

Remember Your Creator in the Days of Your Youth

Ecclesiastes 12

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, December 5, 2021

If you will just open your Bibles with me to the book of Ecclesiastes, because that's the book that we're in today. And while you're turning there, if you're joining us for the first time this morning, we are almost at the end of a series on the book of Ecclesiastes that we started in the fall of this year. As Kevin just mentioned, next week, we're going to start a new Christmas series for about three weeks and so we're going to stop this Ecclesiastes study next week and will pick it up again after Christmas.

But if you would, look at the first verse of the book, Ecclesiastes one, verse one says this, "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 we can just stop there and say, who hasn't felt that way recently, right? Who hasn't wanted to raise their voice up to heaven and say, all this just seems so vain, because you do church one way and then you have to do it another. Then you handle it like this one week with masks and chairs and people in the gym, and then you come back next week, and you change it and then you have to change it again and change it again. It's just one change after another. Life seems like Ecclesiastes one verse one, doesn't it? It seems like we're living out the words of this verse, which is why we're studying this book together.

And if you look in chapter 12, this is some of the advice Solomon gives you in light of all the vanity that we see in the world today. If you look at the very end of the book, this is our passage for today. It says in chapter 12,

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no delight in them"; before the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened, and clouds return after the rain; in the day that the watchman of the house tremble, and mighty men stoop, the grinding one stand idle because they are few, and those who look through windows grow dim; and the doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low, and one will arise at the sound of the bird, and all the daughters of song will sing softly. Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and the caperberry is ineffective. For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street. Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered, and the wheel of the cistern is crushed; then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher. "All is vanity."

I'm going to stop the reading there. Just to say a few words about that, as you can tell by reading this, these are the final words of the book of Ecclesiastes. There's a little more after this, and we'll talk about that when we come back after Christmas. But if you notice, it repeats a phrase that we just read at the beginning of the book in verse eight when he says, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!" I told you before the word Solomon uses for vanity here is the Hebrew word *hebel*. It's could translate as soap bubbles, because it refers to something that just rises up and pops. It just flies away with the wind because it has no substance to it. Solomon says a lot of things in this world are like that today. It's a good way to refer to a lot of these changes. They're here today, gone tomorrow, they blow around with the wind as well, which is having an impact on our society by the way. The Globe and Mail website recently published an article that said that the number one cause of death among young people in British Columbia right now is drug overdoses, not car crashes, not cancer, drugs that killed more than anything else among the young people. For this reason, everything seems so vain to them. It all seems so pointless. All the

money and sex and partying is getting old, all the fun and games and entertainment is not what it used to be because you can't do it anymore. So they're turning to something else and it's ruining their lives.

Solomon says he did the same thing and that's what this whole book is about. But it didn't help him either. We don't know if Solomon got on drugs. I don't know if they had that back then. But he did other things and he gives you this advice to deal with vanity. In the first verse he says, "Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth before the evil days come."

I'm going to talk about this passage in just a moment, but an important word here is the phrase evil days. That's the Hebrew word *ra yom*. And it could be translated as evil days or sad days. And it's a reference to old age at the time when your face takes on a sad expression because you don't have the energy to smile anymore. That's the idea of this term. Solomon says you need to remember God before you enter that stage of life. Because if you look down in verse seven, he says, your body will one day return to the earth, and your spirit will go to the God who made it. So you need to think about God now, before those days come. And to help you with that, if you're reading this passage, you're wondering what he's talking about here. Solomon gives you several descriptions of old age in this text, that are pretty shocking in their detail. If you look in your Bible, starting in verse three, he mentions the watchman of the house trembling, that's a reference to your legs. Because as you get old, this is what happens, your knees don't work like they used to, and they begin to tremble and shake. And if you look a little further over, you mentioned the mighty men stooping and that's a reference to your shoulders, because you don't have the strength to hold the posture you once had. Your back starts bending over. I don't know if you've visited a nursing home recently, but if you have, you'll see older people using walkers and putting a pillow behind their head, because they just can't keep their head up straight. That's what this is referring to. He mentions the grinding ones standing idle because they're few; that's a reference to your teeth because they start falling out. He talks about those who looked at the window; that's your eyes. The doors on the street shutting is a reference to your ears.

