

14.4.24 pm

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Date: 14 April 2024

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

- [0 : 00] Good evening, a warm welcome to the service this evening. Again, good to see a few visitors with us and back with us this evening as well. We're going to begin this time of worship.
- We'll sing to God's praise and we'll sing from Psalm 16. We sing the first praise in the evening in Gaelic. So Psalm 16, the last two stanzas of the Psalm. We're in Ecclesiastes 9, which talks to us about being ready for death and being ready for life. And this is a psalm which points us forward to Jesus and points us forward to the resurrection life that we are given in Christ. Because my soul engraved to dwell shall not be left by thee, nor wilt thou give thine holy one corruption to see, thou wilt me show the path of life, of joys that is full store, before thy face at thy right hand are pleasures evermore.
- These two verses we'll sing to God's praise in Gaelic, remaining seated to sing. And after that, John McSween will come and lead us in a word of prayer in Gaelic, please. NINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNING .
- NINGNINGNINGNING Oh, she'd not pay you, no pay you at wide line in starlight.
- . .
- [3 : 36] NINGNINGNINGNING .
- .

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[14 : 59] Now the ground beneath wakes us his maker us his men curtain torn in tune then our race to life finish the victory cry is the power of the cross Christ became sin for us took the blame for the wrath we stand forgiven at cross O to see my name written in the wounds your suffering I am free death trust to life is trade one through your selfless love love!

This power of the cross! Son God straight for us!

What a what a cross we stand forgiven at the cross!

If you could turn now please in your Bibles to Ecclesiastes chapter 9.

Ecclesiastes chapter 9 as we carry on in our studies in Ecclesiastes. This was just on the table this morning under the desk so if somebody's lost or left behind an ESV Bible with a few bits and pieces of notes inside it, it looks pretty well read, then I'll leave it there, collect it at the end please.

[17 : 16] Ecclesiastes chapter 9, we'll read from verse 1 to verse 10. Ecclesiastes chapter 10.

But all this I lay to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God. Whether it is love or hate, man does not know, both are before him. It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears as is he who shuns an oath. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all.

And he says,

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going. Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us.

We'll sing again to God's praise, our mission praise, 1075. Jesus, all for Jesus.

[19 : 40] Jesus, all for Jesus.

Jesus, all I am and love, I never want to be. Jesus, all for Jesus.

All I am and love, I never want to be. Jesus, all for Jesus.

Jesus, all for Jesus.

All I am and love, I never want to be. Amen. If you could turn back, please, to Ecclesiastes chapter 9.

[21 : 48] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

heavenly father we thank you for your word and we thank you for the the hope of the gospel message we thank you for the power of the cross we thank you that death is crushed when we are trusting in Jesus he has taken the sting out of it we thank you for the life that is ours to live life which we begin to live in this world as we walk with you and life which is known in greater measure in all that's prepared for those who go from here to be with Jesus we thank you for the new heavens and the new earth we thank you for the prospect of all that's been promised for those who are in Christ when he returns and we ask Lord that every one of us here and any who may be listening or watching at a distance we pray that we would know the assurance that we will have a place prepared for us that we will have life assured to us and we thank you that the gospel is an offer the price is paid we thank you that it's a free offer it's a an offer to whosoever will come and we pray that each one of us this evening would come to Jesus that we would surrender our lives our all to the Lord Jesus that we would live lives which are pleasing to you that are honoring to him lives which will be satisfying to ourselves because we know Lord that the reality is the more we seek pleasure for ourselves the the less satisfied we are but the more we seek to live for your glory the more we know peace and purpose and joy in this world so bless your word to us we pray help us to to understand and bless each person who's here each person who watches at a distance bless each home that's represented we pray for those who are in the building we pray for perhaps some that we've left behind in our homes this evening we pray for those that we perhaps want to be sitting with us in the chairs around us and and yet who have no will to come and as we see them in our mind's eye we we pray for them and we ask Lord that you would work in each heart we thank you that you are the God who is able in a moment to quicken to awaken to to revive and so we ask Lord that as we think of those whom we love as we think of those whom we work with and we spend time with as we think perhaps even of those that we struggle with we bring them to you in prayer and we ask Lord that you would work in their lives that where there are those who are lost that you would seek them and Lord that they would be found that they would be saved by your amazing grace and where there may be others who are are your children but perhaps are lukewarm we pray that you would touch each heart and that you would draw them to yourself so we pray for ourselves we pray for those that we love we pray for all those that you you place upon our hearts that we would be burdened for bless them minister to them as we pray that you would minister to us take away our sin Lord we pray as we confess it pour out your spirit upon us we ask empty us of self and enable us to see Jesus for we pray these things in Jesus name and for his sake amen in this life we prepare for all kinds of of uncertainties we we step out of the house in the morning as we might have done this morning about 10 o'clock the the sun's shining and we we step out with

