

Rejoice in Your Creator! Living in the Liberating Providence of God

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[0 : 00] Good. Well, let's turn to our reading this morning, shall we? And we're in Ecclesiastes and chapter 11. I'll give you a moment to turn to that in your Bibles.

Ecclesiastes chapter 11. And we're reading the chapter there. Ecclesiastes 11 verse 1.

Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days. Give a portion to seven or even to eight, for you know not what disaster may happen on earth.

If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth. And if a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls there it will lie.

He who observes the wind will not sow. He who regards the clouds will not reap. As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones of the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.

[1 : 13] In the morning, sow your seed. And at evening, withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.

Light is sweet and is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun. 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, is fleeting. 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. Remove vexation from your heart and put away pain from your body.

For youth and the dawn of life are vanity, are fleeting. Amen. Well, may God bless his word to us this morning.

[2 : 26] Well, do turn with me, if you would, to Ecclesiastes chapter 11 that Paul read for us a little while ago. Which is all about living in the liberating providence of God and so living rejoicing in our creator.

Now, to the casual reader, of course, at first sight, Ecclesiastes can seem to be a very pessimistic book. But as we've seen, a more careful reading shows us that is not so.

It is a supremely realistic book about life as it really is in a fallen world. The world under the sun. A world that is full of mankind's sinful mess.

There's certainly no romantic fantasy anywhere in this book. Or anywhere in the Bible, for that matter. But it forces us to be utterly serious about life.

The very opposite of superficial. And especially realistic about the limitations of our mortality. The transience of mankind.

[3 : 37] And the tragedy of our sin. We certainly saw that last time, didn't we, in chapter 10. Very sobering words there. About the consequences of folly in both private life and public life.

So Ecclesiastes is utterly real about all of that. But there is also, isn't there, a relentless chorus of great optimism. Be joyful, says the preacher.

I commend joy all the days of your life here on earth. It's a fleeting life. But it can be and it should be a fulsome life. A life full of real joy.

Now, the way of joy, of course, does require patience. In the mess of human sinfulness. We saw that in chapter 8. And it needs humility amid the many mysteries of divine sovereignty.

We saw that in chapter 9. But nevertheless, venturesome joy all through life's vexed journey is God's plan for us. In fact, it's his command to us.

[4 : 38] And we've seen these commands in the repeating little vignettes of glorious relief all the way through the book. It keeps coming back to these things. Go, eat your bread, enjoy.

Eat and drink. Be joyful in your toil. And so on. But as the book comes to its climax here. In chapter 11 and 12. So that call to venturesome joy also comes to a climax.

And the preacher really moves up a gear here. Urging us in the way of liberating joy and rejoicing in our creator. Guided by his instruction.

By the message of the one shepherd, God himself. His words are heard, of course, all through the teaching of the teachers of wisdom like the preacher himself.

And all of these things, chapter 12, verse 11, are coming from one source, he says. From the one shepherd. The one shepherd of our lives. And it's listening to him. And it's heeding him that will lead us in the way of true and fulsome humanity.

[5 : 43] That's the end goal of everything, as he says in chapter 12, verse 13. Fear God. Listen to him. Follow him. Because this is the whole of man.

Literally, this is what it means to be truly and satisfyingly human. Hearing the one shepherd. Following the one shepherd. Not rejecting him, but rejoicing in him.

That is the secret of real and flourishing human life. To know God is our sovereign creator and our sovereign Lord.

And will be our sovereign judge, ultimately. And so to live to the full. Guided in everything.

By his words. By his life-giving commands. That is the way of venturesome joy. However vexed. However frustrating our earthly lives will be.

[6 : 42] Jesus Christ said, didn't he? The son of God. He said, I am the good shepherd. And I have come not like the thief to destroy life.

But that you might have life. And have it abundantly. And that is the life that the preacher holds out here so strikingly. In these last two chapters of the book.

In the words of that one shepherd for his people. And how much more so for us today as Christ's people. And it's very, very practical.

