

LifeMax – (Ecclesiastes 9) 10 May'15

This morning we'll be looking at the book of Ecclesiastes. It's not a Mother's Day message per se, but there'll be some applications that I feel will be very helpful for mothers, nonetheless. So turn your Bibles with me to Ecclesiastes and chapter 9, and before we're going to look at the passage itself, I'm going to start with a short video introduction. So, enjoy.

Video : "I used to be a cat. Everyday the same. I'd be aloof to lunch, then, coldly indifferent after. To me everything was just 'meh', then it hit me. Why be so cat? Why not be a bit more dog? (Music) I mean look at the world today- It's amazing. Running- amazing. Chasing cars- amazing. Sticks- amazing. Carpe diem- it means grab the Frisbee. (Music) Maybe we should all be a bit more dog. Be more dog."

Well, this is just an advertisement, a clip from it, and it tells you to "be more dog". What does it mean to be more dog? It means to add zest to life. Today we're going to look at life, through the book of Ecclesiastes and we're going to look at what it means to live a rich, a meaningful, a significant life- to live life to the fullest. That's what Ecclesiastes 9 is all about: "Life Max"- just a simple modern little catchphrase, I hope that would help you remember this message and apply this message to your life.

It was William Wallace, you might be familiar with him from the movie "Braveheart" who says: "*Every man dies, but not every man truly lives.*" It's a great statement; everybody dies but not every one of us live life to the fullest. We sort of uh- get shortchanged in life. The youth culture today has a familiar phrase called Yolo, Y-O-L-O. You say what is this all about. If you have, this is the 1st time you hear it; you're not a youth, of course. Yolo means: "You only live once". The implication that is "make your life count". See, what's important is not just to add years to life, but also to add life to years. So today, let's look at LifeMax. That's the central theme in Ecclesiastes 9, how we can find meaning and significance in life under the sun. See, Solomon for a long time has been telling us that live without God is vain and pointless. So after proving that case, he tells us that the way to life is wisdom. It's in the fear of God and as we follow these principles, he now continues to teach us to live life to what it is supposed to be. So let's get ready and let's look at the verses that are before us. In verses 1 to 3, 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 him. 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 is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. 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 while they live, and after that they go to the dead.” (Ecclesiastes 9:1-3 ESV)*

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Solomon in poetic form is telling us about life and an inescapable reality that would happen to all of us. He says this is the unavoidable event. This same event happens to the righteous and to the wicked. It happens to all, and the event is the event of death. Solomon here says you've got to live life to the max because you will die one day. It's so obvious, but it doesn't quite sink in as we live life isn't it? We somehow imagine we can always delay, we can do things later, but Solomon is saying "live life to its maximum today because you're not going to live forever. You're going to die." It is said that death is an appointment, not an accident, because it is appointed unto men once to die.

*“Death is an Appointment, not an Accident.*

*And just as it is appointed for man to die once.” (Hebrews 9:27 ESV)*

We are all going to die. There's a pastor whose father had just passed away, and so his mum, himself, his family were at the cemetery to look at the burial, the process of it. The worker at the cemetery said to the mum, "Ma'am, I'm going to shift the body of your husband, a little bit off center so that there will be plenty of space for you when you die." This is not a very nice thing to say. I suppose they all laughed at it, but it is true isn't it, that all of us would die one day, it's an appointment none of us can skip. You know you fix appointments with your friends, you can somehow don't turn up. But for this appointment before God in death, it is an inescapable, unavoidable reality. So Solomon says in the light of the knowledge that you're not going to live forever, you better start living now. He goes on to say,

*“But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.”* He says, 'it is so much better that you are alive, at least you can do something about it'. A dead lion can't do anything about it. Now, a lion is a majestic animal; a dog is a despised animal, according to the Jews. But at least, the dog is living. At least there is hope for change. At least you can live your life, but those who are dead, you can't, so you've got to start living your life now not later, because you may die, and you don't live forever. *“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.” (Ecclesiastes 9:4-6 ESV)*

What is Solomon saying? Solomon is saying, ‘Death is an appointment, you will die. We all will. So right now you've got to seize the day.’ Carpe diem: you saw the cat say carpe diem is to grab the Frisbee. Well, life requires carpe diem. It requires a grabbing, a seizing of all that is before us. So, Solomon says life is going to end up with death one day. You can't change that, you can't avoid that, and you've gotta start living life right now. But he also adds on, not only is life or death unavoidable, death is also unpredictable. He says, “*Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. [He goes on to say:] For man does not know his time. [No one knows when you're going to die, and it is] Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.*” (Ecclesiastes 9:11-12 ESV)