optimism but we take a jacket with us because it might rain it did rain not certain but as we step out of the house even when the sun is shining we tend to prepare for things that might happen things that are uncertain or when we make travel plans as we have to uh on an island we we book a ferry we book a flight but often we'll travel the day before the meeting that we know that we have to be at because we're just not certain that the ferry or the plane will go on the on the morning of the day of the meeting and even in terms of our admin our paperwork we we take out insurance for our homes and for our buildings for our contents for our cars perhaps for our pets for our mobile phones and we take out insurance just in case there's an accident or there's some kind of incident some kind of unforeseen situation that would land us in difficulty these things aren't certain they might never happen but we prepare regularly for the possibility of things that may not actually come to pass and all that is wise it's prudent it's prudent it's wise to prepare for things that may not actually be be uncertainties but one thing that is certain that many people actually make no preparation for is death and so Solomon if this is the the writer of this book Solomon teaches us that wisdom requires for us to be ready to die and only when we are ready to die can we actually be ready to to live and experience life in fullness so two points this evening first of all ready to die and secondly when we are ready to die then we can move on to the second point we're ready to live so verse one as we just step through the verses the title in the ESV for the section uh from verse one down to to verse six as death comes to all and uh the teacher Solomon says but all this I laid to heart examining it all how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God whether it is love or hate man does not know both are before it is the same for all since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked to the good and the evil to the clean and the unclean to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice as the good one is so as the sinner and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath the big picture the the the main point in this section as we step out into it is that all die the righteous and the wicked uh the good and the the evil the clean and the unclean the religious and the secular death comes to all that's the the the overwhelmingly clear point that is made in this section and that's just a fact it's a a teaching that comes to the uh the the teacher in this session but that's a fact that all of us cannot deny uh we look back over history and we see the evidence of this there have been some people who have lived good selfless lives they've made a difference

in a in a positive way and there have been some very bad people who have lived selfishly and have caused great harm and great violence but all die all share the the same destiny and so the teacher says it's the same for all the same event happens to all and for some it's it's after a lot of years and a full life and for others death comes suddenly and unexpectedly but death comes to all we might read this and think what's the what's the point in actually stating this so bluntly you know why does Solomon feel it's so necessary to state so so bluntly something that that's so obvious and actually so painfully obvious to us and i think the reason that this is stated so so so boldly so bluntly is because many people never face this fact there are many people who live as if they were never going to die we wouldn't have to walk long we wouldn't have to wander long through the streets of tarbert even to find somebody who has no thought of death and any thought of death that may come to him will be pushed away immediately so no preparation is made because no thought is given and so Solomon almost provocatively states this so clearly death comes to all and this is something that our culture whichever decade we look back over it is so reluctant to actually face and think back to the 1970s there's some Bob Dylan fans here and one of the the songs that he sang in the 70s was a song about being forever young think back to the 90s there are some people who can remember songs by a band called Oasis and they sang about being young and invincible their main most famous song was about living forever but the truth is we're we're not going to live forever here under the sun we are not going to be forever young in this world and if the mirror doesn't show us that fact day by day Solomon is confronting us with with that fact death comes to all verse 3 he continues this is an evil in all that is done under the sun that the same event happens to all also the hearts of the children of man are full of evil and madness is in their hearts where they live and after that they go to the dead so Solomon not only does he tell us the plain facts that all die but he also makes clear in this section that that this is an evil thing death is not something that we just shrug our shoulders over death is is not something that we're we're neutral towards death makes us sad death makes us angry death is evil that's why Jesus was angry when he was confronted with death remember in John chapter 11 Jesus uh he he he goes in response to the message of Mary and Martha to see his