It all boils down to a life that's lived trusting in God. And therefore liberated. To rejoice in God. A life that comes from honoring God.

So that you live listening to God. Or to put it another way. You live rejoicing in your creator. That's chapter 11. Only because you live remembering your creator.

[7 : 37] That's chapter 12. True happiness means living in the liberating providence of God. And therefore rejoicing in our creator. That's chapter 11 here.

But of course we'll only live with true happiness. If we understand what true humanity really is. And that's what chapter 12 will press home to us. It means living for the life-giving purpose of God.

Remembering your creator. And his call and his commands for our life. And that's the end of the matter. Says the preacher. End of chapter 12. To be truly happy.

To know a life of venturesome joy. In this world of mortality. And of mystery. You have to discover true humanity. And to do that.

You have to remember your creator. You have to fear him. You have to heed his commands. For your life. For your life that is lived. For his purpose.

[8 : 36] If you forget him. Well. You'll forgo true humanity. And true happiness. Try to abolish God. In favor of autonomous man. And in fact. You will abolish man as well. But listen to him. And you will find true liberation.

You will find true life. In his service. Is perfect freedom. To be his servant. Is to reign. In life. And that's the message here.

Of chapter 11. It bids us rejoice. In our creator. That's how to be. Truly happy. In life. Learning to live. In the liberating providence. Of God.

Trusting him. And therefore rejoicing in him. So let's look at the chapter. It falls into two sections. First of all. In verses 1 to 6. Bid us to trust God. To live boldly now.

[9 : 35] Recognizing God's sovereign providence. Over your earthly life. Be venturesome now. He says. Whatever. God. Gives you.

Opportunity. Now these verses are. Are an unmistakable picture. Of liberated existence. Of unfettered existence. Enthusiastic. Zealous.

Living life to the full. Verse 1. Cast your bread upon the waters. Venture out. Boldly. Verse 2. Give a portion. Not just to one or two. But to seven. Or even eight.

Verse 6. Go out. Sow your seed. Morning and evening. That is every possible opportunity. Go for it. And do you see.

If you look at these verses. That in each case. The motivator. The spur to action. Is ignorance of the future. Uncertainty about the world. Not certainty.

[10 : 29] And not control. Of the world. Four times in these verses. There's the refrain. That the very reason. We're to venture out in trust. Is precisely because. We know we are ignorant.

And we can't control our destiny. Verse 2. Give. For you do not know. What disaster. May happen. Verse 5. As you do not know.

How the body and spirit. Come together in the womb. So you do not know. Any of the work of God. Verse 6. Because you do not know. Which seed will prosper. Or you sow.

Everywhere. With all your might. Life is full. Of unknowns. There's the known unknowns. And there's Donald Rumsfeld's. Unknown unknowns. But as Bob Fowle puts it.

The possibility of disaster. Is an incentive to be bold. Rather than excuse. To be timid. And that's because you see. For all the unknowns.

[11 : 26] There is one great certainty. For the Christian believer. Look at the end of verse 5. God is the one. Who makes everything. And therefore he is the one.

Who is in control of everything. And we know him. And we can trust him. And so we can. And indeed we must. Seize the day. Seize the day of opportunity.

Wherever God gives it. And launch out into life. Confidently. And creatively. To live that life. That God has given us. To live to the full. It's all about approaching.

The whole of life. Whether in commercial life. Or in domestic life. With a right attitude. Of total trust. In a sovereign. God. Because of course.

There's so many things. That we don't know. And that we can't do. And that we can't control. Just like the mystery. Verse 5. Of life. Forming in the womb. But you see.

[12 : 24] We're not to let. Life's. Mysteries. And life's perplexities. And uncertainties. And dangers. Paralyze us. Into timidity. Into super caution. Quite the reverse.

He says. These are the very things. That spur us to venture some boldness. Disaster may well come. Says verse 2. But that's why. You give a portion widely. Uncertainty.

