

Our theme for 2025 is everlasting, the idea that God is everlasting, and we are not. And that makes us very different from Him, and we need Him. We will not last forever without Him in eternal bliss.

We need a Saviour, and our Saviour is Jesus Christ. And today we come to the end of our teaching in Ecclesiastes, a book that has explored the angst of the human condition, the fact that humanity has eternity in our hearts.

We have everlasting in our hearts. We have a longing to know the everlasting God, but don't know quite how to get there.

And that's where the Gospel comes in, that through Christ we can find a relationship with the God who is everlasting and receive everlasting life. This is the wonderful truth of the Gospel.

But we are in Chapter 12, finishing off this book, which looks longingly towards that Gospel we just spoke of. And the truth of the end of the matter. Our days are numbered.

We know that from Ecclesiastes. Yet we can redeem the time. We can make the best of this one life we get to live.

Now, I wonder if we could do a practical illustration at the start of today's message. You may not be able to stand, and if that's you, please remain seated, of course. But I want to ask you to stand in a second.

And then we're going to play a video on the screen of numbers, the years of our life passing through. It's going to start at one and get to 100. And it goes slower at the start.

I changed the speed because I have a feeling that life tended to go a bit slower in the earlier years. Anyone believe that, too? And as you get older, it sort of starts speeding up.

Now, sometimes people are a bit thinking about their age. So, what I'm going to ask is, when it comes to your age, you sit down. And if you don't want to declare your age, just sit down a little bit older or a bit younger.

It's up to you. You can just take control. But I've done it a few times this week, and it's surprisingly impacting.

It's just surprisingly impacting. So, what I want to encourage you to do is, when you see the numbers, they're just numbers on a screen, but they represent your years. So, try to think, Oh, where was I in that season when I was five years old?

What about 20? What about 30? You get the picture.

So, anyone who would like to take part, please stand. And when it comes to your age, you're going to just sit down. Did you have a sense of the impact of the years?

What struck me was, I'm 55, and then when it went 56, 57, 58, I thought, Oh, these are the years I have dreams for, but I don't know if I'm going to get to enjoy them, and none of us do.

This idea that our days are numbered, teach me to number my days, is so potent, so profound, so powerful. We sing a song about it. Well, so what does the teacher tell us?

I think he gives us three ideas. Remember your creator, rest in God's word, revere and obey. Remember your creator, Ecclesiastes 12, 1 to 14 is our text.

The teacher never knew Billy Graham, but I think they would have got on. You remember Billy Graham has that famous quote, getting old is not for wimps. Anyone agree?

Getting old is not for wimps. I had an angiogram when I was 40. My dad died when I was 40, and I had blood pressure issues, and I was like very keen to have an angiogram.

And that wasn't very pleasant. I didn't enjoy doing that. And I was at church a few weeks later talking to a good mate of mine who was in his 80s, and he said, I've had 11 of them.

I don't know why. They keep making mistakes, so I don't know. But it just struck me at the time, I remember thinking, gee, older people are tough.

Here I am thinking, oh gee, I'm, whoa, I've had an angiogram. This guy had had 11 of them. And you know that, don't you?

Like, you meet a person who's in their older years, and most of the time, I've found that they're tough. They've learned how to trust God through a lot of health issues, challenges, loss, immense loss in their life, aging.

It's a challenging season because when you're getting to the end of it, you really are getting close to death. We all know we could die tomorrow, but I think as you're getting older, it's really in your face.

The teacher declares, remember your creator in the days of your youth before the days of trouble come. He's got a way with words, hasn't he? Before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, I find no pleasure in them.

I find no pleasure in these years. I would not have understood that. It's very much poetic, this language of the teacher.

I would not have understood that if I hadn't watched my mum decline in the 14 years since my dad died. They've both gone home to glory now, but I saw mum in the last two years express a sense and not all of us will experience this, but many will.

So the teacher declares, a lack of pleasure in any day. I find no pleasure in them. There's no good that I'm finding, even prayer, praise.

She struggled as she moved into dementia in her last days. It was really tough, and I watched her and I thought, wow, I think there's some truth in what this teacher is saying. Now, let's just have a think about that it's poetic.

He's talking about the ageing body is a bit like a house. So, he says in verse 2, before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, what's that saying? Losing vision.

In age, we're losing vision, and the clouds return after the rain. Remember, Ben said last week, there's blue sky coming. For some of us, not until we die and go to heaven.

Do you hear that? For some of us, in age, it's like, this isn't getting any better. Like, there was clouds yesterday, but there's rain tomorrow, and the keepers of the house tremble.

