

Wisdom for Everyone from 9 to 99

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Ecclesiastes 11:9-10; 12:1-5

Psalms 92:1-4; 12-15

Last Sunday the main topic was prayer, Praying Earnestly. We spoke about asking for wisdom, wisdom from above, from God. Today, on graduation Sunday, I want to congratulate our youth, and I pray that they learn to seek God's wisdom in their lives.

Speaking of youth, I look back and I find it funny that my parents thought my generation was shallow, spoiled, and not ready to face life's challenges. Now my generation tends to think exactly the same thing about the next generation!

"The young people of today are utterly dissolute and disorderly." (Martin Luther)

"The youth are rebellious, pleasure-seeking, and irresponsible." (Plato)

"The youth have no respect for their elders; children now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority. They show disrespect for elders and love chatter." (Socrates)

"We live in a decadent age. Young people no longer respect their parents. They are rude and impatient..." (Carved in an Egyptian tomb three thousand years ago)¹

The book of Ecclesiastes says, **there is nothing new under the sun** (1:9). When you complain about the youth, do you remember yourself as a young person? Young people, do you think the elderly are too old, too outdated, or slow? Just remember one day you will be like them.

The beauty of the Word of God is that God speaks to all generations.

Abraham was an aged person when God used him to learn to become a father for Isaac and a father for all nations.

Noah's life is another example of how God worked with him in the different stages of his life.

Joseph was the spoiled kid, the dreamer, who became the ruler of Egypt. Yet God did not give up from teaching Joseph even when he aged.

David the young shepherd, who had a heart after God's own heart, became the king of Israel.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, three young courageous and faithful servants of God who dared any god and king.

Mary was probably a teenager when she gave birth to Jesus.

My sermon is addressed to both the youth and older people of our big PACC family.

First, to the youth.

1. Rejoice...

“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.” (Eccl 11:9a ESV)

Do you see how many times Solomon tells the youth to rejoice and enjoy life? These days will never come back. Enjoy the day!

We always complain about our age. As kids, we want to become adults. As we grow older, we look back and want to be young again. **Somehow, we do not know how to enjoy each day that is given to us.** Each day is precious. Each minute is a gift from God.

Dr. Benjamin Elijah, a Christian educator, writes about the value of a minute:

Life is just a minute – only sixty seconds in it.
Forced upon you – can't refuse it.
Didn't seek it—didn't choose it.
But it's up to you to use it.

You must suffer if you lose it.
Give an account if you abuse it.
Just a tiny, little minute,
But eternity is in it!

This is the day that the Lord has made. Let me learn, O Lord, to rejoice in it.

We often have difficulty rejoicing. Either we are busy, worried, or not content with the day that is given to us.

However, joy does not mean becoming a hedonist and pursuing your heart's desires to seek pleasure as your ultimate goal.

"Joy is to be pursued within the boundaries set by goodness and virtue—the boundaries set by God."²

2. Watch what you Sow

But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. (Ecc. 11:9b ESV)

"Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap." (Galatians 6:7 ESV)

"Those who plant injustice will harvest disaster," says King Solomon (Proverbs 22:8 NLT).

"You have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil," says the prophet (Hosea 10:13 NIV).

The Bible stresses the wisdom of examining what we are doing with our lives. As youth, we are commanded to enjoy life, enjoy youth, and enjoy the moments God gives us. Life tends to become harder and heavier. However, Solomon also warns the youth about the danger of sowing wrong seeds.

"Sow joyfully, but sow healthy seeds and not wild oaths. Youth is no excuse for exploits that don't honor Him." (David Jeremiah)

-I am thankful that my parents and advisers helped me in my youth to be joyful and yet cautious with my desires. God's Word and the church youth (C.E. in Aleppo) were helpful to keep me in alignment with God.

3. Remember Your Creator

“Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”; before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain,” (Eccl 12:1-2 ESV)

- “Remember your Creator” is great advice. It gives us the right perspective. Remember who you are. God is your Creator, and you are His creature. He made you; He made you wonderfully; He designed you in His image.

- There are so many self-image issues in our society. Thousands of dollars we spend to look better. Self-image is big deal for the youth. How many likes did I get for my post? I am ugly; no wonder no one dates me. Why was I born within this body? I want to change my body.

-Our society now seems designed to think only about the **outside image**. “This is a culture of reality-avoidance — of image rather than substance.”³

David is describing how God made him.

**For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well. (Psalm 139:13-14 ESV)**

Remember that God loves you and made you special. Each of us is special. Even if we have any issues in our bodies, we are created in His image. I am created by God. All my weak parts of my body, I surrender to Him.

Illustration: I remember when my daughter Nanor was teaching in the Bay Area. One of her former students who had a tough time with life, was depressed and did not see any meaning in life, was rescued and eventually found meaning in life. When he was graduating from High School, His mother

was in our home thanking Nanor and us for showing love and caring for her child. I prayed that this young man will go further in his life finding meaning in remembering God. He was rescued emotionally, yet I pray that young man will be rescued spiritually. Having faith in God will help him grow in all aspects of life.

4. Our Days are Numbered.

Solomon brings forth an important point saying, “**Remember your creator,**” use time wisely, enjoy it, and remember this life has dark days as well; our days on this earth are numbered... watch out... life is very fast.

Remember your creator... before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain, ³ in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed, ⁴ and the doors on the street are shut—when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low— ⁵ they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home (Eccl 12:2b-5 ESV)

We have an eternal home. This is not our home. We should teach this to our youth.

