

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Meaning(Less)

PART

12

TITLE

Tick Tock Goes The Clock

SCRIPTURE

Ecclesiastes 11:1-12:8



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It is always a joy to sing with the whole Providence Family. If you're new with us, if you're in the room or at home, welcome. We're thrilled that you have joined us. If you are new to church or to the Bible or to Jesus, I want you to know what we care about, and that is what we found in life is that there is simply no life purpose. There is no pleasure. There's is no point apart from knowing Jesus Christ is Lord, and there's no greater privilege than to seek to glorify him by introducing people around the world who do not know who he is, and then to try to help them to grow, to actually love Him and to worship Him in every area of their life. Sometimes what happens is when you hear something like that, and you think that sounds inspiring, but what is my part in that?

How do I engage in that mission? How do I live in such a way that my entire life matters for something that's going to last forever and ever, and ever? What we've sought to do is to look through the scriptures that identify simple pathway with four simple steps. If you're new here at Providence, or maybe you've been here a long time and you simply don't know how to necessarily engage or leverage your life in the mission that is going to last forever, we want to encourage you to consider participating in one of these pathway classes, maybe even next week.

We're about to open the Bible. When we open the Bible, amazing things happen. The reason is because it is God's word. It is His written revelation of who He is and who we are and how we're supposed to live in His world. It's transformational, and how it transforms us is sometimes in a painful way. The first thing that what always happens when you open up the Bible is we are revealed to us something that's true about us that oftentimes is not all that healthy and not all that attractive. One of the first things it does is that it dresses our life, and then it moves the step further, and that is it sometimes undresses our life.

Meaning it identifies those fears and anxieties and unbelief, it identifies our idols and our sin. And it says all of this needs to come off if you're to live a life that's ultimately pleasing to God, but also brings joy and peace and meaning to your life. He takes the courage as He has, He's God to say, "Let me tell you some things I see that are ruining your joy." Then what's amazing about the grace of God is, well, you can say it that way, is the grace of God is that, as soon as he undresses us, He looks to redress us. Meaning, He has no intention for you to walk out of the room, simply not being afraid. He wants you to walk out of the room not being afraid, because you're courageous, because He's armed you with so many promises.

So many promise to never leave you. So many promises to never forsake you. So, He intends to, can you say it this way, to cut you with His word and me, but as soon as He cuts for our good, like a wise and loving surgeon, He intends to heal and mend. That's why this is so formative to our life. And so we want to pray for help. Okay? So if you would bow and let's pray. Father, we look to you in faith and ask that you would be gracious to us to give us faith. Would you help us when we read this to find it terribly interesting, just stunningly interesting, more interesting than the things that would distract our attention, the lesser things, and sometimes even heavy things.

God, would you cause us to find interest, and then God, would you take us a step further? Would you address our life? Would you remove everything that is sabotaging our joy and our faith and our belief and our relationship with you, and God, I pray that then you would heal, and you would build up, that you would restore. I pray father for those in this room right now, who are just looking into what are the claims of Jesus and what is the Bible. I pray that this time would be helpful to them, encouraging to them, inspiring to them. Ultimately, I pray God that you would open their eyes and all of our eyes, even more so to the greatness and supremacy and righteousness and holiness and stunning love of Jesus Christ who makes life worth living. So, we look to you in faith and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

If you're at home or in the room, I want to ask you if you have with you a Bible, if you would look with me to Ecclesiastes Chapter 11. If you're just starting with us, we've been walking through a series through this book verse by verse, and we have arrived at Chapter 11:1, and we're going to go through Chapter 12:8. If you're new to all this and new to this book, it's written by a man. His name is Solomon, and Solomon was the King of Israel, which mean that he grew up and lived his entire life in power and privilege and wealth. He had a good life when it comes to what we normally assign those words, that person has a good life.

What's interesting is his story. It starts off so good. God comes to him and he says, Solomon, you can ask me anything that you want as you begin your reign as King. Solomon looks at all the things that you would normally think of asking, like, if you had one wish from God and he was going to fulfill that wish in your life, just imagine what you might pray, and what he says is this. He says, "God, I recognize that you are unlike any other, that there is only one true God, and this is your people. And what I need more than anything in the world is wisdom, to know what is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong so that I can lead this people, your people in a way that will honor you." God was so pleased with him, that he not only gave him wisdom, he gave him everything he didn't ask for as well.

