

Life Moves Pretty Fast

(Ecclesiastes 11)

1/9/19; Wed PM Pine Grove

Introduction

I have a theory that is going to sound kinda spooky, but here it goes..

If we were to go across across the road, and dig up a good handful of folks who had passed away and bring them back to life...

And they were allowed to offer just one lesson about life, my theory is that most of them if not all them would say that their life passed quickly.

That may not be the case for all of them.

It is just a theory on my part, but I know and have heard from so many people who aren't dead but near the end of their life..

And many of them approaching death say that life passed so quickly.

60 years went by in a flash.

70 years went by in a flash.

80-90 years went by in a flash.

And the reality for all of us who may be a little younger is that life does happen quickly..

We can make that statement because we have experienced that truth.

When I was 8, the time from Thanksgiving to Christmas seemed like it took an additional year to get here.

Now I eat Thanksgiving dinner and it is a blur until I see the same people and eat Christmas dinner with them..

This is the speed of life.

It flies by.

Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes calls life a vapor.

It is like going out on a cold morning and exhaling..

The air comes out from a little mist and is gone as quick as it appeared..

Well, that is clearly one of the purposes of the book of Ecclesiastes.

It is a reminder to the reader that life is gone in a hurry.

Every time you leave the parking lot here at Pine Grove, take a glance across the dash of your car.

That is also a reminder that life passes fast.

So how are we to live in light of that truth?

Since God has told us through Solomon that life is a vapor, how does God want us to respond to that truth?

Well, Ecclesiastes 9-12 becomes the section of this book where God through Solomon begins to offer some lessons about a life that moves very fast..

One lesson we saw in chapter 9 was to enjoy the good times that God provides in our life.

One lesson in chapter 9 was to enjoy our spouses and families while we live.

One lesson in chapter 9 was to enjoy our work and to do it well while we can work.

A final lesson in chapter 9 was to be prepared for the unexpected in life.

That brought us chapter 10 where God told us to treasure the wisdom that he gives in this short life.

To live by His wisdom so that our short life can make a big impact for God's glory on the world..

And so we are learning how to live in light a rapidly moving life..

Tonight, we continue to gain some insight into a life well lived...

Yes, life is short, but that doesn't mean that it doesn't have a point.

Yes, life is a vapor but make your vapor count.

Yes, life passes fast, but that doesn't mean it doesn't count, and that certainly doesn't mean that God doesn't take notice..

So with that in mind, let's look at 4 lessons on a short life in Ecclesiastes 11 tonight...

We will begin in verses 1 and 2, with this life lesson..

I. Because the World Is Fallen, Be Flexible (1-2)

Verse 1..

1 Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it [a]after many days. 2 Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth.

Money and wealth have been consistent topics of discussion in Solomon's discussion of life on earth.

The book of Proverbs is full of money management principles...

And it is clear that money is part of life on earth...

However as we near the end of Solomon's wisdom in the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon offers a very specific principle of money management and that is the idea of spreading your money around..

Some see this instruction in terms of our charitable giving..

They say that Solomon us to be generous in frequent places..

To give to multiple causes and people because one day, you may need the favor of charity returned in your life.

And there is some merit for that view, but I take another view of verses 1 and 2..

This seems to be financial advice from Solomon on how to manage your money...

Solomon is telling his readers to not put all their eggs in the same basket in terms of income or investment...

In other words, the working man is advised to have more than one stream of income and the retired man is advised a diversity of investments..

The idea of casting your bread upon the waters is actually a Jewish picture of the shipping industry..

The picture is of sending your products to various places in the world..

In this case, the picture of selling your products to 7 or even customers..

Someone was telling me about WP Rawl down in Pelion being the number #1 supplier of Kale to Walmart..

But I can assure that WalMart isn't their only customer..

They probably ship kale all over the world, and why is that good business sense?

Well, Walmart could close.

Walmart could go bankrupt.

And in their case, they don't want to have all their kale in the same basket.

And why is that?

“...for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth.”

Solomon is telling his readers to diversify because the world is fallen.

Bad things happen in this world, so be prepared for that in terms of managing your money..

This is why I buy life insurance for my family.

If my family's income is cut off through my death, my family needs another source of income until they can make necessary changes..

Look, money is not everything.

The love of the money is the source of evil in the world..

But you cannot ignore money in life.

It was created by God and is part of how the world works, so be knowledgeable about money matters and make sure your money can survive in an unpredictable world..

And this requires flexibility and diversification..