-But we should **also** remind young persons that **God is good**, we should remind them of the goodness of God. And we should remind them to LIVE responsively according to the goodness of God. We find joy in the goodness of God. I found joy in knowing Jesus, who helped me find my identity. I have my dark days, too. Satan tries to take my attention and focus on my failures.

Remember God...Don't lose your joy...Remember your Maker...remember who you are...

5. Words also for the mature adults: it's never late to bear fruit...

My sermon title is “Wisdom for Everyone from 9 to 99.”

God does not give up from any age group. So let me focus also on the seniors of the church.

Psalm 92 says:

The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God. They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green, to declare that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him. (Psalm 92:12-15 ESV)

The palm trees, the cedars of Lebanon, all those metaphors indicate growth and aging. These trees take a long time to grow, yet they still bear fruit in old age.

I live along with the senior members of this church who have strong desire and motivation to serve God. I would like to be like them until the end.

“They still bear fruit in old age” is a reality.

Moses said:

¹⁰ The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.
(Psalm 90:10a, 12 ESV)

So, my dear senior citizens, don't give up from bearing fruit. Don't give up from life. Don't give up from learning Godly wisdom. Don't give up from the youth. There is richness in serving the Lord together from 9 to 99.

6. Do Not Postpone

“Remember NOW your Creator in the days of your youth.” (Eccl 12:1) Some translations add the word NOW. Why postpone?

“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” (Hebrews 4:7)

A father told me once that he does not want to bring his children to Sunday school, so one day when they grow up, they would decide if they wanted to follow Christ or not. He does not want to impose his “religious” ideas on them.

I think these children are being taught other ‘gods’ their lives. If these children are exposed to other ‘gods’, why not also give them a chance to know **the God of our creation**, God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Why not?

All ages 9 to 99, do not postpone your relationship with God.

Illustration: I remembered three young people (students of Anjar School in Lebanon in 1990s) came and knocked my door and asked if we would guide them to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. I am glad that they did, and they accepted Jesus as their Savior. Two of them died very young. One with a heart attack at 21 years old (Mher Ashkarian) and the other of brain tumor in her late twenties (Nelly Sekaian). TODAY and not tomorrow....

Summary:

I hope that by hearing this message you have learned something; I pray that this message will not simply add information; but it will help you to worship the triune God.

- 1. Rejoice**
- 2. Watch what you Sow**
- 3. Remember Your Creator**
- 4. Our Days are Numbered.**
- 5. Words also for elderly, “it’s never late to bear fruit...”**
- 6. Do not Postpone**

Prayer:

God, I want Your Word to be deeply implanted in me so that I not only know the truth, but also express it in the way I live.

Let us approach to the table

1. David Jeremiah, *Searching For Heaven on Earth* p 295
2. Iain Provan, *NIV Application Commentary ECCLESIASTES*, P 213
3. Iain Provan, *NIV Application Commentary ECCLESIASTES*, P 224

Poetry and song By David Bailey

in response to my cancer diagnosis, I began asking questions about time...

If I had Another week, I'd fly down to Jamaica
Or catch a clipper off the coast of Maine
I might even sail all the way across the ocean
And buy some leather boots when I got to Spain

But then again, I might decide to take a train to California
And find my way to the shade of the Big Trees
Have a glass of wine, write a song among the pines
Then head out to the sweet Pacific breeze
if I had another week.

If I had Another Day, I'd take a drive up to the mountains
Have a picnic with my kids and with my wife
I'd hike the hidden trails, tell a few tall tales
About the crazy moments of my life

But then again, I might decide to take a raft on down the river
And pitch a tent upon the western shore
Sing songs around the fire until we all got tired
Then talk about what we're all here for
- that is, if I had another day.

If I had Another Hour, I'd make a pot of coffee
Then drink it nice and slow in my back yard
Watch the red sun set and try to just forget
The fact that this life can be so hard.

But then again, I might decide to write a letter to my parents
And then write a few more to all my friends
I'd thank them for their love and say I loved them too
And remind them that true love never ends

-- that is, if I had another hour.

If I had Another minute, I'd put my arms around my baby,
And hold her like I'd never done before
I'd tell her not to worry, and promise I'd be waiting
When her time came to knock on heaven's door.

But then again, I might decide to fall down on my knees
And thank God for the life I loved so dear
I'd ask Him to send peace to each Of us, as long as we are here.
If I had another minute
If I had another second, I might finish this song.

-The title of Time Magazine's May 20, 2013 cover story was "The **ME ME ME Generation** -- Millennials are lazy, entitled narcissists who still live with their parents -- why they'll save us all."

The Millennial generation was born 1980-2000. They are the **children of baby boomers**, also known as the **ME generation**, who then produced the **ME ME ME generation**.

-In the 1950's, families displayed a wedding photo, a school photo or family reunion photo in their homes. Today's family displays 150 pictures of themselves and their pets.

-Millennials report their daily activities on social media letting all their friends know what they've just had for dinner, what they've just experienced. (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube...)

-This generation has less civic engagement and lower political participation than any generation before.

-They expect the whole world to affirm that they are great! They are narcissistic and have a strong sense of entitlement.

Yet, the author indicates this generation has wonderful qualities as well.

-The Internet has given everyone equal opportunities to access information that once belonged mostly to the wealthy.

-Millennials do not resent authority.

-Millennials could bring huge positive change. They find new and better ways of doing things. They are creative and never say, "We have always done it this way."

-They are the "Why not? Generation". They are earnest and optimistic. They are cool and reserved, not at all passionate. They love their phones but hate talking on them!

We, as a church, need to understand this generation and learn how to reach out to them. Remember, there is no perfect society. We all need God. Therefore, let us go back thousands of years back and see how Solomon dealt with the youth of his time.