

02-05-26b Ecclesiastes

Well, that was a wonderful choice of song for the subject under discussion where it says give of your best to the master, give of the strength of your youth, throw your soul's fresh glowing ardor into the battle for truth. It's a reflection of the very truths that we're studying here in Ecclesiastes chapter 12, and I'm sure that's no mere coincidence. But we've seen Solomon emphasizing with these pictures, you know, there's nothing like an illustration or a picture to get something across that otherwise would just be an abstract concept.

And if you can, especially if you're sort of pragmatic and you're kind of down to earth, you like to see things in concrete terms. You like to have a way of thinking about something that boils it down into a manageable, you know, a lot of people before they do something will try to picture it or try to look at a picture. You know, they have diagrams how to put your kid's tricycle together you have under the Christmas tree or something.

They don't just say, give you some esoteric instructions. They give you a diagram. They give you a picture.

And so when you find parables and you find pictures and metaphors, similes and scripture, these are the truths that are most important. These are the ones that God is making memorable for us, something to stick with us and motivate us when we're in the midst of distraction and confusion. Did you ever try to think some deep philosophical thought when you're right in the middle of doing a task? You can't just stop and philosophize.

You can't stop and launch off into a soliloquy. To be or not to be, that is the question. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the... I mean, we just don't do that.

They do it in plays and they sometimes do it in forms of entertainment, but we've got things to do. We don't have time to sit there and think all these big deep thoughts. And we sometimes feel guilty because we say, well, I'm a believer and I have the word of God in my soul.

How come I'm thinking all these deep thoughts when I'm trying to go through my day? Well, God understands that. And so he gives us these pictures. You can flash a mental image of the five loaves and the two fishes.

You can flash a mental image of the leper, those 10 lepers that Jesus, they cried out to Jesus from afar. And he said, go show yourselves to the priests. And as they went along, they were healed.

And the one leper looked and realized he was healed. And he turned and went back and fell at Jesus' feet and gave glory to God. And Jesus said, were there not 10 cleansed? Why is there only one that has returned to give glory to God? And he's a Samaritan.

It's a graphic picture and it makes us realize that God's grace to us ought to turn us around. It ought to bring us to our knees in gratitude and in glory and recognition of what God has done for us through Christ. It's an easy, quick thing to remember.

We can get caught up. We can find grace coming our way. God makes provision.

God cares for us. God protects us. God delivers us.

And we think, boy, that's great. Well, if we were Catholic, what would we do? We'd go light a candle. But what does the scripture tell us? What does that picture tell us? That in some sense in our souls, it ought to turn us around.

God's grace. Do you not know that the grace of God leads you to change of mind, leads you to repentance? It is not the will of God that any should perish, but that all should come to what? A turning point, a change of mind. And that's true not just for eternal salvation, but it's true in different areas of our lives.

We can be hitting on seven out of eight cylinders, but we've got one area in life that's really a struggle, or it's an area where we haven't yet struggled to the point of shedding blood. And the grace of God will attempt to turn us, will seek to turn us. So these graphic pictures, parables, similes, proverbs, that's what they're designed to do.

And that's what we have here. He says, why didn't you just come out and say, you know, you really need to get with the program and have something in your hand when you depart this life? Why didn't you just come out and say that? Well, we've been saying that for weeks and weeks and weeks, but what sticks in your mind more? I mean, even that, having something in your hand, that's a picture, isn't it? We're not saying, you know, you want to be able to be a judged worthy and righteous at the judgment. We know what it means to come away with something, a remainder after the subtraction is done.

And that's the picture we have here. So he uses this picture of the end of physical life to talk about the fact that this opportunity that we have in this phase of God's plan for us, while we are time bound, while we are earth bound, while we are still struggling against sin, is an opportunity that has its limits. It doesn't go on forever.

So while we're in the days of our youth, before the evil days come and the years strike where we say there is no hep-hets, there is no desirable goal that can be seized and laid hold of. Remember, David says this in the Psalms, the dust cannot praise you. If we're going to give praise to God, if we're going to reflect His glory, we've got to figure out how to do it now.

Well, so we've seen this metaphor of advancing years and the onset of old age and the loss of abilities. What does that mean to us? What should we think about when we think about the keepers trembling and the strong men being crooked and the grinders ceasing because they are

few? Well, I don't think anybody really looks forward to old age and the decrepitude that often accompanies it, but that's not ultimately what he's talking about. Joseph and I had a great talk earlier in the week about what should we bring from our study of prophecy.

