

Venturesome Joy - in the message of our Shepherd

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- [0 : 0 0] And we're going to turn now to our Bible reading, which you'll see is in the book of Ecclesiastes. And we're reading this morning Ecclesiastes chapter 11 and 12. Some weeks back now we looked at the book as a whole, just as a one-off, as part of our series on wisdom.
- Then we spent a couple of weeks in chapters 8 and 9. And we've been thinking about shining-faced faith. Chapter 8, verse 1.
- A man's wisdom makes his face shine and the hardness of his face is changed. And what is it that leads to that kind of shining-faced, wise Christian living?
- Well, that's what we're looking at. And we come to the last couple of chapters of the book. We're going to read chapter 11 and 12 where we get to the climax of this unusual but extraordinary book.
- And so the preacher says to us,
- [2 : 2 5] Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years have drawn near, of which you'll say, I have no pleasure in them. Before the sun and the light of the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain.
- In the day when the keepers of the house tremble and the strong men are bent, then the grinders cease because they're few. And those who look through the windows are dimmed. And the doors on the street are shut.
- When the sound of the grinding is low and one rises up at the sound of the bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low. They're afraid also of what is high. And terrors are in the way.
- The almond tree blossoms. The grasshopper drags itself along and desires fail. Because man is going to his eternal home. And the mourners go about the streets.
- Before the silver cord is snapped or the golden bowl is broken. Or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain. Or the wheel broken at the cistern. And the dust returns to the earth as it was.
- [3 : 3 2] And the spirit returns to God who gave it. Vanity of vanities, says the preacher. All is vanity. Besides being wise, the preacher also taught the people knowledge.
- Weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. The preacher sought to find words of delight. And uprightly he wrote words of truth.
- The words of the wise. Like goads, like nails firmly fixed to the collected sayings. They're given by one shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these.
- Of making many books. There's no end of such study as weariness of the flesh. The end of the matter. All has been heard. Fear God.
- And keep his commandments. For this is, literally it says, this is the whole of man. This is what it really means to be human. For God will bring every deed into judgment.
- [4 : 3 3] With every secret thing. Whether good or evil. Amen. And may God bless to us his word. We'll do turn, if you would, to page 559.

Ecclesiastes 11 and 12. And we're going to look at that together now for a little. As we've seen at first sight, Ecclesiastes can seem like a rather pessimistic book.

But careful study shows that, of course, is not so. It is a realistic book. It's real about life as it really is in this fallen world. In this world under the sun. A world full of man's sinful mess.

And no romantic fantasy, that's for sure. But then, there's no fantasy anywhere in the Bible, is there? But all through the book, there's this relentless chorus of optimism. Be joyful, says the preacher.

I command joy all the days of your mortal life here on earth. Life is fleeting, yes, but it can be fulsome. Full of joy. Now, the way of joy, of course, does require patience.

[5 : 40] We've seen that. Chapter 8 and 9. Patient joy. In the midst of the mess of man's sinfulness. And humility, it needs to be humble joy. Because we live with the mysteries of God's sovereignty.

But nevertheless, it is to be venturesome joy. All through this vexed journey of life. That's the plan of God. Indeed, that is the command of God for us. And these little vignettes of relief that come all the way through the book.

They come to a climax here as the book reaches its climax at the end. And the preacher, as it were, kind of moves up a gear. And he urges us on to have truly venturesome joy in the message of our shepherd.

The one shepherd who is God himself. Whose words the preacher is speaking. So he says in chapter 12, verse 13. This is the end of the matter. This is the nub of it all.

This is the whole duty of man. Literally, this is the whole of man. This is what it means to be a human being. What? To fear God and keep his commandments.

[6 : 45] That's the way of truly flourishing humanity. Simply to know that God is sovereign. He is your Lord and Savior. And that he'll be your judge. And so to live life to the full.

Guided in all things by his words. Because his words are life-giving. And it's his message and his message alone. The message of the true shepherd that can give us lives of truly venturesome joy.

What did Jesus say? I have come that they might have life. And have it in abundance. And it's that life that the preacher is holding out before us.

In these last two chapters. And it's a life, he says, that consists very simply of four things. Trusting God. Rejoicing in God. Honoring God. And listening to God.

Look at verses 1 to 6 of chapter 11. Trust God, he says here. Live boldly. Recognize God's sovereign providence over your whole life. And be venturesome now.

[7 : 45] Wherever he gives you opportunity. These pictures. These verses are a picture of unfitted and liberated existence. Enthusiastic living of life to the full.