Yet, in spite of all the blessing in his life, the Bible tells us that Solomon's heart was pulled away from the Lord and he began to chase meaning, and hope and joy in the world. In spite of wild success in all of his endeavors, he tells us in Ecclesiastes, which is sort of at the end of his life, sort of the summary of his quest for meaning apart from the Lord, that he decided that all of his endeavors, even though they were successful, it was like a chasing after the wind. Running after something with such intensity only to find that it's not there when you get there. This is precisely what he does throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, which is why for many people, the book is very perplexing. Sometimes you look at it and it may even be depressing.

Yet, what he wants in our life is to give us his life lesson, like most grandparents do, so that we would learn his lessons instead of imitate his mistakes. You would assume that if he's concluded that all of the endeavors in his life is simply a chasing after the wind, and you would assume that Solomon, at the end of his life, like a bitter old man, that he would pour water on all the fire of our dreams. He might say, "You know what? I already ran that race, I already won gold, and I promise you, that's not the path to joy." He could do that with every single one of us. Yet, what we find here is he did as just the opposite. He gets to the end of this letter,

and what he's going to urge you to do is to dream and to risk and to run.

Let me show you. Look at verse one. Verse one of Ecclesiastes is Chapter 11. He says, "Cast your bread upon the waters for you will find it after many days." This is a Jewish idiom that we don't use in our culture to cast your bread upon the water. Let me explain what it means. If you're a farmer and you plant seeds in the ground, and God gives you a harvest with those seeds, and now all of a sudden, you have all this grain that's in front of you. You have options of what you're going to do with that grain. You can, if you want to, you can store it all. It's the safe option. This is the safer option, and you can ensure that you're going to have bread for yourself and for your friends and family, not only today, but maybe even tomorrow and many tomorrows after that.

But there's another thing that you could do, and that is that you could put your grain on a boat to cast it to the sea, literally to put it on a boat that would sail away from you. You wouldn't see that grain again. You would send it to trade in the hope that you would be able to reap a greater reward to yourself than the value of that grain. So, there's two options. One is safe bread, and the other one is risk, but the possibility of a heavy return. What he says to us at the end of his life, he's not talking about farming. He's using this illustration to talk about life. He's saying you can play your whole life safe if you want, but I urge you to risk.

I urge you to put your life out there and chase a dream. You see, the words, cast your bread, what they literally mean then is take a calculated risk. However, we live in a broken world, and you know that the broken world has pirates and sometimes ships, they sink to the ground. Sometimes if you have boats, and they are going to bring something back because they're delayed a long time. Solomon actually tells us in 1st Kings Chapter 10, it says that he had a fleet of ships that would go out and would return only once every three years. Because that's the case, he says in verse two, he gives us some wisdom.

He says, "So, give a portion to seven, or even to eight for you know not what disaster may happen on earth." He says, "On earth, it's true. Sometimes bad things happen. There are pirates. Sometimes boats do sink with all of the contents, all of the grain that are sitting in those boats." What he's urging is this, is be wise enough to diversify. You get a harvest of grain divided into seven or eight portions. Don't put all the grain on one boat because that one boat may sink. Be wise enough to diversify, and yet hopeful enough to risk. Before we move on, I want to ask you a question, or two. What's something that you believe that God has told you to do that you've not done?

Or maybe even more inspiring or less convicting is, what is a dream that God has put upon your heart, and you just think, one day, but you haven't yet begun to pursue that dream? What He's going to do for the rest of our text is He's going to give us evidence of why you and I, that we should be running and dreaming and risking now. You see some of you, I know you have a dream, but in about 10 years from now when the kids leave, or four years from now when I get out of college, or this happens, or this happens, or this happens, and Solomon says, "Now, let me tell you something. You may not be around four years from now." That if you

have breath in your lungs today, then today is the day to dream and to risk and to run.

Let me show you the evidence that he has of why he would say you and I, let's risk and run right now. The first reason he tells us is because life is unpredictable. Life is unpredictable. It carries risks. There really are pirates. There really are times when boats with all kinds of valuables on them, they really do sink into the bottom of the ocean. There is risk. Some of us don't like risk very much. We'd rather have safe bread. He says in verse three, "If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth, and if a tree falls to the South or to the North, in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie." You know what this is saying? It says sometimes the rain, it falls on you, and other times it doesn't. I know that's like rocket science for everybody, right?

