

“Eat, Drink, and be Merry”
Ecclesiastes 9:7-10
(Preached at Trinity, November 19, 2023)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citation will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Chapter 9** Solomon is still trying to find out by observation what God is doing upon the earth. It is a confusing task.
 - A. In **Verse 3** Solomon takes us back to Genesis and affirms the fallenness of man.
Ecclesiastes 9:3 NAU - "This is an evil in all that is done under the sun" There is nothing upon the earth that is not tainted by sin.
 - B. And yet, God has shown mercy to sinful humanity and has delivered a multitude from their corruption. There are both wicked as well as righteous dwelling upon the earth. But the wicked have even perverted righteousness upon the earth.
Ecclesiastes 3:16-17 NAU - "I have seen under the sun *that* in the place of justice there is wickedness and in the place of righteousness there is wickedness. ¹⁷ I said to myself, "God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man," for a time for every matter and for every deed is there."
 - C. God knows those who are His. They are in the hand of God.
Ecclesiastes 9:1 NAU - "For I have taken all this to my heart and explain it that righteous men, wise men, and their deeds are in the hand of God."
2 Timothy 2:19 NAU - "Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His,"
 - D. One would expect the righteous to fare well and the wicked to suffer. God's ways are not defined by our thoughts. This earth continues to suffer under sin. We will not see perfect righteousness until the end.
2 Peter 3:13 NAU - "But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."
1 Corinthians 15:51-52 NAU - "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."
 - E. In this present age the righteous and the wicked dwell side by side upon the earth and often suffer under the same afflictions.
It would appear by outward observation that both the righteous and the wicked are treated alike.
Ecclesiastes 9:2 NAU - "It is the same for all. There is one fate for the righteous and for the wicked; for the good, for the clean and for the unclean; for the man who offers a sacrifice and for the one who does not sacrifice. As the good man is, so is the sinner; as the swearer is, so is the one who is afraid to swear."

Matthew Henry – “The great difficulty which Solomon met with in studying the book of providence was the little difference that is made between good men and bad in the distribution of comforts and crosses, and the disposal of events.”¹

2. And in the end, both the righteous and the wicked will die. According to **Verse 12** death will overtake all of us suddenly and often unexpectedly.

3. Ecclesiastes does not always present us with a clear testimony of eternity. Solomon writes as if death ends all earthly contemplation.

Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 NAU - "For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten. ⁶ Indeed their love, their hate and their zeal have already perished, and they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun."

4. This is immediately followed by a charge to take joy in life. There are two ways we might view **Verses 7-10**.

A. They remind us of the goodness and mercy of God. He is kind and gracious, even in this world of sin. He causes good things to fall upon both the wicked and the righteous.

1. We can eat bread and drink wine with a cheerful heart.

2. God grants good wives and loving families.

3. Solomon has previously commended the value of enjoying life.

Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 NAU - "There is nothing better for a man *than* to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God. ²⁵ For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?"

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 NAU - "I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime; ¹³ moreover, that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor-- it is the gift of God."

B. One could also look at these verses with a more cynical eye.

1. If this is all there is how shall we live? From a purely humanist point of view, Solomon concludes that if death is our ultimate end, we need to live life to the fullest right now in the present. “Eat, Drink, and be Merry, for tomorrow we die.”

2. One might view life with an attitude of hopelessness and futility. Humanism teaches us that we are from nowhere and going nowhere. Death will overtake all. It may come sooner or later but it will come. You might as well enjoy yourself in the present for it will all soon come to an end. It can be encapsulated with the Latin phrase, *carpe diem* – “Seize the day.”²

5. Once again, we need to look at life through the lens of Scripture, through the lens of God’s sovereign grace. There is a difference for those who live their life before God with the hope of eternity.

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1048.

² Philip Graham Ryken, *Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2010), 212.