Verse 1. Cast your bread upon the waters. Venture out boldly. Verse 2. Give a portion. Not just one or two or three or four. Seven or eight. Verse 6.

Sow your seed. Not just in the morning. In the evening too. Every opportunity you have. Venture some bold living. And do you see that in every single case.

It is ignorance about the future. And uncertainty about the world. That is a spur to that action. Not certainty. Not control of the future. Four times in these verses.

He tells us it's ignorance. It's impotence to control our own destiny. That's emphasized as the very reason that we're to step out and trust. Give, says verse 2.

[8 : 47] Why? Because you don't know what disaster might come. Verse 5. Do what you do because you just can't fathom the work of God. You do not know.

Verse 6. You do not know what way will prosper. Go at life with all your might. That's what he's saying. Life is full of unknowns. But there's one absolute certainty for the believer.

And it's there in the second half of verse 5. You can see God is the one who makes everything. And so God is the one who controls everything. And we can trust God.

And therefore we can and we must seize the day of opportunity when God gives it to us. Launch out confidently, creatively in life to live it to the full. There's so many things we don't know.

Many things we can't understand. So many things we can never control. Like the mystery of life itself. That's what verse 5 is saying. The baby being knit together in the womb.

[9 : 46] But we're not to let life's mysteries and perplexities and uncertainties paralyze us. Into timidity. Into super caution.

No, no, no. Quite the reverse. It's these very things as the preacher that spur us out into boldness. Disaster may come. Yes, says verse 2.

Well, that's why you give a portion widely. Uncertainties all around us, says verse 6. Yes, well that's why you sow in the morning and the evening. Always and everywhere. The basic pictures are of commerce and trade.

And we know that's true, don't we? If there's nothing ventured, there's nothing gained. It's never the person who waits and waits and waits for the ideal circumstances in life to start working or to start investing.

It's never that person. The person who waits for the wind, as verse 4 puts it. It's never that person who's going to be a great entrepreneur, is it? You don't build up a great business by being so worried all the time about interest rates, so worried about inflation, so worried about this and that, so worried about Brexit, that you never actually start making your product and selling your things.

[10 : 55] You never make a profit that way, will you? Verse 4. He regards the clouds, never does anything, therefore will never reap. And so it is in our whole attitude to all of life.

Think in spiritual terms. There are some Christians, aren't there, who are so paralyzed by life. Can't seem to make any decisions. Can't seem to commit to anything. Can't seem to take any decisive step.

Maybe in their career, maybe in some church commitment, maybe in a relationship, whatever it is. Because they demand certainty. They need control. Need to be able to see how it's all going to work out before they'd even set their foot out on the threshold.

But that's a way of paralysis, says the preacher here. Because you just can't have that in life, not ever. You can't control the wind. You can't stop the weather.

Some things just are not ours to control. That's what verse 3 means. If the clouds are full of rain, believe me, it's going to rain. If a tree falls, well, it's going to fall this way or that way.

[11 : 57] And it's going to lie where it falls. You will not stop it. You just have to accept that. And so it is. With God, verse 5, you do not know the work of God. God is sovereign.

The secret things belong to him. They do not belong to us. Because we're not God. Now that's very hard for some Christians to take to heart.

Because we want total control. We want total knowledge about everything in life. But the preacher is reminding us here that is actually to want to be God. That was Adam and Eve's sin from the very beginning, wasn't it?

We'll be God. We'll know everything about our destiny. We'll know all the knowledge about everything. No, no, no, says the preacher. You need to recognize that God is sovereign. And you need to trust God.

Trust his wise and loving providence over all of your lives. Every intimate detail. Because it's only when you do that that you can actually begin to live boldly and fearlessly.

[13 : 01] And that's the way to living fruitfully in life. And that's God's command for your life, verse 6. Look, trust God, he's saying, and get on with it. Get on with sowing your seed.

Remember we saw it in chapter 9, verse 10. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. Be bold. Be venturesome. Trust God. Trust God's sovereign providence.

But what if it doesn't work out? We want to be sure. We want a sign. I want a text from God that will give me a sense of peace in my heart about this course of action.

Well, says the preacher, you might be waiting forever. The wind may never change to blow the way you want it to blow. And then you'll never reap.

If you're a Christian who gets paralyzed by all sorts of choices. Paralyzed with issues about guidance for doing things.

[14 : 03] Well, I mean, this is a real word for you. It really is. It's not more texts you need from God. It's more trust you need in God. Cast your bread upon the waters.