But the fact is, is that if you live in this city, let's just say you live right here. Well, this person who lives here and this person who lives here right in the middle of where this deluge is actually following, they both look up and they see the same clouds. What he's saying is there some people who look up and they go, "Well, today's not the day to run after my dream, but the rain may not fall on you today." You don't know if it will or not, it's unpredictable. Then he says, "You know what? When it comes to trees, sometimes they fall to the North and sometimes they fall to the South." You don't know where they're going to land.

Notice what he says then in verse four. He goes, "If that's the principle, then what should we do? "He who observes the wind will not sow, and he regards the clouds will not reap." In other words, if you, today, are waiting for that perfect set up, where the wind and the sky look only favorable and there's no possibility for a tree to fall and block your path, then what will happen is you will never sow a seed and you'll never reap your dream. You don't know what's going to happen. So, divide it up and take a few portions and throw it at your dream and see what happens. In other words, quit making excuses for not doing what God told you to do or put on your heart to do.

Submit the application, you never know what's going to happen. Begin the adoption process, you never know what's going to happen. Ask the girl out, you never know what's going to happen. If the boat with profit, then you thank God, if it sinks to the bottom of the ocean, you trust God. One reason we should be running right now is because life is unpredictable. You don't know what's going to happen. Second is, life is mysterious. Some of us in the room, this is similar to the first, is that we want to know everything about a situation before we try anything in the situation. The Bible just tells you, you're just not going to know everything you want to know in order to take a flyer on your dream.

You're just not going to know if it's going to work out or not. Some of us we say, "You know what? If I know she's going to say yes, then I'm going to be more inclined to ask her out." In fact, I'm not going to ask if I don't know for certain, but you don't know. Or others you're like, "I know I need to forgive this person, or I need to go and ask them to forgive me, but if I go and put myself out like that and I expose myself to say, "Okay, look, I was wrong. This is my failure. This is how I was in air. Would you forgive me?" Like, "I want to know, they're going to say, "Yes, I forgive you." And that's going to go well, as opposed to them shaming me or

holding it against me.”

Some will say, “Well, I would start my book, but I don’t know if it’s going to get published.” Well, I promise you, the book you never write will not get published. Write the first paragraph, you never know. This is what he’s saying. Look what he says in verse five, “As you do not know the way the spirit comes into the bones in the womb of a woman with child so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.” Now, what he’s doing, he’s just offering us one illustration, and here’s an illustration. He says, “You know what? We were all created in the image of God.” Psalm 139 says that God actually weaves us together in our mother’s womb.

One of the things that God does in that weaving process is He weaves a spirit into that baby in the womb, a spirit that will live forever, a spirit that gives that person the opportunity to have a relationship with God, puts eternity within their heart. This is what he’s talking about. Now, let me ask you a question. How does God do it? Solomon says, “Well, we don’t know.” He goes, “Now, that’s just one thing you don’t know about the Lord. Think about everything in life, all the things that possibly could happen that you do not know.” And he says, “So you do not know the work of God who makes everything.” Isn’t there’s so many things you do not know in life? What should we do then? Verse six. “So, in the morning, sow your seed, and at evening, withhold not your hand for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.”

In other words, like this hand right now, if you’re a farmer, if you want to put seeds down, the fact is, is you don’t know which one of these, like there may be one of them that’s already dead. You just don’t even know. One may actually create an enormous harvest and one may do nothing. So, what’s he saying? He’s saying plant a bunch of seeds because you don’t know which one is going to work. God knows, but you don’t know. In other words, what he’s talking about here is this, is how do we, as human beings, deal and live in a world where God is sovereign over all things. In this one area of sovereignty, this is what I would simply say to you, is that God’s sovereignty is supposed to be your comfort and not your excuse, that God does not tell us that He is sovereign so that we will lean on a shovel and pray for a hole.

If He puts a shovel in your hand, even though He is sovereign, there is an expectation that you will dig. If he puts a dream in your heart, whatever it is, I don’t know if it’ll work or not, but I promise you this, is that he intends for you and for me to pursue that dream and to dig that hole. So, we should be running and risking now, not only because life is unpredictable and mysterious, but the third thing and last, is because life is brief. Some of you, you’ve been here a while now, you’ve been here all summer long and you thought ... I’m pretty sure some of you’ve already thought of this. You thought maybe this is the one, that He makes it through an entire sermon in Ecclesiastes without talking about a funeral, and it’s not going to happen. One more. Here it is. Life is brief.