- I. For the lost man life is vanity. He lives, he dies, he goes to hell. Everything is lost.
Proverbs 11:7 NAU - "When a wicked man dies, *his* expectation will perish, And the hope of strong men perishes."
 All of our plans and preparations are unfulfilled, left behind for others.
Luke 12:19-20 NAU - "And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry." ²⁰ "But God said to him, 'You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?"
- A. The Bible teaches us that the lost will seek to defend themselves at the judgment but to no avail.
Matthew 25:44 NAU - "Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?"
Matthew 7:22-23 NAU - "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' ²³ "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."
- B. The lost live as if this world is all there is but in eternity they will look back with their memory intact and have full knowledge of their wasted lives.
Luke 16:25 NAU - "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony."
 1. All of the lusts and cravings will continue but there will be no means of fulfilling them. No delicious meals, no quenching beverages, no possessions.
 2. The sorrow of looking back over life and see no value. Jesus testified of Judas Iscariot.
 "it had been good for that man if he had not been born."
- II. As God's people we are not absorbed by this world.
- A. Life in this material world can have the effect of intoxicating us.
1. We can become blinded and distracted by our daily affairs.
 2. Believers must continually be on alert. There are constant distractions and temptations.
 3. That is why the Christian life is depicted as a great battle.
1 Timothy 6:12 NAU - "Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."
 4. There are countless turns in our life that can lead us off course. We must remain steadfast as press on.
Hebrews 12:1 NAU - "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,"

- B. Yes, life is passing quickly and will soon be over.
1. It's good to remember our mortality.
Solomon stated:
We read in **Verse 12** - "Moreover, man does not know his time"
King David prayed,
Psalms 39:4-5 NAU - "LORD, make me to know my end And what is the extent of my days; Let me know how transient I am. ⁵ "Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath."
 2. The body is subject to disease – it is all around us.
 - a. New diseases continue to attack – latex gloves and surgical masks are common place.
 - b. Old infirmities continue to plague us – cancer, heart attacks, stroke, Alzheimer's.
 3. We are ever aging – and nothing can prevent it.
 4. The truth is we hold to life by a thread – death can come at any moment and it will come upon all.
 5. As we consider how short our days are it should make us all the more diligent with the days we have.
If we are here for just a brief time we should labor to spend our days in a manner pleasing to Christ.
 6. The people of this world do not like to consider these things. They don't want to be reminded of death. They much prefer to eat, drink, and be merry.
- C. But God's people look beyond this world.
1. Remember, every second of your day has been ordained by God. Nothing is without purpose. While it may appear that there is no difference between the wicked and righteous in this world, there is a world of difference.
 2. As God's people we have a different perspective. We spend our life laboring for the good of the Kingdom, for the glory of God, and for our own spiritual improvement.
 3. It takes great patience, diligence, and discipline to stay on course. To maintain a Christian perspective.
Many a good life has been ruined by some foolish act.
Solomon's good life was spoiled by being swayed by his godless wives.
1 Kings 11:4 – "For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, *that* his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of David his father."

- D. God's people also learn how to enjoy the abundance of God's grace while praising Him for His goodness.
- Ecclesiastes 9:7 NAU** - "Go *then*, eat your bread in happiness and drink your wine with a cheerful heart . . ."
- Ecclesiastes 9:9 NAU** - "Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life"
1. We should enjoy the good things of life as being from the hand of God. Marriage and family. Secular modernity spurns marriage. God sets it before us as one of His blessings.
 2. We should enjoy good food. White clothes in Solomon's day were their dress-up clothes. The oil was rich in fragrance. They were to look good and smell good.
 - a. We read of the king in Psalm 45
Psalm 45:8 – "All thy garments *smell* of myrrh, and aloes, *and* cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad."
 - b. Enjoy life. Dress up, put on some perfume or cologne, go out, and enjoy yourselves.
 3. Philip Ryken writes – "Primarily the Preacher is saying that our eating and drinking enjoy the blessing of God. Life's enjoyments are not guilty pleasures but godly pleasures—or at least they ought to be. A merry heart has God's approval. It is part of his gracious will for our lives."³
 4. And notice, Solomon puts our earthly toil alongside our earthly pleasures. We should enjoy our work. This includes the work of homemaking.
Ecclesiastes 9:9 NAU - "for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun."

Conclusion:

1. What about you? Are you living your life well?
Have you discovered the futility of sin?
Do you realize how quickly your life will come to an end?
2. Are you able to enjoy the riches of God's grace in this life without falling in bondage to it? Can you avoid the idolatry that has swallowed up so many?
3. God gives us all things to enjoy – food, family, festivity, labor. While this life can be full of difficulty, the Christian maintains his joy in Christ.
Charles Bridges has rightly said: "It is indeed too rare to find a real Christian—much more rare to find a joyful one."⁴

³ Philip Graham Ryken, *Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2010), 213.

⁴ Charles Bridges, *An Exposition of the Book of Ecclesiastes* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1860), 273.

