What are you basing your number off of? How much time do you have? What is that? Some of us are on borrowed time. And you can come up with a number and you can base it on 76 or 80 or 100 or whatever you want to, but the real answer is you don't know. We don't know. Death awaits us all. It is the great punctuation under the sun. It is our last chance to smile here, to dance here, to laugh until we cry here. It is your very last chance to respond to the Gospel, it is your last chance to hear the Gospel. There are no salvations in heaven. There is no evangelism in heaven. You're not sharing about Jesus in heaven, we're worshipping Him, we're talking about Him, we're sharing about Him amongst His people.

In our neighborhood, there's this dog that runs around named Chico. And we love Chico, and he's someone's dog but he's all of our dogs because he comes by every morning. Stella, our dog, our labradoodle, runs to the window and greets Chico with a bark, and then all the kids run, "It's Chico!" You know? And they'll go outside, rush out the back door and pet him and play, he's really playful. He's always wagging his tail. He's just a, he's just a really good boy. He is a good-natured dog. And last Sunday I was coming to church and so I went down, you know I was coming here to worship with all of you. So I walked down our steps and as I was getting in my truck, there's Chico. He comes and greets me and his tail is just a wagging and he's like, "arf!" You know he's making that sound, he wants me to play to throw the ball or whatever. And I'm like, "I can't Chico I'm going to Church but it's great to see you, man." And so I come here, and uh...(JP laughs) well it was good to see him! And uh, and I come here and it was a busy day. Like I left here and went to a meeting, and then went to the next, and went to lunch and went to a meeting and went to the next thing. And it wasn't until that evening that was driving home, returning home. And so, I'm driving home on Old Lorena Road. We live in a rent house right now, kind of in the country. So, we're country living out there. I'm driving on Old Lorena Road and I look on the shoulder and there's Chico. And he's not sleeping. And I thought, "Ah man. I hope it's not..." And then I saw the blue collar and I knew it was.

And so, I went home, and I called his owner, and I said, "Hey you're Chico's owner, right?" And she said, "Yeah, yeah! Oh, is he over there I'll come and get him right now, I'm sorry." And I was like, "No, no, no, no it's fine. We love... Here's the deal. I just saw him on the side of Old Lorena Road, he wasn't doing well." And she was just, I mean, just, devastated. And I said, "Hey why don't I meet you over there." And so, we go and I kind of tell her where I saw him, and I meet her over there. And she can't even look at him. Like she's just standing by her truck and, and I'm like, "Hey it's okay. Like, hey we'll figure this out. Like, I'll take care of him, I'm really sorry." And there's just a lot of grief in that moment.

And honestly, right now, I'm talking about a dog, because it's easier than to talk about a child, or a spouse, or a loved one, or a friend of any kind. It's just sad. Have you ever wondered, why is it sad? Why do we mourn death the way we do? And it's because you and I were made to live forever. It is an apologetic in and of itself that we grieve when a life is lost. Like Jesus crying at the death of Lazarus in John 15, it says, "**Jesus wept.**" **John 15:35** because Jesus knew that that should not be. And in your heart of hearts, when someone is "lost", or we use words like "passed away" right? We know in our heart of hearts: that should not be. That it was not there in Eden. Right? In the kingdom it's not there. The kingdom that you and I were made for, it's not present.

This is why he says in Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 verse 11, that **“He has set eternity in human hearts.”** But that same outcome, the same outcome for Chico, awaits you and me. Best case scenario, unless Jesus returns in the clouds, we go to bed, and we just don’t wake up. And that’s best-case scenario.

And so, because death is a certainty, how should we live? And this is where he’s going to give us instruction, verse 7. **“Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do.”** Listen, where it says, **“God has already approved what you do,”** that is a problem in the Hebrew. And I believe that this is a Holy Spirit guidance statement, and really a nod at Jesus. That because of His righteousness imputed upon us, through His death and resurrection, that God, that we have the approval of God. Not because of what we do but because of what He did on our behalf.

