

## CHASING THE WIND

“Go For It!” *Ecclesiastes 12:1-8*

August 27, 2023

**INTRO.:** I appreciate Pastor John for his willingness to jump in and preach when it wasn't on the schedule. He took us back into our journey through Ecclesiastes, *Chasing the Wind*. What he shared from Ecclesiastes 11 leads perfectly into our theme this morning. I love how God takes everyday life experiences and relates it to our walk with Him. The comparison of farming (thank you to Ken Jones for sharing your experience with Pastor John) to our spiritual lives is awesome. Some quotes that stuck out to me from last week's sermon:

“God works in ways you will never understand.”

“You have no idea the impact your service will have on someone else's life. Be obedient to God.”

How are you and I doing with the applications of Scripture from last week?

\*What perfect conditions have I put in the way of being obedient to God? (time, situation, gifts, inability)

\*What ways can I grow in sowing seeds of service this year? He challenged us to call the office and say, “I'm here to serve.”

So, today as we look at Ecclesiastes 12 our theme is “Go for It.” This past Friday was the beginning of the local high school football season. We had Football Chapel here on Friday morning, a great opportunity to encourage the athletes and challenge them with the Word of God. We had an excellent time of singing and challenge from the Word of God given by Bill Morrow, the local director of Fellowship of Christian Athletes. When it comes to football there are times in the game when you are faced with a decision whether to go for it or not. It's fourth down and you need a yard to get a first down. Maybe it's late in the game and you're behind by a few points and you need to score or you're ahead by a few points and a first down could ice the game. If you go for it and get the first down, winning the game, people praise your gutsy decision. If you're stopped and they get the ball back and they win the game, people are wondering what you were doing in going for it in the first place.

What does God say about when we should “go for it” in our service for the Lord and “why” should we go for it?

As I think about this I'm reminded of what Wayne Gretzky, maybe the best hockey player ever, said about going for it. “You will miss 100% of the shots you never take.” As we read through the first 8 verses of Ecclesiastes 12 think about the when and the why of “Going for It.”

**Ecclesiastes 12:1-8** Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, “I find no pleasure in them”— before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain; when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim; when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when men rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint; when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets. Remember him—before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. “Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Everything is meaningless!”

### WHEN???

#### \*WHEN YOU ARE YOUNG

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, “I find no pleasure in them”—

What specifically is Solomon's challenge to those who are young? By the way, he doesn't really define who is young, but, as we shall see in a bit, he does speak of how you can tell when you're getting old.

“Remember your Creator:” he takes us back to what description of God? He refers to God as the “Creator,” the source of all life, even our individual lives. There is a recognition of the greatness of God, of Him alone being the source of our life and as such, the one who has the right to be in charge of our lives.

“*Creator:*” in the plural form in the Hebrew, suggesting greatness of majesty. (Michael Eaton)

We are drawn back to what we read in Psalm 139

**Psalm 139:13–17** For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

The Apostle Paul speaks of this God when he stands up and addresses the Areopagus, the philosophers of the day in Athens. There were statues of false gods everywhere and as Paul stands up he makes the observation that they are very religious, with statues for all their gods and one for the *unknown god* in case they missed one. Paul tells them about this *unknown god*.

**Acts 17:24–31** “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man’s design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”

This Creator God has every right to claim our worship, from the time we are young and on.

“Remember:” (some of my thoughts and some commentators) Is this just having a recollection of God? Like, don’t forget your keys in your office or your phone on the roof of your car. No, what Solomon is saying is much more than this. It means trusting Him, obeying Him, and walking with Him. It involves giving your life to Him in service for Him. It means recognizing that your gifts, talents, and abilities come from Him and are to be used for His glory. It means recognizing that we are sinners, under the rightful judgment of God, and that we need a Savior.

Don’t waste any of your youth living for yourself. As you seek God first you can avoid bad decisions that could have repercussions through the rest of your life. Seek God while you are making decisions that affect the course of your life: your career, who you will marry, where you will live, and how you will serve.

Bono has written, “Ecclesiastes is one of my favorite books. It’s a book about a character who wants to find out why he’s alive, why he was created. He tries knowledge. He tries wealth. He tries experience. He tries everything. You hurry to the end of the book to find out why, and it says, ‘Remember your Creator.’ In a way it’s such a letdown. Yet it isn’t.”

No, it isn’t. Getting to know our Creator before we grow old and die is the most important thing we can ever do. (Philip Graham Ryken)

This morning we are having a baby dedication but, in reality, it is a dedication of these parents to raise this child in the truth and love of God’s Word. This is the most important person these parents will ever disciple. Young person, if you are growing up in a Christian home, thank God. Let your parents know how grateful you are that they love Jesus and want to teach you how to know, love, and serve God.

This should cause us to remember every day, every moment is a gift from God. As a young person use the strength you have to serve this great God, the only true God.

To remember God is to live our whole lives for Him. It is to be mindful of God in every circumstance – including Him in all our plans, praising Him for all His blessings, and praying to Him through all our trouble. The best time to do this is when we are still young enough to give a whole lifetime to God’s service. Remember God in everything you do: at home, at school, outside in His creation, inside in the kitchen or bedroom, at work or play. (Philip Graham Ryken)

Charles Bridges: “Many have remembered too late – none too soon.”

Go for it when you are young because time passes quickly and you don't want to waste your life for meaningless, trivial things. You turn around and you're a senior citizen. Life is like a vapor, a mist, that is here today and gone tomorrow.

**James 4:13–15 (NIV84)** — **13** Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” **14** Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. **15** Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.”