Sow your seed. For you do not know. You do not know. But you can trust. Now, don't misunderstand.

He's not saying be reckless. That's why verse 2 talks about spreading the risk, doesn't it? You give to 7 or 8. You don't put all your eggs in one basket. There's a right place for prudence in our thinking.

Of course there is. But not for paralysis. That's the point. And that's a lesson that we need. We need it in the church, especially in this country. When you go to visit other countries, you realize just how paralyzed and how conservative sometimes we are.

Never willing to take any risks. Never do anything in case something didn't work out. Cast your bread upon the waters. Find it in our personal lives, too, so often.

[15 : 09] We're always waiting for the wind. And so we're never sowing. And therefore, we're never reaping. Yet the truth is that often the reason for our paralysis, for our defensive living, for our protecting ourselves, is just because our horizons are far, far too small.

We're fixated on this world. We're living only thinking about life under the sun. And the preacher all the way through this book has told us again and again what a futile exercise that is.

We need to see above. We need to see beyond. We need to live in the light of the eternity that God has put in our hearts. Because that alone will give us perspective on this fleeting mortal life that we're living.

It's only when that's a reality that we can be released from bondage to this earthbound existence and for the bold, venturesome living that is real life that God wants for us.

Life lived for the certainty of lasting treasure, not for the uncertainty of fleeting things. Things which will always, in the end, go to moth and rust and decay.

[16 : 25] But that's the question, isn't it? Do we trust God enough to live boldly, taking risks in this uncertain world for the certainties of the world to come?

Because that's what we're in this life for, says the preacher. Jesus says the same. I've called you so that you will go and bear fruit.

Fruit that will last. But you're only going to bear fruit if you go out and sow. You'll never do that. If the things that most shape your thinking all the time are the uncertain prospects, the potential calamities in this life under the sun.

You'll only do that if you really trust in the sovereign providence of a God. A God who, Jesus tells us, has every hair on our heads numbered. Do you think we can trust him?

The God of the preacher here, who made everything, says verse 5. And the God revealed to us so completely and so wonderfully in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[17 : 31] Jesus was so against that kind of defensive, paralyzed existence. I came that you should have life in its abundance.

Think of the parable of the sower. I wonder whether Jesus got his idea of the sowing from this chapter here. Who knows? But certainly the emphasis is the same, isn't it? There's no guarantee of success in every case where you sow the seed.

In fact, what Jesus does say is you'll be guaranteed certain very great disappointments in many cases. But what do you do? You go out and sow. You don't say, oh no, there'll be disappointments.

I'm never going to sow. Scatter the gospel wide and far abundantly. Don't wait for the wind. Don't wait for the ideal conditions.

Get out and sow morning and evening, he says. Well, think of the parable of the talents. Well, the master says to his slaves, giving them pots of money to go and use, go and bear fruit.

[18 : 29] And that one defensive, anxious, uncertain man says, oh, something might go wrong. I'll bury it safely. No, no, no, says Jesus.

That's not the way. That's perverse. That's paralysis. You make yourself incapable of sharing my joy, if that's your attitude. That's just what the preacher is saying here.

You're to trust God. Cast your bread upon the waters. He who sows sparingly, says Paul, will reap sparingly. That's true in so many areas of our lives.

Not least in giving to the Lord's work, which is what Paul's talking about there. You want to reap bountifully in life and in eternity? Paul, sow your seed.

Don't just give to one or two. Make it seven or eight, he says. You want to do something for Christ? You want to do something for his gospel? Well, don't wait for the wind. Get out and sow.

[19 : 30] Trust God. Recognize his sovereign providence over everything you do and venture out wherever he gives you opportunity. But, of course, how you do it matters just as much, doesn't it?

In verses 7 to 10, the preacher says, rejoice in God. Live joyfully, recognizing God's sovereign goodness in all your life. And be joyful now while he gives you capacity for joy in life.

So much defensive living, so much paralysis among Christians comes, I think, from a wrong view of God. God is a God where some sort of dark, inscrutable deity, just waiting to throw a stumbling block in front of you and trip you up.

Ha ha, see? I told you that would happen. But our God is a loving God. He's sovereign in all of life and he wants to release us in life to live for him.

And in the same way, so much joyless Christian faith comes the same way, doesn't it? A wrong view of God. That was the one-talent man in that parable. I knew you were a hard man, he said to his master.

[20 : 38] But his master was the exact opposite. He was a master who lavished things on his servants and sent them out to share in his labors. And wanted to say to them, enter into the joy of your master's house.