“8 Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil.” White clothes were for a joyful celebration, they would protect you against the Palestinian sun. Oil would prevent you from, your skin drying out. This is the equivalent today, of him saying, “Put on your Lulu Lemon and your makeup.” You know? Throw on \$300 in clothes so you can go sweat, right?

“9 Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love,” Man, that’s a good word. **“9 Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun,”** He says, “Enjoy your marriage, man! It’s the only one you’ve got; you might as well work at it.” Like, sometimes the revelation that I see in marriage counseling sometimes, is like, “Oh wait. I’ve got two options: I can work really hard at this, or I can be miserable the rest of my life. I’ve got no other options as a follower of Jesus. What do I do here?” You know? And sometimes that mindset says, “Oh okay! Let’s do work then.”

“...all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun. 10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.” Alright? He’s not taking about Heaven or Hell; he’s talking about the grave. The New Testament version would be Colossians 3:23, **“23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart.”** Knowing that you are working for the Lord, not for human hands. Did you know that it is the Lord Jesus Christ who you will receive a reward from?

“11 I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong,” Let me ask you a question, does the fastest person always win the race? Does the fastest person always win the race? Nah, sometimes they trip. Sometimes they botch a handoff. Sometimes they pull a hammy. You know? Does the strongest person always win the fight? Strongest person always wins the fight? Nah, sometimes they catch a fist to the button, and they’re out. **“...nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all.”** Is the smartest person always the wealthiest person? **“12 Moreover, no one knows when their hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so people are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them.”** He’s just beating the dead horse. Pun intended, right? He’s saying, “You don’t know what tomorrow will bring. But you do know that somewhere out there, for every one of us, is death.” So, he says, “Live life.”

Listen, this past Friday, Friday before last, 9 people went to a music festival in Houston called Astroworld, where they went to see their favorite artist, Travis Scott, perform on stage. And they fought to get close to the stage so they could see him and celebrate and sing and dance and do whatever it is they do. And they didn't walk out, alright. No one went to that concert that night thinking, "This is my time." Alright? "This is when it ends." We don't know. You have no certainty that you will not be t-boned by an 18-wheeler on 84 as you pull out of Sunwest. Alright? It always feels like it's going to happen every time I pull out, I'm like, "Where are these cars coming from?" Life is fragile. There is a fragility to the human experience under the sun. And so, he's making the point, "If we don't know what tomorrow holds, you should enjoy today." Enjoy, find joy in, your moment under the sun because it is relatively brief. And that's my second point.

2. *Find Joy in Living*

Find joy in living. We read this, especially young people, we read this, and we think it's really depressing. In reality, the Jews did not want to include this in the Bible because they thought it was Hedonistic. They thought that Ecclesiastes actually would motivate people to sin and to live a licentious life. They were afraid that it encouraged things against God because it says things like verse 7, **"Go eat your food with gladness, and drink you wine with a joyful heart,"** that really challenges our Baptist roots right there. The "drink your wine with a joyful heart."

When I go eat, I can be fairly pragmatic. Food is for nourishment, goes in, right, and it just gives you energy, it's necessary. So, I can just kind of always go on a budget, but at least once a year, and especially on my birthday, it's a different experience. And so, this past week we load up with some friends and we drive to Austin, and we go to a place where I would have my dying meal. Perry's. If you've not had the pork chop, I commend it to you. It is the best in the world, under the sun. And so, once a year I go, I sit down at Perry's, I'm ordering the pork chop, it's 8 fingers thick. Get your head around that. And this is a time for feasting, right? This is a time where we spend two and a half hours at that table. And we enjoy it. And I believe it honors God. And we fellowship and we catch up on life and we talk about how each other's marriage is doing. And what are the challenges you're facing and what's going good right now. And we laughed that laugh where your stomach hurts the next day. Where you feel like you're being inappropriate in a really nice place and, and you laugh until you cry and you're afraid because you can't breath kind of laugh. And it is good. And we linger, it's the time where, you know, the server usually comes with the dessert tray, "Would you guys like dessert?" And I'm just kind of waving him off when I see him across the restaurant, no. But on my birthday, "Yes! Bring it. We'll have one of each of those. Yes!" And it is good. It is good, there is enjoyment in it. Alright?