There's a big interest in last things and left behind as a series and all of this. What's going to happen if people pour over Daniel and Ezekiel and Revelation? And those are metaphors and pictures and similes and parabolic expressions of what is yet to come. Well, it's the Word of God and every word is profitable for doctrine and reproof and correction and instruction in what? In things to come? I want to know what's going to happen.

I want to know which country is going to invade when. I want to know which army is going to be where. I want to know when the Antichrist is and what his name is and what country he's going to come from and what he's going to do with Israel and are they going to have temple worship? What is every word of Scripture profitable for? Reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness.

So I ask myself the question, or I ask Joseph the question. We ask each other the question. Here you are looking at all of these pictures in Revelation.

Well, so what? How does that instruct me in righteousness? What spiritual lesson should I bring from that? How does that turn me around and bring me to God in gratitude and bring me the opportunity to reflect His glory? It's more than just doping out what's going to happen and mapping out the progress of events in the tribulation. There is instruction there. And of course, we're not in Revelation, so I'm not going to tell you what it is.

I'm not sure I know what it is. But we are here in Ecclesiastes and we can figure out what this, you know, really the communication in the Bible, whether it's future or past, all serves the same purpose. All these things have been written for our instruction because the ends of the ages, the culmination of the ages has come upon us.

We are in the culminating phase of God's plan. And everything that's written is here to give us the opportunity to fulfill God's plan and purpose. We are those servants that come in from the field and continue to serve the master at the dinner table and beyond because we are unprofitable servants.

We don't bring any yitron with us. We don't generate any yitron profit. But the profit comes in our service.

And when the master adjudges us good and faithful servants, we have achieved. We have fulfilled our calling. That's what this picture is designed to teach for Old Testament saints.

Here's Solomon, a thousand years before Christ, calling the nation of Israel beyond the law, beyond the history of Deuteronomy, to lay hold of the years that they had in their lives. You had

individuals, think of all the people that were living in Jerusalem when Solomon was king. They were living lives just like us.

They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they married and were given in marriage. Where is the material evidence of their lives now? Archaeologists search in vain to even document the existence of the Davidic reign, the Davidic dynasty. They find a scarab here.

They find a clay jar handle stamped with something there. They get all excited if they find something that even resembles a biblical name in the archaeological record because it has all turned to dust. The cycles of time have passed.

The same is going to happen to us. What is going to be the remnant? What's going to be left over when God resurrects us at the judgment? These pictures remind us that the time is fleeting, that the cycle is turning. One of these days, that golden basin that can hold all of those gold and silver and precious stones is going to be smashed.

One of these days, that silver rope that decorates and adorns and reminds you of the value and the rarity of these wonderful things is going to depart. It's going to be removed. It's going to be gone.

The jar at the spring will be shattered. We will no longer have the opportunity to get that living water and carry it home. The jar is broken.

The opportunity, the ability is gone. And the wheel at the cistern is smashed. Now the thing about a cistern, and this is fascinating if you remember much about Jeremiah the prophet.

Jeremiah took so much abuse. They kept him around because they were a little bit afraid because he was a prophet of God. And they knew he was a prophet of God.

But he kept being this prophet of doom. He was the weeping prophet. He could tell them all these bad things were going to happen and the king would get sick of it.

And at one point, they dropped Jeremiah into a cistern. Very same word as used here. And if your Bible says well or spring or fountain or something like that, they didn't drop Jeremiah in the well and they didn't drop him in a fountain or a spring.

They put him in a cistern. This is a man-made container for water. And this is doubled here for a reason.

It says that the jar at the spring is shattered. This is a natural spring. This is the source, like the spring Gihon outside of Jerusalem.

Essential source of water coming right out of the ground. A cistern is a man-made storage container for water. So you have pictured here two different sources for this life-giving, life-

sustaining water.

One is the natural source at the spring. You can go straight to the source and get it in your jar and carry it home. The other is a cistern.

Somebody has gathered this water. Somebody has made a receptacle for it. Someone has stored it up and made it available.

And what is the wheel? Well, the wheel is the pulley because the cistern, the ones they had in the ancient world, were kind of like a giant buried jar that had a smaller opening at the top and then it was round. This is why they dropped Jeremiah down in there because he couldn't climb out. It's got rounded sides and there's a hole at the top.