Verse 6. Yes. It's all around. That's why you sow. Everywhere. And anywhere. The basic pictures here. Are from commerce. And from trade. And we all know that's true.

Don't we? Nothing ventured. Well. Nothing gained. It's never the one. Who waits. And waits. And waits. For ideal risk-free circumstances. To start working.

Or to start investing. It's never that one. Who waits for the wind. Verse 4. To blow favorably. It's never that one. That's going to be a successful entrepreneur. You don't build a great business.

[13 : 21] Do you? By spending all your time. Fretting and worrying. About inflation. Or interest rates. And so on. So much. That you never actually start making your product. Or selling your product.

Well. You'll never make a profit that way. Will you? Verse 4. He who regards the clouds. Who never starts harvesting. Just in case. It's going to start raining. Well. He'll never reap.

And. And that's so. Isn't it? In our whole attitude. To life. Think in. In spiritual terms. There are some Christians. They seem to be paralyzed by life.

Can't make. Decisions. Won't commit to anything. Can't. Take. Decisive steps. In any direction. Anywhere. Because. Because they demand certainty. They want control.

In their relationships. In their career. In their church service. They want to know exactly how it's going to turn out. How it's going to happen. Before they will. Even step over the threshold.

[14 : 21] And begin. Maybe they're waiting for God to confirm things to them. With a special word. Or a sign. Or something. But. But that's not the way of piety. It's the way of paralysis.

Because you can't have that in life. You can't control the wind. And the weather. These things just are not ours to control. If the clouds are full. Verse 3.

It will rain. Well don't we know that. If the wind blows. Trees. Trees will come down. Whether the gale is from the north. Or the south.

Obviously there were severe weather events. Due to climate change. 3,000 years ago. In the preacher's time as well. But that's the world isn't it? We have to accept it.

And that is our limitation. In the face of divinity. See verse 5. He is a sovereign God. He's the creator of all. The secret things belong to God.

[15 : 20] The creator. Not to us. Because we're not God. Are we? We know that. But we find it very hard. To really take it to heart. Because we want.

Total knowledge. We want total control. But you see. That's to want to be God. That's the essence of sin. Right back from the very beginning.

With Adam and Eve. We will be as gods. Having knowledge of everything. Now says the preacher. That's not the path. To liberation. And to happiness.

You need to recognize. That only God. Is sovereign. And you need to trust him. Trust his. Wise. And loving. Providence. Over every part of your life. Every part of your own life.

Even in intimate detail. Because it's when you do that. That you can live boldly. And fearlessly. It's when you do that.

[16 : 16] That you can have. A really fruitful life. And that is God's command. For your life. Verse 6. Trust God. Get on with it. Sowing your seed. Remember chapter 9 verse 10.

Whatever your hand finds to do. Do it with all your might. Because life is short. Be bold. Be venturesome. Live boldly.

Recognizing God's sovereign providence. Over your earthly life. But what if it doesn't work out. We say to ourself.

What if we make a mistake. We need to wait. Don't we. Until we're sure. We need a sign. Haven't had a sure word from the Lord about that yet. I'm waiting. Waiting for a text.

To speak to me perhaps. I'm waiting for a sense of peace. About all of this. Well says the preacher. You may wait forever. The wind may never change. The way that you want it to.

[17 : 14] And you'll never sow. And the clouds. And you'll. End up never reaping. It may be that you. You are.

A Christian. Who's been paralyzed. By all sorts of choices. And issues. Issues to do with what you call guidance. Well. If you're waiting for a word from the Lord.

Maybe this is the word for you. But actually it's not more text that you need. It's more trust. In a sovereign God. Cast your bread.

Upon the waters. Don't withhold your hand. Get on. Sow your seed. For you do not know. You don't know.

But you can trust. You can trust. That what happens in this visible world. Under the sun. Isn't the full picture.

[18 : 08] And when you trust the one who is above the sun. Well that transforms everything. Every calculus in life. And that is what will make you bold.