Some of you think God wants to rip you off. He's a good God. He describes His kingdom as a feast. He made you where you can laugh. He programmed and wired your body where it does this weird thing where you convulse (JP twitches) when something is funny, you know? It's like, "hahahaha" It's so weird. Why would, like, the Holy Spirits like, "Oh yeah make him do that, that's cool!" Hahaha. It's like, why did He do that. We got to share Jesus with our server Derek, right?

What makes a meal bad? What makes a meal bad? Don't elbow and say, "your cooking." It's not that. It's not Chef Boyardee or Kraft macaroni that makes a meal bad. You know what, there's only one thing that makes a meal bad. And I'm going to tell you what it is. You come up with your answer and I'm going to tell you my answer. And I believe this is all encompassing, this is what makes a meal bad. Lean in because some of you need to hear this. Your mood. Nothing else. That's what makes a meal bad.

I think so often we live controlled by our emotions. We live as slaves to our emotions. But every scientific study out there is showing you more and more that you actually have control over your emotions. That there are things that you can do to move to a place where you have greater control over your emotions, right? That you are not a slave to how you feel and that we can in many situations choose joy. And you don't have to be thinking right now about this, "Well what about brain chemistry?" Sure! Absolutely, 100%. But even then, there's treatment. There are paths to where we can get to a place of level playing field, where we can begin to apply practices of thinking, prayer, meditation. Where we can find joy in situations and circumstances.

In fact, I've talked to many doctors, many doctors, and their first prescription, when someone comes in with something we'll call "depression", and I don't even like using that word because "depression" is such a wide range of things. It's a really mixed bag of things. But the first thing they'll prescribe is, "Go do something you enjoy. Go do something you enjoy." So, what do you enjoy? Can you do it to the glory of God? That is to say, do it in faith without sin. The thing that you enjoy, do you know what it is first and foremost, and can you do it to the glory of God, that is in faith and without sin? And I would just say your prescription today, from this text, is do it a lot to the glory of God. Leave here and go do more of that - to the glory of God. As an act of worship, and so enjoy sunsets and long conversations and dancing and laughter and fellowship and long lingering walks—make time to do things to the glory of God. Prioritize them! Life is heavy and there's a time when you load it up on your shoulders and you carry it. But even in those times, make space to prioritize the things that you can enjoy to the glory of God.

For my birthday, my wife made sopapilla cheesecake. Amen. We had our life group over and I was eating a piece, I had a piece of sopapilla cheesecake, and I ate it. My friend Marshall is laughing at me and he's just like, "man I need to teach you how to enjoy that." He said, "You're just scarfing it down." And he's right. He's right. There's no joy in scarfing. There's no gratitude in scarfing. We need to create space to linger, to savor, you know? To taste, to go slow in the turns in life. To enjoy it as a gift that God has given us. And I would just tell you, "Learn to enjoy serving others." Learn to enjoy serving others. And it is something you have to learn to do.

Have I ever told y'all about Birthday Bruce? I can't remember. Birthday Bruce? No? Okay, great I'll tell you. So, this week was my birthday, I don't know if I said that. (Crowd laughs.) Just going to throw that out there. And so, every day on my birthday since I've been 18 I get a phone call. And I was driving down the road with Finley in my truck and the caller ID says a 361 number, the little town I'm from. And so, I answer in the car on the speakers. He's like, "Jonathan?" "Yes sir." "It's Bruce Brown! Just want to tell you happy birthday." I was like, "Thank you sir. Appreciate it man! It's great to hear from you again." And hang up, and Finley goes, "Who is that?" And I said, "I have no idea." And so, every year he calls. So finally I ask my parents, I said, "Hey, how do I know Bruce Brown?" And they said, "You don't." And I said,

