

Ecclesiastes

Most of what is called 'joy' in our world is not a very rich or profound joy. It is mostly a hollow thing. A thing which has not spent much time actually grappling with the realities of our world. The preacher of Ecclesiastes calls us to wisdom, knowledge and joy. Not a trite, shallow joy – but a fierce and troubling joy. He invites us to stop and see the world, to come right to the brink of despair and there find the only way to joy. The world is divided between those who see, but despair, and those who cover their eyes and ears and go tritely along. Solomon invites us to open our eyes and...laugh at all of it.

STUDY GUIDE ECCLESIASTES 12

A rather insane tradition began in this country several decades ago. Men and women work themselves into the ground. We neglect time with our children and their spouses. We work a hard grind until we turn 60 and then move to Florida or Phoenix, wrinkle up and die. In our dying moments we may begin to ask a few questions about God, judgment, that sort of thing, but until then we fail to see the significance of what's right in front of us.

To everyone reading this right now: you are going to die. In all likelihood the process by which you die will be long, insulting and will leave you with bad sight, painful joints, strange smells, and mumbling incoherently most of the time. Parts of your body will simply stop working. Your striking good looks will abandon you. You'll suddenly find game shows interesting. This is going to happen to you. You cannot stop it from happening to you. It can't be avoided. The house called your body is going to quite rapidly fall apart and soon enough your efforts at repair simply won't work anymore. We have spent an enormous amount of time tricking ourselves into thinking that we are important and invincible and that death is an inconsiderate myth that happens to people who get cancer. Death is Vanity's last joke. If you cease to fear God and/or choose to ignore Him, all that you hold so dear will become a dilapidated and organic tale of our own vanity.

Solomon wants you to lose the illusion right now. You are not invincible. Your life is on a timer. Your body is on a timer. Its going to run out. Don't wait for wrinkles, a tan, golf, and Scottsdale. Remember God now. Notice the Sun now.

Solomon's conclusion: Fear God. Obey His commandments. Now go live with an ironic joy that acknowledges our mortality, God's Sovereignty, and the limits of all that lay under the sun.

Read ECCLESIASTES 12.

- 1) Do you work and live merely looking toward retirement or what's next? Or do you live joyfully now acknowledging your mortality, God's sovereignty and all the grace He's given you today?
- 2) What do you fear more, death or God? How does this effect how you live?
- 3) We believe that all of scripture points ultimately to the good news of Jesus. What does this passage say about Jesus or how does it point to him? What are the implications of that truth in your life?

This study guide is intended to be used for personal study throughout the week and within your Gospel Community. All sermons and study guides can be downloaded from our website at www.parkchurchdenver.org