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My son likes to see fish in a pond swim. He likes to see them wriggle, wriggle, wriggle and sometimes he brings pieces of bread, throws it in and lets them enjoy the bread. But ever so often, once in a while, he brings also along bucket and pails and as they are swimming, he likes to scoop up the water and the fish along with it. I'll tell you something about the fish, the fish are swimming happily in the waters and are nibbling on the bread happily, not knowing that an evil man will come and scoop, will scoop them away. They have no clue. I mean they're just swimming along in life. Of course, my son is kinder than that, after scooping up, he pours them back in. But that's a picture of how we are, isn't it? We swim along with life, we continue our jobs, our studies, our lives, we think we're going to live forever, we're going to nibble on the bread of life, bread in this world, not knowing one day you'll be scooped up and that's the end. And how tragic it is for people who say, ‘I will live life later.’ Right now it's all about work, work, work. It's all about earning enough money for my retirement. It's all about slogging it out. Following the system, I'm still young, so I've to invest in all these things. What if that day never comes? Students who study hard they say, I'm not going to- I know this is the time to work really, really hard. I'm not going to have this idea of living life to the maximum. But I say to you students: you may die. Nobody knows. Famous people die suddenly. No clue. Solomon tells us to seize the day. Why? Because, as this is a popularly seen kind of a

statement, *“Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is mystery.[You may die tomorrow, You do not know what happens tomorrow] Today is a gift. That's why it is called the Present.”*

So seize the day, the present that God has given to you. So Solomon's 1st point is a very simple one: In this life, you have under the sun, don't say I will live life tomorrow. Don't say I will live life when I retire. Don't say I will really explore what it is about life, only when all my problems are settled. No, he says start today because you don't have forever, and because you never know when you're going to die anyway. That's wisdom. The question next is, what do you mean by LifeMax, what do you mean by living this life, to its fullest? What does it look like if I'm going to start this today and every day? Well, Solomon has words of advice for you. He says,

*“Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart,[Enjoy the things in this life.] for God has already approved what you do. Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head. [Coconut oil, whatever oil. Make sure it looks good]. 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 and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.” (Ecclesiastes 9:7-9 ESV)*

What Solomon is saying here is, enjoy your life. Enjoy all the blessings you have that are given. Enjoy your wife. Now, this is where some of us get very uncomfortable because we do know that in Scripture, the Bible calls us to take up the cross and deny ourselves, isn't it? The Bible does tell us that we will go through sufferings. But don't forget, while that is absolutely true, there is also the blessings and the gifts that God does intend for his people. Just now, we sang a song, 'Blessed be your name'. I'm not sure if you notice it, but the writer, I believe, intentionally tells us about the good things. He writes, 'Oh the world is all as it should be, blessed be your name', but the very next stanza, he also says, 'Though the road be marked with sufferings, blessed be your name'. That is the reality of the Christian life. It's very rare when it is all sufferings. It's also very rare when your life is all enjoyments. In both these experiences of life, God wants us to draw near to him, and they are given by God to us. So I want to say that the Scripture is not against enjoyment, God is not against pleasure. In fact, God is not even against things like bread and food and drinks and beauty. I mean, God is the one who gave us food. Don't tell me you don't enjoy food. It's such a blessing to be able to eat all kinds of food in this world; it is God's blessings to give us color and music. In fact, when He created the world, He placed Adam and Eve in this place called Eden, which means delight. In the New Testament, he tells us God has given us richly all things to enjoy. So what Solomon is saying here

is not unique. He has already said it before in “to savor this life” he has already said it in Ecclesiastes 5, where he tells us,

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*“Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot.” (Ecclesiastes 5:18 ESV)*

He tells us, again in verse 19,

*“Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil. This is the gift of God.” (Ecclesiastes 5:19 ESV)*