“Well he calls me every year on my birthday!” They said, “Yeah, he calls everybody on their birthday. That’s what he does.” So, in my small town, this man, he wakes up every morning, and he begins to call everyone who was born on that day, every single day of his life. Alright? And I’m just like, that’s amazing life stewardship. Like he starts his day, every day, giving to other people. And you know I did have the privilege of meeting him one time. I had a flat tire on the side of the road when I was visiting my parents, and the person who came to help me out there, I met him and I was like, “You’re Birthday Bruce!” You know? Like, this is amazing! And then when I found out where he worked, I went by and I took him a gift, because that’s what you want to do for someone who brings joy to your life. Right? He learned to enjoy life. And guess what was true about Birthday Bruce? There was a joy that marked him because every day he starts out and is like, “How can I serve others?” Learn to enjoy serving others. It is wise to find joy in life.

Let’s talk about wisdom in verse 13. **“13 I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me: 14 There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siege works against it. 15 Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man. 16 So I said, “Wisdom is better than strength.” But the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer needed, or heeded, rather.”** He seems to say that wisdom is pointless because it’s going to be forgotten, and it’s almost like he forgets that he say that, because he then says this, verse 17, **“The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools.”**

Alright? If you’ve ever been in a life group with someone who talks too much, you’re probably pretty disinterested in what they have to say. Because it’s like, “Oh they’re just talking again. It’s what they do all the time, right?” But if you’ve ever been in a life group with someone who rarely speaks like I have, I was in a life group once with someone who rarely spoke but when he said something everybody leaned in a listened, because it was always words of wisdom. He used his words in a really calculated way. He only said what was important to say. The Proverbs say, **“Even a fool seems wise when he keeps his mouth shut.”**

“Wisdom” verse 18, **“is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.”** And then I’m going to go into chapter 10 one verse because it’s commentary on that, it’s a bad break in my opinion. **“As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.” Ecclesiastes 10:1** He’s just saying one person can mess it up for everybody. I can put Harvard’s brightest on the bus, but if a fool is driving the bus, it’s not going to go well for them.

There’s one person at Harris Creek who can hurt the name of the Church and the reputation in this city, by what you post on Facebook, you know? One person can hinder everyone else, right? You can be extremely wise and go to a concert, but you’re not in control of the fools around you. Right? You can have an incredible dog, who’s a good boy, but if he plays in the highway, it’s not going to go well. So, we have to live with wisdom, but even wisdom can only take us so far. That’s my third point:

3. Live With Wisdom

Live with wisdom. It's extremely important that we have a source for wisdom because what we think is wise is always changing. And so, this week I went to the Dr. Pepper museum here in Waco. I've always kind of wondered why it was called Dr. Pepper. Dr. Pepper was actually created in a pharmacy as a medication, and you were to drink a little bit of it, their slogan was, "Drink a bite to eat at 10:00, 2:00, and 4:00." and that would help you be healthy, right? And this was how it was marketed. Well, we know better now that it's not healthy, I know that's bad news for some of you but I'm just telling you. And this has happened throughout history, they used to sell cigarettes to help your throat, to help your cough. Cigarettes, that was a remedy, Dr. approved, right. We know better now that cigarettes actually cause coughs. They would sell a tapeworm as a diet. "Hey, you want to lose weight? Eat a tapeworm, you'll lose weight." This is true, like, this was marketed to the masses.

So, we have to say, "Okay, what are the things we're believing in Waco, Texas that people are telling us but are not wise?" Things like business is the badge of honor. No, it's not. What has been prescribed to us? Things like what others think of you is the most important. Things like success is measured by scoreboards, grades, or bank accounts. Three things Jesus isn't going to ask to see. "Hey, show me your trophies. Let me see your report card. Pull up your checking account." It's not going to happen. And that we should like to grow followers and likes. Every account will be deleted. He says in 1 Corinthians 3, verse 19, **"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight." 1 Corinthians 1:39** But he says in Psalms 111 verse 10, **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal life."**