Some of you, this is going to disturb you. He’s going to use a metaphor that frankly is disturbing to humanity, but he uses it as motivation to get you to move and to dream and to run and to risk. The reason is because you may not be here tomorrow, but you are here today. This is what he’s going to say to you. Just watch what he

does here. What the Bible says is that you and I were all given a predetermined number of minutes, and God is the one who predetermines those number of minutes. That clock on your life is ticking. Every minute that passes is a minute that is passed forever. It's like a jar, and every single minute you take one out. Everybody starts with a different number of marbles.

Every single one of us, our life is a different length, and the clock is ticking. So, what he's going to do is he's going to show us this death process, which is really sobering, but he starts on a really good note. He's like, okay, I know this is going to just wear you down. So, let me show you ... some of us are going to have a really good day. This is what he says in verse seven. He says, "Light is sweet and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun." What that means is there are some days in life where the sunlight, you open up your eyes and you look and you see the sunlight that comes through the window, just like this picture, and it feels like the hope that you have within your heart. It doesn't happen like that every day, but there are some days when it does happen. You wake up and you feel rested.

You get up, you have a good hair day, your jeans fit all the way up. Anxiety is low, health is high, your back is not stiff, kids are agreeable, your spouse is affectionate. He says, "Man, on those days, on those days when you're just inspired to order a sticker that says, life is good, I'm going to stick it on the back of my car." He goes, "You better go ahead and order the sticker." Chase the dream, and the reason is because the day's coming when no light passes through that window for your life. He says, "Well, I just got bad really quick." Look at verse eight. "So, if a person lives many years, let them rejoice in them all, but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many." The death process. "All that comes as vanity."

Now, if you are new with this and you've not heard the rest of this series, it's really important you understand this, okay? There's just a few keywords. It's like master keys to the whole book. One of them is the word vanity. One of them is the word under the sun. What he's actually saying there's this, is if ... what you can see with your eyes is all there is because then it's vanity. In other words, the book of Ecclesiastes is written from the perspective, if this is all there is, if there's no truth, no revelation, no God, no rescue or no Redeemer, no savior, no heaven, no eternal life, no forgiveness, no hope, you just live, you have your endeavors and then you die.

He says, "You know what? It's vain." Unfortunately, so if you only had Ecclesiastes, if you were some tribes somewhere or some people group, and there really are people groups, they have no books of the Bible. No Bible translators start with Ecclesiastes. Here, this is God's word for you. This is all you get, Ecclesiastics. That would be really hard. Because you would looking at it, and it's only written from one perspective, and that is, if this is all there is, if all you can see with your eyes is all there is, he goes, "Then the whole thing is meaningless. It's vain." Now, fortunately, we have the rest of the Bible that actually colors that, that tells us that for those of us who trust Jesus Christ as savior and Lord, that the day that becomes darkest on the earth actually becomes the brightest forever.

That we will be forgiven by God when we trust Him as savior, and then we will live with him forever and ever in heaven. Oh, there is such great news in the Bible, such great news. It's called the gospel. And yet, this side of heaven, when we're walking through it, he's saying, I need you to dream and I need you to run and risk, and the reason is because this stuff is really going to happen, he's saying enjoy the light while you can. He gets to verse nine and he says, "Rejoice, O young man in your youth, and let your heart cheer you all the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes, but know that for all these things, God will bring you into judgment."

Now, some of you, you just read, O, young man, or O, young woman. You think, well, this isn't for me. I'm no longer a young man or a young woman. Some of you, you're like, oh, I'm pretty sure he's talking to me. And some of you are like, no, I've already passed that age. Let me tell you something. He's talking to you, and this is how I know. If you get tomorrow, you'll be older tomorrow than today so you're younger today than tomorrow. If you're still breathing, if you're still thinking, then this is the day for you to run and risk and dream. That's what he's saying. He says, "But when you do so," he says, "in your youth, let your heart share you." Then he says in this middle part, "Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes." He's saying chase something, what's on your heart? Run after it, go for it.

But then he says, but don't forget that you will live in God's world, and one day you're going to stand before God in judgment. So don't forget His rules, don't forget what he cares about. Don't forget that you're going to stand before a Holy God and give an account for every decision and every word of your life. Then He moves on. In verse 10, he says, "Remove vexation from your heart." No matter how old you are, and particularly if you really are a young person, this is so critically important what he's saying, because what he's saying is this, deal with the junk that vexes your heart now so that it will not rule your decisions for the rest of your life.

