

Life Under the Sun

Part II: A Time to Mourn/A Time to Dance

Ecclesiastes 2:22-25; 3:9-13; 3:20-22;
5:15-20; 8:14-15; 9:7-10; 11:7-12:1

- I. Sifting Through the Fog
 - A. All of our Efforts Gone up in Smoke
6:12; 9:9; 11:10
 - B. Life: An Enigma we Cannot Solve
2:15, 19, 21, 23; 3:19; 4:7-8; 6:2; 7:15; 8:14, 17
- II. The Case for Enjoying it Anyway
2:22-25; 3:9-13; 3:20-22; 5:15-20; 8:14-15; 9:7-10; 11:7-12:1
 - A. The Two-Faced Teacher?
7:2-4
 - B. A Clear Word Against Striving
1:7-8; 4:7-8; 5:10-17; 6:7
 - C. The Posture of Pleasure
- III. How to Receive the Gift
 - A. Release Control
7:13-14
 - B. Realize All is Gift
 - C. Return to the Now
3:1-11

Questions for Further Reflection

1. Kid's Question: What is the best thing about summer? What could you do each day to enjoy your family and friends the most?
2. How have you seen Hevel this past week in your own life? What have you found yourself placing your hope in?
3. What do you do when the Bible seems to contradict itself? What is the proper way to wrestle with the text?
4. What does striving look like in your life? Are there areas in your life where striving has had dire consequences? Are there areas where ceasing to strive has given new life?
5. What is a way that you "feast" regularly? Do you feel guilty about this? Should you?
6. What might it look like for you to "accept your lot" without becoming a passive robot?
7. What area of your life is it hardest for you to release control?
8. What area of your life is it hardest for you to accept as a gift?
9. What would it take for you to be able to live in the present and to see that as the end, not the means to some other end? What would happen if you did? How would you live differently?

Blaise Pascal Quote

"We never keep to the present. We recall the past; we anticipate the future as if we found it too slow in coming and were trying to hurry it up, or we recall the past as if to stay its too rapid flight. We are so unwise that we wander about in times that do not belong to us, and do not think of the only one that does; so vain that we dream of times that are not and blindly flee the only one that is. The fact is that the present usually hurts. We thrust it out of sight because it distresses us, and if we find it enjoyable, we are sorry to see it slip away. We try to give it the support of the future, and think how we are going to arrange things over which we have no control for a time we can never be sure of reaching.

Let each of us examine his thoughts; he will find them wholly concerned with the past or the future. We almost never think of the present, and if we do think of it, it is only to see what light it throws on our plans for the future. The present is never our end. The past and the present are our means, the future alone our end. Thus we never actually live, but hope to live, and since we are always planning how to be happy, it is inevitable that we should never be so."