You can imagine almost a spherical type of hole in the ground. It was often carved out of the rock or it would be lined. They would line it with plaster so that it wouldn't leak and they would store water in there.

They would divert streams and different things and use all kinds of human ingenuity to store water in a place where it wouldn't evaporate so that it would be there when the natural springs were not available. The Hezekiah's Tunnel in Jerusalem was dug because when the city came under siege, the spring was outside the city walls and they had no water. Couldn't get to the natural things so they built a pool of Siloam and they diverted the waters from Gihon through Hezekiah's Tunnel so that they could store it inside the city walls.

Then they tried to camouflage. They rocked off the spring Gihon on the outside so that the water would all flow into the city but anybody that knew the secret could go cut off their water until they built that tunnel. This is the same idea.

We have different ways of getting water. We can go straight to the source. We've seen these scriptures many times.

You have no need that any man teach you. You have the Holy Spirit but you also have human agency. You have the wheel, the pulley and the rope and the bucket and you have a cistern that's a man-made container for water.

Sometimes you can't always go straight to the source. A lot of us, we go to the Word of God and it's too confusing. We don't have the background.

We don't have the time to dig and study it out the way someone does who God has said you're going to go to seminary. You're going to learn the languages. You're going to spend time.

You're going to have a gifting from the Holy Spirit that will enable you to be the cistern builder, to be the pulley operator, to store up water in a place where people can get it when they can't go to the natural source. But both sources are given here. So this is a picture of life sustaining water in

the physical sense that reflects the water of the Word in our soul.

So you still have your opportunities to avail yourself. Our jar is unbroken. Our cistern is still there and God always provides availability of His Word.

We saw that in our scripture reading this morning in the Proverbs. He does not let the soul of the righteous famish. But he says before these things take place in verse 6, the rope of silver is not parted or departed.

The basin of gold is not smashed. The jar at the spring has not yet been shattered. The wheel at the cistern has not been smashed.

Water may be in there, but if you don't have the wheel, you can't pulley it out of there. And the dust returns to the earth as it was and the spirit returns to God who gave it. Once again, he began this section, remember your creator.

This dust, aphar, A-P-H-A-R in Hebrew, is going to return to the earth. Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return. The cycle of our life, the span of time we're assigned is over with.

And the ruach will return to God who gave it. So don't wait until you're on your deathbed to remember God. Remember Him in your youth.

Now, he returns to the opening theme here in verse 8. Vapor of vapor, says Kohelet, all is vapor. Well, don't these preceding 7 verses find their summation and their distillation in that phrase? It's become a truism that young people think that they're immortal. We think nothing can happen to us.

We have all of our powers. We can't conceive of what it's like to be crippled up, to be disabled, to lose our functions. But Solomon says it is temporary.

The nature of vapor is that it doesn't last. Clouds in the sky, they don't hold their shape for more than a few seconds. They're constantly changing.

They're constantly moving. Fog, vapors, they come from the boiling kettle. It's here and immediately gone.

He says, remember, it's all temporary. It is ethereal. It is going to be here and it's going to be gone.

So what do we do during that brief time? Well, in verse 9 he says, and what is left over, and you'll see in your English it'll say moreover. They're trying to capture the sense here. But this is Yoter, Y-O-T-E-R, which is from the same word, it is the same word as Yitron.

And we know what Yitron means. We've seen it all through Ecclesiastes. This is the remainder.

It's what's left over. When the Israelites were getting ready to fight the Philistines under Saul, and Samuel said, wait here until I come before you fight the Philistines. And Saul said, okay.

Well, Samuel didn't show and didn't show. And everybody was looking over the ridge, thinking about the Philistines and deserting. And the army was dwindling down and dwindling down.

And Saul was getting more and more nervous. And Saul counted the people and he said, if this keeps up, by the time the prophet gets here, we're not going to have an army left. He says, I can't wait any longer for Samuel to come and offer the sacrifice.

And so he offers it himself. And then Samuel comes and you remember that story. Well, Saul could not see the spiritual issues.

All he could look at was the circumstances. He got in trouble again when they fought Agag. Remember King Agag? God said, go in and utterly destroy them, wipe everything out, burn all of their possessions.

And they went in, but Saul spared Agag's life. And they didn't wipe out all of the animals. They took the best of the animals as sacrifices for God.

And what was left, and the Hebrew word there is *yoter*, they kept as spoil. They took for themselves. Or the remainder is what was destroyed.