friend Lazarus who is sick and as Jesus journeys in the direction of Lazarus uh Lazarus he dies and Jesus goes to the place uh where his friend uh Lazarus lies and and he is dead and he sees the the the the the the sorrow he sees the grief that surrounds him in that situation and it says in John chapter 11 that that Jesus was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled and in the Greek i'm no Greek scholar but in the Greek it's made clear that within that phrase deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled uh there is anger as Jesus sees death he is angry why is he angry because he was seeing the evil effect of sin and satan so death comes to all because all are sinners the wages of sin a universal truth the wages of sin as sin has come into the world is death so all die but this is an evil thing verse 4 but he who is joined with all the living has hope for a living dog is better than a dead lion for the living know that they will die but the dead know nothing and they have no more reward for the memory of them is forgotten their love and their hate and their envy have already perished and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun now what do we make of these verses how how can we how can we sort of put a headline over these verses well without going into the the details of them i think the summary for this section from verse 4 to verse 6 is where there's life there's still hope where there's life there's hope remember the the parable in uh luke chapter 16 you don't need to go there just now but remember the parable in luke chapter 16 uh of lazarus and the rich man in that parable uh the rich man he's dead and he's in hell and he sees those who are in heaven he sees this place where there is life he recognizes those whom he swept to the side during his time in life and he recognized them in the place of of life and yet he is in this place of of death and he can't get to the place of life and so abraham uh says to him as he as he has this conversation uh with with the rich man abraham says to the rich man between us and you a great chasm has been set in place so that those who want to go from here to you cannot nor can anyone cross over from there to us so what's the point well the point the point is as long as we are alive in this world and this is a point that whether you're in in s1 or primary whatever or whether you're 95 it's easy to understand and it's important that we grasp it's the point of this the point is as long as we are alive in this world there is the opportunity to trust god as long as we have breath as long as we have today

[38 : 15] as long as we are in the the land of the living we have the opportunity to trust god to seek forgiveness and to receive eternal life to receive a place in heaven so tonight we who solomon here calls the living we have we have the offer of hope and that hope is found in trust in jesus so let me ask every one of us here tonight have we trusted in jesus the busy middle aged to those who are moving through the years have we trusted in jesus do we have eternal hope do we have sure and certain hope it's only found and trust in jesus if we want to be ready to die and none of us know that the day the hour we will die if we want to be ready to die we need to trust in jesus whilst we still can and we can today john chapter 3 verse 16 you know it so well for god so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life whoever here whoever out there believes in jesus tonight there's the promise that they will not perish they will not die it's eternal life john chapter 11 as he speaks to uh those who are mourning as he prepares uh to to raise up his friend lazarus jesus says i am the resurrection and the life whoever believes in me though he die yet shall he live and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die and then jesus says to them and he says to us do you believe this it's 2 corinthians 6 2 in a favorable time says the lord said to the apostle paul in a favorable time i listened to you and a day of salvation i have helped you behold you behold now is the favorable time behold now is the day now is the day of salvation not tomorrow not next week not when you're 30 not when you're 40 not when you're 60 not when you're 90 i've visited homes and spoke to people in their 90s who've said not yet and who've gone to the end of their days as far as i know saying not yet the lord says 2 corinthians 6 2 today is the day of salvation so solomon as he as he brings up the subject of death he's pointing us to jesus as we've seen all the way through this book uh and in the bleakness of this book often uh there is the the pointer to the to the lord jesus in the darkness of ecclesiastes we are being given an appetite for the light of christ as we come to terms with the fact that death comes to all we are being pointed to the savior who came to crush death