Look, you may think that your job will be around forever.

You may think that the one investment you have is the very best, but God is reminding us through Solomon that things change.

Sometimes, the basket carrying all our eggs breaks, so it better to have your eight eggs in 8 baskets.

That is lesson of chapter 11..

Let's move to verses 3-6 where we find lesson #2 on how to live in light of the brevity of life..

We will call this..

II. Because the World Is Unpredictable, Be Disciplined (3-6)

Let's read these verses...

3 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 it [b]lies. 4 He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap. 5 Just as you do not know [c]the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the [d]pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things. 6 Sow your seed in the morning and do not [e]be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether [f]morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good.

Though we don't know what misfortune may occur on earth as verse 1 says, we also cannot shrink back in fear and withdraw from the world because of its unpredictability..

Verse 3 simply says that it sometimes it rains and sometimes trees fall..

Verse 4 says that sometimes the wind blows this way and sometimes it blows this way.

Verse 5 says that man has no idea why the wind changes directions and no idea how God puts a baby together in the womb...

Yet, verse 6 says this..

Plant your crops despite what could happen in the world..

You see, there are people who worry too much and are anxious too much over every little thing...

Look, plant your garden...

It may rain or it too much or it may not rain at all, but you'll never have a crop if you don't plant the seed..

When I was doing a good bit of competitive bass fishing as a young man, there is all sorts of wives tales about when to go fishing and when to stay home..

Wind out to west, fish bite the best.

Wind out of the south, fish opens it mouth.

Wind out of the east, fish bite the least.

Then there were charts about the phase of the moon.

Never fish on a new moon or a full moon.

There there is weather considerations..

Blue skies in the spring are bad.

Rain in the winter is good.

And look if I had listened to all the supposed signs around me, I would have never went..

Yet, my dad's rule for going fishing was simple.

If we don't have to work or if we get off early, we are going..

Kinda like the post office..

Rain, sleet, snow or dead of night, you go when you get the chance...

But look, there are people in the world paralyzed by what "might happen."

God's response to that attitude..

Get up and paint your seed and stop worrying about what you can't control..

Look at the example again in verse 5..

If you worry too much about what could happen to a child in the womb or in the world, you will never have kids.

So you trust God to put that child together and you rest well at night...

Getting back to fishing for a minute, the olds align is that you can't catch a fish unless your bait is in the water.

Well, you can't grow a crop unless your seed is sowed..

So be disciplined and not fearful.

Be bold and not timid.

Be assertive and not anxious.

Plant your seed in all sorts of conditions and weather and trust the Lord.

You have to disciplined and bold and trusting in a world that is unpredictable..

A third lesson takes us to verses 7 and 8..

III. Because the World Is Passing, Be Thankful (7-8)

Verse 7..

7 The light is pleasant, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun. 8 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.

In verse 7, Solomon is just saying that life is better than death..

The light is pleasant simply means that living is better than dying in a general sense of the world..

Therefore, verse 8 is Solomon's encouragement to be thankful and rejoice for each year of life.

Birthday parties are biblical as long as they help us be thankful for the years that the Lord has given..

Look, life is going by fast, but for someone it passes even quicker.

Some people only get a few years on the earth, so if the Lord allows you a good number of year on the earth, rejoice and be thankful for them..

Psalm 118:24

***This is the day which the Lord has made;
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.***

Solomon would say to you here..

This is the year that Lord has gave;
So be thankful and rejoice in it.

Then he adds that we should rejoice because not all
of our days will be good..

Some days will be days of darkness and trouble and
grief..

You see that in verse 8..

Yet, despite the difficulties of life, be thankful for
the years and days and moments that God blesses us
with.

Look, the world is passing quickly before your eyes,
so why would spend the majority of your time
grieving instead of rejoicing?

Why you spend the majority of your time filled with
regret instead of thanksgiving..

Look, the world is broken.

The world is fallen.

Life is hard at times.

But don't spend your days sulking and pouting and crying over spilled milk.

Rejoice.

Be thankful.

See the blessings of God's goodness in your life and dwell on those things.

Let me tell you something, Paul was man acquainted with much grief in the world.

He had lots of dark days.

He was beaten.

He was shipwrecked.

He was stoned.

He was abandoned by his friend and family.

His life was anything but easy.

Yet listen to what he wrote in Philippians 4...

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is [c]near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all [d]comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is [e]lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, [f]dwell on these things. 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

I will tell you this.

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit.

