



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Not a Waste

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Ecclesiastes 9:7-10

Clint Pressley

⁷ Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.

⁸ Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.

⁹ 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. 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.

(Pastor prays)

In the Fall of 1991, I took my first Greek class at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary with Dr. Lacoste Munn. The class got the nickname "Fun with Munn" but I can assure you, it was anything *but* fun. One day in class, Dr. Munn didn't want to talk about the conjugation of Greek verbs. He wanted to talk about life and death as a Christian. And the sobering joy of thinking about your own mortality is that you are going to die. And something he said always stuck with me. Dr. Munn said, "Until you come to grips with your own mortality, you can't really live freely as a Christian."

Death is here and needs to be dealt with, considered, observed and then rightly integrated into how we view life. I think that's what the preacher Solomon is doing for us in this chapter. Chapter 9 is the beginning of the end of Ecclesiastes. For 8 chapters, Solomon has given us his worldview of life under the sun and now in Chapter 9 he starts spelling out his conclusions and the lessons he has learned.

Now remember who this is. This is Solomon, the richest man in the world at that time. Think about his vast holdings, his harem of women, his servants, his gold, his wisdom, and all his stuff. And as an old man it's as if he found out it was completely empty and now after a lifetime of mistakes, he is sitting down beside us saying, I want to give you some advice. In the words of John Piper, "Don't waste your life" pursuing things that don't ultimately matter. You will find meaning when you realize that God has given you life to enjoy to His glory and for His name's sake! That's what you were made for, to glorify God. And the only right way to honor God and respond to His good gifts is to enjoy them in the name of Jesus.

So here's what I hope to do today. I want to take this small passage and convince you that you were made for God's glory and you glorify God when you take joy in this brief life he's given you. This passage is short but filled with commands from God not to waste your life! So let's get to it.

This Life is All You Have So Let's Make it Count

The first point is short. Let's deal with it.

Don't waste a day

That very first word in the text is a command. Go! Or it could be, come! The preacher has encouraged us to enjoy life before in this little book, but now that we are getting close to the end, his advice has turned into a command. Embrace what's good in life before it's too late! It's almost like he's saying, pull yourself together man! Stop complaining. Stop worrying. Stop being angry about things you can't change or stop being bitter about what someone has done to you. Stop brooding about your problems, and as Christians, let's take these issues and anxieties and fears to the cross of Jesus. Get over your fears and let's go! What are you afraid of; failure, pain, a mistake? The Bible says in 2 Timothy 1:7 *for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*

The writer of Hebrews encouraged his beleaguered church in Hebrews 10:39, *But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.* What do you need to do? What do you need to repent of? To make right? Who do you need to call? Do you need to move, move on! Procrastination is the enemy of Christian maturity and the thief of Christian joy. What are you putting off? And for some of you who have been playing

Christian, maybe you have been baptized but your life doesn't reflect that you have been walking with the Lord, so the truth is you are probably not a Christian. Or maybe you are just not a Christian. You are especially in danger because you live under condemnation.

But it doesn't have to be like that. Remember, the Gospel is good news. God is holy and man is a sinner separated from God. Dead in sin. The Gospel is that God so loved the world that He gave us Jesus. He lived perfectly and died on the cross in place of sinners. And the promise of the Gospel is that every sinner who turns from their sin and believes, puts their faith in Jesus, the Bible teaches that you will be saved. This life is all you have. So let's make it count. Don't waste a day.

Don't waste a meal

Now look, I didn't say don't *miss* a meal. I said don't *waste* it. Look what the preacher says in verse 7. ⁷ *Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.* Eat your bread with joy. Drink your wine with a merry heart. I mean you can feel the great fellowship around the table as the food is good and the wine is tasty and it's the enjoyment of eating and savoring the moment. This is the very opposite of gulping down your food so you can get on to the next thing. Verse 7 is actually the book of Ecclesiastes in a nutshell. I've heard it said that Jesus practically ate His way through the gospels. We have so many scenes of him sitting and eating. In Matthew 11 he was even accused of being a glutton and a drunk because he didn't waste a meal. Receive the simple act of sitting down and eating as a gift. Jesus fed the 5000. He turned water into wine. "Our daily bread" is the petition in The Lord's Prayer. There are two ordinances that we do in the church and they are baptism and The Lord's Supper with bread and wine. "This is my body given for you. This Cup is the new covenant, given in my blood."