the ever thought about the fact that the only man who never had to die because he had no sin he chose to die he chose to go to the cross in our place all of us we have to die we have no option the wages of sin is death we are sinners we must die but jesus had no sin he didn't have to die he is life and yet he chose to come to this world to lay down his life to die in our place and he promises that if we believe in him we have the assurance of eternal life his life and we will be made ready to die are you ready to die tonight it's the stark question in that location i hope none of us do die tonight but are we ready to die one of the commentators david gibson is it says looking hard at death can pave the road to life and so solomon in these verses he he makes us look hard at death in the hope that we will look for life and that life comes in and through jesus so in christ we are made ready to die in christ we have life that's eternal and in christ we have life in this world so not only when we trust jesus are we made ready to die but we're also made ready to live and that's our second and our final point that takes us from verses 7 through to verse 10 ready to die secondary ready to live i've told you before that i like airports some people hate airports they hate going and all the stuff that goes around the airports i i like airports but i only i only like airports once i've checked in and got through all the security checks and everything's done once all the important stuff is done once i'm ready to fly i like to wander about the place get a coffee take a wander through a few shops have a cake sit down savour it and watch all these interesting people just pass me by it's a great hour or two in an afternoon when you're ready to fly and i know it's not the the best illustration but when we are ready to fly from time to eternity when we have trusted god when we know that we are ready for the hereafter then and only then can we really enjoy life here if you're not prepared to die if you're not prepared for eternity for for that never-ending eternity that spans before us how can we possibly enjoy life this little life but once we know that we're we're ready to go from this world to eternity and we are secure we are safe we can enjoy this life we can see this life for what it is and in perspective when we're ready to die we're actually made ready to live

when we're ready for eternity we can actually begin to enjoy this small segment of time that god has allowed us to have and what we're encouraged to do in verses 7 to 10 is to enjoy life so what are we to enjoy in terms of life what is what is a life that is enjoyed look like well be interesting to ask that question what does it look like to enjoy life what would what would we need to have to enjoy life well what we see in the the verses 7 through 10 is it's not the the huge expensive decadent things that give us the greatest joy it's the simple things with the people that god puts around us so there's uh one two three uh four things i'll just give you the points we'll be done by seven don't panic there's four things uh that solomon highlights in this next section uh he says enjoy your meals it's good news for some of us enjoy your meals enjoy marriages you know we had a marriage here on uh friday a wedding celebration enjoy marriages and parties these special occasions says says solomon that's the second thing the third thing he says enjoy marriage enjoy your marriages and the last thing he says is enjoy your work work so first of all uh enjoy enjoy your uh your meals verse 7 go eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart for god has already approved what you do when we were flying back sorry to talk about london again um but uh it just came as an illustration of my mind when we were flying back from from london last week we were sitting on the plane and um marie asked the question of all of us what did you enjoy most in the in the few days that we had away and uh the girls were answering and i was sitting there thinking what what did i see here what what did i enjoy most and uh there's lots of things i enjoyed uh the sights were good it's great to experience and see the sights uh there's lots that i enjoyed about the time in london but you know the first thing that came to my mind when i thought about what i enjoyed most in london it's a cheeseburger it was a beautiful burger and uh it had uh it's a nice beef patty and it had a melted cheese and it had a a couple of things of bacon on it and there was onion rings in there and it was crispy chips and this cheeseburger wasn't just any cheeseburger the bun was actually dipped in gravy and it had a full sugar coke to go with it and i loved that cheeseburger then the following day we went out for breakfast to to this wee place in covent garden and we had waffles and we had bacon and we had cheese and we had syrup and we had amazing coffee and i enjoyed these meals and i felt a wee bit guilty actually about thinking that the first thing that came to my mind was a burger and some waffles but i think solomon says to me no that's a good answer enjoy your meals be thankful to god for the for the bread and the wine that he's approved for you to eat and part of living and part of enjoying life it's savoring and being thankful for the the things that the lord puts even on our plates when we have the the children's prayer meeting i've said this so many times