Yet, so many believers seem to never rejoice in anything.

To them, life is a box of lemons and they have no interest in making lemonade..

They sulk, they pout, they moan, they groan.

Yes, life is hard.

Yes, life is sad at times.

But guess what?

Each year that God gives you another trip around the sun is an opportunity for you to find your joy in Him and be thankful for the good things in your life.

Yes, the time is flying, so don't spend your time crying.

Spend your time rejoicing in the good things that God has sent into your life..

A fourth and final lesson of how to live in a world that passes quickly is found in verses 9 and 10..

IV. Because the World is Tempting, Be Warned (9-10)

As a result of what Solomon writes about the brevity of life, it is tempting to throw off all restraint and live like there is no tomorrow..

So, Solomon offers a final word to anyone who misunderstands his instruction..

Look at verse 9...

9 Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the [g]impulses of your heart and the [h]desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things. 10 So, remove grief and anger from your heart and put away [i]pain from your body, because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.

Some people with what Solomon writes here, especially this idea of following your heart and your eyes..

We all know that our hearts are deceitful.

WE also know that the lust of the eyes can lead us to sin..

So what is Solomon saying to the young man?

Let me give you a couple thoughts..

#1 - Young people should enjoy the blessings of youth.

It is sad to see so many teenagers and young adults committing suicide.

Every time I hear those reports, I wonder how a young person could do something like that.

Though suicide is always a sin, it is easier to understand an older person doing it.

But when kids do it, we struggle to understand.

And the main cause of confusion is that so much life is in front of the young person..

Not only that.

They don't have the stress of providing for a family or holding down a job..

Most have their health.

Most are in the prime of life.

And Solomon agrees with that here by telling them to rejoice in their youth...

But second, young people have a world of options before them...

Who will they marry?

What school will they go to?

What occupation will they seek?

What sports will they play?

And so he tells the young person to do whatever pleases them..

In other words, you have all sorts of option on the table.

As a young person, you aren't generally forced or cornered into being something you don't want to be.

Look, I had about 5 majors in college..

And the reason I did is because I had the freedom to choose what to do..

At 44, I don't have that freedom anymore..

But a young person can seek to do what they enjoy doing..

That is all that Solomon means by what he says in the middle of verse 9..

And in case you aren't convinced that this verse belongs in the Bible, Solomon balances it out with the end of verse 9 which reminds young people that their choices will have consequences...

In other words, youth affords you the opportunity to do what you want to do, but be warned.

If you choose to do sinful things, there is a judgment of God coming..

The lesson here is simple.

As a young person, don't spend your time grieving and being filled with anger...

Spend your time enjoying the prime of life.

Spend your time figuring out what you enjoy doing..

And pursue those passions as long as they aren't sinful..

Look, the world is before a young person.

Some of the options are good and pleasing to God.

Some of the options are tempting and lead away from God.

Figure out which good option you like, and go after that with all your might while you are young..

Conclusion

So where do we apply these 4 lessons in our lives tonight?

#1 - There are no restrictions on rejoicing.

Look, laughter is biblical.

Joy is biblical.

Enjoying life is biblical.

Christians can and should have fun.

Life will give you enough days of grief and mourning, so make sure the days in between are filled with rejoicing.

#2 - There are no perfect conditions in life.

Though I said this in my life, I chuckle when I young couples waiting on children until they can afford them.

Look, I know we must exercise wisdom in money matters.

I know planning is a good thing.

But you will never be able to afford your children.

But there is no greater reason to be broke than the joy of children.

But this applies to so many things in life.

Life will never give you perfect conditions, so don't hold your breath for them.

Trees are going to fall.

Rain is going to pour.

Drought is going to come.

But you plant your seed, do your work, serve the Lord with discipline and boldness.

#3 - There are no days to waste.

Time slows down for no one.

Solomon was a king.

Solomon has boatloads of wealth.

But he lacked the power to slow down time.

The world went around the sun just as fast for him as it does for me and you.

This means two things..

First, get saved as soon as possible..

The sooner you come to know to Christ, the sooner you make sense of the world and find joy in it.

Second, get moving as soon as possible.

Maybe you are waiting for the right time to serve.

Maybe you are waiting for the right opportunity to come.

Let me tell you something, it may never come.

So, pray and ask the Lord for courage.

Pray and ask the Lord direction.

Seek out the counsel of another believer you trust, and then get moving.

Solomon wants us to know that life is a vapor so make your vapor counts.

Let us pray.