BUT, not only when you are young, but also:

### **WHEN YOU ARE OLDER**

As you get older the days will become more challenging.

**Ecclesiastes 12:1** Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, “I find no pleasure in them”—

Solomon is now going to share some of the aging process. See if you can figure out what he is saying. As we do this let us remember that God does not want to put older people on the shelf, the body of Christ needs them!! As a person ages the years can become more difficult: “I find no pleasure in them.”

**Ecclesiastes 12:2** before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain;

As we get older the physical problems and challenges just keep coming like how the clouds keep coming back after it rains. This reminds me of what happened on Thursday afternoon: the clouds came, it poured and cleared up and clouds returned, and it poured. Got to Cross Country practice and the clouds came, and it poured.

when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim;

(much taken from Philip Graham Ryken)

*“the keepers of the house:”* are a person's arms which start to tremble

*“the strong men stoop:”* are legs which are bent with age

*“the grinders:”* are teeth, if any are left

*“the windows:”* are eyes dimmed by cataracts or a general loss of vision

**Ecclesiastes 12:4** when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when men rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint;

*“the doors to the street:”* are ears that are deaf or hard of hearing and thus closed to the hustle and bustle of a noisy street

*“sound of grinding fades:”* a common cheerful indication that younger folks were going about their business, while the elderly found themselves increasingly shut off from the hum of daily life (Michael Eaton)

*“men rise up at the sound of birds:”* trouble sleeping

*“all their songs grow faint:”* vocal chords that no longer have the elastic strength to make sweet music.

**Ecclesiastes 12:5** when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets.

*“when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets:”* unsteadiness of old age

*“almond tree blossoms:”* since almond trees are pale in the springtime, this phrase indicates that someone's hair has turned white with age.

*“grasshopper drags itself along:”* you usually see grasshoppers hopping because that's what they do. Things are slowing down.

*“desire no longer is stirred:”* desire for physical part of the marital relationship

*“man goes to his eternal home:”* Solomon is now describing death.

**Ecclesiastes 12:6-7** Remember him—before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

*“before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken:”* something valuable, precious, and beautiful is broken  
*“before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well:”* this is something destroyed beyond repair.

*“the dust returns to the ground it came from:”* this is describing our bodies.

**Genesis 3:19** By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

Older folks **remember Him** before you die! Don't waste any of your years. Treat every day as if it were precious, for you can't buy it back! Invest in those younger. Use the wisdom you have gained by seeking God, spending time in His Word, and in serving Him.

I heard a new term this week on the radio: “granfluencers:” which I did some research on. It is originally referring to older folks (60, 70+) going to social media and making an impact. I would like to have it refer to those of us who are older and looking to continue to make a difference for Jesus Christ. Continuing to serve and not putting yourself on the shelf. Not saying, “I've done my part and now it's time to let other people do it.” It may mean a different approach with different levels of energy. Maybe it's not the same ministry you served in previously. Maybe it's getting involved in a ministry of any kind for the first time.

We have a senior saint who comes in every Thursday to stuff the bulletin and help in whatever other way she can  
There is a senior saint who is a tremendous prayer warrior and sends multiple cards of encouragement every week  
There are multiple senior saints involved in the Fishnet ministry headed up by Donna Outt  
Mops needs mentor Moms to help encourage younger Moms  
AWANA needs men to work with TNT boys  
The Youth Ministry needs prayer partners for teens

So, we see the **WHEN** to *GO FOR IT* (when you are young **AND** when you are older), but what about the:

### **WHY???**

“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Everything is meaningless!”

### **\*apart from God life is meaningless**

Solomon's conclusion is a repetition of what he said in Ecclesiastes 1:2. It can mean vapor, breath, like a puff of smoke coming from a fire or your breath on a cold winter morning.

Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of this verse, “Smoke, nothing but smoke. There's nothing to anything – it's all smoke.”

It can carry the idea of things that are *pointless*. In order to show people what really matters he is showing what doesn't matter, those things that are transient, that don't last for eternity. The word is repeated 5 times in Ecclesiastes 1:2!

Everything he searched out for meaning and purpose in life, apart from God, is meaningless, a vapor that is quickly gone. God is the One who brings meaning and purpose to life for He is the author of life: physical and eternal life.

### **REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR: when you are young and old**

It means trusting Him, obeying Him, and walking with Him. It involves giving your life to Him in service for Him. It means recognizing that your gifts, talents, and abilities come from Him and are to be used for His glory. It means recognizing that we are sinners, under the rightful judgment of God, and that we need a Savior.

### **\*life is short; eternity is long**

Jim Elliot, who gave his life in missionary service trying to reach the Auca Indians said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

2 Corinthians 5:1-10 speaks of how our body is like a tent that wears out and that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord for the believer. The conclusion:

**2 Corinthians 5:9–10 (NIV84)** — **9** So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. **10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

What is your goal, your aim in life? Every believer will appear before the judgment seat of Christ to answer for what they have done for the Lord in using the gifts, talents, abilities, time, and resources God has given. This is not in reference to our sins for they have been paid for through the death and resurrection of Christ. I think we would all want to hear, “Well done, my good and faithful servant.”

Invest your life in things that last!!!

**SO WHAT????**

**GO FOR IT!!!!** We aren't here on this earth to play it safe when it comes to our lives with God!

Have I given my life to God?

\*in salvation

\*in seeking Him

\*in service for Him

Say Yes!!

\*God has called every believer to service for Him

\*Young or old

What am I saying yes to when it comes to my walk with God? It may mean saying no to some other things.