What's that mean? The legs are not as strong as they used to be, and the strong men's stooped backs become bent over and weak and stiff. When the grinders cease because they are few, what does that mean?

Teeth. Not enough of us have gone to see Alfred, our church dentist, and the teeth are falling out, and those looking through the windows grow dim. Eyesight again, getting poor.

When the doors to the street are closed, isolation is part and parcel with aging, and the sound of grinding fades. You can't hear it, and the teeth have gone. He's got a thing about dental hygiene, the teacher.

When people rise up at the sound of birds, anyone get up earlier as they've got older? But you don't get to hear the birds sing because the hearing is going.

When people are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets, they're suffering from vertigo and frailty. When the almond tree blossoms, that means the hair's gone white. I mean, can you imagine that?

White hair in your aged years. And the grasshopper, I love this one, the grasshopper drags itself along. Used to hop, but now, and desire no longer is stirred.

Sexual desire has gone, the teacher says. Then people go to their eternal home and mourners go about the streets. How are you feeling?

Feeling good? That's not me, we say. That's not me.

But some of us know getting older is not for whims. People go to their eternal homes. Mourners go about the streets in the funeral.

Remember him before the silver cord is severed and the golden bowl is broken.

Before you've lost the capacity to build your wealth, before the pitcher is shattered at the spring and the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Before life is over, before the days given to you have run out. Meaningless, meaningless, says the teacher.

He says in this whole pursuit of meaning, he's saying it's tough, it's hevelled, it's like vapor, and it's translated meaningless, but we know it's illusory, temporary, this life.

Everything is hevelled, so with all his reflection, this wise teacher says, when you're younger, when you're much younger, when you're just a bit younger, remember your creator in the days of your youth before the days of trouble come.

Redeem the time, as Ben said last week. Carpe diem, seize the day. How do we live remembering our creator?

Well, it's such a big statement, isn't it? Remember your creator. But what are some of the ideas we've seen in the Book of Ecclesiastes?

Redeem the ordinary day. Don't wait for life to explode in honouring God at some big moment in the future. Invite God into your Mondays, amen?

Into the routine of everyday life. This is what we've learned from Ecclesiastes. In the small conversations at work, make yourself available to be an ambassador of grace for God.

Prioritise relationships, because relationships are what life is all about. This is eternal life that we would know God. Don't put off that phone call, that offering of forgiveness.

Spend time with the people you need to spend time with. Number three, in some thoughts, in reflection and recall, use your energy for God while you have it.

The wise teacher says, there comes a time when you don't get to do the ministry that you would like to do, amen? Use your body, use your sight, use the gifts of energy, the talents for God's kingdom that God has given us. Cultivate daily gratitude.

Cultivate daily saying, thank you God for this light that I see. My wife Leanne is just nearly over pneumonia. But this week, we were like, gee, breath is good, isn't it?

You know, you take for granted breath itself. Spiritual investment versus wasted days. Remember your creator.

Warren Buffett talks about investing well, not just saving, but investing. But who has learnt that you can invest your life as well? Not just in money.

Who has learnt that investing your life into eternal matters is the best way you can use your life? And you have to think about it, don't you? How can I best invest my life?

I heard an athlete who was an elite athlete was asked, how do you succeed in health and fitness? And this is what he said. Success in health and fitness is consistency times work plus effort.

Consistency, you have to keep doing it. If you want to get fit, better at something using your body, you've got to be consistent, you've got to put the work in, but you've also got to rest.

And as soon as I saw that, I thought, gee, that's what the kingdom of God is like. If you want to be fruitful, I think the next one shows it, fruitfulness in the kingdom of God is consistency, times, work, plus rest to the power of grace.

Don't you reckon? There's work for us to be done. There's obedience, there's submission, there's humility, there's servanthood, there's giving.

It's not to earn God's grace, He's given it to us, but it's work plus rest, Sabbath, stopping, replenishing, all to the exponential power of grace. How are you investing your life? You can invest each day in that which lasts.

And that's the sixth point. Say yes, more to what lasts. Make your investment into people in the kingdom eternal.

And the last one, the teacher says, is remember our mortality. We only have a certain amount of days. We are going to find that we meet God and we need to meet him in Christ.

Start now, don't delay your devotion. Stay present. Treasure today's relationships and opportunities.

And serve hard, serve hard. You know what Leanne's been saying to me regularly since she took over kids ministry? She said, I can't believe how motivated I am.

I'm just so enjoying getting into a different place of ministry where you're using your giftedness. And is anyone looking for that? Like, because you used to experience that, but you haven't done it for a while?