I remember an older man at a former church. Every time we would sing hymns, he would look to his wife and say what did he say? What was the hymn number? This passage talks about men being afraid of terrors. That's your nerves, the almond tree blossoming is your hair turning white. The grasshopper dragging himself along, that's your energy level. And we could go on and on. But you get the idea here. This is a scary passage. It's pretty frightening to read this. But Solomon says scared or not, it doesn't matter. This is coming for you. Whether it concerns you, it doesn't change the fact that you're one day going to get old. It's the fate of every man. And so the time to prepare for that is now. Don't put this off into later; you need to prepare for these years at an early age.

He says you need to remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come. You don't do it afterwards, because then it won't help you. You don't think about your Creator when the evil days get there, you need to think about it before it arrives. This is the reason so many young people get hooked on drugs is because they forget this, they think they'll never get old. They think they're bulletproof. This is also the reason why they drive so fast, live recklessly at times, because they think they're immune to danger. This passage says you're not immune to danger, live long enough danger will find you. And it's going to look like this. So you need to keep that in mind and be humble about it.

This is important because I told you before that Solomon is making a transition here from talking about the problem of vanity to talking about the solution. And the solution is that you're not going to live forever. You have

a limited shelf life on this earth. And you have to deal with that now. Things like drugs and sex and alcohol and partying and all that stuff shouldn't matter to you so much in light of eternity. You need to be thinking about the Lord. This is something I think what's really important for our area because there's such a push to be healthy right now in British Columbia. I don't know if this has always been a thing but McDonald's used to have really big buckets of coke you could get. Now they're really small. Maybe McDonald's doesn't affect you guys as much. But there's a movement to eat right and drink right and exercise. And that's okay. But they do it because they think it's going to make them live forever. They think they'll never get old. That's not true. You're going to get old. There's a desire to make sure everyone gets free health care here and no one gets sick. When you can't do that, if you live long enough, you'll get sick eventually. Because it doesn't change the fact that the evil days are coming. Whether you have free health care or not.

That's what this passage is all about. No one gets a pass on this. One commentator said it this way, that one day you will be undone. It's a fact; it's not conjecture. Maybe it'll come sooner or maybe it'll come later. Maybe it will be now or maybe in 50 years. But whatever the case, you will experience the painful process Solomon speaks of here just like everyone else, because your hair will turn white. And the Agile athlete used to hop and skip along like a grasshopper will now scoot and shuffle. The Hungry Man will lose his appetite, he won't be able to eat the things he used to eat. The powerful man will lose his muscles, the vigorous man who used to work and work and work and stay up all night until the wee hours of the morning won't be able to do that, because he's going to sit down and fall asleep in his rocking chair. Or he'll sit in a nursing home and stare at the wall, which sounds alarming until you realize that that's why Solomon put it in here to alarm you. It's in here to get your attention. Because that's what old age does: old age strips away every last vestige of pride you have left in this world takes away your body, it takes away your strength, it takes away your beauty, it takes away your good looks. It takes away your appetite and your hunger. When I was a young man, I could eat anything I wanted. But I was broke, I didn't have any money. Now I have a full-time job. And now I can't eat everything I want to anymore and it's not fair. But that's the way it works. It does that until the only thing you have left is God. It takes away everything you have until the only thing you can turn to is Jesus Christ.

You know, there was a lady in Georgia who was dying. So she wanted to teach her family this lesson. And she asked them to write these words on our tombstone. She has her name. And then below that it says, "Now I know something you don't." And she's right. What a dead person knows is that life is precious. It's a very valuable thing. You're only here for a little while. And that's what we're going to talk about this morning by looking at four ways to prepare for death and old age in this passage. That's our sermon for today. If you're taking notes in Ecclesiastes 12, we're going to look at four ways to prepare for death and old age. And we're going to do this because we don't like to talk about the subject very much do we? We tend to push it aside because it's unpleasant, it does kind of unravel us a little bit. That's why we often put our old people in nursing homes today. I understand sometimes we do that because we can't take care of them. And that's okay. But oftentimes we do that because we just don't want to watch them die. It makes us so sad.