And liberated. And venturesome. In life. Now please be clear. This is the very antithesis. Of.

Arrogant self-belief. No. It's a holy humble trust. It's a bowing the knee. Isn't it? In recognition. To the utterly sovereign hand.

Of our creator. And our sustainer. It's bowing to verse 5. To the God who makes everything. To rejoicing that he is the one who is sovereign. Not me.

Or you. But it's knowing that to be in subjection to him. To be serving him. Is. To be liberated. To be bold.

[19 : 03] And venturesome. And joyful. The people. Who do know their God. Said Daniel. Well said the angel to Daniel. The people who do know their God. Shall be strong. And do.

Exploits. Daniel 12 verse 32. That's the constant message of scripture. Humble yourselves. Under the mighty hand of God. Says Peter.

And he will exalt you. Casting all your anxieties on him. For he cares for you. James says exactly the same thing. And he adds in. And God opposes the proud.

Those who try to be gods. Who try to be in control of everything. And have certainty. But he gives grace. To the humble. So get on. He says.

With resisting the devil. And he will free from you. Draw near to God. And he will draw near to you. Be bold. Trust God. Get on with living life. I don't misunderstand.

[19 : 58] Again. He's not saying be reckless. Remember everything we saw in chapter 10. We need wisdom. Don't go charging at things with a blunt axe. And maybe verse 2 here does imply that.

Spreading some risk. Giving to 7 or 8. Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Maybe it is a very good idea to invest in gold mines. In a world full of inflation and increasing instability.

But if you put your entire pension pot into two gold mines in Russia. It's probably not the best idea. Of course there's a place for prudence in our thinking. It is an uncertain world.

But you see he's saying there's no place for paralysis. It is an uncertain world to us. We do not know. We cannot know. But God knows.

It's not uncertain to him. And as chapter 8 verse 17 said. We cannot find out. All his work under the sun.

[20 : 57] Let alone God's work above the sun. But we can trust him. And we have his command. To live boldly. To be liberated. From fear and paralysis.

Because we do know our God. And we know his power. To control all things. And we know his goodness. And his grace. That he works.

Always. For the ultimate good. Of those who are called. According to his purpose. Friends just pause for a minute here.

And just think about how utterly counter cultural. This whole view of life is. Not just for many Christians. And many churches. But for our whole culture. In the 21st century.

At least in our western world. Which is more and more. A culture that meets uncertainty. Not with confidence. But with fear. Our culture in the 21st century west.

[21 : 59] Is above all. A culture of fear. One of the most insightful. Thinkers and writers in this area. Is. Professor Frank Furedi.

Emeritus professor of sociology. From the University of Kent. He's written a number of. Very useful books. Examining this whole area. About why.

Societies have become so fearful. And how fear works. To paralyze us. To diminish. Human flourishing. He's not a Christian. But interestingly.

He recognizes very clearly. What the loss. Of Christian thinking. Has done in our culture. He says that we've ditched. The concept of sin. We've abolished the fear of God.

And so now. Western societies. He says lack. A coherent narrative. Through which. They can give meaning to fear. And he says. Our moral confusion. Both sustains.

[22 : 54] And reproduces. A culture of fear. He clearly recognizes. The very positive. Biblical understanding. Of the fear of God. And he says. The Bible. Offers a verifiable.

Cultural script. Providing guidance. On what. And what not. To fear. And so in the past. He says. In Western society. Fear was understood. In the context.

Of an ordered world. And a provident God. From which certain assumptions. About politics. Morality. And identity. Flowed. But that is no longer so. The virtue.

Of fearing God. Was overwhelmed. Overwhelmed. By the tide of secularism. That decried it. As dangerous superstition. And so he says. Fear of God. Was increasingly displaced.

By an unfocused. And therefore confusing. And meaningless force. The fear. Of fear. Itself. In all but name.

[23 : 49] The fear of God. Has been replaced. By the fear of life. You see. Liberation. So called. From God. It brings not.