God is, let me say this again, God is not against things or enjoyment. The problem with us is that when we turn these gifts, we turn these enjoyments into the ultimate thing. So, He does want us to enjoy them, but he doesn't want us to worship them. But the human heart, so corrupted in sin, now begins to worship the things, the gifts, instead of the giver. But it doesn't mean that things and gifts are bad. It is his will for us to enjoy them. I've shown you or shared with you about this book by Michael Wittmer, and he wrote about worldly saints and how Christians are called to advance the kingdom of God. At the same time, Christians live in the world richly blessed by the Lord. And he talks about 2 kinds of ways or 2 ways by which we may ruin our relationship with God. I know it doesn't quite sit in easily. So I'm repeating it again here. He says the first way to ruin our relationship with God is to ignore him and focus entirely on his gifts. So, as I've said, instead of enjoying these things and giving glory to God, we say we want these things and we don't want God. Idolatry, it's bad, that's not good, but the 2nd way we can also ignore the gift and focus on the giver. The 2nd way is to say, I don't want your gift, I just want you. Wow, that sounds actually very pious, but Michael Wittmer goes on to explain: if the 1st temptation ignores the God who gives, the 2nd temptation refuses to let him be the God who gives. What do you mean? The 2nd temptation is a subtler form of idolatry, because it makes you think and act as if you know better than God. God is the one who gives us, richly, all things to enjoy, every good and perfect gift, but we say, ‘God, I don't need this.’ We are putting ourselves above God, thinking that we know better than the omniscient, all wise God, and it sounds so pious. Well, all that to bring us into balance.

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Living life to the fullest is not against enjoyments or the blessings. In fact, it is through these enjoyments, through these gifts, that we see God for his grace and his wonderful provisions and that we can worship Him for all that he has given to us. I say to you if you want to live life to the maximum today, you've got to learn to savor. Enjoy. Be thankful. Through these gifts, let it be windows to see the beauty and the generosity and the grace of your giver.

It's a very different kind of life from someone who is always complaining and someone who is always saying 'I want more'. He will never have enough. He will never live life to the fullest because he's always thinking 'I don't have enough'. But the man who's able to rejoice in all that God has given; he lives life to the max. Godliness with contentment is great gain. When I think about savoring life, I think about my friend in church, this church years ago, maybe 19 years ago, and we were in the Army then, and in the Army, in those days we would eat in the Army cookhouse and they are not prepared- the food is not prepared by professionals. Today, it is- Singapore food industry, and in those days, it is prepared by NSF's- Army conscripts like myself who have no clue about cooking but we have to cook, so, in those days we would, uh- queue up for the food. You'll use metallic trays, and the guy there is a cook, who is very unhappy about serving anyway. He takes this huge, giant, metallic ladle, scoops up the rice and "KONGGG"- you can feel the vibration- "KONGGG" and, and, and the rice is just one heap or if I may say it more accurately, one rock of a rice, because it's so hard, it's not cooked properly. And so on. So we were not very happy with Army food generally, we complain about it. And there was one day when my friend was sharing he, he was so happy eating the rice, he was so happy having the meal. You say siow (colloquial for mad) or what. He says he, he thought about what God did to bring the rice to him. He thought about how God raised the farmer in Thailand or China, I don't know where the rice is from. When he thought about that distant picture of someone laboring, sowing and reaping and doing all the hard work, separating the husk from the grain, polishing it, washing it, packing it, transporting it and then letting NSF's cook it and present it, and so he thought about all that and he said when he ate that rice, it became very flavorful. He said it was so tasty, because through it, he tasted the goodness of God. As he shared, I thought I wanted to cry, wah like that also can. [Laughter in congregation]. But he ate it with deep gratitude. He enjoyed his bread.

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That is, I think what it means to live life to the max. You know we live in such a complaining culture. Actually I'm not surprised, you should not be surprised,

because the Bible tells us this world is in darkness, and it knows nothing but complaining. Philippians 2 tells us, one of the ways by which a Christian shines is that he is not complaining, he's thankful. In a dark and perverse world where everybody feels God owes them something, the Christian man thanks God for all that God has given. He savors this life, he savors his family. He savors his wife, his children. That's what it means to live life to the max. But that's not all, because Solomon goes on to tell us LifeMax involves savoring, it also involves laboring. It involves work. It's balanced you see. He tells us in verse 10:

*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol [this is a Hebrew word for the place where the dead will go, the place of the departed dead], to which you are going. (Ecclesiastes 9:10 ESV)*

So Solomon here says to live life to its maximum because days are short, days are unpredictable.

