

MAKE THE BEST OF YOUR YOUTH

Reading: Ecclesiastes 11:9 – 12:14

Singing: 259:1-3 – 40:5, 6 (after law) - 1:1-5 – 246:1-3 – 428:3, 5

Many people find that the most beautiful and special part of their earthly life is when they are young.

It is a time God has given us to enjoy.

To enjoy?

Yes, God speaks positively about the joy of youth.

Skipping calves and jumping lambs do not cause a frown on God's face.

In one of the prophecies about the new world, Isaiah wrote about young children playing.

Jesus referred positively to children playing in the markets in Matthew 11.

Play and joy belong to childhood.

Solomon even counselled in Ecclesiastes 11:9, *“Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth: and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes.”*

It is much easier to be joyful when you are young. There are fewer cares and responsibilities. You can rest in your parents' care.

Not knowing all the troubling or discouraging things happening in the world will help children and youth to be joyful.

Many of you children do not feel the pain or tiredness of bodies that older people often feel.

Yet in the meantime, let us not forget that children's hospitals are full.

Many, many children in the world never have a care-free youth.

How many children are born and raised in warzones?

Thousands or even millions of children in some countries labour more hours each week than adults do in our country.

Many have experienced unbelievable trauma.

Be mindful of those young boys and girls who are enslaved in poverty and powerlessness.

Still, do not forget to rejoice while you are young, for it is the gift of God.

However, this rejoicing is not without boundaries.

For God's law always remains the boundary.

Besides, the future judgment seat of God ought to keep us sober.

Therefore Solomon added an important truth to the verse 'Rejoice, O young man:'

“But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”

In other words, Young people, rejoice in your youth in such a way that you never need to look back with regret when you are old.

Rejoice so that when you called to stand before the Lord Jesus,
you need not fear His frown about what you did,
or about how you wasted yourself or the precious time He gave you.

The Scripture we are called to obey provides us a necessary instruction.

Let us consider Ecclesiastes 12:1, where we read,

“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.”

This verse contains God’s direction to make the best of your youth.

According to God’s wisdom you do this when:

1. You remember that He is your Creator
2. You remember Him in your youth
3. You remember Him now

First, you make the best of your youth when you remember that God is your Creator.

What is meant with the word *‘Remember?’*

That is not that you simply do not forget the fact. Most of us will not forget that God is our Creator.

Rather it means you consider this truth and take the right action.

To illustrate the difference, think of a cellphone.

It is one thing to remember to take it along.

But if you do not remember to check the messages
and respond to them, then you might as well have left it at home.

In the same way God is telling you,

“Don’t just think about Me once in a while.

Instead live so that I am always in your sight and thoughts.

Let Me be present in all you do!”

Why is that so important? Why I am to remember my Creator like that?

There are two good reasons for that.

First, because your Creator owns you.

He made you and He made *you* for Himself!

Hear Revelation 4:11, *“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.”*

Imagine you bought a new mountain bike.

Would you appreciate it if this bike would ride off by itself to go for a swim in the ocean?

Of course, I know that a bike cannot do that.

But you get the point. You own the bike, and the bike serves you!

And for a bike to go for a swim in the salty ocean is not good for the bike and it does not serve you!

Who owns you? Who is your ultimate Possessor?

Not your parents, not your country, not even yourself, but your Creator.

You simply do not have a right to yourself.

God made you for Himself and for His pleasure.

God created you to serve Him with all the skills and resources He has given you.

Do you want to know the great secret about enjoyable living which many discover far too late?

It is this truth: *when you live to God’s glory and answer His purpose, then and only then will you actually enjoy living!*

Our chief purpose is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

If that is the way you really live, you will taste true joy.

Think of your tongue. One of its purposes is to help you to taste what you eat.

If your taste buds are not working, all your eating will not be quite as enjoyable.

It is the same with living: *if you are not glorifying your Creator, you are not tasting the joy of living.*

Do you see that God’s care for your enjoyment is expressed in His command to remember Him?

