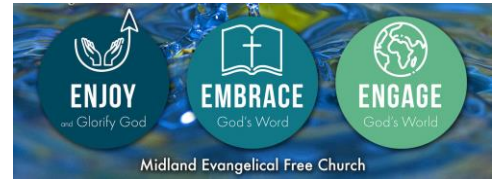




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Date: November 7, 2021

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 7

Ecclesiastes 7:1 – “Death Teaches More”

Death teaches more than birth because death teaches us how to live. Looking back over the course of life reveals what matters most. At death, one’s reputation or “good name” is all that remains on earth. Please consider the following:

- Think about a typical funeral service. What do we learn about someone from attending their funeral?
- If you were to die today, how would people characterize you at your memorial?
- What would they say is important to you?
- How would you like to be remembered?
- What small thing can you start doing today to move the needle in that direction?

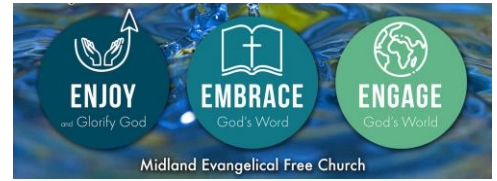
Ecclesiastes 7:5 – “It Is Better...”

Verse five teaches us that it is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools. Most of us probably believe this, but few of us want this. It is far easier to process praise than criticism.

- What can we do to help open our hearts to constructive feedback?
- What are some helpful tips that you would give someone who asked, *“Please help me process constructive criticism better. What are some things that you do or try to do?”*



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Ecclesiastes 7:8 – “Better the End Than the Beginning”

For the Christian, we know this promise to be true. ¹ But for the author of Ecclesiastes, he or she did not have the full revelation of God.

- Of what, then, does the author speak?²
- Why does the end exceed the beginning?
- What examples can you give?
- Are there any analogies between that process and the spiritual life?

¹ 1 Corinthians 13:12 (ESV)

¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

Romans 8:28–32 (ESV)

²⁸And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

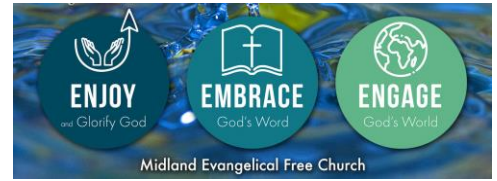
³¹What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

³²He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

² **“Easy” Routes = Expensive Detours** that are difficult and painful¹ *The “long haul” is better than the shortcut (7:7–9)*. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Satisfied, “Be” Commentary Series* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 87.



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Ecclesiastes 7:10 – “The Good Ole’ Days”

Someone has said that “Bad Memory + Good Imagination = The Good Ole’ Days”³

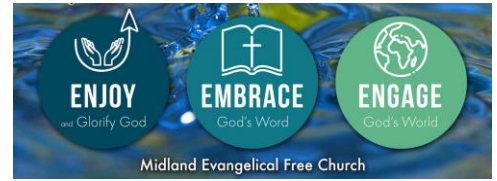
- Why does the author of Ecclesiastes condemn the question “Why were the former days better than these?”?
- What does that question say about one’s acceptance of their current portion?
- Is that question a genuine question? What is it?
- Who are we to judge what is “better”? Do we know the end from the beginning?⁴
- What truly makes a situation, regardless of the pain or pleasure in it, good or evil?

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Satisfied*, “Be” Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 88

⁴ Ecclesiastes 5:1–2 (ESV)

¹Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil.

²Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.



Ecclesiastes 7:13-14 – “Crooked on Purpose?”

¹³Accept the way God does things, for who can straighten what he has made crooked?

¹⁴Enjoy prosperity while you can, but when hard times strike, realize that both come from God. Remember that nothing is certain in this life.

Verse 14 helps us understand verse 13. The significance of *straight* and *crooked* extends beyond their literal meaning to their literary meaning. Many things “under the sun” are crooked. The author continues to point them out (Eccl. 7:15). Yet God rarely seems to explain the specifics behind each crooked thing we experience.

How then are we to process the crooked?⁵ Tie it in with the message of Ecclesiastes.

⁵ When something in life seems crooked, we are usually very quick to tell him how to straighten it out. Instead we should let God straighten *us* out! Philip Graham Ryken, *Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2010), 169.

In his prayer at the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asked his Father if there was any way to make Calvary straight instead of crooked. But there was no other way. As Jesus considered the work of God, he could see that the only way to make atonement for his people’s sin was to die in their place. So Jesus suffered the crooked cross that it was his God-given lot to bear. And he trusted his Father, waiting for him to straighten things out when the time was right by raising him up on the third day.

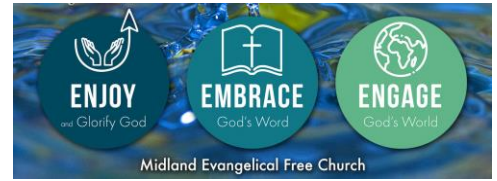
If God could straighten out something as crooked as the cross, then surely he can be trusted to do something with the crook in our lot!

This was the testimony that James Montgomery Boice gave the last time he spoke to his congregation at Philadelphia’s Tenth Presbyterian Church. Dr. Boice had been diagnosed with a fatal and aggressive cancer; he only had weeks to live. This was the crook in his lot. So Dr. Boice raised a question that was based on the sovereignty and the goodness of God. “If God does something in your life,” he asked, “would you change it?” To say this the way Qoheleth would have said it, “If God gave you something crooked, would you make it straight?”

Well, would you? Would you change your disability or disease? Would you change your job or your finances? Would you change your appearance, or your abilities, or your situation in life? Or would you trust God for all the crooked things in life and wait for him to make them straight, just like Jesus did when he died for you on the cross?



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After a good hearty discussion, please pray to conclude and confess your faith in God, His character, purposes, and plan.

Bonus or Homework for next time:

- Is there a time in your life, that you experienced crooked circumstances, only to discover in them the purposes of God?
- If so, and you feel comfortable, consider sharing an example with your group.

Dr. Boice answered his own rhetorical question by testifying to the goodness of God's sovereign will. He said that if we tried to change what God has done, then it wouldn't be as good; we would only make it worse. The Preacher who wrote Ecclesiastes said something similar. "Consider the work of God," he said. "Do not try to straighten out what God has made crooked." Our Savior would tell us the same thing. "When you consider the work of God," he would say, "remember my love for you through the crooked cross, and trust our Father to straighten everything out in his own good time."¹

¹ Philip Graham Ryken, *Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2010), 170.