Labor. Some of you say, but I thought living life to the max is going to Maldives and chilling out and sleep there. I want to relax for the whole year and I don't want to work and that will be the life. I say to you if you lie in the Maldives beach for your whole life you'll be chow ta (colloquial for burnt blacked, blackened): number 1. Number 2, you'll be so tired of it, you'll be so sick. It is good to take a break occasionally, sure, but you'll realize if that is your idea of living life to the fullest, you'll be very disappointed because God wired us to work. God created Adam for work. Work is not a bad thing. Work is a good thing. The role of work is given before the fall, before sin came in. So He made us wired to work, to be productive, to be contributing. In fact, if you are now a believer, a follower of Jesus Christ, the desire to serve is even stronger. So, to live life to the max, it is not just chilling out and doing nothing, and holidaying all the time. Living life to the max involves savoring and laboring, contributing positively.

So how do you labor, what do you do? Solomon here tells us, number 1: start right away. Very simple, you want to live life to the max, alright, start right away.

Whatever your hand finds to do whatever comes up, grab it and do it. That's what he says. See one of the reasons why we don't live life to the fullest is we always come in with this excuse, 'we can do it tomorrow'. It's very interesting. Someone came in 1st service this morning and wore a T-shirt, a picture of a sloth that says 'whatever, do it later'. [Laughter in congregation]. When she came in, I looked at her, I said, "Hey, I really want to use your t-shirt" She said "sure", but I didn't get the picture in time,

‘whatever, do it later’. That's the slogan for the day, folks. Solomon says no, whatever your hand finds to do, go do it. See, we say we want to live life to the fullest, but we always say, ‘tomorrow la’. I want to pray; I’ll start tomorrow la. I want to have a consistent quiet time; today cannot, tomorrow. I want to lose weight; tomorrow. I will go on a diet after this buffet. It never comes. I will serve God in church, we’re going to Punggol, I’ll step it up; tomorrow. Tomorrow never comes. See, Spurgeon wisely said,

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*“No man ever served God by doing things tomorrow.” -Charles Spurgeon.*

I will serve, but tomorrow. And this man will end up never serving God, because it's always later, ‘whatever it is, later’. Now, I tell you this philosophy of doing it later will work, will work if you’ve all eternity; but we don't. We will die. Worse still, you do not know when you’re gonna die. So Solomon says in the light of that, whatever comes up, grab it and do it. I remember when I was just saved, maybe now, 20 years ago, I just came to know Christ. I wanted to be involved, I wanted to serve, I wanted to grow and I didn't know what to do so, one of the 1st things I did was just to come earlier to church services on Sunday, help arrange the chairs. We were not in a hotel and so we have to do these things ourselves. I would just do simple things like taking out the hymnals, placing it on the chairs. We didn’t have PowerPoint in those days. So that’s what I did. And when I came earlier, I realized that people are praying, I’d join them in prayer, and, uh, people stayed back for Bible studies, I’d stay back for Bible study. Just whatever there is I just did. I didn’t know what it would be like, 20 years later, that I’d serve God full-time. But I’m thankful that whatever there is to do, I could do, and God leads a step at a time. You want to serve God today; you want to make a difference in your life. Don’t sit there and dream that you will be somebody sometime. I say something practical for you, start whatever God has given you to do. Start right away. Start right away.

Not only does he say ‘start right away’, he also tells you to go all the way. Do it with your might. So often we give half-baked efforts. I’ve realized something about life, the more you give to it, the more you get out of it. The more you put in, the more you enjoy it. It's like sports, you know you play badminton, you anyhow play, you don’t enjoy the game la, right? Even if you’re lousy, you’re not very good, wah you chiong [colloquial way of saying ‘giving it your all’], you feel so shiok [colloquial way of saying ‘good’] after that, you know? Doesn’t matter about your skill, as long as you give in your best. Life is about giving it the best shot we have, whether it's your work



or your home, or ministry. Give it your best shot. Why, because life is short and life is unpredictable. Live life to the fullest that way. See the Bible tells us,

*“Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.” (Romans 12:11 ESV)*

You know, one of the things I look for in people serving, is this kind of a spirit. Not always, ‘uhh, I think cannot la, cannot cannot.’ Can’t do, or just do a bit, or very reluctant. They won’t make a big impact for the cause of Jesus Christ. That fire, that zeal, that passion, ‘doing with my might’, is so important in life. Paul applies it to working in a job for your boss, for your employer, for your superior. He says,

*“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.” (Colossians 3:23-24 ESV)*