And so, where it says in verse 7, **"God has already approved what you do."** He's saying, "Listen, Christ has died for you. You are now seen as clean by God Almighty. So, live a life that honors Him, not for His approval, but from it. Right?" The New Testament verse on this would be 2 Corinthians 5:19, that **"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them." 2 Corinthians 5:19.** I think so much of what we think about on our bucket list is because of the reality that we don't understand the kingdoms' going to be here. That God is going to put the kingdom here. I don't have to hike Machu Picchu before I die, because I can hike Machu Picchu in its glorified state. I don't have to experience all the things here under the earth, because I'm going to be on the earth in a state of perfection. We're going to be here forever and ever and ever in the presence of Jesus. I can go to Israel with Jesus and, "Hey show me where you were, show me where it happened. We don't exactly know where the crucifixion happened, they say it was this or this-which one was it, Jesus?" He can be your tour guide. I mean I don't really know how it's going to work, probably not like that but, but imagine, like, be wowed by the fact that Heaven is not this place where you're going to go to a cloud and play a harp one day. No! No! We're going to be here, in a perfect world, with our real true King, and His kingdom, right? And so, as you live here under the sun, remember, death awaits us all. Learn to enjoy life. Learn to enjoy life. And as you live, live with wisdom.

I'll end with this story. Before I ever did a wedding I did a funeral, and the man that died he had become a believer, a Christian, later in his life. He had two sons that survived him. He knew that he was going to die. He had a diagnosis and had been given a time to live. So another pastor and I drove out there to his house. We were driving through Dallas, in the area of Dallas where there is big houses. And we got to the area of Dallas where there's big houses on big lots, big estates if

you will. We pulled up to a large gate and a guard house. Gate opened slowly, we pulled onto a cobble stone road, and it felt like we were driving through the arboretum. Perfectly manicured grass, beautiful flowers, it was just incredible. That road took us to an enormous house. An enormous house with a large door, we walked up, we went inside, there's beautiful pieces of art on the wall, like pieces that you would see in a museum—of artists that've been dead for a long time, who you know their names. The house was perfect, I mean, everything in it was incredible. But then there were these post-it notes all over the wall. Just little yellow post-it notes. That was curious to me.

We sat down with his two sons, they had been crying, their eyes were bloodshot. And we began to talk about how they would like the service to go and, as the conversation went on and became a little more comfortable, I finally had the courage to ask them, "Hey what's up with the post-it notes?" And they said, "Well, you know Dad became a Christian later in life and, kind of, everything changed when he got a diagnosis that he was only going to live for a certain amount of time and so he wanted to be surrounded by the word of God. And so, he had us just write Scriptures on them, and just put them all over the house." So over million-dollar paintings were post-it notes with the word of God. I said, "Wow! What else?" And they kind of smirked talking about their dad, and just said, "Man, nobody could come near us without hearing the Gospel. I mean, nurses would come in, you know hospice was here, they were going to hear the Gospel 10, 11, 12, 13 times. The mail man brought the mail and dad knew he was here and was like, 'Bring him in! Bring him in! Bring him in my room, I want to tell him about Jesus.'" I said, "Wow! What else?" They said, "Well dad was really well resourced. He had a lot of money." He said, "But in his last days he just wanted to give it all away. And he got frustrated because there were trusts and attorneys and it was complicated and we tried to tell him, dad, we couldn't just give it all away. We can't just give it all away. You know, we're trying to figure out how we can be generous, but it's locked up. And there's power of attorneys and all they things. He just wanted to give it all away." I said, "Wow! What else?" They looked at each other and kind of smiled and they looked back at me, and then one of them answered and just said, "Well, his last words were: He stood up in his bed, and he just shouted, 'Don't wait! Don't wait like I did! Don't wait!'" I said, "What do you think, what do you think he meant by that?" And they just said, "There was the prioritization that death brings."