In fact, things have gotten so bad with this, as are in our society that we've instituted a program here in Canada called MAID. It stands for medical assistance in dying. And it sounds nice, but all it's referring to is assisted suicide. It's a program created by the government so that you don't have to watch old people get old. And doctors and nurses can kill them if the elderly want them to. So far, from what I could tell very few people have done that. But the number is rising. According to a government website, it's gone from 55,000 suicides to 80,000 but the reason they do that is simple. They don't want to go through this painful process Solomon's talking about here.

They don't want the discomfort of watching their hair turn wide in their body get old, they'd rather just die. But he says in this passage, you shouldn't commit suicide because this process is here to help you come face to face with your own mortality. It's here to help you prepare for the grave. Since I've lived in Canada, I've known just a few people, one in particular who died from MAID and he was lost. And I remember my wife and I were trying to talk to their spouse in order to go over and see him and then the spouse was saying no, I don't want you to upset him. Well, you'd better upset him because he's about to be really upset. He is missing the whole point of this thing though, the whole point of this difficult process of getting old is to push you closer to God, not farther away. You know, it used to be your deathbed was your time to get right with God and get right with your family before you left this earth. Now most people's death beds, they're so stoned and on drugs, they can't do anything. We need to get back to thinking this way today, which is what we're going to talk about by looking at four ways to prepare for death in old age. The first one is to remember your Creator.

We've already said a little bit about this one but we need to say more. Because the first way to prepare for death in old age is to remember your Creator, which means you need to accept the fact that you didn't come into this world on your own. There is a God who created you and He needs to be on your mind as you go all throughout this life. And if you look in verse one, it says, "Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, 'I have no delight in them.'" As you read that there, it might help to remind you of the setting of this verse, because, as I just mentioned, these are the final words of Ecclesiastes; this is how Solomon ends the book. And he does it by telling you to remember something. In other words, as you grow old Solomon's not telling you to do something and make a bucket list and go skydiving and go run with the bulls. He's telling you to recall something you already know. And that is the fact that you have a creator. If you think about it, he could have just said, you need to remember God here, but he doesn't. He's more specific than that, because He's emphasizing your place in the universe. And that is that you are down here, you're not up here. This is your place as a human being: you are created, you're not the creator. And you have to let it make you be humble as you go through life.

The word for Creator here is the Hebrew word *bara*. It's the same word used in Genesis one verse one to say that in the beginning, God created or *bara*, the heavens in the earth. And Solomon uses that to say that just as God created the heavens and the earth, so He created you; just as He formed the sea and the land and all that's in them, so He did the same thing with your soul, which means that you have someone to answer to as you go through life. There is a judge. I mean, so many young people who don't think that way today; they think that nobody can judge them. They're the masters of their own destiny, they hung the moon, the world revolves around them, it doesn't. Doesn't work that way for young people. it doesn't work that way for old people. Because Solomon says you need to remember your Creator, in the days of your youth, before the evil days come.

And if you notice, he's contrasting two days here, the days of your youth versus the evil days. And to explain that the word youth here literally means the opening stages of life. Because this is the time when everything is new and fresh and exciting for you. This is the time when everything is bright and fun and active, and you have the energy to go outside and play. My boys want to go outside and play. I'm just too tired. Now, this is the time before that he contrasts that with the evil days, those are the times when you can't go outside, you're too tired. He says that you have to remember your Creator. Before all that. If you notice the word *before*, it's a time sensitive word, it means you do this before that; you need to think about God prior to the evil days coming. It's also emphatic because he repeats it again in verse two. But really the reason he mentions this is because young people are so prone to forget this, aren't they? They're so prone to forget the fact that they have a creator and a God for several

reasons. I mean, one reason is because there's so distracted like everyone else today, young people have so many things on the brain like school and work and play. They have to think about finding a job and a house and a spouse. I remember when one of my little boys was two years old, we had this massive hallway in our church in Indiana where we were before. And he would see me at the end of the hallway and he would say, "Daddy!" and he would come running for me. And about halfway down the hallway he would get distracted by something else. And off he'd go. Well, that's how young people are right? Just so busy, so many irons in the fire.