So they made a separation between some that they set aside as sacrifice for God and then the remainder. And that's *yoter*. So it's what's left over after you subtract something out.

Well, at the end of your life, you subtract out your life, subtract out all your human abilities. All of your stuff is broken and crushed and gone away, disappeared, departed. What's left? Well, he says in verse 9, what is left over, this is the remainder.

This is what remains. So it's a lot stronger than *moreover*. Because *Kohelet* was wise, *kacham*, the standard word for wisdom we've had throughout the book, still, he taught the people knowledge.

And he listened intently and diligently searched out and straightened out many proverbs. The word for proverbs there is *mashalim*. *Mashalim*, it comes from *mashal*, which means a, the word *mashal* is real interesting because it means it's a word picture.

It's translated *parable*. It is a likeness. It means something is like something else.

Really, the best English translation is *simile*, a simile or a metaphor. Because it's not just a proverb, you know, a stitch in time saves nine. The idea is not that it's a proverbial saying.

The idea is it's a picture. Solomon looked for picture communication that would bring divine truth

to a popular level. That's why he collected the proverbs, like apples of gold in pictures of silver, like a broken tooth is a servant who fails you when it counts, like this, like that.

He wanted to communicate it and have it make an impact. And so he, mashalim, mashal, there are lots of words for proverbs and maxims and wisdom and so on. But mashal means it's a parable.

It's a likeness in daily events, daily situations of a spiritual truth. So because Solomon was wise and because this, the word still, and I put it in there in kind of a literal sense, but it means that throughout, it means for a duration of time. Solomon had as one of his goals during the time that he was king, he asked God for wisdom so that he could guide God's people Israel.

And he wasn't just talking about leading the nation. The attitude that God honored when he said, because you have asked for wisdom and not for wealth, I'm going to give you wisdom and wealth. But that attitude of seeking God and wanting to be pleasing to God, this is something that Solomon wanted to pass on to the people.

And it lasted over a space of time. It wasn't a flash in the pan. Solomon made his mistakes.

You know, everybody thinks about the 7,000 concubines and the 3,000 wives and all of that. But it says that this was an ongoing goal that Solomon had. Solomon was wise and over time for a duration.

That's what the word still there means. He taught the people knowledge. He listened intently.

What is the best way to teach? Well, you learn first. You have to listen. And the first thing Solomon did, this verb, azan, it's A-Z-A-N, but it's the verb behind the noun ozan, which is the word for ears.

He eared. He listened. He heeded.

And it's in the P-A-L. And this is where these words get very strange because you never find some of these in the P-A-L. But all of these words where it says he listened intently, that's why I put intently because it just says he listened.

But it's in the P-A-L. It's the intensive stem. He really listened.

He worked hard at this. He tried to find the best ways to express this wisdom. And he diligently searched.

This is the word to search or to seek. We've had it a couple of times in the previous contents. But he diligently searched out.

And it says he straightened out. And I put a note there for you. Chapter 7, verse 13.

Do you remember that? Go back a page or two to Ecclesiastes 7, verse 13. It says, consider the work of God, for who can straighten out what he has made crooked? We saw it back in chapter 1. What is lacking cannot be filled up. What is crooked cannot be made straight.

We had a reference at the beginning of the book. We had a reference in the middle of the book. And now we have a reference at the end of the book.

And it says Solomon did his best to straighten out, to make straight crooked proverbs, crooked applications, crooked pictures. He was a picture straightener. He tried to make a straight, clear presentation of these truths.

That's what it means. And the literal translation is he straightened out many mashalim, many of these. That's why you have the collection of proverbs that we read from this morning.

Look at verse 10. Kohelet, this is Solomon, intensively sought to find words of chepetz. That's what it literally says.

How many times have we seen chepetz? Desirable goal. One of the words in the last words of David. He says, you know, during my life there were some of these desirable goals that were not able to sprout.

They didn't come to fruition. Some of the things David wanted to accomplish, some of the things he saw in the plan of God, didn't come to fruition. But he said, I know that God will bring them about.

David had an eternal hope. David knew that there was a resurrection and there was a future. He said, it's not all measured by what happens in this life.

It's not all summed up by your eulogy or your obituary. It's going to be summed up when God renders an accounting. Kohelet intensively sought to find words of chepetz.

Words that express that desirable goal and a correct record of words of truth. That's what it literally says. He intensively sought to find words of a desirable goal and a correct record.

