

Eat, Drink, Be Merry

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Date: 20 October 2024

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[0 : 00] We've been in this sermon series for a few months now. We're in chapter 9. We're getting rapidly close to the end of the book. And for those of you who don't know me, my name is Sean, and I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church.

And it's my joy to preach God's word to you this morning. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word.

Father, it is easy for us to, on the one hand, get lost in the pleasures of this world, to indulge in sin in an effort to forget the reality of death.

And to live for ourselves. But on the other hand, Lord, it is also easy for us to look at the condition of this world, how broken and unjust and messed up it is, and to be given to excessive sorrow, despair, depression.

But Lord, we ask that you will minister to us, you would speak to us through your word this morning, so that we are sober-minded about the reality of death and the futility of life, but at the same time, have the humility and the gratitude to be able to enjoy the simple gifts of life that you give, to enjoy life and its pleasures in accordance with your will, and help us most of all to fix our eyes on Jesus, our greatest treasure, to enjoy him and life with him, our bridegroom forever.

[2 : 15] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please stand in honor of God's word as I read from Ecclesiastes 9, 1-12.

Amen. Amen. But all this, but all this I lay to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God.

Whether it is love or hate, man does not know. Both are before him. It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice.

As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all.

Also, the hearts of the children of men are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

[3 : 31] For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.

Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. Let your garments be always white.

Let not oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life, and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol to which you are going. Again, I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all, for man knows, does not know his time.

Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time when it suddenly falls upon them.

[4 : 51] This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated. Because of the lies of the enemy and the persistently sinful heart of man and the way sinful people tend to perceive God and relate to God, God appears when we examine our world, he appears to have a PR problem, a public relations problem.

Many people imagine God to be a cosmic killjoy, a strict disciplinarian who demands all work and no fun.

They wrongly think that God's favorite word to us, his children, is no, and relate to God that way. And my hope this morning is that God would use the preaching of his word to change that perception just a little bit.

And with that in mind, let's play a little game of who said that, right? Guess who said this in the Bible? Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch.

That's great. Does that sound to you like something God would say? Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch.

[6 : 11] Quite to the contrary, that's the voice of the false teachers in Colossians 2.21. Here's another example, not from the Bible, this time from a children's novel written by a Christian man named C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

A character at one point in the book says this, what is the meaning of all this gluttony, this waste, this self-indulgence? Where did you get all these things? Which character do you think says that?

Condemning, gluttony, self-indulgence? Is it Aslan, the lion, the Christ figure in the book? No, it's not. It's the white witch who's a satanic figure in the book.

The imposter queen who condemns the good gifts of God. And in that scene, that's a great scene where in that land of Narnia, which is always winter and never Christmas, finally, as the true king, Aslan, approaches, the land begins to fall and Christmas begins to come and Father Christmas distributes these gifts.

And so instead of austerity and scarcity, they have feasts with decorations of holly and bread and wine and plum pudding. Do you find Christian life to be burdensome?

[7 : 36] But did not Jesus say in Matthew 11, 29, my yoke is easy, my burden is light? Does not 1 John 5, 3 say, for this is the love of God that we keep his commandments?

Commandments, does that sound onerous to you, burdensome to you? It says in the rest of that verse, and his commandments are not burdensome. In Ecclesiastes 9, 1 to 12, he's a case in point.

This passage teaches us to eat, to drink, be merry, and enjoy what God has allotted to you in life. First, we're gonna talk about the certainty of death, and then secondly, we're gonna talk about the uncertainties of life, and then finally, we're gonna talk about the joys of life that we get to enjoy because of those twin realities.

In order to relish the joys of life, we need to remember both the certainty of death and the uncertainties of life. So in both verses 1 to 6 at the beginning and verses 11 to 12 at the end, the preacher speaks of those two realities.

And these two sections kind of frame that middle section and point to it to emphasize that, to enjoy life. But it begins this way in verse 1, but all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God.

[8 : 56] Whether it is love or hate, man does not know. Both are before him. The hand of God is an expression for the power of God. Sometimes the hand of God blesses, and sometimes the hand of God punishes.

You see examples of that in 2 Corinthians 30, verse 12, and 1 Samuel 5, 11, where the hand of God is heavy upon the Philistines who have stolen the ark of the testimony.