Oh, how good and how great God is! He seeks for your best!

The second reason why you are to remember Him as your Creator is that you need Him.

You cannot live without Him for a moment.

Acts 17:25 reveals that *“He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.”*

Every breath you suck in or blow out comes from your Creator and Provider.

Every breath!

We do an average of 12 to 20 a minute.

Each of them is provided by our Creator!

Not only does He give us our breath. He preserves, feeds, clothes, upholds, guides and overloads us daily with blessings freely given.

Now, remember, what you and I have received in this life is not what everyone in the world is receiving.

Some of you who are not even 10 years old have already received more than others receive over an entire lifetime.

Is it not good for us to remember Him daily?

Shall we daily trace the slice of bread and cheese or sausage to where it came from?

Though perhaps your mom's hands prepared the food, though the farmer sowed seed and harvested, it is ultimately your Creator Who provided it for you to eat.

Would we not feel more devoted to Him when we remember our Creator and Provider's active role in every little detail of our life?

We need to remember Him because we really need Him.

You may not be convinced of that, but without Him you *can* do nothing.

You cannot find your way in the maze of your life.

You cannot cope with the realities of this fallen world.

You cannot deliver yourself from your spiritual condition.

Oh, what a wonderful Creator do we have!

Instead of letting us go in the path of destruction we entered in Paradise, He came to seek!

He is pursuing us with His heart and hands full of goodness.

For He remembers that you and I are dust, feeble and helpless in our fallen condition.

Not only do we need Him as our Creator but also as our Re-Creator.

He needs to be our personal Saviour.

Are you remembering to seek Him while He is near?

Are you asking Him like the thief on the cross, "Remember me ...?"

So, we are to remember Him for two good reasons: first, your Creator owns you; second, you need Him for every detail of life and that includes our spiritual needs.

Remember now Thy Creator ... but how am I to remember Him?

Remember Him first of all by meditating on His glorious character as Creator.

What God reveals of Himself in His works of creation is so marvelous.

Seek to see His eternal power in the glories of His creation!

Remember when you see a butterfly, you are seeing a work no engineer can ever make!

You will stand in awe of your Creator only when you study His works prayerfully. Meditate often on Who God is as revealed by nature and His Word.

Secondly, remember Him as the Lawgiver.

Consider what happens if you break natural or physical laws that the Creator has put in place.

For example, it is a natural law that alcohol affects your body and mind differently than milk. According to the laws of the Creator, using alcohol and then a driving a car can be fatal. Why? Simply because of the natural laws the Creator put into place! Driving superfast on a wet road and pushing your limits is challenging the Creator's laws. We must remind ourselves: The Creator's natural or physical laws know no mercy! Is eating junk food, smoking, or making super long days with a lack of normal sleep remembering your Creator's laws? Do you remember why our Creator made these physical laws about food and sleep? Breaking these laws will permanently ruin your health. It is not only foolish, but also sinful.

Even more true are our Creator's moral laws given us in the Ten Commandments. Thou shalt love the Lord above all and every neighbor as yourself is His Divine will for you. If you break any of those laws, then His law can only condemn you. God's Law cannot ever show you mercy. Anyone who has broken His law, stands guilty before Him! How dreadful to meet a holy and just God as a guilty man!

Thirdly, remembering your Creator means also to remember the Creator's gracious character. We are never to forget that the Creator is holy, just, and almighty! But He is also patient, good and loving. His goodness and greatness are truly immeasurable. You know what we did to Him in Paradise. We rebelled against our Creator. Though we disowned Him in an unprovoked riot of destruction, He did not disown us. Instead, He came into His ruined creation to bring the message of salvation. He has no desire in our death. He does not want to continue to live in separation from us but has made provision for reconciliation.