So the Bible tells us do it with all your might; give it your best shot. I hope you give your best shot for the ministry. I think Singaporeans are so good at giving our best at work, really. Singaporeans are top-notch workers, in general la, not everyone of course, that would be too sweeping a statement. But in general, absolutely hard-working bunch, absolutely hard-working people. But somehow when it comes to church, we think we can get away with 30% of our effort, 50% of our effort. Doesn’t quite square up. And so, the cause of Christ, we need to do it with our might, that’s what Solomon says. Why? You’ve got to start right away; you’ve got to go all the way, because there may not be another day. ‘There is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.’ You may not have another day to do this; you may not have another day to usher. You may not have another day to teach God’s word to the kids, you may not have another day to care for your people in your care group. You may not have another day to preach the Gospel to those who are lost; you may not have another day. You don’t know, Death may just come in with the pail and scoop you up. That’s it. And you’ll be that dead lion, so do your best. Redeem the time. Carpe Diem; Grab the Frisbee; seize the day. You know the word ‘opportunity’ is what we’re talking about here. Seize that opportunity, grab it. Opportunity is very interesting. Actually opportunity is the name of one of the Greek gods in Greek mythology. You may be familiar with Zeus, and Odin and Thor, these guys.

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But there’s this Greek God, the youngest son of Zeus, his name is ‘Opportunity’ or ‘Kairos’, and to the Greeks, they portray Opportunity or Kairos this way. [Picture] This is art, all right. Admire it and learn from it. Why do the Greeks picture

Opportunity or Kairos this way? I love the way ancient people think and intentionally incorporate it into their portraits and sculptures. Well, there are few things you notice here. Number 1: 'Why do you stand on tiptoe?', they ask Opportunity. He replies, 'I am ever running'. 'Why do you have a pair of wings on your feet, Opportunity?'. He replies, 'I fly away swiftly with the wind.' 'Why does your hair hang over your face?', because it's the youth culture to do so- Hahaha, No, no he didn't say that. He said, 'For him to seize me by the forelock when I come.' You've got to grab it! 'And why is the back of your head bald?', because I'm middle-aged, no, haha, because 'That when I'm gone, none can lay hold of me.' Opportunity comes swiftly; you've got to grab it and if not, it is too late. So, carpe diem, seize the day.

A story is told of a young man who was in the train with his army officer, in a train carriage. Sitting opposite them is this beautiful young lady and her grandmother. As they sat there, it is obvious to all that the young man and the young lady had something going for each other. They've been exchanging gazes, and there's electricity that flows between. Now this train, as they approach, they now pass through a tunnel and it became completely dark. No light, and suddenly there was this sound of a kiss and then a sound of a slap, and then it emerged (from the tunnel). It was so short, just a kiss, and a slap, and it emerged, and everybody could see. And all four of them were thinking about something; the young lady was thinking, I'm so glad the young man kissed me, but I wish my grandma didn't slap him; the grandma then thought to herself, that young man is so bold to kiss my granddaughter, I'm so glad she slapped him in return; The officer beside says this young man is really too bold to kiss the young girl, but I wish the grandma wouldn't make such a mistake and slap me instead; And all along the young man was smiling to himself, I'm so glad I kissed the young girl and slapped my officer. [Laughter in congregation]. Here is a man who knew how to grab an opportunity; he seized the day. I ask you today, do you seize the opportunity to kiss your wife? One of the dangers in a marriage, and in the family, is taking each other for granted, as if you're going to last forever. It may not. Someone may just throw in the towel. It's unbiblical to throw in the towel, but someone may just throw in the towel and we're going to die one day.

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So, today is Mother's Day. Your mother, no, not your mother, your children's mother is beside you. Haste, grab her hand, seize the day, give her a kiss later on, whatever you want to do, but don't just do it today; do it every day. LifeMax is savoring all that God has blessed you with today and every day. God is giving us an opportunity to

labour, do you realize that as a church? I can't think of anything else except that God has given this church a unique opportunity. It is the reality; whether you see it or not, it is the reality. We are going to Punggol in the heart of a population, hundreds of thousands of people- right where we think we are suited to serve. That's the opportunity. Some of us may say 'later, whatever, later', no, it begins today with prayer, with searching of scripture, in caring for one another, in growing. I ask you, 'Are you ready for that day?' That's what it means to live life to the fullest. We have 30 years in Punggol at least. Make the best use of it. Not every one of us will live for that 30 years. Some may be shorter, some may be longer, even beyond 30, but let's seize the day.