The preacher of Ecclesiastes recognizes this aspect of the hand of God and notes that, whether it is love or hate, man does not know. Both are before him.

Later in verse 6, the preacher says a similar thing. He says that, when people die, their love and their hate and their envy perish, and that they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.

So love or hate in verse 1 describes the good things and the bad things, the ups and the downs of life here under the sun. And we share, as human beings, all of us share in those things, in love and hate, but it is not for us to determine or control what comes in our life.

[10 : 05] We cannot make sure that we only get love instead of hate. Desperately, we try to control our lives and to grasp hold of it, but it's like chasing after the wind and it slips right through our fingers because the times of our lives are not in our hands, but in the hand of God, as it says here in verse 1.

So life is uncertain and the preacher will elaborate on this more in verses 11 and 12, but now he returns to the theme of the certainty of death. In verses 2 to 3, he says, it is the same for all since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice.

As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun that the same event happens to all. The phrase same event is repeated twice here for emphasis, and this same event that happens to all is the same event that the preacher has been speaking of all throughout the book of Ecclesiastes.

In chapter 2, verses 13 to 14, he said that while wisdom is better than folly, if you, it just says light is better than darkness, if you have wisdom, you at least know how to navigate the complexities of life, you know what you're doing, but in the end, everybody dies.

That's what he says. And that's the same event that happens to all. He says the wise dies just like the fool. The righteous and the wicked, the good and the evil.

[11 : 38] God's people in the old covenant were taught to distinguish what is holy from the common, what is unclean from the clean. They were meant to be a people who were holy, meaning specially set apart for God and for his glory and for his purposes, and because of that, they had an extensive set of regulations to help them to live in a manner that is set apart from the rest of the nations.

They were to be clean, not unclean. And yet, the writer of Ecclesiastes who's very familiar with the law of God says that they both come to naught.

They both fall. They both, the same event happens to them both, whether you are clean or unclean. Likewise, the person who gives sacrifices to God and who does not make sacrifices to God, they both come to the same end.

The person who swears an oath to God and keeps it versus a person who doesn't care what God says at all. They both come to the same end in death. Whether you're Billy Graham or Osama Bin Laden, whether you're Corey Ten Boom or Adolf Hitler, the righteous and the wicked all die.

No amount of your righteousness or your good deeds and no amount of your wickedness or your evil can reverse the tide of death or control and determine your fate.

[13 : 08] And this is not a good thing. It's an evil thing, he says in verse three. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun that the same event happens to all.

Yes, as Christians, we do not fear death because we have a hope that goes beyond death and we do celebrate that reality. However, as Christians, we never celebrate death in and of itself.

Why? Because Jesus wept at Lazarus' tomb because death is not the way this world is supposed to be because 1 Corinthians 15, 26 tells us the last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Death is our enemy. Christ defeated death through his death on the cross and through his resurrection from the dead, but death will be finally destroyed only at the resurrection of the body when we are resurrected.

And so it is an evil that is presently part of this fallen sinful world that both the righteous and the wicked perish in death. And not only is this, is the end of our lives, namely death, evil, our entire lives, the duration of our life is full of evil.

[14 : 19] He says in verse three, the hearts of the children of men are full of evil and madness is in their hearts while they live and after that, they go to the dead. These two realities are related because we know from other parts of scripture that the wages of sin is death from Romans 6.

The natural consequence for humanity whose hearts are evil and because of their hearts that are evil, they do evil, the natural consequence of that is death.

So I think this is probably alluding to Genesis 6.5 where before the flood judgment of God, this is his assessment of humanity that the man's heart, the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

The evil that you see, that we see out in the world and the evil that we see in the tragedy of death are all related to the fact of the evil that is in our own hearts.

The human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. Who can understand it? This is why when God sends his son Jesus and sends his Holy Spirit, he promises to give his people a new heart because we need it and we can't be saved without it.

[15 : 32] That all ends in death, however, isn't meant to make us depressed. It's not meant to make us fatalistic. So the preacher reminds us in verses 4 to 6 that life is still better than death, that death in and of itself is not better than death.

I mean, death in and of itself is not worse than life itself. It says in verses 4 to 6, but he who is joined with all the living has hope for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing and they have no more reward for the memory of them is forgotten.