He wasn't a hard man. Those other servants didn't have a joyless view of their master. That's what the preacher is saying here. He's a bountiful God.

He gives us life on earth to be filled with joy. A life of thanksgiving for all the goodness of his great gifts to us. And he wants us to rejoice in those gifts all the days of our lives.

The point of these verses, you see, is that the reality of death and judgment coming isn't a reason to give up life in despair and hunker down and batten down the hatches.

No. It's the opposite. It's a spirit to live life to the full. To find joy in life urgently while we've still got the capacity to do so. That's God's gift to us while we're breathing.

[21 : 37] It's about understanding what it means to be truly human. There's a time to be born, he said in chapter 3, and a time to die. Well, that's God's plan for our mortal lives.

Don't fight that. Embrace it. And be joyful in the time he gives to us to breathe and give thanks. Whether our years are many or whether they're few.

It's a joy to be alive, he says in verse 7, especially when the sun shines. Well, hallelujah. We've seen the sun shine a bit more than usual, haven't we? Well, rejoice in it. Lap it up, he says.

Verse 8, rejoice all your days. Because, well, you know the darkness of death will come.

All that comes, verse 8, is vanity. It's fleeting. All our days are fleeting. They're brief. Life will end. So find joy now.

[22 : 34] He's not peddling frivolity. He's talking about responsible joy. Doing what we're created for. He's taking both time seriously but also eternity seriously.

And that's what gives our joy weight. It's what gives it meaning. It's what gives our life significance. The fact that life does have meaning is really the key to true joy in life.

The greatest robber of joy, the greatest robber of fulfillment in life, is the sense that everything we're doing is pointless. Isn't that right? What are the things that get you down most at work?

They get you depressed. They get you feeling there's no point at all. Well, it's the things that you think are just pointless, have no meaning. The endless paperwork that you know nobody's ever going to read. The endless bureaucracy.

It's just a waste of time. It makes your work pointless. And you find yourself saying, oh, what's the point? That's a depressing thing, isn't it? But the preacher's whole message is life does have a point for God's people.

[23 : 41] Derek Kidner says of these verses, The ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes, verse 9, must have a goal worth reaching. A well done to strive for, to find fulfillment.

Otherwise, triviality takes over. Or worse still, vice. By this verse, he says, By insisting that our ways matter to God and therefore are meaningful through and through, it robs joy of nothing but its hollowness.

You see, solid joys in life for those who can rejoice in God and see his goodness and see his purpose in life. So he says in verse 10, Remove vexation and evil from your life.

Don't be defined in your attitude to life by the world's folly and bitterness. This world is not futile for you as a Christian. It's full of meaning. We have that well done, good and faithful servant to look forward to, to strive for.

We have the great consummation of joy to prepare for. Solid joy. That is the activity of the master's house, according to Jesus. And we've only got these few fleeting days of life on earth to become truly practiced rejoicers for that day.

[24 : 57] They're saying, Youth and the dawn of life are vanity. They're fleeting. They're passing us by. So, start being a joyful believer early in life, he says. Get into the habit. Remember, God commends joy.

Banish that niggardly and joyless Christianity. What does Paul say? Asceticism belongs in hell with the demons. That's what he says to Timothy.

Everything created by God, he says, is yours to enjoy, to be received with thanksgiving to God. As his blessing for this time on earth. God will bring everything to judgment.

Yes, he will. And if he will judge us for misuse of these gifts and pleasures, as he will, he'll also judge us for misery and for rejecting them.

The reality of death and coming judgment are not grounds for despair. Rather, they're a spur to make us rejoice in God's goodness. Rejoice in God, he says.

[25 : 55] And that brings to the third command in verses 1 to 8 of chapter 12. He tells us here to honor God. To live reverently, recognizing God's sovereign purpose for our whole life.

Which is to be godly. And have faith now, before he removes that possibility in our mortal life. The sense of joy that comes from knowing real meaning and purpose in life.

That comes into sharp relief here with this first verse of chapter 12. Remember your creator in the days of your youth. He's saying above all, the purpose of mortal life is that you should find and honor the God who made you.

Remember him. Remembering means not just what we mean by remembering. Here's Psalm 137. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth. If I do not remember you.

If I do not set you, God, above my highest joy. To remember God means to set him above our highest joy. To worship him. To acknowledge him as truly God.

[27 : 03] And to acknowledge that we are his creatures. And the reality is we can only find joy in the good gifts that God gives us.