This is katav, which means to cut. It's the word that is used of writing. To write it down, to record it so it would last and under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, he succeeded because God the Holy Spirit has preserved these writings for us.

Now, verse 11. This is the most fascinating verse in the whole chapter to me. The words of the wise.

Who's the wise in this context? It says in verse 9, Kohelet was wise. The words of the wise. It says in your Bible something like they are goads or ox goads.

But again, go back to the usage in 1 Samuel where it talks about Saul and Jonathan and the Philistines. Saul and Jonathan were the only ones in the army that had a sword because the Philistines had a monopoly on iron working and they passed a law that no Israelite could be a blacksmith. No Israelite could do any metal working in iron, only the Philistines.

So if you wanted to get your plow sharpened, if you wanted to get any of your iron implements created or sharpened or cared for, you had to go to the Philistines. Well, one of the few places where this word that's translated goads is used is over there in that context and it's talking about plows and implements of agriculture. These are sharpened iron tools.

Goads is just a wild guess. There's nothing to say it has anything to do with an ox or a goad or any of that. It's a sharpened iron implement.

So what do you do with sharpened iron implements in an agricultural economy? You plant with them and in the context of this verse, that's what they are. They are tools used for planting. All of the tools that you sharpen.

Plows, poles that you stick in the ground to make a hole where you can drop the seed. We had pointed breaker bars. They had things like that made of iron that were heavy.

They could poke a hole in the ground. You had a servant just go along and poke those holes and another servant came behind and dropped in the seeds. The words of the wise are like planting tools.

Sharpened iron implements. And you won't even recognize this verse from what's in your English, but this is what it says. Like those who keep watch over what is planted are the masters.

This is Baal. Remember that? Lords, like those who keep watch over what is planted are the masters of what is collected and given a single pasture. Now this is some tricky Hebrew and if you compare English translations they are all over the map, but the literal translation makes the best sense.

What is he talking about here? Solomon has been listening intently and diligently. He's been searching out and straightening out all of these words of wisdom, these proverbs, these distillations of truth that will lead people toward God and toward having a prophet at the end of their life. What did he do? His words are like planting tools.

He has poked the hole in the ground for us. And if we master this material, if we plant those seeds in our soul, we will master these things that have been collected. What got collected? It's these grains of truth, these morsels of wisdom that he has collected and straightened out and set in order.

The ones who master that that has been collected and has been given a single pasture. These

seeds were scattered to the wind. Solomon has done the work of collecting them.

Solomon has done the work of gathering them. Solomon's words are like these sharpened tools that have made holes to plant them in rows. Well, what would happen if you went to all this trouble and planted these seeds and put them out there and then didn't keep watch over it? It's out in a pasture.

This is not the word for shepherd. This is the word for pasture. It's related to the word that says feeding on wind, pasturing on wind that we saw.

The pasture is the place where animals feed. If you don't guard this pasture, the animals are going to come in and eat your seedlings and they're not going to sprout. Your capets is not going to sprout and bear its fruit, just like David said in his last words.

Well, Solomon has helped dig the holes. Solomon has gathered the seeds for you, but you've got to guard the little seedlings. They've all been collected and brought into one pasture.

The words of the wise are like planting tools. If you master this that has been collected, if you recognize that you've got a field where all these seeds have been planted and they're trying to sprout and grow and you've got to guard them, you will be a master of this collection. You'll be a guard.

You've got to guard it. Otherwise, it's going to be eaten. Jesus used the picture of birds coming and carrying away the seeds before they could take root and grow.

This is an Old Testament version of that same picture. You've got to guard. This word shamar means to keep watch or to guard.

The words of the wise are like planting tools. Notice, the words of the wise don't do all the work for you. The words of the wise are not like plants that drop forth fruit.

It plants a seed. It makes the hole, but you've got to guard the seed. You've got to protect it and not let it be nipped in the bud.

You've got to watch over it so that it can sprout. So what's the practical outworking of this? We've studied and we've seen Solomon laboring and stretching the bounds of Old Testament wisdom and Old Testament expression in Hebrew, trying every different way to picture for us how important it is to wake up and realize that the issue for us today and the issue for us tomorrow and as long as the sun still shines in our lives, is to seize righteousness by faith. We have to find the good that is beautiful.

The tov that is yafei. Remember that phrase? God makes this good that is beautiful. We don't declare ourselves to be good.