This doesn't contradict what the preacher has been saying all along. For example, in chapter 4, verse 2, he said that because of oppression and injustice that filled this world, he said that, I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive, but better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun.

That's still true. The preacher also said in Ecclesiastes 6, verse 3, that a stillborn child is better off than a man who lives a long time but has not learned humbly to enjoy the good gifts that God has given him.

Life is full of evil and suffering and that's why 7.1 says the day of death is better than the day of birth. In one sense, death is released from that.

[16 : 53] Attending funerals and numbering our days and knowing that we'll die gives us a heart of wisdom and that's why the preacher of Ecclesiastes enjoins these things to us.

However, that doesn't mean that death in and of itself is better than life because in life we still have hope and the possibility that we may learn to humble ourselves under the sovereignty of God and enjoy our toil and the lot that he has given us in life.

However, that doesn't change the reality that life is full of evil and suffering. So he says, a living dog is better than a dead lion. That is true. It's better to be a living dog than a dead lion but don't take that as a compliment.

When we think of dogs, we think of these cute pet dogs. I know some of our church members love these cute corgis. They're probably useless for most things because their legs are so short but their food is served to them two to three times a day.

They don't have to do anything to earn their food. Just food is served to them and it's served usually on a silver platter. Maybe not real silver but silver platter. And they can take a nap whenever they want during the day.

[18 : 07] They sprawl themselves out and whenever they want a massage, all they need to do is go in front of somebody or even a stranger and just lie down and then people will oblige and give them a massage and a rub.

I mean, what a life, right? We think of dogs like that when we think of dogs but that's not the kind of dogs that are in view here because dogs in the ancient world are scavengers and that's the case still in much of the world.

These are wild mutts that survive by eating scraps and any kind of food they can find and they are not very discriminating with their food.

They eat garbage, they eat carcasses, they lick blood. You see that even in the Bible and for this reason, in the Bible, evildoers are sometimes described figuratively as dogs.

A dog, Proverbs 26, 11 tells us, returns to his vomit. That's what dogs literally do. They'll return to their own vomit and then smell it and then lick it a little bit and say, oh, that doesn't taste that bad and then they'll start eating it.

[19 : 12] And in Proverbs 26, 11, that dog that returns to his vomit is compared to the fool who repeats his folly. So when you hear a living dog is better than a dead lion, don't think of that cute corgi but think of that wild scavenger dog.

It may be better for us in our urban context to think of living rats because that's what they're really more like. It's better to be a living rat than a dead lion.

And so what's the point here that he's trying to make? He's telling us why the living are better off than the dead for the living know that they will die but the dead know nothing and they have no more reward for the memory of them is forgotten.

Knowledge sets us apart from the dead but what is this knowledge that sets us apart from the dead? The one thing that is certain for believers and unbelievers that we all know is coming is that we're going to die.

So here is this one knowledge that you have that sets you apart from the dead. You know you're going to die. You're just not dead yet. Same thing with the living rat versus a dead lion.

[20 : 22] Sure, you might only be a rat. You're still alive but you're a rat. You're a dog. You repeat your folly. You live in this life under the sun that is vanity of all vanities.

That's the kind of that doesn't diminish the suffering of this life the brokenness of this life. So here are three truths that we have to try to hold together.

Life is better than death. Two, remembering death is better than trying to forget it in life. And three, living in light of the end gives us the heart of wisdom which then enables us to enjoy life as we're going to talk about.

So that's the certainty of death. Now let's turn to the uncertainties of life. Verses 11 to 12 are a succinct summary of chapter 8 which I talked about last week how good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people.

It says, Again, I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong nor bread to the wise nor riches to the intelligent nor favor to those with knowledge but time and chance happen to them all for a man does not know his time like fish that are taken in an evil net and like birds that are caught in a snare so the children of man are snared at an evil time when it suddenly falls upon them.

[21 : 40] Race is not to the swift. How many of you guys have experienced this in reality? Man o' War I know some of you guys are into the horse racing.

Some Kentuckians here. Man o' War is a thoroughbred racehorse that is widely considered to be the greatest racehorse of all time. I disagree with that assessment but that's okay.

Spurts Illustrated voted the best American racehorse of the 20th century beating out even Secretariat. During its career the horse won 20 races and earned a 2024 equivalent of \$4 million during its short career in prize money.