If we first of all find joy in God who is the giver of these good gifts. And the way of true joy, of fulsome, liberated, joyful humanity on this earth is to honor him.

To give everything to him at the earliest possible time in your life. In the days of your youth, he says. That's the opposite of the world's idea. What does the world say?

Well, when you're young, live it up. Sow your wild oats. Seek out all the pleasures. And then, you know, later on, much later on. When your bones start to creak and you need a bit of a crutch in life. That's the time to get religion.

If at all. Not so, says the preacher. For one thing, it gets harder as you get older. Because we become hardened as we get older.

[28 : 03] If we resist God. But it's much more than that. Because the whole point of life, he says, is to live it before God. To live it with God. That's the way to fulsome life.

It's the whole point. It's God's purpose for your life. So he gives us days in which we can find God. And then live with him. Seek the Lord while he may be found.

Call on him while he's near. Says the prophet. But from the days of our youth, our clock is ticking. These days are passing fast. That's what these verses give us, isn't it?

A picture of the unmaking of life at the hands of time. The evil days of verse 1. Which are marching on. And light does gradually begin to fade on our mortal existence.

Verse 2. It's a picture, isn't it? Of the reversal of creation. Sun and light and moon and stars becoming darkened. No sun again after the rain. Just more clouds. There's a beauty in the poetry.

[29 : 05] But it's haunting. Especially as you get older. There's a chilling nature to it, isn't there? It's speaking of the undoing of life. The whole complex web of beauty.

And all our life's relationships. It's a picture of a whole community in decline and in decay. Everything that's associated with life. Everything associated with our relationships. Gradually fading and disappearing.

So verse 3. Look, people are fading away. The great ones and the doorkeepers alike. The women grinding the corn. Those who are watching. Fading away. Verse 4.

Activities fading away on the streets. Only fear is remaining. The almond trees only blossoming. No fruit anymore. The crops are consumed by locusts that are so engorged they can't fly.

And desire fails. Why? Well, verse 5. Because life's mortal journey is coming to an end. Another home is beckoning.

[30 : 05] Man's eternal home. And so in the earthly home, as it says, mourners are going about the streets. Very poignant, isn't it?

Verse 6. Beautiful image. Something once beautiful and precious. A golden lamp bowl. Strung on a silver cord. Silver thread. Fading away.

The pitcher that was once being filled with water by the pump wheels of the fountain. Now it's broken and shattered. The oil of joy from the lamp is now spent.

The water of life is draining away. Ashes to ashes. Dust to dust. Adamah. Verse 7. The dust. The Adamah. Of which we are made.

Adam. The man. Turning back into Adamah. The dust. The human. Back into the humus. Verse 8.

[31 : 05] Ends. The main portion of the book here, doesn't it? With the motto. Hevel. Hevel. Everything is Hevel. Fleeting. Fleeting. Everything is fleeting. The book began in chapter 1 with a poem at the beginning.

Speaking about the circularity of nature. You can't beat nature's unchanging ways. So be serious about the facts. That's what that poem said. And here we are at the end with another poem.

Saying be serious about faith. While you've still got life to do it. While you can. That's what you're created for. To find God. To find Him before you return to dust.

And if you don't. Well Macbeth was right after all, wasn't he? All our yesterdays have lighted fools. The way to dusty death. Out, out.

Brief candle. Life's but a walking shadow. A poor player that struts and frets his hair upon the stage. And then is heard no more. It's a tale. Told by an idiot.

[32 : 06] Full of sound and fury. Signifying. Nothing. But no. Says the preacher. Life does have significance. And purpose. If you remember your creator.

If you recognize him. That's what you're here for. To honor him. And to cleave to him now. Before the silver cord is snapped. Before the golden bowl of your life breaks.

There's urgency in these words, isn't there? But it's true. Because fleeting. Fleeting. Everything is fleeting. And that's the preacher's last word to us in this book.

In his own words. But in the last paragraph there. The narrator now calls our attention to his words. And tells us to heed his words. And that's the final injunction here.

Listen to God. He says in verses 9 to 14. Live wisely. Recognizing God's sovereign calling upon your life. And so be obedient now. Be responsive now.

[33 : 08] Because he's given us all the direction that we need. To find significance in life now. To find the whole of what it means to be human. And verse 14.

And forever in the world beyond that judgment when it comes. God is not silent in this world of confusion and perplexity. Perplexity. That's the message of this whole book.

The preacher says God calls out to us. In his twin megaphones of pain and pleasure. Both of which resonate with that sense of the eternal. That God has placed into our hearts.

