



Terry Pratchett once wrote, “Inside every old person is a young person wondering what happened!?” There’s that famous saying “Youth is wasted on the young!” You only realise when you are older what an amazing gift youth is. Solomon says that youth is an incredible gift from God to be enjoyed with thankfulness, but youth is gone so quickly! Solomon teaches us that if we want to live a wise life here we need to remember that life under our sun is a mere breathe, or mist.

Life under the sun is a precious gift. “*Light is*

sweet, and it pleases the eyes to see the sun. However many years anyone may live, let them enjoy them all.” (v.7) To open your eyes on a new day is a precious gift. Not all the goodness and beauty of the original creation has been destroyed. God is glorified when we enjoy the preciousness of life with thankfulness. “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.” (Ja 1:7) Solomon says. “But let them remember the days of darkness, for there will be many”. (11:8) Everything to come is ‘hebel’ (הֶבֶל), a mere breath ending in “days of darkness” that we need to remember and prepare for in our youth¹ (2:1-8) Solomon paints a vivid picture of a person’s physical decline because he wants us to live wisely in this passing world of mist. “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.’” when a person’s arms and hands tremble in old age, and legs struggle to bear the body’s weight; when the teeth fall out, eyesight dims, hearing fades so even the dawn chorus is faint. When you hold on tight at the top of the stairs and don’t want to go out into a busy night for fear of being knocked over. When “the almond tree blossoms” it’s like hair turning white. and “the grasshopper drags itself along” instead of jumping out of bed she does a log roll groaning! Desire for life has gone. There is loss of confidence as they snooze in the chair. There is a moment when the wheel at the well is broken and the bucket is shattered as the water of life drains away. Life returns God who gave it and the death of Genesis is reversed and the body returns to the dust where it came from.

When Jesus died he cried out “Into your hands I commit my spirit”. When Stephen was being stoned he looked into heaven and prayed “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Our culture tells us that when you die the light goes off and there is nothing more. But Solomon says that is not true; “to be absent from the body is present with the Lord”. (2Cor 5:8) Believers will stand before the judgement seat of Christ to give an account for the deeds done in the body both good and bad, but there will be no condemnation in Christ Jesus who has paid for our sins so that we can stand before our great Creator holy, blameless and with great joy. We will be welcomed into the new creation with resurrected bodies to experience eternal youth.

“God is patient not willing that any should perish but that all should be brought to repentance. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but rather that they should turn and live!” (2Pt 3:9) The spirits those who reject Jesus will receive what their souls desire. They will account for their rejection of the Saviour and be separated from the light, life and love of God to a place Jesus called Gehenna: hell.

Solomon says we should do 2 things: **1.** Enjoy the goodness of life with thankfulness! (11:9) Cast off anxiety and sin and enjoy the goodness of the life God has given you. Be thankful. Enjoy your physical strength, your friendships, music and reading, falling in Love with someone who Loves and trust Jesus as you do and who is kind. Enjoy learning, your work, interests, new languages and projects. Enjoy art, ice cream and swimming in the sea. Enjoy good causes and doing nice things for other people. Enjoy being generous towards those in need. Enjoy your lunch this afternoon. All these are gifts from a very generous God who loves you! Don’t turn these things into idols and overindulge in them thinking they will satisfy the deepest longings of your heart because they won’t. Only everlasting life with God and his unfailing love in Christ can do that for you. Don’t enjoy sinful, foolish, hurtful, destructive and stupid things. Satan wants to

tempt you to waste your life with things like that! When a father gives his child a present but he doesn't play with it because he thinks his father will be disappointed with him if he indulges himself in the joy of it, the father will ask why do you think that I am some kind of kill joy who is happy when people are miserable!?" The sense of 11:9: is not don't enjoy yourself not too much because one day God will judge you, but enjoy the life God has given you because one day he will ask you if you enjoyed the good gifts he gave for your pleasure? God is pleased when we enjoy his generosity. Paul wrote against idolatry and over-indulgence but he also wrote God RICHLY provides us with EVERYTHING for our enjoyment! We live in a very dark, painful and broken world, but so much goodness still remains and comes our way on a daily basis if we have the eyes to see it. A wise person will learn to enjoy the small wonders of life wherever they can. Nurturing that kind of gratefulness and awe while you are young not only pleases God but will help you not to become a grumbling, critical, miserable, Victor Meldrew in the later, harder years of your Life! **2.** Life is precious. Remembering your Creator in the days of your youth is not like remembering a password but how we remember the war every November. We live in the light of it and let it shape our attitudes. Modern culture says that no-one has the right to tell you what you should and shouldn't do because your life is your own. Modern Christian culture tells us "Faith and God are good because they help you achieve your life goals. "Solomon says "Remember your very precious life was created by God. Taste his goodness make him and his unfailing love your treasure.

The minister James Russel Miller (1840-1912) wrote for the young people in his church, "Old age is the harvest of all the years that have gone before. It is the barn into which all the sheaves are gathered. It is the sea into which all the rivers of life flow from their springs in the hills and valleys of youth and manhood. We are each, in all our earlier years, building the house in which we shall have to live when we grow old. And we may make it a prison or a palace. We may make it very beautiful, [...] Or we may make our house very gloomy. [...] Nothing good ever comes out of idleness or selfishness. The standing water stagnates and breeds decay and death - it is the running stream that keeps pure and sweet. Years lived selfishly never become garden-spots in the field of memory. Happiness comes out of self-denial for the good of others. Sweet always are the memories of good deeds done and sacrifices made. When one has lived to bless others, one has many grateful, loving friends whose affection proves a wondrous source of joy when the days of feebleness come. Bread cast upon the waters is found again after many days. We must live a pure and holy life. [...] A happy heart sees rainbows and brilliance everywhere, even in darkest clouds, but a sad heart, unhappy and discontented, sees spots in the sun, specks in the rarest fruits, and something with which to find fault in the most perfect of God's works, and hears discords and jarring notes in the heavenliest music. So, it comes about that this whole question must be settled from within. [...] he cannot get away from himself and his own past.

Sin may seem pleasant to us now, but we must keep in mind how it will seem from a dying pillow. Summing all up in one word, only Christ can make any life, young or old, truly beautiful or truly happy. Only He can cure the heart's restless fever and give quietness and calmness. Only He can purify that sinful fountain within us, our corrupt nature, and make us holy. To have a peaceful and blessed ending to life, we must live it with Christ. Such a life grows brighter even to its close. Its last days are the sunniest and the sweetest. The more earth's joys fail, the nearer and the more satisfying do the comforts become. And for such a life death has no terrors. The tokens of its approach are but "the land-birds lighting on the rigging, telling the weary mariner that he is nearing the haven." The end is but the touching of the weather-beaten keel on the shore of glory."

Our lives are hidden in Christ with God and sooner than we think we will return to you. Be our treasure, delight and peace we pray!
In Jesus name. Amen