

**Text:** Ecclesiastes 3:9-15

**Meaning:** Solomon said to live with the end in mind

**Big Idea:** Let God be God

**Objective:** I want the hearers to trust in the Lord with all their heart

**Theme:** Instructions

### **LIVE WITH THE END IN MIND**

#### **ALFRED NOBEL ILLUSTRATION**

In 1866, Alfred Nobel invented dynamite and built up companies and laboratories in more than 20 countries all over the world. In the process, he amassed a considerable fortune. When Nobel's brother died, the newspaper made a mistake and ran an obituary for Alfred Nobel. In the obituary they stated that he was known for creating the most destructive force known to mankind: dynamite. When Nobel read the obituary he was devastated. In an instant he came to the realization that his entire life was known for war and destruction. In that moment he decided that he didn't want his family name remembered this way.

On November 27, 1895, Nobel signed his final will and testament at the Swedish-Norwegian Club in Paris. When Nobel died on December 10, 1896, it was discovered that according to his will, his vast wealth was to be used for five prizes, including one for peace. The prize for peace was to be awarded to the person who "shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding of peace congresses." Just before his death, he confided in a friend, "I want to be remembered for peace, not destruction."

**LIVE WITH THE END IN MIND – WRITE YOUR OWN OBITUARY AND LIVE BACKWARDS.** It's been said somewhat facetiously, live your life in such a way that **THE PREACHER DOESN'T HAVE TO LIE AT YOUR FUNERAL.**

#### **A SAINT OF A BROTHER**

In a small town, there were two brothers who, over the course of many years, cheated, swindled, robbed and generally stole from everyone that they ever did business with.

The entire town and surrounding community reviled and despised these two brothers as everyone was aware of just how disreputable and dishonest they were.

One day, one of the brothers mysteriously died. Although they had never attended church, the one remaining brother went to the local pastor and offered vast sums of money if he would come to the funeral and say the appropriate words, **AND**, a large bonus, but **ONLY** if he would - during the course of the eulogy - refer to his brother as "a Saint."

The pastor was troubled by the request, however, it was a very poor church and the church desperately needed repairs.

The Parishioners had heard about the pastor's dilemma and were curious as to what he would do.

The Funeral began, the church was packed, and the pastor started with the usual prayers and followed the rites and traditions as required by the churches teachings. In closing, after referring to the man in the box, he paused and turned to face the remaining brother.

He began, "As you all know, the departed was an awful individual who robbed, cheated, swindled and stole from everyone he ever did business with.

However, compared to his Brother, he was - "a Saint!"

#### **AS ONE COUNTRY PREACHER USED TO SAY, "you're either a SAINT OR YOU AINT!"**

Saints are those who have chosen by faith to follow Jesus and this is exemplified in how they spend **THEIR TIME – HOW THEY LIVE THEIR DAILY LIVES FOR CHRIST.**

**In Ecclesiastes 3 Solomon talks about TIME – and he says if we are going to make the most of the short time we have on this earth we must LIVE WITH THE END IN MIND.**

**READ ECCLESIASTES 3:1-15**

**In Chapter 3 Solomon talks about TIME:**

**A TIME TO LIVE**

Solomon starts the chapter with all these different experiences of life – both positive and negative, comfortable and painful, things to celebrate and things to repudiate – and He says GOD IS OVER IT ALL.

Without the combination of all this stuff – LIFE WOULD BE INCREDIBLY BORING.

**Think about it** – If life were all joy and easy circumstances the temptation to forget God would be immense

If life were all pain the temptation to hate God would also be immense.

The peaceful blessings of God remind us of His goodness, and painful circumstances remind us that we need Him and there is something better on the horizon!

**A TIME TO DIE**

He says here that from the dust we have come and to the dust we shall return. Death is inevitable.

Listen to this statistic today – 10 out of 10 DIE! There is a %100 mortality rate for mankind!

**A TIME FOR JUDGMENT**

The end chapter 3 Solomon says there is a time for every matter to be judged. I wish reincarnation were true. I wish you got a second chance at life. I wish purgatory was a real thing, a place of discipline in the afterlife so you can learn some lessons and still go to Heaven. However, neither are accurate.

What is so significant to me about this chapter is TIME IS IN THE SINGULAR. We think of time as days, weeks, months, and years. GOD SPEAKS TO TIME AS ONE COLLECTION OF EXPERIENCES AND CHOICES.

**Deuteronomy 30:19**

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live

Then Solomon gives two instructions for how to live with the END IN MIND

**HOW DO WE LIVE WITH THE END IN MIND?**

**INSTRUCTION #1 IS.....**

**LET GOD BE GOD**

All this pursuit of satisfaction in worldly things takes the place of God. Stop trying to do God's job! Trust Him! Rest in Him! Worship Him!

Who God is has been clearly revealed to us in Christ and in history. What God does is a mystery to us.

We may not see or understand it in the moment, but there is beauty in everything that happens in the life of a Child of God.