Another reason he tells young people to do this, and this is probably more important is that if you don't remember your Creator, when you're young, let's be honest, most people never do it at all. They ignore him the rest of their lives. They've done studies on this and found that about 85% of people who go to church were saved at an early age that came to faith when they were young. It's not hard to see why because you're impressionable at a young age. Your heart is teachable. Back then we all remember things that our parents told us when we were kids. Things we learned in Sunday school, things we learned in church sermons. We heard but it's harder to do that for an older person because your heart gets hard. As you get older, you begin to say, well, I know it all already.

So to prevent you from going that route, Solomon says you need to think about God before it happens. Do it while your heart is still soft and tender. And we need to stop here and say a little more about this, because this is a point of the passage, and that is that you can't just wait until your 60s and 70s and 80s to think about death. You can't just wait until you're old and gray headed and you got one foot in the grave, you need to do it in your 20s and 30s, too. You need to think about dying when you're young. Because young people die to any doctor in this room will tell you they get sick and go to the hospital just like everybody else. They're not immune to that. We've all met people who said, "I'll think about God when I'm old" only to die all of a sudden; they never got old. They say they'll do it on their deathbed, but their deathbed never came. They ended up passing away before that. Solomon says in order to deal with that, you need to take care of it now. Think about God early on.

To look at this another way, I had a professor in seminary, who used to say that the person you will be you're now becoming; the man you're going to be in 30,40, 50 years, you're turning into right now. So don't think you're going to wake up tomorrow and be somebody else. It doesn't work that way. Don't think you'll get out of bed one day and just snap out of it and turn your life around. Nobody does that. The things you do now impact the things you do then. Your life is made up of a billion different choices you make every single moment. If you start making the right ones now, you'll make the right ones then, but if you make the wrong ones, you go the opposite direction. So Solomon is telling you to avoid the vanity of life and think about these things. Now. As I was preparing for the sermon, I came across a story of a time some children were touring a hospital. And one little girl asked an old woman, how old are you? And the elderly lady said "I'm 98." And the child's eyes got real big. She couldn't quite process that. So finally she said, "Wow, did you start at one?" Well, the answer is yes, we all do. Everybody starts at one. And from that point forward, you need to take your life seriously. That's Solomon's advice here.

And which leads us to another way to prepare for death in old age and that is to pay attention to the signs and remember that your life is fragile. So the first one is to remember your Creator. You have to realize this world did not start with you, it started with God. You're not the center of the universe, He is, which is so important to learn at a young age, because so many people go astray simply because of mistakes they made when they were young. They were proud, they didn't listen to anybody. We've all been there before. But if you remember that you have a God, it makes your heart teachable. And we need to do then that brings us to a second way to prepare for death in

old age. And that is to pay attention to the signs. And remember that your life is fragile, which means you need to pay attention to the signs of your body breaking down. Those are given to you to point you to God. And if you look at verse one again, Solomon says this, “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come in the years draw near when you will say, ‘I have no delight in them;’ before the sun and the light and the moon and stars are darkened, and clouds return after the rain; in the day that the watchmen of the house tremble and mighty men stoop, and the grinding ones stand idle because they are few, and those who look through windows grow dim.”

I'll stop the reading there because we talked about some of this before. When you first read this passage here and go through all these images, it seems kind of confusing, but it's actually very simple. And this has been called the most vivid description of old age in the Bible. It paints a picture that really nobody can miss. And just to say a little bit about it, if you if you take this one phrase and verse two, “before the sun and the light and the moon and stars are darkened”, that means that when you get old, this is what happens to you. All the light goes out of your life. All the hopes and dreams and goals for the future come crashing to the ground because you realize there's just not enough time to get to them all.