Joyful liberty. But paralyzing fear. And. Furedi points out. That the uncertainty. In life. Can. Give rise.

To fear. But also to hope. But he says. In the 21st century. The flame of hope. Is increasingly. Overshadowed. By a dark mood. Of intangible.

Anxiety. What he calls. A pessimistic. Teleology. Of doom. Now. If you've opened. A newspaper.

Or watched any news. In the last few years. You'll certainly recognize that. Won't you? Ontological. Insecurity. And existential. Anxiety.

[24 : 46] Are the hallmarks. Of our. Society. He says. The future. Seems to be. Incomprehensible. To us. And therefore. It is. Terrifying. To us.

Now. Is that not. A total. Contrast. To our verses. Here. Which explain. The biblical. Hope. The uncertainty. That we have. In life. Because we do not.

Know. The future. Leads us. Not. To paralysis. Not to fear. But to venturesome. And joyful. Boldness. Under the hand. Of a sovereign God. Because we know God.

And we trust. In his sovereign providence. And all things. In the world. Are under him. And every single detail. Of our own lives. Are under him. Contrast that. With the view.

Of our society. For again. As fear. Really notes. One of the most. Disturbing. Aspects. Of the way. The perspective. Of fear. Works. Is its capacity.

[25 : 44] To recast. The normal. Features. Of life. As constant. Threats. Well. Risk assessments. Rain. Don't they. Today. There's a threat.

In kids. Just walking. To school. There's a threat. In just going out. And sitting. In the sunshine. There's a threat. In sleeping. Too long. Or sleeping. Too short. Or eating butter. Or then not eating butter.

Or everything. Especially the weather. He charts. The use. Of extreme weather events. Through the newspapers. Going back. The last 20 or 30 years. 30 years ago. You heard that phrase.

Two or three times. In a decade. Now. Hundreds of times. Every year. Verses three and four here. Just won't do today. Will they? The wind and rain. No, no. We've got to call that. Storm Kohelet.

Storm Ecclesiastes. And in case it does rain. Or in case the wind does blow too hard. We better shut all the schools down. And stop all the trains.

[26 : 40] And stay in bed. But then when you're staying in bed. Avoid overheating. And beware of hot water bottles. They can be very dangerous. So to be safe. Make sure you only put cold water.

In your hot water bottle. I'm only slightly exaggerating. Aren't I? Here's Professor Freire's summation. As a perspective.

Fear does not simply guide people's attitudes and feelings. It offers a coherent and deeply embedded outlook. Society expects its citizens to be fearful.

And actively promotes the values of caution. Risk aversion. And safety. Those who ignore the advice of health professionals and experts. Are regarded as irresponsible. And their behavior is sometimes represented as a threat to the community.

Consequently. The aspiration for safety. Has emerged as the principal value. In Western society. The perspective of fear encourages society.

[27 : 41] Not only to fear. But to fear the worst. I won't go on to detail more about how he shows. Just how damaging.

This whole ethos has become. Especially. This is his focus. In the development of children. We've become so paranoid. About child protection. And so on. He says.

A closed door. Alone. Is seen as a huge threat. Today. I encourage you. To read his book. How fear works. Especially for parents.

Because. He's very concerned. To try and help arrest. This bringing up of children. In a totally fearful environment. But I'm sure you recognize. The world he's describing. Where any uncertainty.

Is immediately interpreted. Loudly and shrilly. All around us. As a threat. As danger. As doom. And it induces paralysis. Anxiety.

[28 : 39] Constantly. Can you see the absolute contrast of that? To what the Bible points us to. Uncertainty about the future. Not leading to paralysis.

And anxiety. And fear. But to activity. To hope. Not the precautionary principle. To rule your life. But the providence principle. Christian believers.

Who do know their God. Shall be strong. And do exploits. Because we do know. The sovereign providence. Of a good God. And a gracious God. And that knowledge.

