

Without Christ, Death is Our Enemy

[But with Christ Death is the Gateway to Life]

Series: Finding the Meaning of Life

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Text: Ecclesiastes 7:1-6

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Theme and Text: Open your Bible to **Ecclesiastes 7:1-6**. The title of tonight's message is "Without Christ, Death is our Enemy".

We are a culture that is fixating on living long, curing disease, and abolishing death. Death is such a depressing subject, that the majority of people simply get fixated on the here and now, and forget about the fact that death is coming.

The truth is that none of us knows just when we are going to meet God. It can come very suddenly. It can come without warning, and suddenly you are standing in the presence of God to be judged. There are two types of people at the judgment. Jesus says you are either a sheep or a goat.¹ You are either saved or lost. Death is unpredictable. None of us have a guarantee on life. None of us knows if we are going to make it home safe from the service tonight.

Death is all around us. This year, it is likely that someone you love will die. **Hebrews 9:27**, "And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment".

People don't like to talk about death unless they know Jesus Christ. Why is that? I believe there are two reasons from our text tonight. Death points us to personal responsibility for our life. And death points us to responsibility with God. It is both a biographer and an evangelist.

I. **Death is an enemy to the lost because it is a the great Biographer.** Solomon says in **Ecclesiastes 7:1**, "A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth." When you die, someone else writes your obituary. Will they say you had a good name? It could happen today. **It's a serious thing to realize that your life has consequences on people around you.**

A. **What will the fragrance of your legacy be after you die?** What is your legacy? **Ecclesiastes 7:1a**, "A good name is better than precious ointment".

A good name is better to have than costly perfume. Why is a good name compared to costly fragrance? In Solomon's day, there was no running water. People did not bathe

¹ **Matthew 24:31-34**, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" Then **verse 41**, "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"

every day. They did not wash their clothes often. Costly oils were very valuable and made a person pleasant to be around.

Application: Do you realize that after you die, you will leave a fragrance for all to evaluate. Are you leaving behind the legacy of a Christian concerned with holy living? As Christians we are to seek to have the mind of Christ and to live the life of Christ. We are to “be holy” as He is “holy”.

Psalm 101:2-3, David says, “I will ponder the way that is blameless. Oh when will you come to me? I will walk with integrity of heart within my house; 3 I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me”. The word “worthless” can also mean “wicked or godless”.

Often people live for the moment, selfish lives for the here and now, and they miss the fact that each one of us is leaving a legacy. The Scripture is clear that those who know Christ will leave a legacy that is a blessing.

- **Proverbs 10:7**, “The memory of the righteous is a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot.”

How will you be remembered? Do *you* have a good name?

B. Your legacy is more important than your job or how many friends you have or how much money you make.

- **Proverbs 22:1**, “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.”

Death is the great biographer. It put’s the period at the end of your life. Your legacy will be evaluated by others.

C. For believers in Christ, the day of one’s death is better than the day of one’s birth.

Then Solomon says something amazing, astounding: “the day of death [IS BETTER] than the day of birth.” How can he say that? For the righteous, the day of death is a day of victory!

1 Corinthians 15:54-57, “Death is swallowed up in victory.” 55 “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Application: Do you fear death? Please understand if you need to live in the shadow of the cross. If you fear death, then you are not focused on the shadow of the Cross. It is our Lord Jesus Christ who gives us the victory over death through the Cross. Why would anyone fear death? Because of the possibility of deserved eternal condemnation from the

Holy God who created us. **Romans 8:1**, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Transition: Death is the great biographer. Do YOU have a good name. When death came for Elijah, Elisha said, “Where is the God of Elijah?” What about your sons or daughters? Will they be saying when you die, “Where is the God of my Daddy and my Mama”?

Death will bring a period to your legacy. It could be today. People without Christ don’t want to think about this. It’s a serious thing to realize that your life has consequences on people around you. But your life also has consequences on your eternity.

II. **Death is an enemy to the lost because it is the great Evangelist.** If you have noticed, most people get uncomfortable when they are evangelized. Death tells us that there is an end – that we will all meet our Maker. Listen to Solomon.

Ecclesiastes 7:2, “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart.” When you walk into a funeral home, the greatest preacher is the deceased loved one. Though they are silent, they are shouting that one day, you too will die. Your life will certainly end. It may be today.

While many people like to attend a church where they are entertained, this not at all good for them. It may very well damn their soul. There was one thing that stirred Solomon up, and that was people who did not take death seriously!

What do we learn from Solomon? Considering our death and our own mortality is good because it focuses us on “our end” – we are all going to live forever somewhere.

Listen to death’s message.

A. Considering death is good because it causes the living to ponder eternity.

Ecclesiastes 7:2, “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart.”

Application: Take every opportunity to ponder your own mortality. Are you ready to die? If your car was hit head-on by a drunken driver or you went to the doctor and received a death warrant, would you be ready? Would you know where you are going? Ponder this. Solomon later says....

- **Ecclesiastes 8:8**, “No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the day of death.” Are you ready? It could happen anytime.