You don't have enough energy. I've talked to many men who have said they wanted to go farther in their career than they did. They wanted to do more but they couldn't because they ran out of time. That's what this is talking about here. The sun or the light went out on them and the moon or stars couldn't shine. That happens to everybody and to explain this he gives us the verses we looked at earlier in verses three through five where the watchman of the house tremble, meaning your knees tremble and the mighty man stoop. But if you look in verse five, this is his solution to that. He says, “For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street. Remember him before the silver cord is broken and the Golden Bowl is crushed.” That's a second time Solomon uses the phrase, “remember him” in this passage, to show you that this is why God gave the aches and pains to you. This is why he made the process of old age so difficult, so uncomfortable, to draw your mind back to God. When you're young, it's easy to forget about God because you know, everything's so easy for you get out of bed, no problem, go to work, no problem. Eat your food, no problem. When you're too old, there's just one problem after another. But that's there to remind you of your Creator. And if you notice how he puts this, he says, “Remember him before the silver cord is broken, and the Golden Bowl is crushed.” That phrase, “Golden Bowl,” is a way of referring to your life in general. And the picture is of a golden bowl, held by a silver cord just dangling over the ground, kind of like a big Christmas tree ornament. At this time, in Israel, wealthy homes would often have one of those in their living room to spruce up the place. And they would put incense in there and sweet smelling perfume and that type of thing. And Solomon uses that image here to say that this is all your life is at the end of the day. It's held by a chord. It's like a pretty trinket held by a thread that could snap at any moment. And in order to deal with that, he says you need to keep God in the picture. You need to keep taking your thoughts back to him.

Jonathan Edwards in his sermon sinners in the hands of an angry God said Your life is like a spider's web. And it just takes one rock and the whole thing will break. And you never know when it's going to do that. So same idea here. In fact, this is interesting, because Solomon flips this around from what he said earlier, because now he says not only do you need to remember your Creator, when you're in your teens, and 20s and 30s, you need to do it in your 50s and 60s and 70s, too. You need to do it when you get old. Because as your knees buckle and your shoulders stoop and your teeth fall out, it should remind you that this life is not all it's cracked up to be. It's not all

that wonderful down here. And as your string fails, and your eyesight vanishes, and your ears don't work anymore, and these to show you that there must be something greater.

A newspaper in the states published a cartoon of an old man drinking a beer, saying this was so much nicer when I could taste it. But now I'm too old to get drunk anymore. And that's a sad thing to hear. But it has a nugget of truth in it. And that is that we're all going to experience that someday. We're all going to get to a place where you can't enjoy the things of youth anymore. So Solomon says you need to be thinking about it now. Which is another thing that we often neglect today. People ignore this advice as well. I just told you that most people come to Christ at an early age. But I didn't mention they've also found that about two thirds of them fall away. Either because their profession was not legitimate. Or for some other reason they leave the church after graduating high school by the 1000s because this world just looks so appealing to them. They pray a prayer, they walk in aisle, they go through a confirmation class, go to vacation bible school and throw it all away later on alcohol or drugs or whatever, but one thing they're finding also is that many of them come back later on because they realize that the fun doesn't last. The trappings of this world aren't so fun anymore, because over time, all the beer tastes the same. And the drugs do that. All the parties look alike after a while because you can't tell one apart from the other. And Solomon's point here is that God allows that to happen for a reason, and that is to get your attention. There's a reason he makes this world so miserable and depressing and disgusting at times for you. And that is to bring your heart back to Him.

It's been said that sometimes you can't look up until you're down. And sometimes you can't stare up at the sky until you're flat on your back in some kind of turmoil. And God often puts you through that in order to help you. It doesn't always feel that way at the time. But it's there to make you grow in your faith. I know a lot of people are discouraged in times like this, when these restrictions come back and floods come. But spiritually speaking, some of the best fruit comes out of times like this. We've all met people here in the church that have come to the Lord later in life because they said, you know, they tried all that stuff. But it's so boring now. They went to party after party and show after show and game after game. And it's all just so mundane. And they remember things that they heard as a young person hearing how Jesus saves and they wanted to come back to that again because that's the only thing that can help. That's what Solomon is talking about here. In fact, when you open up your Bibles, this is something you see a lot, because you've learned that there are several men who came to the Lord at an old age. Quite a few of them actually, like Solomon. As we've talked about, in this book, he repented later in life. He did it when he was probably in his 60s and 70s. And Nikodemus, as well, you remember that guy? He came to the Lord in His twilight years. Moses was 80 years old at the time of the burning bush. I don't know about you guys, but that that's pretty up there. Abraham was 75 when the Lord first met him. Noah was 600 years old when he entered the ark. I think that's a record. I don't think anyone can top that. But one man who really did this was Manasseh. If you can recall that guy, he was one of the worst people in the Bible, because he was the king of Israel, but he worshipped idols, he bowed down to the statues, and he sacrificed one of his sons in the fire, he took the future king of Israel and he killed them. But at the end of its life, the Bible said he repented because he was old. He trusted in God again, because his sins had lost their appeal for him. Which is something that we all need to learn a lesson from today.