You have anxiety problem, deal with it. You have an addiction problem, deal with it. You have a guilt problem, a shame problem, you need to deal with it. Whatever it is that vexes your heart, you need to pursue a solution. Sometimes that solution is not one day. Sometimes it may take a long time. Sometimes what vexes people is actually physical or financial debt. In other words, I know people and they say, you know what? I want to become a missionary. This is where I would go, but the first thing is all these agencies that would be sending and supporting me, what they say is I can't have financial debt that's overwhelming. So, I need to get out of debt first.

Okay, then address what vexes your soul now. If that's the dream that's in front of you, stop buying TVs, get an extra job, run after it. As quickly as you can, address whatever it is that might vex your souls to protect the rest of your life and to protect the rest of your dream. Then he goes on and he goes, "Not only your heart," but he says, "and put away pain from your body, for youth and dawn of life are vanity." What does he mean here? It means you need to care for your body. This is so hard, in particular, and I think he really is talking to young people here, but even those of you and me who are a little bit older, he's going to show us that it's only going to get more physically challenging.

While you have strength, go ahead and utilize it, but let me tell you something. There always college students over here. They look so young and spry like they they jumped out of the gym. You need to take care of your body. You know why? Because those eyes are the only ones you get, and those ears are the only ones you get, and those knees of yours are the only real ones you get. That hip, it's the only real one you get. There's a few things that we've identified. We can say, "Hey, well let's throw one of these on and take one of those off." But for the most part, what you have is what you get. So, you need to take care of it when you're young. Something is going to happen to you. It'll surprise you, at around 35, 40, somewhere around there.

You'll still be able to do the things you like to do and want to do, but it'll feel different when you're doing them, and you'll be thinking differently while you're doing them. I know right now you can't compensate, for you can't imagine that. It's inconceivable, but today is coming. I'm 46 years old. I like to wakeboard. The first time of my life, last summer, it was my turn. Get into the water, strap up, ready, I've got the rope. I'm ready. And I have the conscious, I've never had this conscious thought ever in my life, and the conscious thought was this, this may be the last time. Not that I thought I was going to die, I thought this knee, it may actually blow out this time. This may be the time.

You just start thinking differently because it takes so much longer to recover. This is what he's saying. Take care of your body. Chapter 12:1, "Remember also your creator in the days of your youth." That means wherever you're at, no matter how old you are, if you have another day coming, don't forget to leave God out of your life today. Don't forget to look to God and making your decisions today. Don't forget to look to God when considering who you're going to marry today. The reason is because your decisions today will affect all of your tomorrows. There is an inconceivable tomorrow that is approaching for every one of us, and this is where he goes next.

He says, "Remember also your creator in the days of your youth before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you say, "I have no pleasure in them." I know this is just so hard. It's inconceivable when you're not at that place, but there's coming a day, he says, that if you live long on this earth, things will happen. It's such an extent with your physical body and your mind and your heart, that when you wake up and you see light coming through the window, you say, "Ugh, another day." I know a lot of people who, because of physical pain and emotional pain, and they're just older and they can't wait to get to heaven, that they pray, "God, would you take me one night when I'm sleeping?" And every morning they wake up, they think, "Man, I was hoping this would be the one."

I know for you, you think, "Well, that's inconceivable. I can't imagine ever thinking that." But then he goes through this metaphor, what's going to happen to each one of us if we live long enough on the earth, and it's quite sobering. It's supposed to be a little funny. I think that's why it's written as a metaphor so that we don't just see it all so blunt and yet, just consider what he says. He says, "You need to remember your creator before the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened." This is a metaphor to your mind, your thoughts. One day, you're going to forget things. One day you're going to be in a room and people are going to be

talking, and then you're going to be done talking and you won't remember anything about that conversation. One day, you're going to forget where your keys are at.

So, you're going to ask your spouse for some essential oil or some herbs that's going to help you remember stuff. Then all of a sudden, you're going to forget where it's stored. You're going to have the essential oil in a house where I have no idea where it's at. Our mind, you live long enough, and it gets darkened, it gets weakened. He goes, "... in the clouds return after the rain, in the day when the keepers of the hands tremble. What are the keepers of the house? It's the hands. You lived long enough and what you're going to find is your hands are going to shake just like your grandparents'.