There's a bucket list. You want a bucket list? Be surrounded by the word of God, know it. Do what it says. Live it out. Right? You want a bucket list? Share the Gospel. Anywhere and everywhere, you go. That's a life well lived. That will matter in eternity. Not for God's approval, but from it. You want a bucket list? Be as generous as you can. Some of you get this and we're grateful, we are doing ministry on your generosity, and I just want to say to you thank you. Parents that have helped support college students that are here, and these faithful members of this body, thank you. But that's a bucket list, and don't wait. Don't wait like he did. Let me pray.

Father we love you, and just ask that you would move in our hearts. Even now as we look at this, as we peer into this Scripture, as we see our mortality, as we understand how our days are numbered. Would you help us to live a life of meaning? God, some of us, we've been doing this for a long time, we've been going through the motions at church, we've experienced all the kinds of services and all kinds of things, and sometimes that works against us. It's hard to awaken us to

something new. Would you do that, would you show us how you want us to live? In the name of Jesus, Amen.

We're going to end our time together by taking communion. As you think about what it means to savor, to go slow, you can go ahead, (JP opens communion cup) because these are kind of challenging, there's a thin, clear layer you know on top. And you can peel that off first to pull out this piece. The scripture tells us a lot about communion. That's actually not true. It doesn't tell us a lot about communion. In fact, just to show you my cards, sometimes I'm, like, wrestling with God, I'm like, "God what do, like, what do you want us to do? Especially in the midst of Covid, like, how should this look? Would you renew my heart around the purpose?" Because there are people that are like, "You've got to take it all together, you've got to take it at this time, it needs to be—there has to be a pastor present." And I think sometimes we add all these rules to what the Scripture says, the Scripture really doesn't say that much. I think it's much more concerned about what's happening in your heart, and it's interesting that even those things can happen in your heart and distract you from the savior, the one that we are to savor. Right? And I don't think that's God honoring. I don't think it's God honoring to rush onto the next thing. I don't think it honors the Lord to sit and be critical of His bride, but to sit and to savor your savior. That He was sitting with His friends, and I would just say this to you, that if there's something in your heart if you realize you're not at peace with someone, that you have something to work out—I might refrain, you don't have to, you know, you follow the Holy Spirit. You have the Holy Spirit, but if it was me the way I'd wrestle with it, I'd refrain from taking the elements before I'm reconciled to my friend. And it's something I wrestled with even this week.

But as He was sitting there with his friends He just said, He grabbed a piece of bread and He broke it as an illustration for them, right? He said, "Here's what I want you to do, I want you to remember that when the bread is broken that my body was broken for you. That that happened for you." He said, "Whenever you eat of this, would you do so in remembrance?" That is to remember that Jesus Christ literally died for you. He gave His body for you. It was broken for you. The body of Christ (JP takes the bread).

There was a cup there, as it always was, it would be a communal cup. It was a cup of wine, a chalice if you will, that everyone would drink from. The same cup. He said, "This cup, this is the cup of my new covenant. I'm doing a new work, guys. There's one that comes after me, and when He comes—I've got to go so that He can come, and He can do a new work inside of you. I am He, He is I. This is the cup of my new covenant. Whenever you drink from it, do so in remembrance of me." The blood of Jesus (JP takes the juice).

As you drink that, you realize that His blood was poured out for you to do a new work inside of you. And so, we're going to leave different today. You can sit there for a moment if you want—if there's something you need to work through. We're going to leave quietly. Outside the doors where it says "Exit," you know talk, fellowship, enjoy life. But, for just a moment savor this. In fact, let me just give you a minute just to sit there and savor this. Reflect on the Gospel. Think about Jesus. See him on the cross.

He's a payment for you. He did what you can't do. You can't pay for your sins; you are under condemnation without Him. The sacrifice would have to be perfect. Only God could do that.

Father, would you renew our hearts and our minds around that reality? Would you do a new work inside of us? And we thank you for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Help us to enjoy our life under the sun, to your glory. In Jesus's name, Amen. Amen.

I love you guys, it's a privilege serving with you. If we can serve you in any way let us know. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.