

The Long Shadows of Life

Text: Ecclesiastes 12:1-7 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; 2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: 3 In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, 4 And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; 5 Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: 6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. 7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Acts 20:24-27 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. 26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

II Timothy 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

Introduction & Personal Note: The year 2024 is a milestone year for me. The 50th anniversary of my high school graduation. As a Christian, this year marks the 45th year since I was gloriously “BORN AGAIN”. Also, it marks my life with over 40 years as a minister.

WHAT HAVE I LEARNED—WHAT ADVICE CAN I GIVE TO OTHERS?

- What a joy it has been to serve Christ all these many years – what a Faithful Friend he has been to me! What huddles, obstacles, and problems we have been through together! What a joy to trust Him with my future! TRULY, HIS PEACE PASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING! What a comfort to know the last 2/3 of my life has been spent in service to Christ – MY GREATEST REGRET IS NOT SERVING HIM THROUGHOUT MY ENTIRE LIFE! It brings me sorrow to think of the wasted years without Him in my life!
- What a comfort to know Him as I approach the latter phase of my life on earth. I’m glad I didn’t wait until I was an old man before starting out on my Christian Journey. Today, He isn’t a stranger to me – I don’t need to get acquainted with Him as I walk the uncertain “LONG SHADOWS of LIFE” I know Him and He knows me!
- Life is short – one minute we are young and strong – seemingly the next minute – too quickly, we are changing into the person of Ecclesiastes Chapter 12 –
- LET THIS BE A LESSON TO ALL - many friends and loved ones never make it to the final stage of Life!
- We never know when our promotion or summons from God will come – death comes at various ages and in countless ways –
- God is Faithful and Trustworthy – These facts are undeniable and based upon 45 years of experience - **Life has many experiences and various stages. The last stage is the topic of this sermon.**

In looking at our text - NOTICE - Solomon’s Addresses the Youth First- INSTRUCTS & ADMONISHS ALL YOUNG PEOPLE FROM AN OLD & WISE MAN

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them –

Look at Some Common Challenges of Growing Older – my dad’s favorite chapter in the Bible

Ecc. 12:1-7

- ❖ the years (WILL) draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;
- ❖ While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: (EYES BECOME DIM)
- ❖ In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, (STRENGTH OF OUR BODY BEGINS TO DIMINISH)
- ❖ and the grinders cease because they are few, (THE TEETH BEGIN TO FALL OUT)
- ❖ and those that look out of the windows be darkened, (AGAIN, EYES BECOME DIM)
- ❖ And the doors shall be shut in the streets, (WE LOSE THE DESIRE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE WORLD)
- ❖ when the sound of the grinding is low, (AGAIN, THE TEETH BEGIN TO FALL OUT)
- ❖ and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, (SLEEP BECOMES LIGHTER AND LESS SOUND)
- ❖ and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; (AGAIN, WE LOSE THE DESIRE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE WORLD)
- ❖ Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, (FEAR OF DEATH)
- ❖ and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, (GREY HAIR & WEAKER)
- ❖ and desire shall fail: (AGAIN, WE LOSE THE DESIRE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE WORLD)
- ❖ because man goeth to his long home, (OUR EYES BECOME FOCUSED ON ETERNAL THINGS)
- ❖ and the mourners go about the streets: (DEATH IS UNIVERSAL AND OUR ENDING HAS COME)
- ❖ Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. (FOUR COMMON EXAMPLES TO ILLUSTRATE WHAT IT IS TO DIE - **silver cord** (HOLDS THE OIL LAMP AND IT FALLS AND BREAKS) - **golden bowl** (ONCE A BEAUTIFUL BOWL BUT NOW A WORTHLESS UNUSABLE BROKEN BOWL – **pitcher be broken at the fountain** (SIMILAR MEANING AS THE BROKEN BOWL) **wheel broken at the cistern** (WE ARE NO LONGER CONNECTED TO OUR FORMER LIFE))
- ❖ Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. (OUR PERSONAL JUDGEMENT DAY)

This song is one of my favorite songs. It speaks about the continuously repeating story of the Long Shadows of Life. WE FOLLOW THE COMMON PATH OF ALL MANKIND - HOME

The Last Few Miles (On My Knees) - Bob Willis and Jimmie Davis, 1980

[Verse 1]

I once was young, I could run the fields all day long;
I never, ever tired back then it seems.
But something's surely wrong,
Lord help me to travel on,
the last few miles I've traveled on my knees.

[Refrain]

Lord, I've traveled the last few miles on my knees,
More and more I'm spending time there it seems.
Summer's come and gone, winter's coming on,
the last few miles I've traveled on my knees.

[Verse 3]

Oh, please don't criticize when you see me passing by;
someday you, too, will be just like me.
When the spring of youth is gone,
winter's coming on, you, too, will have to travel on your knees.

How should we live in the “Long Shadow” season of our time on earth?

1. Ending well is very important - it's not how well we begin that's important - it's how we finish!

Our entire life on earth (including our death) should be an enduring and lasting testimony for God- whether we die as a youth, in the prime of life, as a middle-aged Christian, as an old Christian, or as a martyr, we seal our testimony and close the book on our entire life's work for God. All Work Ceases for US!

The last few years of our life we should work tirelessly to “**end well**” in honor to God and to seal our personal testimony as a light shining in the path for others to follow!

*****Paul Ended WELL - Acts 20:24-27 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. 26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.**

II Timothy 4: I have fought a good fight, **I have finished my course**, I have kept the faith:

2. DON'T QUIT EARLY – don't use the infirmities of old age as an excuse to not complete your service to God! Health may cripple you to where you may no longer can be a part of the church but continue working for God in any capacity that presents itself! *If health is a true issue – God Understands*

3. Lean more upon God – we need Him more than any other stage of our life!

We should have a long history with God by now! Talk to Him more – PRAY MORE

4. REMEMBER - some of our best work for God is in the LAST STAGES of LIFE or in the “LONG SHADOWS”

- we are more seasoned and more mature Christians – we should be settled, faithful workers for God
- we are battle hardened - fought many battles – we are not afraid – tested in the battles of life
- we have earned respect - many have watched us through the years and know of our faithfulness
- we are more focused on the eternal and less focused on earthly goals
- we carry a heavier burden for the lost (especially our family) – our eternal focus makes us more aware of the danger – we wish to impact their souls in such a way that they follow us to heaven

5. REMEMBER - God isn't finished with us until He Summons us HOME!

THE HEART BEAT TEST – if your heart is still beating, God isn't finished with your yet!

Closing: CAN WE HONESTLY SAY: I have fought a good fight, **I have finished my course**, I have kept the faith: **II Timothy 4:7?**

If We CAN honestly say we have completed all of II Timothy 4:7, then, II Timothy 4:8 is ours to claim! ---- Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. **II Timothy 4:8**

If We CANNOT honestly say we have completed all of II Timothy 4:7, then, we need to do the following:

- *FIND A PLACE ALONE WITH GOD AND SEEK FORGIVENESS AND REPENTANCE!*
- *ASK GOD TO HELP US GET IT RIGHT – REMEMBER HE IS EVER MERCIFUL AND GOOD!*
- *START ANEW WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE AND LEADERSHIP!*
- *REVIVE OUR DAILY CONNECTION WITH GOD – SERIOUSLY SEEK HIM DAILY – WE WON'T BE DISAPPOINTED IN THE RESULTS IF WE “WALK IN THE SPIRIT” PROPERLY EACH DAY!*