



MEANINGLESS

AUDIO DEVOTIONS

ON ECCLESIASTES

The Laughing Life is Meaningless

(Ecclesiastes 7:2-6)

- ² *It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting,
for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart.*
- ³ *Sorrow is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart.*
- ⁴ *The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.*
- ⁵ *It is better to heed a wise man's rebuke than to listen to the song of fools.*
- ⁶ *Like the crackling of thorns under the pot, so is the laughter of fools. This too is meaningless.*

There was a game that we used to play when I was younger called “Would you rather...?” The objective was to get the other players to be divided about which of two options they would prefer. So the wise winning questioner would propose two situations that were similar yet different enough to bring about a split decision. In these verses Solomon plays something of a “Would you rather...?” game with us, but I doubt any of his options would cause many mixed reactions! Would you rather go to a funeral or a wedding feast? Would you rather attend a eulogy or hang out at a comedy club? Would you rather have someone tell you like it is or smile and speak sweetly while you go your jolly way to ruin? Under normal circumstances, most of us would select the fun, festive, and lighthearted over the sad, serious, and somber.

But what is Solomon's point? He is not some grouchy old man who can't stand to see anyone else smile or be happy. Rather he impresses upon us that this brief life of ours is no joke. It is serious business. Our days here are far too important to waste on passing pleasures and empty laughter. This is our one shot, our one opportunity to seek and find and be found by the God who loves and forgives and saves us through Jesus Christ. This is our time of grace.

Still, we might wonder, “Why is sorrow better than laughter and mourning better than pleasure?” Sociologists and psychologists say lightheartedness is good for you, and “laughter is the best medicine.” Sure, a TikTok “try not to laugh” challenge may boost your spirits for a time, but that elevation is induced by living for the moment, and like the flash of heat and the popping of thorns on a fire there's no staying power to a life spent scrolling for the next laugh. It's an endless search for more, wandering further afield, hoping the fire doesn't wink out in the meantime. On the other hand, sadness and mourning and sound correction shove the cold hard facts of life and death into our faces and turn our hearts and minds towards the long-term. Thereby, we are put into a state of significance, seeing what is truly important, which is where Solomon is going by the end of this book (cf. Ch. 12).

Our Lord Jesus once said, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matt. 5:4). While we journey here, we experience sorrows on every hand. We see pain and sin and death on every side, but this time of mourning will soon pass. This valley of shadow will soon open up into the endless day of heaven freely won for us through Jesus Christ. Then in God's presence no one and nothing will take away our joy. All tears and sorrow, pain and sighing will be wiped away and enduring happiness will be ours. And there's no “Would you rather...?” that can compare to eternal life.

For your self-reflection:

- 1.) How will the truth in today's devotion help you see your next funeral as a blessing and a spiritual opportunity?
- 2.) Pause to self-reflect on what parts of your faith life, your physical life, and your relationships you are taking less seriously than you should. Seek the Lord's Word, prayer, and personal accountability to other Christians to reinvest yourself in what is most important.

Prayer: Lord God, the distractions of life are all around. Forgive me for foolishly seeking out the temporary and the trivial. Through your Spirit give me a somber heart and a sober mind so that my life remains focused on what is eternal. Through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.