Then he goes on and he says, "And the strong men are bent." The strong men are ... they think like, "Hey, let me pick up the refrigerator," and then all of a sudden, you get to a place and you're like, "Let somebody else pick up the refrigerator." It's the legs, it's the back, it's the shoulders, to where, eventually you live long enough and you'll start to stoop over a little bit. You'll be a little bit shorter. You won't quite be as tall. He goes on. And he says, "... and the grinders cease because they are few." This is your teeth. "And those who look through the windows are dimmed. What are the windows that are dimmed? Well, it's our eyes. So our eyesight begins to give away. Suddenly, things become blurry and so you get some glasses or contacts. Then eventually, it gets worse. And I say, you can't wear contacts anymore. We've got to go solely glasses.

Then all of a sudden, it gets worse, you're like, "We need to get some finger glasses. Then eventually, we should put multiple lenses in those really thick glasses." They get dim. And he says, "And the doors on the street are shut when the sound of the grinding is low." The doors on the street, that's our ears. All of a sudden, other people are talking, you're like, "Hey, what? Hey, say that one more time." All of us have talked to somebody who's older on the phone and it seems like they're screaming, or you have to scream in order for them to listen. Well, that's coming for you and me. He goes on and he says, where am I? "And one rises at the sound of a bird."

There's a reason Jeopardy's at seven. So, you watch your Jeopardy. And then all of a sudden, you get tired and so you go to bed, and suddenly, the very first bird chirp, and all of a sudden it's time, everyone else in the house is asleep. It's like 4:45, and you're like, "Okay, it's time. It's time to get up." Your sequence of going to sleep and waking up will be different as you get older. He goes on. You're like, "Enough already." But he goes on. He goes, "And all the daughters of the song are brought low. And they're afraid also of what is high and terrors are in the way." Afraid of what is high. That doesn't mean that they don't like the bungee jump. Okay? It means that sometimes you get old enough and even one single curb feels too high. If I step off this curb, am I going to land?

Terrors are in the way. You're going to get to a place one day, if you live long on the [inaudible 00:33:52], you're going to look at a staircase, and you're going to think, "That might be the most terrifying thing I see today. I don't know if I can make it up, and if I get up there, how am I going to get back down?" Then he goes

on and he says, “The almond tree blossoms,” the almond tree, they blossom flowers that are white, and so you get gray hair. Don’t laugh. “And the grasshopper drags itself along.” This is great. He’s like, this is ... Solomon’s grandpa. This is what he’s describing. That when you’re young, your joints, nothing hurts, and you just jump, and all of a sudden, he gets to the place to where the joints, they don’t work anymore.

So, what used to be something that could fly and jump and move quickly, suddenly cannot anymore. Desire fails. Some of your Bible translations they say capper berry, which is a sexual stimulant. What he’s talking about is one day the time will come to when your sexual impulse will not be there any longer. Then he goes on and he says, “Because man is going to his eternal home and the mourners go about the streets.” That’s your funeral. “Before the silver cord, your spinal cord is snapped, or the golden bowl, your honor is broken, and the pitcher, which is the heart is shattered at the fountain, and the wheel, it’s your blood pressure, broken at the cistern.”

Then he goes, one last part. “And the dust returns to the earth.” That’s your death. “And the spirit returns to God who gave it,” that’s judgment. He says, “Vanity of vanity, says the preacher, “all is vanity.” And that is the most discouraging sermon in the history of sermons. What he’s doing is simply saying this ticktock goes your clock. It is unpredictable and it’s mysterious and it’s brief. So, if you have a dream, then put some of the grain on a boat and chase that dream. Few applications before we close. First is let’s trust God by dreaming, risking, and running. Run while you can. I know that many dreams, they require a series of steps to completion.

What is step one? Simply say, don’t be the person who talks about what you wish you would have done during the season of life. Plant some seeds, pray for a harvest. If you get one divided up, put some of them on a boat, chase a dream, then trust God with them. But it’s true that not all dreams are equally noble. Isn’t it? Some people, like their greatest dream, is to collect peacock feathers. Like, they just get 400 of them, then I’m going to just die satisfied. Most of us, we have something that’s ... when you hear someone else’s dream, you’re like, “Oh, you want to start four vintages. And I was just thinking about feathers.” There’s different weights to our dreams on the earth. This is where the second point adds clarity to our dreaming.