Jesus proclaimed Himself as the Door and the Way to God. In Him and through Him we can approach unto our holy and just Creator to seek His salvation for Christ's sake. In Jesus Christ, God the Creator has made it possible for you to be restored in communion with Him and eventually in a perfect, new creation. Often, very often, has your Creator been at your door already to call you to return to Him! Are you taking His call seriously? Are you remembering Him in your days of youth? Oh, do you remember to make use of Him Who offers Himself to us in His Word? Do you remember to turn to Him as the truth of God's law pricks your conscience?

Before we consider the second direction God gives us, let us sing together with Psalter 1:1-5.

God's Word reads, *"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."*

So why must we remember Him especially *in our youthful days*?

God Himself gives us a couple of strong reasons.

First, because when your body is still young, it does not hinder you as it does in old age.

In the rest of Ecclesiastes 12, Solomon gives us an accurate picture of an older person.

They cannot see and hear quite as well anymore (verse 2).

The trembling keepers of the house are shaky hands; they walk stooped over.

Their grinders, or teeth, fall out.

Getting out of the house, and also coming to church, is not so easy or even impossible for older people.

Often small things become huge problems that keep them awake or worried.

When you talk with the elderly, you notice that Solomon's words are still totally true.

One day you will be like that if it is the Lord's will you live as long as they.

Therefore, your Creator reminds you to remember Him long before those days begin.

Now your body is still strong. Now you are not hindered with as many health problems as you may face later.

Also, you are able to remember things better.

How much easier now to learn new things or new skills!

Be wise.

Use this fruitful period of your life to honour God and seek and serve Him with all your gifts and talents.

Do not forget what we learned earlier: He is your Creator.

He owns your strength, talents, intellect, resources, and opportunities!

Do not live to build your ego, acquire honour, be popular, have only fun, or only to accomplish your dream.

I do not know what your bedroom walls look like, but we see signs for sale that instruct us contrary to God's Word in this Scripture.

You are told *"Dream Big!"* or *"Follow your Dreams!"* or *"Be all you can be."*

But that is not how God instructs you: *Remember now your Creator in the days of thy youth.*

As said earlier, God does not forbid joy and pleasure.

In chapter 2:24, God instructs us with these words, *"There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour."*

In chapter 3:11 we read that *"He that made everything beautiful in His time."*

God allows us to enjoy the beautiful things of life in eating and drinking, in friendship and marriage, in work and play.

The problem is, however, that while young, we tend to forget that we will not always be young.

Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

The second reason to remember your Creator while young is that the days of youth will soon die, never to return in your life.

If you have wasted those days of youth or misused them, they will never be returned.

A while back, I bought a 2x4 beam. It was straight as a pin when I bought it.

But I got sidetracked for a few months and did not get to use it.

When I finally got to it, the entire beam was ruined by the drying process in the sunlight.

It had cracked and warped so badly that I could not use it anymore.

So it is with the years of youth.

If we ill-spend them, we will be warped so badly that all the rest of our life we will feel the ill effects of them.

Do you realize that the choices you make in your youth will most of the time be with us the rest of our lives?

It is true our parents' shaping or misshaping leave permanent results in our life. Good parenting is particularly important.

But in this verse, God is speaking to you, young people, about *your* responsibility and *your* choices in your youth.

Are you approaching every choice, every act, every acceptance of an invitation or job offer with the prayer uttered by Saul, "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*"

You are making choices about your future study or work,

about places of living,

about friends to hang out with,

about life-partners,

about whether to try drugs or alcohol,

about how you use your free time,

about where you surf on the internet and what sites you go to on your phone.

Remember, oh, please, remember the C-C principle.

Every Choice has a Consequence.

You reap what you sow.

How can a man take fire into his bosom and not be burned?

Who can step with bare feet on hot coals of fire and not get roasted?

Therefore, God is pleading with you to remember Him while you are young.

The choices you make in your youth are what you will live with the rest of your life.

Genesis 34:1 informs us about Dinah, Jacob's daughter.