## 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.

What He says about YOU – Stand on it  
What He says about the WORLD – Believe it  
What He promises TO DO – Claim it

Today:

Stop worrying about all the things you can't control, and stop trying to control all the things you worry about. Just TRUST GOD, REST IN HIS LOVE, STAND ON HIS WORD. Just LET GOD BE GOD.

LET GOD BE GOD IN YOUR FAMILY  
LET GOD BE GOD IN YOUR FINANCES  
LET GOD BE GOD IN YOUR HEALTH  
LET GOD BE GOD IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS  
LET GOD BE GOD OVER YOUR LIFE

He's BIG ENOUGH AND STRONG ENOUGH AND WISE ENOUGH TO HANDLE ALL THE ISSUES OF YOUR LIFE!

### **LIFE IS LIKE A PUZZLE**

One of the things we like to do at Christmas break time is to put together a large puzzle as a family. All break we will walk by the table and pick up another handful of pieces and search for where they go and then gently place each one in connection with the previously placed pieces.

Life is a puzzle. Through every experience we gain another piece to the puzzle that we can add. As life goes along the full picture comes more and more into view when we entrust the pieces to God.

When putting a puzzle together there are two very important things: the box and the edges.

The box has the finished picture on it, so every time we go to place another piece in the puzzle we have to go back to the box top and see generally where it will go. **GOD'S WORD GIVES US THE FINISHED PICTURE.** WITHOUT CONSISTENT INTERACTION WITH THE WORD WE LOSE SIGHT OF THE BIG PICTURE.

Whenever you put a puzzle together you should always start with the EDGE PIECES. The edge pieces provide the framework which allows us to fill in the rest of the puzzle. **FAITH IS THE FRAMEWORK.** Faith in Christ and connection to the family of God provides the framework so I learn where all the pieces go and how they fit together.

Everything is actually “beautiful in its own time.” All the issues of life are marked by harmony of purpose and beneficent oversight by God. When men see the big picture, they surely must marvel at the way God has arranged life.<sup>1</sup>

### **INSTRUCTION #2 IS.....**

#### **RECOGNIZE HIS BEAUTY AND HIS GRACE**

God makes everything beautiful in its time. There is beauty in everything. God is not the author of sin, and He doesn't cause all things that happen in our lives. Scripture clearly teaches that we make decisions that have real consequences. However, God is so

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<sup>1</sup> James E. Smith, *The Wisdom Literature and Psalms*, Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co., 1996), 731.

sovereign that somehow He can turn darkness into light, brokenness into blessedness, and our mess into a message.

It should encourage you today to know that even Solomon, the wisest, wealthiest, most influential person in the world at this time struggled with doubt, discouragement, and some would argue even depression for a time. However, as Solomon turned to the Lord in faith everything began to change.

There is a lot of talk in our world today about MENTAL HEALTH, and the answer for mental health is not simply to HAVE MORE FAITH. The Mental health conversation is much more nuanced than that. However, I can promise you based on the authority of God's Word that adding these two principles today to your life will put you on a path toward mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

Daily – WHEN OUR FEET HIT THE FLOOR IF WE WILL DECLARE BY FAITH, "LORD, TODAY IS THE DAY YOUR HAVE MADE I WILL REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT." AND THEN WE WILL LOOK FOR THE BEAUTY

AND GRACE OF GOD THROUGHOUT THE DAY – I CAN PROMISE YOU THAT you will be on the path toward mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Start with FAITH and know that God is going to bring the people and the resources into your life to help you have real peace and real joy!

God can take anything and bring beauty from it! In fact, that's the good news of the gospel. He can take even the worst situations and turn them for His glory!

### **CHURCHES BURNED IN RURAL ALABAMA**

On February 3, 2006 Matthew Cloyd, Benjamin Moseley, and Russell Lee Debusk Jr. set fire to 5 churches in rural Bibb County Alabama. One of those churches, Ashby Baptist Church, in Brierfield, Alabama was pastored by a dear pastor friend and mentor in my life named

Dr. Jim Parker. Dr. Parker is a Vice President now and a professor at New Orleans Seminary, and in 2006 He was a professor at the New Orleans extension center in Birmingham while also pastoring Ashby Baptist Church. On February 3, 2006 as He and his deacons looked at a pile of burning ashes where there building once stood they thought, "Who would do such a thing?" and "What are we going to do now?"

But Dr. Parker tells the story that these young men actually did the church a favor. As a result of the fire Ashby Baptist got a brand new building paid for through their insurance, and the months they spent worshipping at an off-site location helped stir a sense of freshness and excitement in their worship. Dr. Parker to this day says it was one of the best things to ever happen to the church.

Beloved, only God can do that! Only God can get beauty from ashes! Only God can bring life from destruction! If He can give a physical blessing from something tragic like this you can rest assured He will GIVE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS TO THOSE WHO SEEK HIM!

### **Psalm 27:4, 13-14**

One thing have I asked of the LORD,  
that will I seek after:  
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD  
all the days of my life,  
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD  
and to inquire in his temple.

I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD  
in the land of the living!

Wait for the LORD;  
be strong, and let your heart take courage;  
wait for the LORD!