Friends. Is liberating. That's the real liberation. That our society needs. And it comes not from resisting our creator. But from rejoicing in our creator.

And it's the attitude that churches need too. And individual Christians. As we think about our lives. It's easy for churches. For church leaders.

[29 : 35] To be paralyzed by fear. By ultra caution. Leading. Always to paralysis. We can't be certain about what will happen. So we do nothing. And we change nothing.

We're so afraid of the future. Waiting for the wind. Never sowing. Well. Never reaping. I think it's a particular problem.

In this country. Scotland once had a. An extraordinarily entrepreneurial spirit. Much of the new world. Was built by the Scots. I don't know. Maybe all the energy emigrated. And took the gene pool with it.

Just left. The rest of us behind. The paralysis genes. I remember listening to a radio program once. Where Alistair Begg. Was being interviewed. And he was asked. What was the difference.

Between leading a church. In Scotland. And leading one in the United States. And he said. Well. It was like this. In my church in Scotland. Have I ever suggested. Well let's do this thing.

[30 : 29] The immediate answer was. Oh. We've never done that before. Can't do that here. Whenever I suggest. Doing something new. In my church in America. I'm met with. Ah. We should have done that.

Years ago. Let's do it. That's the difference. That the Atlantic Ocean. Seems to make. Let's not conform. To that mold. We don't have to be like that. He who observes the wind.

Will not sow. He who regards the clouds. Will not reap. And it can be like that too. In our personal lives. Can't it? And the truth is.

That very often. Our reason. For defensive living. For fearfully. Protecting ourselves. It's just that our horizons.

Are so small. We're fixated. On this world. Alone. This world. Under the sun. We're trying to live for gain. For profit. In this world. Under the sun.

[31 : 23] But the preacher's whole message. All through this book. Has been to tell us. How utterly futile that is. Vain. We need to see above. And beyond. We need to live in the light.

Of the eternity. That is in our hearts. That alone. Is what can give us. True perspective. On life in this world. It's only when that is a reality.

That will be released. From the bondage. Of earthbound existence. All its. Earthly anxieties. And fears. And for a life.

Lived in certainty. Of a treasure. That is lasting. Not for the uncertainty. Of fleeting gain. In life under the sun. Where moth and rust. So easily. And will ultimately.

Destroy. And decay. But that's the real question. Isn't it? Do we trust God enough. To live boldly. Taking risks.

[32 : 22] In this uncertain world. For the certainties. Of the world to come. That's what life is for. And God has given us.

This earthly life. So that we will sow. And so that we will reap. For eternity. As Jesus said. Go. Bear fruit.

That will last. And what he means is. That will outlast. This passing world. But you see. We won't do that. Will we? Ever. If the things that most.

Shape our thinking. Are the uncertain. Prospects. And the potential calamities. Of this life. Under the sun. It will only be. If we really do. Trust the providence.

The sovereign providence. Of a God. Who has every hair. On your head numbered. The God of the preacher here. Who's made everything. In the God.

[33 : 17] Who is now. Revealed ultimately. And completely. To us. In our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus. Was so against. Defensive. And paralyzed. Existence. I'm come. That they might have life.

And have it abundantly. Think of the parable. Of the sower. It might very well be. That Jesus got that. From this. Very passage. Think of what he says.

And his emphasis. It's exactly the same. Isn't it? There's no guarantee. Certainly for the sower. Except. The guarantee. Of frequent disappointments. In the life of Christian mission.

Yet. Our job. Is to go out. And sow the seed. To spread the gospel word. Abundantly. Morning and evening. Not waiting for the wind. Of ideal conditions. Morning and evening.

Just like verse six here. For you do not know. Which one will prosper. This or that. Or all of them. Think of Jesus. This parable of the talents. In Matthew chapter 25.

[34 : 16] Go and bear fruit. Says the master. But one defensive. Anxious. Paralyzed man says. I'll be safe. I'll dig a hole. And put my talents in there.

