

Too Late

Today's Reading Ecclesiastes 11:1-12:8

It was tragic. A funeral that caught everyone by surprise. Days before...hours before...seconds before...he had been completely healthy and active. He was only in his thirties. He probably would have laughed at the suggestion that his life could end any time in the foreseeable future. But end it did as he was struck unexpectedly by a vehicle. His funeral was filled with people impacted not only by the reality of but also by the suddenness of his passing.

That's a true story. Do I think something like that will happen to you today? No. I suppose it could be argued that we preacher types are given to the use of unlikely morbid stories in order to illicit a response. That may well be the case, but I think you will have to agree that life is brief, isn't it? Whether you or I pass in one year, 21 years, or 51 years, we (and those close to us) will likely say that it was sooner than we had hoped!

No wonder Solomon, "the Teacher," counsels his readers

in Ecclesiastes 12 to "remember your Creator in the days of your youth." In other words, don't wait any longer to make the Lord an integral, daily part of your life. Don't postpone it for another day when you are older. Some people promise, "One day, I will make that a priority." Or "Don't worry, I will deal with that before I die." But repeatedly, verses 1-7 point out that we should do so now. Do it now, even if you are still "enjoying life" (v. 1). Make it a priority now before your eyesight worsens (v. 2). Give Him first place today before fears of the latter years of life increase (vv. 3, 5). Seek Him before your hearing wains or your stature changes (vv. 3, 4). Remember Him. Not just in a passing point in time, but as the daily Director of your life. Remember Him before it is too late

Unless...

Today's Reading Ecclesiastes 12:9-14

"There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known." (Lk. 12:2) Those words spoken by Jesus provide a sobering reminder. No secret word, thought, or deed escapes the current scrutiny and future judgment of God, unless... Well, we'll come back to the "unless..." part later.

That reality of unavoidable, all-inclusive judgment is part of the final conclusion drawn by Solomon in your reading today. He points out that there is nothing that will escape judgment. It is important, however, to understand other biblical principles that give further definition to this judgment.

1. The judgment for those without Christ will include eternal torment and separation from God (2 Thess. 1:8, 9).
2. Those who know Christ will not experience a judgment that determines destination (Heaven or Hell). Christ's work on the cross has secured their

eternal life with God (1 Jn. 5:11-13).

3. Those who know Christ will, however, be subjected to judgment that takes even those hidden things into account (2 Cor. 5:10).
4. For believers, good will be rewarded and bad will result in loss of reward (1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Things like thoughts, motives, conduct, and conversation are not moot points for believers. If you know Christ, your eternity is securely in His hands, but your rewards will be a reflection of your life. No wonder, Solomon describes your duty as "fearing God and keeping His commandments..." (v. 13).

So what about the "unless"? Is there a way to remove some of your less than stellar performances from the agenda for conversation at the judgment seat of Christ? The answer is yes, through confession! By admitting to God in repentance your own shortcomings, He removes those shortcomings from issues of judgment. Are there things that you should clear up with Him now?

Hope and Purpose

Today's Reading

1 Corinthians 15:1-58

Be honest. At times you may agree with the conclusions drawn by Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes. Life does have its mundane, routine dimensions. In the rat race of life, there seem to be some "chasing after the wind" moments of "meaninglessness."

But life for the believer shouldn't be a futile existence. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15 give you two encouragements not found in Ecclesiastes. First of all, ***there is hope beyond this life!*** The resurrection of Jesus offers you the expectation of life after this one. At death, your spirit will depart from your body (Jas. 2:26). If you are a follower of Jesus, you will instantly be with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8). God even values your body enough that He will one day transform and resurrect it (1 Cor. 15:42-44). His children will be with Him forever (1 Thess. 4:17)! That brings hope!

Secondly, Paul makes clear that ***there is purpose in this life!*** Not everything you do

has to be meaningless. Paul is specific in saying that you can know that "your labor in the Lord is not in vain." (1 Cor. 15:58) Your service for Him has purpose. It can make an eternal impact in the lives of others, and it can result in eternal rewards for you. With that realization in mind, you are encouraged to "always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord." The two adverbs in that phrase are important. "Always." What would need to change in order for you to see yourself as constantly in His service? Your mindset? A specific activity? Similarly, the word "fully" implies completely or without reservation. Do you ever find yourself holding back from giving your all to the Lord and for the Lord? If so, you are likely missing out on the sense of daily purpose that He wants to give you. Hope and purpose are found in Christ!

Is your future hope secure? Is your present purpose real?