In one of his sermons, Charles Spurgeon said this, "I can tell you for a fact that the sick beds and hospital rooms in England are doing more for Christ than our pulpits have ever done. Because men will never become great in theology until they become great in suffering." Martin Luther said, "Affliction is the best book in my library, because it cleanses me from sin. It checks my motives and throws all boasting and pride to the ground. It also

makes me trust in God's promises, grow in my faith, and it causes me to find comfort in eternal things, which makes me say that old age is probably the single greatest blessing that can ever come to a Christian.” And I think he's right.

And it brings us to one more way to prepare for death and old age in this passage, just to review these other ones. The first one is to remember your Creator. And then secondly, you need to pay attention to the signs and realize that your life is fragile, because it gets snapped at any moment. It doesn't take much to bring this life crashing to the ground, which is something that we saw a few weeks ago with the floods, didn't we? We one thing that troubled us about all the that disaster is that nobody saw it coming, we had no idea. But Solomon says you can see this coming, you are going to get old, live life long enough, it will happen to you.

And that brings us to one more way to prepare for death in old age. And that is to keep in mind that you are dust. So if you're taking notes, a fourth way to prepare for death in old age, is to keep in mind that you are dust which means that you prepare for all of this by remembering that your body is just a grain of sand. The only thing that matters at the end of the day is your soul. And if you look in verse six, this is what Solomon says. He says, “Remember him before the silver cord is broken, and the golden bowl is crushed. The pitcher by the wall is shattered and the wheel of the cistern is crushed; then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. ‘Vanity of vanities,’ says the Preacher, “all is vanity!”

There's that phrase again that we talked about in the beginning. “Vanity of vanities,” and Solomon puts it here because it's kind of the bookends of the book. It ties the beginning and end together. Because he says that after the golden bowl is crushed, this is what will happen to you: you're just going to die like everyone else, which is vain in this world and seems very empty. And the way he says this is interesting because he says your spirit will return to the God who gave it. That means that you have a Creator. Your soul will go back to God and the dust will return to the earth as it was. That's some deep theology here but to explain it some when God first created man, this is how He formed him, says he did it out of the dust of the ground. Genesis two verse seven says the Lord formed a man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. That's very interesting, because God could have made man the way he made everything else, he could have just said, Let there be man and there was man or snapped his fingers. But he didn't do that. He created you out of the dust to remind you that you are part of this world. You're not any better than anything else. We're made in the image of God, and therefore mankind is special. And we have the breath of life, which makes us different from the plants or the animals or that type of thing. But at the end of the day, you're just dirt physically. And nothing more. In fact, if you read further down on the book of Genesis, you'll recall that after Adam sinned, as part of his punishment, the Lord said, By the sweat of your face, you will eat bread until you return to the ground. For you are dust and to dust you shall return. That means you started with the ground, you're going to end with the ground; you started with dirt and go back to dirt. Adam and Eve sin because they wanted to be like God, they thought they could be as smart and as great as he was. So God said, “You're not going to do that; you're just going to be dust.” And Solomon's point here is that the same can be said for all of us, no matter what stage of life you're in. If you're a child, or a teenager, or young adult or elderly, rich or poor, black or white, male or female, you're all in the same predicament. We're just products of the fall.

As one commentator says, this verse completes the decaying process that Solomon talked about earlier, because it brings us to the final insult of life. And that is that we're all going to be eaten by worms one day, which sounds terrible, until you balance that with the rest of this passage, because Solomon says even so, your spirit won't do

that, because it will return to the God who made it. The only hope you have in this whole chapter is your spirit, not your body. And the word spirit in verse seven is the Hebrew word *ruwach* which means wind or breath and the way it's used here, it refers to your soul, or the breath of life. The reason the Hebrew language compares it to wind here is because you can't see the wind. It's the same way with your soul. So Solomon says you need to make that a priority, because it'll survive way longer than your body will. Which is something we don't normally talk about a lot today, there's been a tendency to overlook the soul, because it's viewed as an outdated thing or a relic of the past. And I remember talking to a relative several years ago who was getting her PhD in psychology, which means the study of the soul. That's what the word psychology means. Psyche means soul, and ology means study. And so I asked her, I said, "What do they teach you about the soul in school?" And she said, "Nothing. We're not even sure if we have a soul anymore." I said, "Really? You think people do bad things just because their neurons misfired?" She said, "Yes." And the conversation got real awkward at that point. You think they murder and rape and pillage just because their genes got knocked out of whack? It's more to it than that.