No one? So that's so good, everyone is finding their passion in ministry. But if you're just sort of wondering what's next, I just want to encourage you, step out.

Step out because we have only a certain number of days to invest in the Kingdom of God for the glory of Jesus. Number two, rest in God's word. The teacher continues, not only was the teacher wise, but he also imparted knowledge to the people.

He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. He provided lots of teaching this wise person. The teacher searched to find just the right words and what he wrote was upright and true.

And he says, the words of the wise are like goads, like they're collected sayings like firmly embedded nails given by one shepherd. Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them.

Of making many books, there's no end, and much study wearies the body. I think the teacher is saying, we need wisdom. We need teaching.

We need like the goads prodding cattle. We need teaching to speak in to our life in the different seasons. And some of the teaching will sting us.

It will awaken us, warn us, challenge us. But I think the teacher is saying, there's a limit to human wisdom. There's, you need it, but there's a limit.

And we know 3000 years later, don't we? That we need teaching, but there's a limit to human knowledge found from humans. We need the word of God.

Amen? So we need to rest in God's word to find the guidance and the wisdom and the direction that we need for this one solitary life we get to live. Rest in God's word.

Does anyone find that seasonal? The joy you find in the word of God?



I've been a teacher for over 30 years and you might look at me, I'm sort of often up here teaching the Bible, you might think, oh, it must be good to have it easy, you never lose your passion for the word of God. No, it can be a bit seasonal.

It's hard work to be teaching from God's word and I have to remind myself, no, this is the higher source of truth. I need to come under it. I need to find the joy again that the word of God gives.

And it takes faith, doesn't it, to access the wonders of God's word. We have to bring that faith as we come to it. And you need to know we can be discouraged in God's word, can't we?

If you're struggling with sin, it can feel like it's always condemning you, convicting you, until you can give that sin over and say, Lord, I am a sinner. I need your mercy. I need your grace.

And suddenly the Bible turns and suddenly it's showing you the way to hope and forgiveness and redemption. Would you agree we're living in a pretty strange time regarding teaching? It's a really odd time.

A couple hundred years ago, people would regularly go to a few places to learn. The church in the centre of the town square was one of those places. Right now, you know, you can learn from a lot of different places.

We're in an unparalleled time of upheaval and disruption. People are saying that we don't know, and you might just shake your head and go, oh, that's ridiculous. They're saying we don't know if people will be trained in universities in five years.

Probably will, but some jobs just won't be there because AI is disrupting everything. You know, they say that Chat GPT-5 might just mean nothing in those letters, but it's an AI program, a bot.

It's already smarter than basically any human being on the planet, Chat GPT-5. We have podcasts for every subject under the sun. It used to be that you had to go to a TED talk, and then it went to podcasts.

But guess who's going to be out of a job in a few years? The podcasters. Why?

Because everybody will have on their phone access to all the truth and hacks that you want to find. But will that be enough? I would say no, absolutely not.

We need to come back to the word of God and realize that with all the hurry that we are embracing in a modern society, it's taking us to a point that we're going to find God and His truth at the end saying, I told you so, whenever you find at the end

that is true, God's already there, amen? When we realize that the greatest truth is in God's word, we need to do something about that. So how do we rest in God's word? Firstly, slow down with scripture.

Slow down with scripture. It's not a race. We've done a bit of racing with Bible loop programs over the years.

But can I encourage you, if you are struggling a little bit with sensory information overload, stop and allow the word of God to speak to your heart. Go to a passage like, excuse me, Psalm 23 verse 1, the Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

And just sit on that verse for a week. The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. Make God's word a safe place, not a to-do list.

It's not just to gather information, but it is to spend time with the God who created the word and receive his invitation to restoration. Sabbath with scripture.

Take the time out of your work week, not just to study, but to enjoy the presence of God in his word, in an undistracted time. Maybe you've got that sorted.

I find I come in and out of those rhythms and I have to re-align myself to that which is needed in my life. Read prayerfully. The Lectio Divina style is read a passage multiple times and stop and pray and listen.

Let it shape your thoughts. Replace noise with the word. How do you get out of bed?

How do you start your day? How do you end your day? Is it with the noise of the world?

Maybe you could change that and let the word of God be the voice that you hear when you start your day and you end your day. Anchor your mind in the promises of God. We do this, don't we?

Anchor our minds in the promises of God. When you're anxious, Isaiah 41 10, do not fear, the word of God says, I am with you. Do not be dismayed.

I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I'll uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Put it in context. When weary, that verse in Matthew 11 is so wonderful to come to, where Jesus says, come to me, all who are weary and burdened. If that's you, put your hand up and say, yeah, that's me, Lord.