Every meal you eat and each drink has the faint refrains of Jesus dying on the cross for sinners to save sinners. And this very book ends in Revelation 19 with the marriage supper of the lamb! The preacher has slowed us down to show us how every part of our lives is saturated and besotted with reminders that God is here and He is good. Jesus saves sinners at the cross. And if you are a sinner here today and within the sound of my voice, there is good news. God has spared your life up to this point and you have heard the Gospel. If you will ask God to save you on the merits of Jesus, the Bible teaches that He will do just that. Whoever calls on the name of

the Lord will be saved. This life is all you have so let's make it count. Don't waste a day. Don't waste a meal.

Don't waste grace

Let me show you where I get that. It's in verse 7. ⁷ *Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.* For God has already approved what you do. The preacher could be thinking of the goodness of creation in Genesis 1, that God is pleased when we enjoy His good provision. Or it could be the Old Testament aroma of justification. We don't live our religion so that God will save us, we live for Christ *because* He has saved us. In Christ God is not an oppressor but a sustainer.

In Ephesians 2:10, Paul says that when we are saved something happens to what we do and how we live. ¹⁰ *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* And the approval of God only happens by grace. More specifically, God's approval of us is found only and completely when you are in Christ, when by faith you have come to the cross and Christ takes your sin and you receive His righteousness. You can have that today. You can ask Him now to save you by grace through faith in Jesus. This life is all that you have. You need to make it count. Don't waste a day. Don't waste a meal. Don't waste grace.

Don't waste leisure

When I say leisure, I mean luxury. I won't spend much time here, but I at least want to call your attention to verse 8. ⁸ *Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.* God has not called us to a life of monasticism or ascetics. Those are lives derived of His good gifts in order to prove our spiritual death. You certainly can go overboard with this, but the sense seems to be to enjoy whatever level of luxury or leisure God has given for your refreshment and his glory. Garments that are white and oil on the skin, in a hot climate, these items would bring relief, and you can enjoy these luxuries with a glad and grateful heart. Let me point out something else not to waste in verse 9.

Don't waste love

You might say it like this: Don't waste your marriage. When you read verse 9 you find out you have this vane vanishing life, the time that God has given to you. And if you are married or hope to be married one day, verse 9 is a great sanctifying passage. Don't downplay this passage.

⁹ 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.

Cherish and protect, value and invest in, love and honor and respect and empower and enjoy the person God has given you as a spouse in your short life. Because according to Ephesians 5, your marriage is supposed to be a picture of the Gospel. And I think of how much time and how many marriages are wasted because of sin, selfishness and stubbornness, refusing to humble yourself before God and your spouse. Seek forgiveness, seek flourishing for the other. How many Gospel opportunities are lost because love was wasted? What sin do you need to repent of? What forgiveness do you need to extend? What flourishing do you need to foster? This life is all we have. We need to make it count. Don't waste a day. Don't waste a meal. Don't waste grace. Don't waste leisure. Don't waste love.

Don't waste an opportunity

Let's look at verse 10. *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.* If you have a chance to do something, do it now! Who knows what the future holds? Life is lived in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Death is always looming. There is no work, no thought, no knowledge, no wisdom in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. You know that's Psalm 23. *And yea though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, Thou art with me.* This life is all you have. Make it count.

I want you to bow your heads and close your eyes and listen. This is all you have, right now. Pray and ask God to save you from your sin at the cross. Ask God to forgive your hesitation and help your faith. Take the next step.

(Pastor prays)