I was talking to another person who was involved in some sin. And I said, "That's going to hurt your soul." And he said, "Well, I don't buy into that nonsense, because I can't see it." Well, you can't see the wind either. But you see the effects of the wind. But you hear that sort of thing a lot today. It's not unusual. And Solomon's point here is that your soul matters despite what some may tell you. Your inner man is important because it changes everything about you. In fact, as I was preparing for this sermon, I came across an article that said that when you prioritize your soul, it does several things for you. Because it changes the way you look at spiritual things like prayer in the church. It changes the way you view eternal issues like the Bible and evangelism, because you value them more now. When you pray, you place a high priority on your soul. You stop saying, "I don't have time for that." Because you make time, clear your schedule. It also changes the way you handle relationships with people. Because you realize every time you talk to someone, you're talking to an immortal soul. That person is not an animal looking back at you. That's not an evolved monkey. As a human being made in the image of God. You begin to hold worldly things with a loose hand and other things like your friends and family tighter, but maybe the greatest change that happens to you when you prioritize your soul is that you begin to see yourself as a pilgrim down here. You understand that you're just passing through life. One poet said it this way. He said, "Jesus loves me this I know, for my white hair tells me so. And though my sight is growing dim, I know it brings me close to Him. And it tells me come what may, He'll be with me all the way from only passing through to give God praise in all I do." You're just passing through this place. And you need to learn to think like that today.

You know, I don't know if you guys know this, but John Bunyan's book *Pilgrims Progress* is the number one selling book behind the Bible. And one reason it's so popular because everybody can relate to it. Because who doesn't feel like they're on a pilgrimage nowadays? Who doesn't feel like you don't belong down here? Well, it's because you don't belong. Solomon's question in this book is that if that's the case, then why do you want to be so comfortable here? If you don't belong in this world, why are you getting so worked up about when things get out of whack? You shouldn't do that. Because it only reminds you that you're heading to a better place. Listen, friends, this, this has been a tough week on a lot of people. And as these things continue, and go back and forth, it just gets harder. But just to give you some hope, if you understand what this book is talking about, it helps because it says that when things are bad down here, that's actually good for you as a Christian, because it reminds you not to get too attached to all this. Don't place a high priority on this, put it somewhere else and put it on your soul.

As I was preparing for this sermon, I came across the story of the time, a missionary asked a poor man in Africa, where his home was and he said it was with his father. And so the missionary asked him if it was a nice place and the man said, "Yes, because wherever my father is, it's a nice place." And I tell you that story, because if you're a Christian, you can say that today; you're going to heaven. And it's nice because your Father is there. So the troubles of this life shouldn't bother you so much. There's a Savior who has come to the world, His name is the Lord Jesus Christ. As a son of God, he lived a perfect life in this world and died on a cross to save us from our sins, so that we could go to be with the Father. That's where our hope is found. And I pray that you would take that to heart today, especially as we take the Lord's Supper.

Let me pray for you that you would, and God will be glorified in these things. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we've come almost to the end of rich and deep book, every week that we study it, it seems like we're missing so much because our minds are so small. And yet, Father, it's such a good reminder to remember that we do have a soul. And all the things of this life are just secondary to that. Whether there's restrictions, whether there's flies, whether there's earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, whatever disaster, it just reminds us that we have something more to look forward to. Oh, thank You that through Christ, we can go to a place where there are no restrictions. And one day, we'll go to a place where there are no natural disasters and troubles of this life. There'll be no weeping and crying and mourning and pain there. And we look forward to that glorious day. Father, thank You for the chance to meet today. Lord, thank You for the graciousness of our church family that seeks to be unified in these times. And as we take the Lord's Supper, I pray that it would be a special thing this morning is it reminds us of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the one who unites us and brings us together. We pray this all in Jesus name. Amen.