You promised that you'll give me rest. When we're uncertain, Romans 8 28, we know that in all things God is working for the good of those who love him and have been called according to his purpose.

You need to do a bit of the work, don't you, behind the scenes to have the scriptures that you can go to. You know what I find is really helpful? Anyone use you version?

A few of us? Find a verse, highlight it, and then work out how to put that into an image that you store in your images on your phone. It's just an easy way to go back and find great passages that speak to your heart.

And finally, share the word in community, which is what we do with Daily Sevens and Bible Loop, and we encourage people so much to be in the word of God, but share what you find with others. Remember your creator, rest in God's word.

And finally, the teacher says, revere and obey. The teacher has come to the end of the matter, and he's ready to sum it all up, and he says, now all has been heard, here's the conclusion of the matter.

Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. Fear God and keep his commandments.

When we studied the Book of Proverbs, I don't know if you remember, but we had this from Jerry Bridges, a wonderful teacher of God's word, who's gone home to glory now.

Fear of the Lord involves three things, reverential awe, admiration of God's glorious attributes, and amazement at his love.

You might have forgotten that, but can I just encourage you to lock that one away, put in your notes on your phone or something, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, the fear of the Lord is essential in the task of following

Jesus, of discipleship as a child of God. And it involves these, at least these three aspects, awe, reverential awe.

It's just seeing God, it's visceral in his glory, in his essence as something other than anything else in all of creation, just beholding his glorious being. And it's not just about him, but it's him, the glory of God.

I heard it said when we were teaching on this, that it's like true awe of God is like, it's very different from visiting a museum and seeing a fibreglass version of a Tyrannosaurus Rex.

And you can sort of go there and look at the Tyrannosaurus Rex and it's 10 meters high and you think, wow, that's really awesome. And meeting the awe of God can be like that, if it's sort of the God who the libraries talk about.

But to meet in person that Tyrannosaurus Rex, that's a very different response, isn't it? It's like, wow, I'm actually hiding. And that's what happened when the angels turned up on planet Earth.

People fell to the ground. There was a visceral physical experience, a response. And that's what we're hoping to experience, isn't it?

A reverential awe that actually grabs hold of us as we come in contact with the living God. But then this admiration as we think about who is this glorious one. What is he like?

And we know so much about who he is. And we can just admire him for who our God is. And then there is amazement at his love when we think this God, glorious, wonderful.

He became a baby to live a perfect life and die on a cross for us. Or admiration, amazement. This is the fear of God which leads us, the teacher says, to obedience.

Fear God and keep his commands, for this is the duty of all mankind. The fear of God involves practical obedience. I would put it to you that that picture, the equation, consistency, work plus rest to the power of grace.

That's the work of obedience.

We need to keep humbly coming back to consistently asking for mercy and allowing the Spirit of God to change the patterns and habits of our heart and mind that we act the way Jesus said we could live in obedience plus rest to the power of grace.

We live with accountability because hidden things matter, don't they? This is what the teacher says. Fear God, keep his commands, for this is the duty of all mankind, because God's going to bring into judgment everything that you've done.

That's a pretty horrible thought in some ways, isn't it? Because we're all sinners. We've fallen short of the glory of God.

But how good is it, friends, to know that the good news of the gospel says that movie clip doesn't get shown. Hallelujah.

The movie clip of every hidden thing that you have done that brings you under the wrath of the living God, a holy God, when we are in Christ, the blood of Christ covers us. And we are clothed with the pure white righteous robes of the sun.

That's the gospel. We are saved from every hidden thing being shown before God because we are seen as Christ. We really are.

Christ has taken the judgment for that sin. Ecclesiastes leaves us longing. But we know the gospel speaks into that longing because, and this is a really amazing summing up, I think, when you think, remember your creator?

Did Jesus do that perfectly? Absolutely. Remembered his father in everything he did.

He embodied the words of the shepherd. He rested in God's word perfectly. He feared God and he kept his commandments fully.

And he took our judgment, the judgment that we deserve from that film clip. He took it on the cross and now offers us everlasting life. He rose again from the grave because the grave couldn't hold him down.

Life is short, but not meaningless. Amen. It's a challenge to make the days of the worth of being a son of God, but we can do it.

So how would we finish this challenging and sobering book? I think if you want the best wrap up, look up last week's sermon that Ben preached. Because I don't think you could beat that, the way that it was presented.

I think that was just wonderful. I would look back on this 12 chapters of Ecclesiastes and I'd say we'll stand in awe, walk in obedience, live with eternity in view.