We don't look at our work and say, that's good. Look at that good work that I did. It's like Jesus said in Luke.

It's amazing how our two studies have intertwined themselves because Jesus said the servant shouldn't come in and say, well, look what a good servant am I. He says we should say we are unprofitable servants. We have only done what we were obligated to do. Where is the profit? It's not in our human efforts.

It's not in our human attainment. Solomon has spent 12 chapters telling us it's what counts in God's eyes. So these words are like planting tools.

He's drilled the holes. He's collected the seed. He's dropped it in.

It's our job to guard it and let it take root and spring up and grow and produce fruit. So then in verse 12 he says, and what is left over from these? And he uses the word *yoter* again. I didn't note it, but that's the same word at the beginning of verse 12.

What is left over from these? My son. And then there's an imperative. He says, heed the warning.

Take warning. The making of many books, there is no end. To meditate greatly is weariness to the flesh.

We get tired of thinking about this for very long. We can't go do the work that Solomon has done. We can't go collect all the Proverbs.

Where do you think he put all of these Proverbs that he diligently listened to and collected and thought about and straightened out? He wrote them down in books. We all can't do that. We're not all scholars and we don't all go to seminary and we don't all learn languages and we don't all spend time studying and collecting and drilling the holes in the ground and gathering the seed.

God has designated certain ones to do that. In this case it was Solomon. He is Kohelet.

He's drilled the holes. He planted the seed. He's got it all in one pasture.

It's all in one fenced area here. All you have to do is guard it. Don't let the seeds get nibbled away by the sheep.

Don't let the animals or the birds come in and pick it away. You've got to guard what has been gathered. Heed the warning.

It is wearisome. It's hard work to gather these things. It's hard work to make the books and to think about them and try to straighten them out.

It's weariness to the flesh. But look at the grace of God. A lot of that work has been spared you.

Look at the work Solomon did in putting all of this together. God puts that task in front of people who teach. We have ladies who teach.

Parents teach their children. All of us have opportunities to speak the truth in love. You know if you've ever prepared to present the Word of God to someone, it's a labor.

You've got to spend time. There's a lot more time in preparation than there is in delivery. But if you are the beneficiary of that, then take warning.

Because if God has made that investment, whatever form it takes, He has commissioned someone to gather the seed. He's commissioned someone to use that sharpened iron implement and drill the holes in the ground. He's gathered all the seed and planted it in one place, one pasture.

He says, My son, take warning. Don't think that God is going to overlook it if that crop fails, if those seedlings don't sprout and bear fruit. He says, take warning.

There's a lot of work that went into that gathering and collecting. We have been called to become masters of that collection, owners of that field. We are responsible for it.

You remember the parables Jesus told about the servants who were entrusted with the care of a vineyard. The master went away on a journey. When he comes back, he expects to find fruit.

We should become masters of that which has been entrusted to our care. How many different ways does the Bible express this truth? The parable of the talents. The servant that has been put in charge of the household while the master is away.

What will the master find when he returns? If he's taken care and fulfilled his responsibility, he's rewarded. But if he begins to beat the servants, eat and drink, and act like the owner, he's cut in two and apportioned his lot with the hypocrites. What is left over? What remains? We have to look at the way we are living our days.

Why do we do what we do? And at the end of each day, have we nurtured those seeds that God plants in our souls? Have we sought the yitron that should be there at the end of the day? That is the question we have to ask ourselves because the day is wasted and the time has not been redeemed. It doesn't matter what we accomplish. It doesn't matter how we build, how we plant, how we declare our soul good in our labor.

If it doesn't result in good that is of intrinsic value, good that is beautiful in God's sight, the whirlwind is going to come and take it away. It is the house built on the sand. So, Solomon concludes and is wrapping up this book with the strongest possible exhortation to redeem the time because the days are evil.

And he does it in a picture just as he's done all through the book so that it will be memorable, so

that it will stick with us. And that's our challenge in the days that lie ahead. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you for the manifold ways that you have chosen to reveal yourself and to communicate your truth to us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will be able to take these word pictures, the images and the ideas that have been communicated to us here and impress them upon our hearts in such a way that we will see the opportunities, even as we engage in normal everyday activities, to reflect your glory, to be righteous by faith, to be prepared both in this life and in the next, to be useful and of service, to be declared a good and faithful servant, and to fulfill all of the potential that you have purchased for us through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray it in his name.

Amen.