



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Life is Good

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Ecclesiastes 11:7-10

Clint Pressley

⁷ *Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.*

⁸ *So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.*

⁹ *Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in 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.*

¹⁰ *Remove vexation from your heart, and put away pain from your body, for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.*

(Pastor prays)

In Romans Chapter 8, the Apostle Paul gives us one of the great promises of the Bible. And more specifically, it's one of the great promises in the Bible for Christians. This is how he says it in Romans 8:28. *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* Do you know that? Take all of the events of this past year – the pain, frustration, tragedy, hurt, broken or damaged friendships, broken hearts, depression, bouts of anxiety, loss of a job, cut in pay. Pick something that has happened to you and put it in this category. Do you actually believe it? That as a child of God, you've gone through it for your good. How can that be? How can we actually live and appropriate that promise for our lives?

I think the preacher helps us with that in Ecclesiastes 11. Now Ecclesiastes is not known for its uplifting tone and positive attitude. You don't find this book on bumper stickers or quoted by Joel Osteen. But right near the end of the book, the preacher is reminding us that in spite of all that you have encountered and struggled through, that life is a gift and it is good. And more than that, when you are in Christ by faith in his life, death and resurrection, every day of life is a good gift from our good God. So today, I want to convince you of the goodness of God and how good life is as a child of God in Christ. Simply put, so you can live with joy...

In Christ, Life is Good

I had a hard time categorizing each point so I may jump around a bit. Let's start with the first point.

It is good to be alive

That seems to be the feel of this beautiful sentence in verse 7. *Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.* This actually may be the most positive sentence in the entire book of Ecclesiastes. It's filled with common grace. The simple joy of walking outside and feeling the warmth of the sun on your face and being reminded that there is a good God that loves his good creation and more than that, there is a good God that has redeemed himself a people purchased in love at the cross of Jesus.

In addition, this first call in verse 7 is especially important for aging people. Do not lament at growing old, but be reminded of God's good and preserving grace that has given you another day to live. This is Psalm 118:24. *This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.* And if you pound on this verse a little harder, you see that it's completely and entirely positive with no "but" statement to balance it out. It's not, It's a beautiful day but it'll probably rain later. Here is a full-throated statement that says God has given you this day to fully enjoy and its good! In verse 8, the preacher takes it a little further – "so if you live many years, rejoice in them all."

I'll get to the rest of verse 8 in my next point but for right now, the preacher is calling you to put things into perspective. Some of you have lost your perspective. Yes, you have pressures, issues, deadlines and problems. You may even have significant pains but you can't let all of that outweigh the great and good blessings that God has given us in Christ. Isn't that what the

prophet Habakkuk meant in Habakkuk 3:17-18 when he said, *Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.* The preacher is saying, I know things can get bad and pain is real but just be reminded that it can never outweigh the good grace of God found and centered in Jesus!

And then notice what the preacher does in verse 9. He turns his attention to the young men and women. Let's read it. ⁹ *Rejoice, O young man, in your youth.* Let's stop there. There are some good things about being young. There are fewer cares, less responsibilities, room for mistakes, and stronger bodies. But more than that. As a young man or woman, you should rejoice and drink deep of the doctrine of God's sovereignty. Let me show you what I mean. ⁹ *Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in 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.* Everything doesn't have to be a mystical, agonizing decision. Should I take this job? Should I go to school? Should I buy a house? Should I go on a trip? Should I marry this person? Does he love God? Do you love him? If you are pursuing holiness, then you can make decisions for happiness and trust God's providence to work for good! This takes the pressure off and reminds us that in Christ, life is good. It's good to be alive.

It is good to know God

It's important to know, fear and love God. You need ground to stand on and that ground is made solid by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We need it. Some of you know this all too well. Let's go back to verse 8 and be reminded that even though we are called to enjoy life, suffering is real. ⁸ *So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.*

What a haunting phrase. The days of darkness will be many. That could mean, rejoice while you can because you are going to be dead longer than you are going to be alive. But it also could mean that yes light is good and it's pleasant for the eyes to see the sun. And being young is great but there will be days, maybe a whole lot of them, that are shrouded in darkness with no real good way out. So don't be called off guard. This is Elijah under the Juniper tree. This is John the Baptist doubting in prison. This is when your faith is tested and tried, refined and displayed.

When you can say with Job, “though he slay me yet will I praise him”. And trust that God is close to the broken hearted and that the bruised reed he will not break and a smoldering wick he will not quench. That the sufferings are for sanctification when you can actually learn to say as Spurgeon did when he said, “kiss the wave that throws you against the Rock of Ages”. It’s to know God in the dark hole. Pain is to know God is indeed good.

There is another facet to know in God. Warren Wiersbe had a great outline for this passage. It was rejoice, remember, and removed. And verse 9 tells us exactly what to remember. Let me show it to you. It's in the context of telling those who are young to enjoy life. Let's read verse 9 again.

⁹ Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in 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.

It’s interesting that the preacher brings up God as judge. This passage has presented him as the giver of good things; the giver of light, life, joy and youth. Here the pastor says but before you go too far, don't forget that the God of the Bible is inevitably holy and unapproachable and all people of every time period and every race stand before him as judge. Not only that, we stand guilty. Each one of us stands guilty and that guilt was so deep and has stained our soul so thoroughly that the only hope of removing it is the sinless savior, Jesus.

Here's a good place for the gospel. The gospel goes like this. God is the holy creator who has created every one of us in his image. But the image of God in you has been disfigured because of sin. You are not only far from God; you are dead in sin. You need spiritual resurrection. And God who is not only judge but is loving, sent his only son, Jesus, who lives perfectly because you and I can't. He keeps the entire Law, earning righteousness as a man. And that righteousness he gives to everyone who believes in him. Not only that, He goes to the cross and there on the cross he takes the wrath and full judgement of God. You will never be judged for your sins if you are in Christ. You will be disciplined but the judgement went on Jesus. He died, God raised him from the dead, and the gospel is, if you believe that, you will be saved.

In Christ, life is good. It's good to be alive. It's good to know God.

It is good to be content

It's right there in verse 10 with the words remove and put away. Let's read it and see. ¹⁰*Remove vexation from your heart, and put away pain from your body, for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.* Remove vexation from your heart. Quit being a worry wart. You can't enjoy life if you're always scared. Remove vexation from your heart. Repent or at least pray for God to get vexation out of your heart which begs the question, what is vexation? It is anger, hurt, bitterness, unforgiveness, resentment, self-pity, and jealousy. All of these are the enemies of contentment and are thoroughly unchristian. Remove – ask God to help you and he will.

There is one more step to contentment. Put away the pain. That word pain in Hebrew is *Ra'*. It's the general word for evil. This is the 6th and 7th petition of the Lord's Prayer. Do not lead me into temptation but deliver me from evil. Isn't that where contentment begins? The preacher makes one final assertion in verse 10. It's the last phrase. *for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.* Literally it is youth and blackness of hair are vanity; here for a second and then gone. It's only in Christ that you'll see life is good. It's good to be alive. It's good to know and fear God. It's good to be content. Do you believe that? Let's ask God to help.

(Pastor prays)