The horse was undefeated in all races except for one. And in that one race he was defeated by a horse that was fittingly named Upset.

That's not where we get the word Upset. It existed before that but that's the rumor. This is a horse that Man o' War had beaten before and this is a horse Upset that will never go on to win another race.

[22 : 50] And yet the greatest racehorse of all time lost to Upset. On February 10th, 1990 Buster Douglas was a 42-1 underdog against the undefeated heavyweight champion boxer of the world Mike Tyson.

It was such a lopsided bout that Mike Tyson's corner didn't even bring an ice pack to the match because they were like we're not going to need the ice pack.

He needed much more than an ice pack because he's the one that got knocked out. One of the greatest upsets in sports history. The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong.

In June 1694 400 Polish soldiers defeated 40,000 Ottomans at the Battle of Hodo. Maybe we can chalk that up to superior strategy.

They're more intelligent. Fight smarter not harder. Maybe that's why. But we can't do that either because the intelligent don't always prevail. Things don't always go well for the people who are smart.

[24 : 00] It says in verse 11 nor bread to the wise nor riches to the intelligent. Bread doesn't always go to the wise. Edgar Allan Poe was a brilliant writer, poet, editor, and literary critic and he only made \$6,200 in his entire life.

Adjust that for inflation that's almost \$200,000 like \$190,000. Some of you guys make that in a year. I mean this is, he made that throughout his entire life and even accounting for his short life he was not financially successful.

His poem, one of the most famous poems in the world, The Raven, earned a measly \$9. Bread doesn't always go to the wise. Nor riches to the intelligent.

To the Serbian-American engineer, Nikola Tesla, called a father of electricity because of his contribution to the design of the modern alternating current, the electricity supply system.

His subsystem was superior to the one designed by Thomas Edison. He was brilliant by any measure. He had 300 patents, over 300 patents to his name worldwide and yet in the later years of his life as his patents ran out and his new experience began to fail.

[25 : 17] He became bankrupt and couldn't even afford his rent. The bread is not to the wise nor riches to the intelligent.

Nor is favor always to those with knowledge. When Absalom staged a successful coup against his dad, King David, in 2 Samuel 17, he had a counselor named Ahithophel who gave sure and intelligent counsel related to everything and yet when Ahithophel gave Absalom this counsel, he opted to not follow his advice and followed a different advice which eventually led to his defeat and death.

Favor is not always to those with knowledge. Time and chance happen to them all for man knows not his time. None of us know whether we will be rich or poor, full or hungry, famous or forgotten, favored or spurned, victorious or defeated in the future.

Sometimes people less deserving than us will get into the program that you want to get the grant that you want, to get the job that you want, get the promotion that you want, and get the wealth that you want, get the recognition that you want, or get the man or the woman that you want.

And sometimes people who are more deserving than us will not get those things. It is not the lot of humanity to know our time, to know what kinds of times and seasons will come to us.

[26 : 55] This is not to say that life is completely chaotic and random. It is still generally true that race is to the swift, the battle to the strong, bread to the wise, riches to the intelligent, favor to those with knowledge, and that's what the book of Proverbs is all about.

Proverbs 20, verse 13, verse 19, teaches that people who work hard will have plenty of bread. So bread is to the wise. But there are always exceptions in this sinful, broken, fallen world.

And that's the preacher's point in Ecclesiastes. There is no such thing as a foolproof path to the ten steps towards success that will guarantee outcomes for you no matter how many self-help gurus tell you that.

Anybody who offers you a foolproof path towards success is a person who is not wise. But does knowing this make us lazy then?

Absolutely not. Look at verse 10. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might. For there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol to which you are going. Sheol is the realm of the dead.

[28 : 06] It's speaking of death, the grave. We still work hard in this life because now is the time for toil. Now is the time for craftsmanship. Now is the time for artistry.

We're not going to have work to do on earth once we die until the time of the new heavens and the new earth. Our goal in work then is not success or gain but it is faithfulness to God.

Remember verse 1 which said that all our deeds are in the hand of God. So we can't guarantee the outcomes of our work, the fruit of our labor. We can't control the times that come to us so then what does it look like for us to work hard in this life?

Whatever our hand finds to do, we do it with our might while humbly recognizing that all our deeds are ultimately in the hand and not of our own hands but in the hand of God.