In case there should be any loss. No. Says Jesus. That's absolutely wrong. That's perverse. That's the paralyzing outlook of fear.

That will make you. Incapable of sharing my joy. Is what he says. It's the same. Isn't it? As the preacher here. Trust God. Be bold. He who sows sparingly.

Will reap sparingly. Says Paul to the Corinthians. And that's so true. In so many different aspects of life. Including. Christian giving. To the Lord's work. Which is what he's talking about there.

Do you want to reap. Bountifully. In life. And in eternity. Well. Sow your seed. Morning and evening. Give not just a one or two.

[35 : 14] But to seven or eight. Do you want to do something for Christ? Do you want to do something for his gospel. And his church? Well. Don't wait for the wind. Get out and sow.

We've only got one life. On this earth. But we are living it for eternity. Trust God. Recognize his sovereign providence.

In all that you do. And venture out. Boldly. Wherever he gives you opportunity. But of course. How you do that. Also matters.

And that's. What verses seven to ten. Are saying. Rejoice in God. He says. Live joyfully. Now. Recognizing God's sovereign provision.

In your earthly life. Provision of so much. Goodness. Be joyful now. Is the message. While God gives you capacity. For joy.

[36 : 08] In life. We talked about this culture. Of fear in society. Due to its loss of. Of moral moorings. In Christianity. But there's a lot of defensive.

Living. There's a lot of paralysis. Even among Christians. And you see. That also comes. From a wrong view. Of God. As though God. Were a dark power. An inscrutable power.

Just waiting. To fling a stumbling block. In your path. To trip you up. Or something. But he's a generous God. A loving God. A God who is sovereign.

Over your life. For your good. And for your blessing. Not for ill. He's a God. Who wants to release you. From fear. To live for him.

Abundantly. And likewise. There's so much joyless. Christian living. That comes from the same wrong view. The same perverse view of God.

[37 : 05] Isn't it true? That so often we think. Just like that one talent man. What did he say of the master? I knew you were a hard man. That's why I buried my talent. The truth was exactly the opposite.

He was a master who loves to say to his servants. Well done. You've been faithful over a little. Let me now give you abundantly more. Enter into the joy of the master.

None of the other servants thought he was a hard and a joyless master. But you see the preacher is saying to us here. God is a bountiful God. God is a bountiful God. He's given us life on earth.

To be a life of joy. A life of thanksgiving. For all this year goodness. That he gives to us. In the land of the living. And he wants us to rejoice.

All of our days. In these good gifts. Verse 8. Rejoice. If you live many years. Rejoice in them all. Verse 9. Again. I say rejoice.

[38 : 07] Rejoice now. He says precisely. Because even a long life. Doesn't go on forever. Does it? See the point. The whole point of these verses. Is that the reality of our coming death.

And of judgment to come. Is not a reason to give up on life. And misery and despair. It's the very opposite. It's a spur. To live life to the full.

It's a spur to find joy. Urgently in life. While we've still got the capacity. To do so. Because that is God's gift to us. There's a time to be born.

And. Yes. There's a time. To die. That is God's plan and purpose. For humanity. Under the sun. That's what it is. To be a human being. So embrace that reality.

Fearlessly. And be joyful. In the time that God gives us. To be alive. Whether the years are few. Or indeed. Whether they're many. It's a joy.

[39 : 09] Verse 7. To be alive. When the sun shines. Well isn't that wonderful. This morning. It's pleasant for the eyes. To see the sun. Especially in this country. So lap it up. He says. Rejoice.

Verse 8. All your days. Because. Well you know. That the darkness of death. Will come to us all. All that comes. Is vanity. It's ephemeral. It's passing.

It's fleeting. Fleeting. It's the best translation there. The days of our life. Are fleeting. See. He's not peddling foolish frivolity here.

Not at all. It's responsible joy. It's serious joy. It takes time and eternity. Both very seriously.

But that is what gives our joy. Real meaning. And real significance. The fact that our life. Does have meaning. The great robber.