She chose to go and hang out with the daughters of the land.

While among them, Shechem took her and raped her.
Never again was the life of Dinah the same.
She could never wipe away the shame and defilement she experienced of that vicious act.
Solomon himself made foolish choices in his youth he could not reverse in his old age.
He brought wounds and dishonour upon himself that left scars.
Friends, listen to God's will.
Remember Him. Acknowledge Him in all your ways.
Do not go against His revealed will.
Do not defy His laws.
Search the Word to make sure you are on the Creator's wavelength.

Dear young people, heed your Creator's call to *remember Him in the days of your youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*

Those words, "*when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them*" brings me to the third reason why we are to remember our Creator in our youth.

In your youth, you form your mindset and habits of thinking by what you expose yourself to.

Again, this is a huge responsibility for us who are parents.

But in this Scripture, God is addressing especially you who are young.

You are responsible for guarding what you expose your mind to.

What we allow to be fed into our thoughts will influence our mindset, in either the right or wrong direction.

What you feed your mind on will determine how you will think.

Be careful and discerning about what comes up on social media.

Do not think it just flows like a waterfall over our mind and then it is gone.

Every picture, every post are thousands of drops that do sink in and absorbed.

You simply cannot shake yourself from these drops as a dog that gets out of the water.

Your mind is like elastic clay which soon hardens into a mould of thinking that is set for a lifetime.

Can God not break those mindsets? Can He not change them?

Absolutely. His grace is not only amazing; it is also powerful.

But consider this true story. Some years ago, I spoke with a rock musician-turned-preacher.

He used to play Rock-and-Roll music and lived in the mindset presented by that music.

God's grace converted him, and he has been used greatly in God's service to preach God's Gospel.

But did that cancel the tunes he used to play and love?

Did that erase the words and phrases he sang and even wrote?

No, it did not. Each time a familiar tune or phrase reached his ear, the past revived.

It became a battle to suppress the music that before he had been involved with.

Therefore, young friends, remember now your Creator in the day of your youth.

Accustom your mind to wholesome truths and clean activities.

No area more illustrates the disastrous results of youth-time sowing and adult-time reaping than pornography as well as violent and impure video gaming.

The exposure to either leave biological footprints that affect your thoughts and even your delights in future years.

Flee these toxic influences which harden your conscience and pollute your mind.

Remember that unwholesome influence turns into unwholesome thinking, which turns into unwholesome living; and finally, it will lead to an uncomfortable dying.

All neglect of reading and hearing God's Word, studying to understand and wrestling at God's throne to believe His Word in your youth will great compromise and hinder you when you are older.

Instead, seek the pure wind of the Scripture's teaching.

Expose your mind to teachers who expound the Word of God faithfully.

Take up and read good books which challenge and direct your heart.

Lastly, let us once more listen to God's directions and focus our thoughts on one word that needs our attention, "*Remember **now** thy Creator ...*"

Now!

God is calling you to act now.

He summons you not to delay remembering Him.

Tomorrow is uncertain; even the end of today is uncertain.

Today He calls us to remember Him; tomorrow He may summon us to appear before Him.

All of us who are now older know how short the days of youth are.

We did not believe it when we were young.

How many people sitting here now wish they could turn the clock backwards!

Do not join their ranks, my friends!

Remember *now* thy Creator, while He calls and while He is near, while you are still young.

There is no time in your life more beautiful than your youth.

But how much more beautiful when we may be devoted to serving God and following Jesus in these youthful years!

Let it be clear, the day to begin to remember your Creator is today!

Listen which day God speaks of in Psalm 95:7, “*For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart...*”

We harden our hearts when we ignore and reject His call to hear Him today.

Today He waits to hear your response because He is longsuffering.

But do not abuse His longsuffering.

His longsuffering is not *always*-suffering or *always*-patient.

There will come a moment when the measure of God’s patience is ended.

Where would you be or where would you go if this moment the axe laying at the root of your tree would be taken up and this moment you would be cut down?