That's what it looks like. Faithfulness. There's also a parallel between verse 12 and verses 2 to 3. Twice we are told in verses 2 to 3 that the same event happens to all and then in verse 12 it says chance, time and chance happens to all.

[29 : 18] That expression chance happens is the same Hebrew word that was translated earlier twice. It's the same event happens to all and again it's speaking of death. Look at the illustrations.

Verse 12 for man does not know his time like fish that are taken in an evil net and like birds that are caught in a snare so the children of man are snared in an evil time when it suddenly falls upon them. What happens when an unsuspecting fish that is swimming around gets caught in a net?

It's killed. What happens to an unsuspecting bird that is caught ensnared? It's killed for plumage or feathers or for food.

Death comes for us all and we know not when we are caught unawares like a fish caught in a net or a bird caught in a snare. Time and chance happens to them all for man does not know his time.

The certainty of death uncertainties of life. So in this way then now these two realities are going to point us to how we are supposed to live and enjoy life and that brings us to verses 7 to 10 which is the fifth and final carpe diem passage in the book of Ecclesiastes.

[30 : 36] If you've been with us through this series what I mean by carpe diem is the Latin expression seize the day. These are insightful passages that are scattered throughout the entire book of Ecclesiastes and it's meant to teach us to take advantage of the present opportunities and to enjoy life today while it still lasts rather than counting on tomorrow that may never come.

That's the idea of the wisdom of Ecclesiastes. Instead of chasing after life regain humbly and gratefully receive life from the Lord as a gift. It says in verse 7 go eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart for God has already approved what you do.

if you think of bread and wine it's representing food and drink here if you think of food and drink as a means for gain then you're probably the type of person that scarves down his food every meal and then chugs his drink whatever the choice of beverage is just so that you can get to that next appointment or get onto that next item on your to-do list.

But if you do that then you can't slow down enough to savor your bread and your drink. That we got some good bread makers in our church that's not Lance's but Lance makes good challah bread Lauren makes good focaccia bread you guys have favorite focaccia bread I think Brittany makes sourdough bread and different things I think that crusty crispy edges of a bread and then when you bite into it the inside is moist and juicy the crumbs and then it just in your body I don't know what it does it creates all these dopamins or something it gives you that sense of home and comfort or maybe you really enjoy that earthy and smoky flavor of well barbecued meat you know who's laughing here you guys it says drink wine here but I know not everybody drinks and also if you struggle with alcohol you should not drink and so

I will use a different illustration maybe coffee tea that fruitiness and sweetness and bitterness and that intricate mixture that just clears your palate you guys know what I'm talking about one day we're all going to be dead so learn to enjoy the simple pleasures of life as gifts from God for God has already approved what you do so this is again an indication that God is here in the picture these simple pleasures of life are gifts from God that we receive from him not pleasures that we enjoy apart from him or instead of him 1 Timothy 4 4-5 echoes this thought for everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer and this raises an important caveat there are places in the Bible where the what the preacher commands here eat and drink and be merry seems to be condemned and we're going to look at two of those examples right now briefly 1 Corinthians 15 32-34

[34:10] Paul says this if the dead are not raised let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die do not be deceived bad company ruins good morals wake up from your drunken stupor as is right and do not go on sinning Paul's saying don't think let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die what he's saying is if there is no resurrection from the dead then yeah you should think well let's eat and drink for tomorrow we die because there's no point but he's saying you cannot think that because there is a resurrection from the dead so the difference here however is not that you're receiving these pleasures of life as gifts from God but you're seeing them you're enjoying them apart from God as replacements for him in sinful ways that's why Paul says wake up from your drunken stupor as is right and do not go on sinning that's something that the preacher in Ecclesiastes never approves earlier in Ecclesiastes chapter 2 he said that he tried wine he tried getting getting into alcohol as a way of fulfilling his life and he said it was all vanity he knows that ultimate fulfillment and pleasure is not found in alcohol itself but he's telling us to enjoy responsibly not in a sinful way but as gifts from God this is why the Bible in many places condemns pleasures toward a hedonistic end pursuing pleasure as the end of life rather than pursuing