Don’t just dream about anything. No, let God’s mission direct your dreams. You see, when we study Ecclesiastes or any book of the Bible, it’s like holding a simple piece of the puzzle, just one little piece. There’s a thousand pieces, and all of a sudden, you pick one up, and you’re like, “Hey, look at that. It’s a piece of the puzzle.” And you can look at it. You can see something in it, maybe an eyeball, or maybe something you’re like, “Hey, I know what that is,” but you don’t know what it’s connected to. So it is with the book of the Bible. What it says is true, but if you don’t know the story into which it fits, you don’t know how it contributes to the hole, or how the hole helps you interpret the piece.

Every book of the Bible tells a part of one big story, a big story that goes from creation, where God says, I want to create you to know me to a fall where we rebelled against God, to a place to where God almighty, in his grace, sought to redeem us by sending Jesus Christ His son to this earth in a response to his promise that

He would send a rescuer so that we could know Him and be forgiven of our sin when He died on a cross and when He rose from the dead. The last part of the story that we're waiting for is restoration, when Jesus has promised to make all things new. What we find here is this, Ecclesiastes, it's place in the canon of scripture is simply to reinforce and show us the ravaging effects of the fall.

It's narrowing us to that place. So, where Ecclesiastes urges us to dream and risk, the rest of the Bible narrows our focus so that we're dreaming and risking in something that matters, that will last forever. This is what Moses did. In Psalm Chapter 90. He's like, "God, would you teach us to number our days so that we would have a heart of wisdom. Show us how many days we have so that we can leverage every one of them." And then he says, "And would you service this way? Would you let your work be shown to your servants?" Do you know why he wanted to know what God was up to? Because if he could align his life and his dreams around what God's mission was in the world, then he would be absolutely certain that the work of his hands would be established forever, that his dreams would be connected to a kingdom that would last it and do it forever and ever, and ever.

Habakkuk 2:14 tells us all about the end of God's mission. He says, "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." He created you for this mission. He sent Jesus Christ for this mission. He's commissioned us to make disciples that would make disciples so that the knowledge of His glory would cover all the peoples of the world, just as the waters cover the sea. Those who do trust in Jesus Christ, who repent of their sin, who trust in him and believe, and confess in His Lord, the Bible says He forgives us of our sin, but then He sends us on a mission. So, Providence, let's dream mission advancing dreams, and let's take mission advancing risks. The very last thing I want you to see, this is so important. When he says, "Remember also your creator." This is so important, it's the last thing is, as you're dreaming and you're thinking about what you're going to run after in life, is let's seek God's face as we dream risk and run.

To seek someone's face is to enjoy a relationship with them. It's to say, "I'm aware that you're here. I see you're present. I want to know your name. I want to be with you." When we don't seek someone's face, what we're saying is, if this person over here, I'm seeking this person's face, is I recognize you're here in the room. I want to know who you are. But if I have my back to them the whole time I'm saying, "I don't really recognize you there, and I don't care." This is what he's saying. He goes, "As you live your life," he says, "make sure you face your creator." Make sure you recognize that even the mission of God to give your entire life to making Jesus Christ known is absolutely empty if you don't know Christ as your own savior and Lord.

He intends for all of life to be about a relationship with him. The question I have is, have you trusted Jesus Christ as your savior? As you're planning your dreams and you're making your plans and you're risking and you're running, is God Almighty and a relationship with Him important to you? You see, the reason that Solomon's running felt like a chasing after the wind is because he did all of his running apart from a relationship with his creator. At the end of his life when he's a grandpa, he comes to us and he says, "Listen to me, learn

my lesson. Don't imitate my example." What is it God placed in your heart? I urge you, chase it. Chase with all your might.

Let me pray, father in heaven, we love you. We thank you for your kindness to us. We thank you for Ecclesiastes 11 and 12, and thank you for the sobering reminder that it is that forces us to think that we may not be here as long as we think that we will. I pray father that you would use it, God, to inspire a fresh wave in each of our hearts, to be thinking about how to build our life upon the cornerstone, how to give our time and energy and resources to something that's going to matter forever and ever, and ever. We ask God that you would align our desires and our dreams to your mission and your work to glorify Jesus Christ, and I pray for those who are considering trusting Jesus now, that you had opened their eyes to the beauty and supremacy of Christ, that without whom, life is absolutely meaningless.

We thank you for the hope that we have in knowing Christ, and we thank you that even though we will one day die, that you are going to make all things new. So, thank you for the hope that we have. We sing to you now. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.



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