

Wise for the Present, Ready Until the End

Ecclesiastes 11:1-10

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Good morning, everyone. Our sermon from Ecclesiastes 11:1-10 is titled “WISE FOR THE PRESENT, READY UNTIL THE END”—a call to trust God by living wisely through certainty and uncertainty, in seasons of hope and hardship. It is a text ideal for financial planners, a playground for prosperity preachers when twisted out of context, and a passage that can cause sleepless nights for expositors trying to explain what it means to “cast your bread upon the waters.” This is our thirteenth Sunday in Ecclesiastes. I am amazed that our attendance has grown, which is only possible because the Holy Spirit enables us to see God and eternity through these pages, fixing our gaze on Christ. Historically, church father Jerome viewed this book as a pessimistic call to an ascetic, monastic life away from the world. However, the Reformers, particularly Martin Luther, argued that Ecclesiastes guides us to enjoy life’s simple pleasures—food, drink, marriage, and work—as gifts from God. While Jerome tells us how to leave the world, Luther teaches us how to live in it. Solomon addresses things we cannot control, instructing us to live with biblical optimism while preparing for the reality of death. How do we enjoy life knowing that death meets us in the end? To answer this, we will examine three divisions: Planning for Risks, Enjoying Rewards, and Minding Responsibility.

We turn first to verse 1: “Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days.” Scholars interpret this phrase in a few ways. The classical Jewish and Christian view, shared by Charles Spurgeon, links it to giving alms to the poor, where bread represents resources and water represents those in need. Spurgeon reminds us that this includes the generous stewardship of our time, service, and talents. A second view treats it as an agricultural metaphor where a farmer casts seeds on wet ground and waits for growth. A third view, matching the immediate economic context of chapter 10, refers to international trade cycles where merchants sent grain out on ships, seeing a return months later. Regardless of the view you take, the spiritual point remains identical: it is a call to be bold and act now for a reward that cannot be seen immediately, trusting God in the unseen. Solomon is not endorsing get-rich-quick schemes. If he saw someone lining up for lottery tickets or frequenting casinos, he would point them to Proverbs 13:11: “Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.”

Solomon continues in verse 2: “Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth.” In modern terms, this means diversifying your resources, or as Miguel de Cervantes wrote, “Do not put all your eggs in one basket.” For the Filipino employee or student, it means setting seven to eight



snooze alarms—something I do all the time. Long before modern portfolio theory, Solomon declared that spreading your resources protects investments against unexpected failure. Scripture addresses money frequently because our attitude toward resources reveals our hearts. Money itself is amoral, but 1 Timothy 6:10 warns that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. We are called to diversify precisely because we are ignorant of the future. Think of April 15, 1912, when the RMS Titanic, deemed unsinkable, struck an iceberg and sank because the builders failed to plan adequately for disaster. The key principle is that wisdom cannot guarantee good outcomes, but the believer must plan diligently. God's absolute sovereignty does not eliminate human responsibility. Proverbs 6:6-8 points us to the ant, which prepares her bread in summer. As Proverbs 21:5 states, the plans of the diligent lead to profit, while haste leads to poverty.

Verses 3 to 6 expand on these principles using natural illustrations. Verse 3 states that clouds pour rain and trees fall where they may; there are fixed realities we know will happen, yet we cannot control their timing. This tree metaphor carries profound spiritual weight; in September 1957, the great theologian R.C. Sproul was converted through this exact verse, realizing his life was like a dead tree rotting in sin. Friends, if you do not know Christ as Savior and Lord, you are like that dead tree, decaying in sin and bound for hell. I pray the Holy Spirit awakens you today to repent and trust in Christ's finished work on the cross, where He bore our sins on a tree at Calvary. Romans 10:9 promises that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Solomon moves to verse 4, writing, "He who watches the wind will not sow." He describes a farmer so analytical of the weather that he never plants, missing the harvest entirely. This addresses laziness and idleness disguised as productive procrastination or doomscrolling. Like Shakespeare's Hamlet, overthinking leads us to inaction. We delay sharing the gospel or joining a Bible study, acting as though we are guaranteed tomorrow, yet we have no such certainty. Verse 5 reminds us that just as we do not know how bones form in the womb, we do not know the activity of God. Believers must have a bias for action, doing what is right while trusting God with the results. This leads to verse 6, commanding us to sow seed in the morning and evening. Instead of obsessing over the hidden future through forbidden practices like fortune-telling or astrology, we must focus on what we can control: our effort, our work ethic, and our obedience. We need theology, not astrology. Work is a pre-Fall gift from God and a platform to testify to the world. As Colossians 3:23 commands, work heartily, as for the Lord.

This brings us to our second division, enjoying rewards, found in verses 7 and 8. Verse 7 states that the light is pleasant, representing the joyful seasons of life. Solomon writes in verse 8 that if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all, but let him

remember the days of darkness, for everything to come is futility (*hevel*). Here we see a call to a biblical *carpe diem*, enjoying life while recognizing that periods of hardship will come. Ecclesiastes 3:1-4 reminds us that there is an appointed time for everything under heaven. This rhythm is scheduled sovereignly by God, and the temporary nature of life highlights our desperate need for Jesus Christ, who provides eternal meaning beyond this temporary world.

Our final division is minding our responsibility, found in verses 9 and 10. Verse 9 states, "Rejoice, young man, during your childhood... yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things." Solomon commands young people to pursue joy, but includes a massive theological caveat. This is not a license for unhindered hedonism or self-gratification. You can enjoy hobbies, but you must ensure they do not compromise your witness or violate scriptural commands, such as regularly forsaking the corporate gathering of believers (Hebrews 10:25). I have two points for the young people today. First, give your best years to the Lord. Do not wait until you are old, less busy, or retired to serve Him. Offer the best version of yourself to your Creator, not the leftovers of a passing world. Second, cultivate a lifestyle that honors God in your thoughts, words, and actions. This connects to verse 10, which commands us to remove grief and anger from our hearts and put away pain from our bodies, practicing self-control because youth is fleeting.

The Book of Ecclesiastes began with the declaration that all is vanity under the sun, but nearing the conclusion, Solomon tells us to be bold, to rejoice, and to live life to the absolute fullest. We move from total meaninglessness to a life rich with purpose. Life under the sun will inevitably bring seasons of pain, loss, and difficulty; Christians are not exempt from these realities. However, how we view these days depends entirely on our relationship with God. Fearing, reverencing, and worshiping Him determines how we view eternity and the judgment to come. The ultimate answer to Solomon's dilemma is Jesus Christ. Because of His substitutionary death on the cross, we do not live and die hopelessly under the sun; we live securely under the bright morning star. Because of Christ, we can live boldly and joyfully, facing the coming judgment without dread and looking to eternity with absolute confidence. It is all because of Christ.