

Life, Light, and Longing

(Ecclesiastes 11)

I. The Busy Life, 1-6

1: cast bread upon waters...

- “Cast” = total commitment
- Once cast, it’s gone
 - Bread: goods, livelihood. Dt.8:3

Two ways to view it –

1. Charity may be rewarded (1b)

- *Gk. proverb: to sow in the ocean (thankless)
- *Turkish: do good, cast your bread upon the water.
If the fish know it not, yet the Creator knows

Do good without hoping for a return...

Pr.19:17; Lk.14:13f.; Lk.16:9; Hb.6:10

Do good without hoping for a return...

Pr.19¹⁷ He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given.

Lk.14¹³ But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. ¹⁴ And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

Lk.16⁹ And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home

Hb.6¹⁰ For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister

1: cast bread upon waters...

1. Charity may be rewarded (1b)

2. Commerce on the sea

- Life is a risk. Take it. Pr.31:14.
- Prepare for delay in profits.

For the king had merchant ships at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the merchant ships came bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and monkeys – 1 K.10:22

- Best things in life are worth the wait. Gn.24. Ro.8:19-23.

2: give serving to seven, eight...

- Numerical sequence: **to x + 1** expresses an indefinite number.

Amos 1:3-2:6. Mt.18:22.

- Hebrew form of definite for indefinite.
- Eccl.11: try every option and then some.
- Don't put all eggs in one basket.
Diversify. Variety of opportunities.
- Gn.32:...8-9
- “You do not know” (four times: 2, 5, 6)

3: things happen

- Clouds (ominous outlook)
- Tree falls (unexpected events)
 - We cannot control events...
 - Clouds do pour down rain...
 - Trees do lie where wind blew them...
- One who demands absolute certainty will never do anything
- Let regrets ruin joy? Esau
- Duty is ours; results are God's.
 - Gospel: Lk.13:6-9. Ac.17 ... 18 ... 19

4: observe wind . . . no sowing...

Fear demoralizes

- Wait for perfect conditions: no work
 - Farmer: no sowing
 - Evangelism: no sowing
 - Lord's disciples
 - Eunuch, Ac.8? Saul, Ac.9?
- Overly cautious: Mt.25:24-25, *I was afraid*
 - Lost because of fear
 - Should fear disobedience

5: *do not be discouraged by ignorance*

- You do not know the way of the . . .
 1. Wind (as v.4). Jn.3:8, the wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.
 2. Spirit ... Jer.1:5, Before I formed you in the womb I knew you... (Ps.139)
[either: “spirit comes to the bones . . .”
[or: “path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb” – NASB et al.

6: *sow seed a.m. to p.m.*

- Work hard; leave results with God (ct. v.4)
- Assurance in ignorance...
 - 2 Co.9:6, But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.
 - Ep.5:16, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
- God's blessing gives success. Pr.10:22
- “Do not withhold your hand” (rest) – do not stop working. Mt.20:1-16.

I. The Busy Life, 1-6

II. The Blessed Light, 7-8

7: light is sweet (good times
Darkness, v.8 (hard times) [2:13-14]

- Enjoy the present; expect the future
- Sweet...pleasant...sunshine... This is a life worth living.
- Pleasant to behold the sun: implies fullness of life. 7:11.

8: rejoice for blessing in each day

- But remember days of darkness...many... vanity (transitory)
 - Probably referring to old age, death, life in Sheol
 - 12:6-7; 9:10. Jn.9:4. Ps.23:4.
- While God permits, reverently use His gifts; if they disappear, patiently submit

I. The Busy Life, 1-6

II. The Blessed Light, 7-8

III. The Biblical Longing, 9-10

9: Rejoice...but know...

- Two ways to interpret –
 1. Go ahead: sow wild oats, sin, but Judgment awaits.

Nu.15:39 ... Nu.22, Balaam ...

And he answered him, Go and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king! – 1 K.22:15 [irony]

So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, to walk in their own counsels
– Ps.81:12

9: Rejoice...but know...

- Two ways to interpret –
 1. Go ahead: sow wild oats, sin, but Judgment awaits.
 2. Enjoy blessings of youth (innocent pleasures) before nature overrules with pain and sorrow
 - 2:24; 8:15; 9:7-10, et al. [Rejoice, v.8]
 - Let God and His Judgment guide you.

For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come
– 1 Tim.4:8

9: Rejoice...but know...

- Two ways to interpret –
 1. Go ahead: sow wild oats, sin, but Judgment awaits.
 2. Enjoy blessings of youth (innocent pleasures) before nature overrules with pain and sorrow
- Many different judgments await: physical, disease, poverty, shame... Especially: 12:14
 1. Walk in ways of your heart.
 2. Walk in sight of your eyes. Pr.24:32
 3. Remember: Judgment is coming.

10: remove sorrow and other hindrances to joy

- Sorrow (vexation, anxiety, discontent) from your heart.
 - Ec.1:18, perplexity / 2:23, grief / 7:9, irritation
- Evil from your flesh. “Evil”: of **pain** and **sin**.
Ps.97:10, You who love the LORD, hate evil...
- 2 Co.7:1, Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God

10: remove sorrow and other hindrances to joy

- Sorrow (vexation, anxiety, discontent) from your heart.
- Evil from your flesh. “Evil”: of pain and sin.
- Childhood / youth are vanity (brief).
 - Youth: “black hair, dark hair”
 - When one is robust, healthy, youthful, full of vigor
 - Vanity: brief; soon passes away (9:9)