God and enjoying pleasures on the way as gifts from God the Bible condemns those who are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God 2 Timothy 3 4 those who are slaves to various passions and pleasures Titus 3 3 those who enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin Hebrews 11 25 but the Bible commands those who are lovers of God and because of that enjoy the pleasures of life that God himself gives let's also look at another one Luke 12 13 to 21 Jesus tells the parable of the rich man right who has land has produced plentifully has so much in his barn but instead of being rich toward God and instead of being open-handed with the poor he decides you know I can't keep all my stuff to myself so I'm just going to tear down my barns bigger bigger barns and keep all my produce to myself and then God judges him and he perishes the next day that is not an example of a proper humble grateful enjoyment of God's gifts that's an example of idolatrous worship of God's gifts and as soon as soon as you turn

God's good gifts into an idol that you love above God it loses all this pleasure and it starts enslaving you so ask yourselves these diagnostic questions think about the things that you enjoy in life the pleasures in life that you enjoy that you desire and ask yourself these questions are you greedy for those pleasures or do you always need more or are you grateful and content because that will tell you if you're receiving these gifts as pleasurable gifts from God or not are you possessive of these pleasures or are you humble in your relation to them you're open handed about them you recognize that they are all ultimately from God and may be gone the next day are you controlling or anxious about these pleasures these gifts of life or do you have peace in your heart because you trust God with them ultimately let's keep going verse 8 let your garments be always white and let that oil be lacking on your head in the hot and dry ancient near east oil upon your head was a particularly delightful gift for a couple reasons one is that in really dry climates your scalp is dry and oil nice cold viscous oil on your head it moisturizes your scalp and feels refreshing and also you guys notice I have kids in young kids in school so I just got another letter this week saying that there was lice in the classroom and furiously checked the kids hair but lice was a lot more common in the ancient world and when you have lice and you get oil on your head it kills the lice because the oil is of its viscosity and imagine that you're getting these little critters sucking on your blood on your scalp and then the oil it's refreshing doesn't that sound just delightful that's a it's great relief and refreshment for these reasons oil is often associated with parties and festivities and special occasions similarly white is a symbol of purity and glory and beauty and festivity not only does that help in hot climates it keeps you cool but it's also a sign of festivity the bride wears white at a wedding mourners wear black at a funeral this is another concrete example of what it looks like to enjoy life as a gift from God it's still true that we ought to reflect on the day of death remember number our days as

Ecclesiastes 7 told us but that's not meant to make us depressed Eeyores through our life gloomy no we still in the midst of with death in view enjoy the present gifts of life because God intends for these things to be bombs to our souls in a sick and sorrow filled world the preacher put it this way in Ecclesiastes 5 18 to 20 behold what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him for this is his lot everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil this is the gift of God for he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart he intends for these simple pleasures of life as gifts to be bombs to our souls so that we can weather the sorrows and the sufferings of this sin sick world in fact only those who keep the uncertainties of life and the certainty of death in view can rightly enjoy pleasures of life in their proper bounds

I read recently that despite the constant bombardment from Russia the conductor Vitaly Alexino and his orchestra refused to cancel their annual Kharkiv music festival in Ukraine so they've been performing in bomb shelters and subways and hospitals during the Russo-Ukrainian war oftentimes bringing the audience to tears because of their beautiful soul-stirring music that's what enjoying the gifts of life in the midst of this fallen death-ridden world looks like it's an act of defiance it's a declaration of faith yes this world is not the way it's supposed to be but this world will not always stay that way verse 9 continues enjoy life with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun this is really important for us to remember especially for married couples marriage is hard marriage does come with its own share of sorrows and sufferings because it's a union of two sinful people that is reality however note that verse 9 doesn't say live with your wife and put up with her he says enjoy life with the wife whom you love if you see your husband or wife as a means for gain as an accessory to burnish your reputation as a stepping stone and a way to get to a stage in life or in your career or to accomplish your next goal then you'll end up as little more than housemates or you'll end up trying to use the other person and end up taking and taking and taking and you'll have a miserable marriage early in my marriage