We cry out, don't we? From our deepest hearts. There must be more. There must be a judgment. There must be a reversal. To all this pain and perplexity. And we cry out too.

There must be more. There must be somewhere, somehow. A final flourishing of all this beauty. Of all this pleasure that we sense in the world. But we know it must just be a shadow of something.

[34 : 05] Something so much greater. Yes. Both these things are a powerful witness to the eternity that God has placed in our hearts. But that's not the only way God speaks.

He's given us so much more. In words. Words of clarity. Words of truth. Through the preacher here, verse 9. With the exquisite care which he chooses his words.

And of course through every other mouthpiece of God in the whole scripture. He gives us, verse 10, doesn't he? Words of delight. Words of truth. Words to goad us, verse 11.

Words to prick us so that we'll respond. Words of truth. Strong words that are like nails that will fix our lives with certainty and with safety. They're spoken by many mouthpieces, but they are all, says verse 11, the words of one shepherd.

God himself. And his word is saying to us there is an answer for life. With all its enigmas. With all its uncertainties. With all its vexation.

[35 : 09] All its perplexity. And that answer is to be found and can be found. Even now. Even under the sun in this world. If only we will fear him, says the preacher.

And submit to him. Throw everything we have upon him. And worship him. That means listening to him. Means obeying him.

That's what it means, he says, to be human. That's the whole of humanity. It's the secret to the great purpose of human life.

In all its rich glory. Life as it's meant to be on this earth. It's the only way to significance now in our mortal existence. And to significance forever.

Beyond the sun. In the realm beyond the judgment that waits for every one of us. But there's only one way, he says, to that life. And it is in listening to him.

[36 : 10] To that voice alone. Yes, there are many, many clamoring and competing voices in the world. He says in verse 12. But beware of all of these. Books.

Philosophies. Religions. Ideals. There's no end of these. But in the end, they are to no purpose. They are all vain. Chasing the wind. Empty. Frivolous.

Futile. But the words of the one shepherd. So, so different. They are words of truth. Words of delight.

Words for all who are weary. All who are looking for meaning in this veil of teals. I am the good shepherd, says Jesus Christ. And I came that you should have life in all its fullness.

Come to me, he said. All of you who labor with life's vexations and perplexities and mysteries. Come to me. And I will give you rest. See, this preacher is simply preaching the same gospel.

[37 : 13] The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And to have heard his voice and to obey his voice. To bow down to Jesus Christ as your Lord. As your shepherd.

Friends, that and that alone is to find the life that God created you. For. He calls us not to an escapist fantasy.

Not banishing pain and perplexity and mystery. This side of the sun. No. But he calls us to a sure and certain hope. To give us an anchor above the sun.

Beyond the judgment. When this whole passing world itself is done. But even now. In the life that is in Jesus Christ.

Even now. There is a life to be had of bountiful blessing. Even amid all the baffling struggles of life. There is a way of venturesome joy.

- [38 : 11] All through the vexed journey of life in this fallen world. There is gain. There is profit. There is solid joy and lasting treasure to be found. All along life's toilsome road.
- If it is a life lived in the Lord Jesus Christ. Because as Paul says. None. None of our labors in him are ever in vain.
- Ever fleeting. Or fading. Or futile. No. All that. Will outshine the sun itself. One day.
- But that way of joy. That way of liberation. The way of solid joys and lasting treasures. It comes only when your search for fulfillment. And for gain in this world alone.
- Comes to an end. When you have seen this world without Christ. For what it really is. Fleeting. Passing. Futile. Vain.
- [39 : 10] It comes when you hear the words of the one shepherd. And when it is his words alone. That are the nails that fix your life for eternity.
- My words are spirit and life says Jesus. And no one comes to the father but by me. You ignore him. Life will be forever a wearisome cycle of vexation.
- Sound and fury. Signifying in the end nothing. But hear him. And honor him. And rejoice in him.
- And trust in him. And you will have says the preacher. And says the Lord Jesus Christ. You will have life in all its abundant joy. Both now.
- And forever and ever. Beyond the sun. And let's pray. And let's pray. Words of delight.
- [40 : 12] And words of truth. Given by one shepherd. So Lord we pray. Help us. All of us here this morning. You've heard these words.
- Help us. Help us. Help us. To fear you. And obey you. To find you. Through our Lord Jesus Christ.
- As early in life. As is possible for us today. And help us live. So keeping your commandment. That we will truly know.
- All that it means. To be human beings in this world. For we ask it in his eternal name. Amen.