Is your life leaning toward God? Are you living for Him, seeking His will, prioritizing His Kingdom?

Or is your life leaning towards the earthly: making more money, having more fun, trying different pleasures, accomplishing greater things, scoring more goals, pursuing larger dreams?

Today the Spirit is definitely striving with your spirit.

You know God is knocking at the door of your heart.

You hear Him—but will you listen and obey Him?

He is still waiting and is ready to receive you, guide you and lead you in the way everlasting.

But are you willing to be guided contrary to your feelings or your earthly desires?

There are other voices you hear, I am sure.

They tell you there is time enough to get serious about God and eternity.

The devil is expert in reasoning that others were saved after a length of wild living.

Maybe your peers put pressure on you not to be so silly or make a fuss: *it is all clean fun!*

Friends may tempt you to think that Jesus will put an end to all fun and pleasure and that to live as a true Christian is quite drab and boring.

Oh, nothing is farther from the truth.

But though all God’s people will testify to the contrary, you will not believe it.

Your mind is already poisoned to think your own way.

We need an infinitely greater power to convince that us that we are wrong.

Do not believe the suggestions that you have a good excuse to give minimal time to God.

Sure, you are busy with study, school, work, or family, or even with needy people in your life.

Add to this the huge distraction of a boy or girl friend.

How beautiful these relationships are if they are pursued in God’s Way.

Yet there is one thing you will all experience if God grants you the blessing of a relationship that may lead to marriage: *they take much time and thought especially when you become a father or mother.*

Therefore, again, remember *now* thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

I recall a conversation I once had with a young mother.

She was rather exhausted during the difficult time of raising a young family.

She shared how she was glad she had read many books by various Puritan authors in her teen years when she had much more ‘free time.’

All that reading became like ballast in a boat.

Do you know what the ballast is?

That is the weight in the hull of a boat which gives the boat depth and stability, especially in rough waters.

How blessed this young mother was now in those stressful years of motherhood with the solid ballast of her mind stocked with Biblical teaching.

Let that example urge you to *Remember NOW thy Creator.*

Is it true that the older we become, the colder we get?

Yes, it is true.

It is as true as the image of a young fruit tree compared to an old one.

While young, the stem and branches are still bendable.

The farmer can guide the young tree so that its branches are spread out to allow sun and wind to its fruit.

But if the farmer delays several years, bending and spreading will no more be possible.

Young friends, can you see why the Spirit added the word “NOW” in our text!?

Once a mother was urging her young daughter to seek the Lord with this Scripture.

Her daughter answered her, “Mother, it is all good and well what you say. But I am only young once.

These are the years I like to use for myself, to enjoy all the things I can do while young.

Once I am older, then it is time to settle down and get serious.

Then I will live for God.”

Her wise mother did not answer this foolish talk.

She waited until her daughter’s birthday to answer.

Upon coming home from school on her birthday, her daughter was greeted with a large, wrapped bouquet of flowers on the table.

Excited about who would have sent her such a large bunch of flowers, she tore the wrapping.

To her dismay, inside lay a set of dried-up roses.

A small card was attached to the bouquet, with the simple words, "From your mother!"

Somewhat offended and dismayed, she turned to her mother,

"What is this supposed to mean?"

She answered, "My dear, these flowers picture your gift to God.

You first want to spend the beautiful years of your youth for yourself.

Then you plan to give God the rest of your years.

In other words, all you want Him to have are the wilted and dried up years of your life."

Let us take this striking lesson along, my dear young friends.

God seeks the first fruits of your life.

Will you offer Him a blemished, spent life?

Blemished and weakened with age?

Soiled with more sin?

Corrupted and twisted through the pursuit of the impure?

Will you give Him the leftovers of a life while you give yourself and your earthly friends the flower of your life?

Let us therefore hear once more this direction of your Creator and Possessor Who seeks your best: *"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."*

Amen.