[43 : 14] I was very irritated by the fact that Hannah often my wife Hannah often misspoke or spoke imprecisely because I was a prideful man and controlling man I didn't want people to perceive Hannah a certain way like they're gonna think you're not smart and that's gonna reflect badly on you and it's gonna reflect badly on me because she's not smart she's very smart but as I've grown and God has humbled me over the years I've learned to enjoy the way she misspeaks and her self forgetfulness and humility and not taking those things too seriously is actually a huge gift to me so I keep a running list of all the Hannah-isms because they make me smile she'll say things like nip it in the butt instead of nip it in the bud you guys know she'll say oh that sail has shipped instead of saying that ship has sailed when I'm trying to think of doing something risky or something she'll say why would you play with water she means why would you play with fire when we're playing a game she says you win to play instead of saying you play to win and when she's talking about something she's really good at sometimes she will say that's my cream and butter instead of that's my bread and butter and about our church she once asked me in a very serious way is our church too brick and mortar and I looked at her stared at her confusedly

I was like what we don't even have a building what do you mean our church is too brick and mortar she's like oh no no wait no no is our church too fire and brimstone yes yes Hannah we are yeah yeah yeah do you enjoy life with your children if you see your children as a means for gain and seek to live vicariously through their successes then you will become a helicopter parent and a tiger mom and you will suffocate your children under your expectations that's not what it looks like to love them do you enjoy them do you enjoy their tiny humanness enjoy their interesting meal habits the way they pronounce certain words and the way they talk their embrace their idiosyncrasies their wild hair and their general childishness do you enjoy them brothers and sisters this is a command from the Lord

God he says go go enjoy life verse 7 go and enjoy the pleasures of life that God has given you and has already approved beforehand go and savor that post church meal and instead of scarfing it down eat slowly and enjoy it go enjoy that sweep sunday nap on the couch that I know you guys some of you guys take go on that fall foliage hike that some of us are doing go and play some basketball like some of us are doing after church go and make some music go make some art go run a race go take your kids out for something sweet go do a puzzle in the afternoon like some of you guys are planning on doing spend some time with good friends and above all enjoy and cherish Jesus who is your greatest treasure and talk about him and worship him enjoy him that brings me to the last thing I want to say

Jesus did this better than anyone else in all of human history Jesus if you look through the gospels is always eating and drinking theologian David Ford puts it this way Jesus literally ate his way through the gospels that's why people who his critics said of him in Matthew 11 19 look at him a glutton and a drunkard a friend of tax collectors and sinners even though Jesus was not a drunkard and he was not a glutton he just knew how to enjoy life Jesus can do this knowing full well that he is headed to the cross he knows that he's destiny in life is to die on the cross a gruesome death for the sake of sinners like you and me he knows that he's living toward that end and yet on his way to the cross he enjoys life and on the cross he dies he defeats death he is raised from the dead so that all sinners who repent of their sins and believe in him and entrust their lives to him our promise not just pleasures that will eventually be lost but eternal pleasures an eternal feast isn't that our destiny brothers and sisters how does the bible describe our eternal life with god it's a wedding feast an eternal one with our bridegroom jesus christ and that's why jesus in luke 4 reads this prophecy in isaiah isaiah 61 and says that this is fulfilled in his hearing he's fulfilled in his person and work and this is what was prophesied and promised in isaiah 61 the spirit of the lord god is upon me because the lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound to proclaim the year of the lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our god to comfort all who mourn to grant to those who mourn in zion to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes the oil of gladness instead of mourning the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit and that they may be called oaks of righteousness the planting of the lord that he may be glorified and then we're supposed to respond this way in verse 10

Isaiah 61 i will greatly rejoice in the lord my soul shall exalt in my god for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation he has covered me with the robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels yes this life is broken and is full of death and suffering but because christ has come and already begun the process of renewing all creation we already have a glimpse and we get to enjoy life and enjoy jesus knowing ultimately that we'll have that in the end that we'll get to enjoy pleasures unending dressed as a bride sanctified glorified for the sake of our bridegroom so with that in view let's live life and enjoy life and accept the lot that god has given us let's pray together father give us wisdom wisdom to slow down and when to say no to things and when to declutter our lives our days our schedules our souls so that we can be more present to the simple gifts you have given us and to enjoy them genuinely and most of all help us to enjoy you enjoy our savior

[51 : 49] Jesus Christ who gave his life as spiritual bread the bread of life who poured out his blood as wine for us to drink help us to enjoy him above all other pleasures cherish him above all other treasures so that even when there seems to be nothing in life to enjoy we might rejoice in him fill all of us in this room now with that joy unending Lord God in Jesus name we pray amen