B. Considering death is good because it urges us to seek a solution.

Ecclesiastes 7:3, “Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad”. If sorrow is focused in the right direction—if it leads us to soul searching, it can make our heart glad. We will search until we find the solution. What is the cause of all

our sorrow in this life? Sin is the ultimate culprit. Before sin there was no sorrow in the universe.

Sorrow in your life lead can lead you to the solution to all pain and death and suffering. “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Our problem in life is our own sin. We need to settle that through Jesus Christ. When it comes down to it, do you have a settled certainty that you will enter into the glory of heaven?

Sorrow and seriousness helps focus the heart on eternity, which will make the heart glad! Sorrow gets us to start soul-searching. It gets us to consider that all might not be well with our soul and to seek for an eternal solution. Sadness is meant to lead to gladness in the Lord.

For the Christian, God often uses times of crisis to change our heart, so sadness is often turned into gladness. Have you had a time of deep sorrow where a loved one died, and God drew you close, and it made you glad? Often the difficult times of our life are the best teachers.

- C. **Considering death is good because it causes believers to focus on what is most important.** Ecclesiastes 7:4, “The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth [PLEASURE].” Ultimately all that we see is going to pass away, so we believers choose wisdom over folly. We weigh all things. We are going to give an account to God! Believers, if given the choice, focus their interests on that which is serious over that which is silly.

Application: Only the fool avoids the serious subjects of life. Some of course, take this too far—they morbidly focus on sin and death. Now understand that Solomon is not telling us never to laugh or lovingly tease our children. Christianity is not morbid, but it is the “good news”. Solomon is not telling the believer to morbidly focus on sin and death. Christianity deals with sin and death, but focuses on God’s love in Christ and the joy of His forgiveness. But though we as believers laugh and enjoy life – our goal and our god is not pleasure. Our goal is to please God! At the core God’s people are serious minded people!

1. Wise people appreciate rebuke and correction.

Ecclesiastes 7:5, “It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools.” God’s people profit from people giving them a truthful, loving rebuke. We are to admonish one another as Christians. It is our responsibility. Those without Christ are prone to avoid the truth through foolish entertainment.

2. **Wise people will avoid laughter that drives us away from serious thought or that mocks God.** This is the laughter of fools. And it is meaningless with no good purpose.

Ecclesiastes 7:6, “For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fools; this also is vanity.” You can hear this crackling from most of the sitcoms and late night TV. It’s vain and useless. It doesn’t help us.

- We have to be careful of foolish laughter and crude silliness. We cannot disobey God or make light of Him for the sake of a joke. We cannot make light of anything sinful. Sin is serious. We ought to grieve at this kind of humor. Anything that makes light of God or laughs at sin is “crude joking”. Of course Paul tells us that “filthiness and crude joking” are forbidden (**Ephesians 5:4**). This eliminates about all of the stand up comics today.
- I have often missed an opportunity to address the issues of someone’s soul because I allowed myself to be drawn into silliness. There is a time for laughter and silliness. I can be used to calm someone down or to let someone know you are their friend. It can glue you together with a friend. But it must never distract from what is most important.

3. **Sadly, the lost are laughing themselves right to hell.** **Ecclesiastes 7:6**, “For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fools; this also is vanity.”

All the laughter of the lost is only to numb the pain of the present and future consequences of sin. And their laughter is vain and empty. There is no substance to it. The saved use laughter for a comfort and for edification.

Many people use laughter like a drug to keep their mind off of important things. Laughter in this way can distract the heart from what is most important. It is easy to get caught up in the laughter and hilarity of our day. Solomon says, for this reason, it is better to choose to go to a funeral home than to a bar-b-que. In the end what good does all the good times do if we miss Christ? **Verse 6**, “For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fools; this also is vanity.”

Truly, it is always God who has the last laugh. **Psalm 2**, “Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his anointed, saying, 3 “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.” 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision”.

So much of what is laughed at in the world today is a mockery of God or laughing at sin. Sin is rebellion against God. We must never laugh at sin. We are wise if we find our joy in Jesus Christ and we are silent when there is crude joking going on.

We ought to be known as people filled with the joy and gladness in Christ. In Christ there is a joy in Christ that is “unspeakable and full of glory”. True peace and contentment comes through knowing Christ!

**What can pry a person from vain silliness to a joy and contentment in Christ?
The pondering of their own mortality.**

Conclusion: Death puts everyone on the same page. We are all going to face God very soon. A hundred years from now, we will all be in eternity. That is a fact. By the end of this year, there may be one or more of us that are in eternity.

What if I knew? What if I knew one of you or that I was going to die before the end of this year. If I had that advance knowledge, would it sober you? Would you watch me more? How does a person live who knows he's facing death?

When a loved one near me was diagnosed with cancer, I asked them the question, what is the chance that you won't make it?

You know what her answer was? It's 100% that she was going to die. It's just a matter of when. We are all going to die. Without Christ, death is your enemy!

If you die, what will be written about you? What will be said of you? Get your priorities right! It is urgent that you make things right with the Lord.

For all who know Christ, death is not your enemy. Death is the door to eternal life. There is sorrow in death, but our sorrow is only temporary, and it is only on this side of eternity. When we reach the other side, God will wipe away all tears.

That should make our heart glad!