they thank god each week for a cozy house and a roof over their heads and food on their plates and that's a good thing part of enjoying life is enjoying the good gifts that he has given to us we can worship the lord at least three times a day as we as we uh as we go and eat and drink so enjoy life says solomon enjoy your meals why don't you make a cheeseburger this week put away the salad second thing enjoy marriages and parties um verse eight let your garments always be white let not oil be lacking on your head now going back in time to uh the average jewish home at the time this was written we are speed the commentator says life was difficult in the average home but every family knew how to enjoy special occasions such as weddings and reunions that's when they wore their white garments white garments with a symbol of joy and anointed themselves with expensive perfumes instead of the usual olive oil these occasions were few so everybody made the most of them think about jesus and in john chapter 2 we see him and where is he he's at a wedding think about the the very different accounts that were given of jesus as he moves from place to place that's so often the encounters that we read of are encounters where he's eating and he's drinking and he's spending time with the people that are around him and these are things that jesus enjoyed in this world if we want to see life in all its fullness we see it in jesus and he's out and about and he's amongst people and one of the the things that uh it should be part of our lives as we enjoy them is to go out and to enjoy these special occasions marriages and these parties that uh we're given occasion to to go to solomon says yeah put on the put on the glad rags get out the white clothes splash on the brute 33 if it still exists enjoy them enjoy your meals enjoy marriages and and uh parties of course there's there's a line here we've got to watch this is not taken to excess this is not some kind of warrant for gluttony and for drunkenness and for all kinds of hedonism these are good gifts these are occasions that we're to enjoy the third thing is uh we're to enjoy marriage verse 9 enjoy life with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life i'm not sure that would be the best text for an engagement card or an anniversary card enjoy life with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun because that is your portion in life enjoy life with the wife whom you love says solomon how many couples and often christian couples i get to a place where they endure marriage rather than enjoy it and where they stop communicating and just suffer each other that wasn't god's design remember back in the very beginning eve was good for adam and adam was good for eve that's the way it was that's the way it should still be and it takes work work because every marriage is two sinners living with each other sometimes annoying each other

but where god has given us a wife or a husband we can and we should enjoy life together now solomon if it's solomon that's writing this he hadn't got this one right he'd gone way off course in this one he had made a mess of marriage a thousand times over and so perhaps he writes with some regrets but god uses him to say to us enjoy marriage with the wife singular that you love the final thing here is enjoy work uh... verse 9 second half into verse 10 and your toil at which you toil under the sun whatever your hand finds to do do it with your might for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom and sheil to which you are going solomon assumes that we will toil note that uh... that we will work and whatever it is that our our hand finds to do whether uh... we are a tradesman whether we're a teacher whether we're doing fishing or or whatever we're being taught here to do it with all our might jesus did that jesus did that the son of god he worked as a carpenter and i'm sure there were some jobs in the workshop that he enjoyed less than others but he would have worked with all his might then in ministry he was never half-hearted he was never sloppy he worked with all his might so enjoy your work says solomon work with with all your might and if we hate our jobs and if we're continually just tempted to to be a slacker maybe it's time that we we prayerfully consider looking for another job because a big part of living and enjoying life is working hard at something that we enjoy so we're to be ready to die we don't know the hour we don't know the day but if we're in christ if we've trusted him then we are made ready to die and when we are ready to die then and only then are we made ready to live and can we live and work to god's glory i think i'll stop there let's pray heavenly father we thank you for this your word and we pray that you would help us as we go from here to meditate upon it we thank you for life we thank you for today we thank you that you have given us this day this is the day the lord has made we thank you that we have much reason to rejoice and to be glad in it pray for anybody here tonight or anybody who who may be watching or listening who isn't yet ready to die any who have been pushing away the thought of death we thank you that as uncomfortable as it might seem to us in love lord you confront us with this time and time again and we pray that even this evening we would if we are not yet ready to die that we would

[58 : 30] bow before the lord jesus that we would confess our sin that we would trust in him and that we would know that we are safe for eternity and we thank you that when we are safe for eternity we can really enjoy our time in this world knowing knowing that every good gift that we receive whether it's our meals whether it's marriage whether it's the occasions that we attend whether it's the work that you put before us to do we thank you that when when we know that these are gifts that have come from your hand we can enjoy them and we can work and we can eat and we can drink and we can live in a way that brings glory to your name to help us to do that we pray and hear our prayers take away our sin help us to have our eyes now focused on jesus as we we conclude in praise and we ask all this in jesus name amen we sing to finish the the well-known hymn mission praise 51 be thou my vision o lord of my heart not the all else to be

NING With me, thou with me, Lord.

Thou my great Father, I lie to Son. Thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.

He are my blood to shield sword for the fight. Be thou my dignity, thou my delight.

Thou my soul's shelter, thou my high tower. Praise thou the heavenward, O God of my heart.

[61 : 29] In church I heed not, or unto empty grace. Thou mine inheritance, thou and always.

Thou and the holy first in my heart. Thou my King of heaven, my treasure, thou art.

Thou my King of heaven, brother in turn equal. May I reach heaven's joys, O right and son.

Heart of my own heart, whatever befall. Still be my vision, O ruler of all.

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit, be with us all now and forevermore.

[62 : 42] Amen.