[40 : 05] Of real joy. And fulfillment. The great robber of that. Is the sense that life is just pointless. We know that don't we.

That's what makes people depressed. And stressed about their work. More than anything else. It's not long hours and hard work. That does it to people. It's feeling that there's no point. There's no value in what they're doing. Endless paperwork.

Nobody ever reads. Endless stifling bureaucracy. What's the point. That sort of thing is so destroying. When we say. What's the point. But the preacher's whole message is.

Your life does have a point. Derek Kidner makes his comment on verse 9 here. The ways of your heart. And the sight of your eyes. Must have a goal worth reaching.

A well done to strive for. To find fulfillment. Otherwise. Triviality takes over. Or worse. Vice. He's ought to say. How somebody who is just.

[41 : 01] Sheer. Pleasure. Pleasure seeking. A playboy. Is just a pitiable figure. And then he adds this verse. Verse 9. By insisting that our ways matter to God.

And therefore are meaningful through and through. This robs joy of nothing but its hollowness. We know that God is our judge.

And so life is valuable. It's serious. But we know that he's also the joy giver. Who enables truly solid joys.

Therefore to be found in this life. For those of us who can see his goodness. And his provision for us. And for all of life's great purpose. So he says you see verse 10.

Remove vexation from your heart. Put away literally evil troubles from your bodily life. Don't be defined in your attitude to life. By this world's folly and bitterness.

[42 : 02] This world is not futile for us. It's full of meaning. We have that well done. Good and faithful servant to strive for. We have the great consummation of joy to prepare for.

Don't we now? Sharing in joy. Everlasting is the. Indispensable great activity of the father's house.

And that means we've only got these few fleeting years of life on earth. To become truly practiced rejoicers. For what we're going to be doing for all eternity. Verse 10. Youth and the dawn of life are vanity.

They are fleeting. They're passing rapidly. So the message is clear. Start being a joyful believer early in life. God commands joy.

We must banish. Negative and niggardly and joyless Christianity. Paul says, doesn't he, to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4.

[43 : 05] Asceticism belongs in hell with the demons. Everything created by God is good. It's to be received in this earthly life with thanksgiving. Yes.

Verse 9. God will bring everything to judgment. And yes. He will judge us for misuse of life's pleasures. But he will also judge us for being misery guts.

He commands the shining face. Not the scowling face. Not the perma frown. Perhaps some of us need to look in the mirror a little bit more.

And see the frowns on our faces. And banish them. Friends, we must grasp this. The reality of death and of coming judgment is not a reason for despair if you're a Christian believer.

Rather, it's a spirit to rejoice now and always in the sheer goodness of our Creator. Living in the liberating providence of God with venturesome joy amid all uncertainty.

[44 : 14] That is the hallmark of genuine biblical Christianity. It's joyless fear and anxiety that is a mark of something that's gone badly wrong. What has happened to all your joy?

It's what Paul says to the Galatian church that had lost the gospel and was slipping back into slavery. What has happened to all your joy? Let me finish by quoting some words from my father's Bible notes that capture the message for us, I think, better than I can.

Be venturesome. Be imaginative. Let the Spirit of God make the cockles of your heart tingle with excitement and hopeful anticipation.

Drink deep at life's streams. Aye, but live in the light of eternity. Drink deep at life's streams.

But live in the light of eternity. That's the message of this chapter. Living in the liberating providence of God and rejoicing all our days in our Creator.

[45 : 26] Amen. Let's pray. Words of delight. Words of truth given by one shepherd. Lord, how we thank you, Lord, that you are our shepherd who leads us in green pastures and by still waters to restore our soul.

Preparing a banqueting table for us, even in the presence of many enemies. Anointing us with oil. Lavishing goodness and mercy on us all the days of our lives.

So help us, Lord, we pray to follow you boldly and joyfully. That at last we shall dwell in your house.

The house of joy. Forever. Amen. Amen. Amen.