There are many people in life we have read about, who seem to live such rich lives. The Luthers, the Spurgeons, the Elliots; they seem to live so many lifetimes in that one life. And then there are so many of us who seem to live less of a life in a lifetime. It's like scooping soup with a fork, it doesn't get anywhere. I hope your life will be maxed out to its fullest, starting today. One more thing before we end, and that's found in verse 12 of chapter 8. I just want to put it back into context. LifeMax is possible only for those, I believe, who fear God. See, this philosophy of savoring and laboring to live life to the fullest will not work if you do not know God. Now, those who fear God are those who know God. That's clear, because scripturally, there is no fear of God before man. Man by himself will not fear the Lord. He fears the Lord because God has put his fear into our hearts; he's given us a new heart. So these are people who know God, who know God through the Gospel, who know God through the salvation plan God has given. These are people who have received the love of God in giving us a sacrifice. This life that we want to live to the fullest can only be possible if we know God loves us in His Son Jesus Christ. It gives us tremendous security and comfort and contentment to move forward. So I want to say LifeMax is possible if we understand LoveMax. Ok, very simple, alright? When we know that we are loved by God in Jesus Christ, we can go out and savor and labor the way we should.

Last week after service, I was talking to one of our church members and somehow the conversation led to the sharing that she sometimes, would pray- you know how it is when you go to shopping malls or places, and you can't find a parking lot. And you get stressed because you're late for an appointment or something like that. And so she says she will often pray, 'Lord, if you love me, give me a parking lot'. We all laugh, because that's what we pray, right? But when she said that I gave her a frown. She said, 'What's wrong? Don't you pray for parking lots?' I said I do, and in fact, I get my son to pray that as well. 'So, what's wrong?', 'Well, I pray part B, but I don't pray part A'. 'What do you mean part A, part B?', 'Well, you said: If you love me, give me a

parking lot. I don't say 'if you love me', because I believe that God's love for me is sure and certain. I don't have to say, Lord, if you love me, give me a parking lot.' But she sort of got it and she said, 'But I want to feel special ma. Maybe God loved me more, during that time. God loves me specially, above all then he gives me the parking lot.' I said to her, 'No, that's not possible'. 'That's not possible?' 'Yea, that's not possible'. God cannot love you more; neither can God love you less. She said, 'Why?'. Because he loves us not because of what we have done or who we are, he loves us because of who Jesus is and what he has done. So, if I was a good boy today, I obey God in every commandment, let me tell you something, God is not going to love me more; I don't earn God's love. On the other hand, if I was a naughty boy today, I sin in so many ways; I'll tell you the amazing thing about God's love; He doesn't love me less because He loves me in Jesus Christ. He cannot love you more, he cannot love you less because he loves you all the way, the same way he loves His Son Jesus Christ. LoveMax. See, the point I'm trying to make, is that our God loves you very, very, very, very, very, very, very, very, very, very, very, very, very much. Say how much? This much [Pastor with outstretched arms]. When Jesus died on the cross to pay for your sins. This is an eternal, unchanging love. Know to say that this love cannot be seen through circumstances alone. You see, so often we are tempted to think: Oh, if God gives me this, he loves me. If he doesn't give me this, he doesn't love me. Isn't that how we think? We measure God's love by circumstances. I tell you this doesn't work well. Solomon already tells you, it doesn't work well. He says verse one right in the beginning,

*"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 him." (Ecclesiastes 9:1 ESV)*

Timestamp 42:03

You can't tell whether God loves you or hates you, based on events, because good things can happen to bad people and bad things can happen to good people. So today, my knowledge of God's love is not predicated on whether I have everything exactly the way I want, or if the song goes 'the world is all as it should be', or whether 'it is a road marked with suffering'. I sing 'blessed be the name of the Lord' because he loves me in Jesus Christ, an unchanging love. And when you know he loves you in such an amazing, unconditional way, you don't have to grab, you don't have to steal, you don't always have to work to earn God's favor, you don't have to be a slave to yourself, you don't have to be a slave to performance traps. But you are now truly set free to enjoy this life, to enjoy the grace, the gifts of love from your father, and to

labor for him and no more for yourself. See, that's the point Paul is making in Romans. Knowing the amazing Gospel, we are now willing to present ourselves a living sacrifice to Him. No more trying to be a good boy to earn God's favor, but being a good boy to please our father. It's a totally different life and it begins when we know LoveMax. My friends, Jesus came to give you life. He tells us he is the bread of life come down from heaven. This life is not just about a ticket to heaven, it involves that. It involves a tremendous salvation from the fires and the misery and the agonies of hell, to be in a place of eternal joy and communion with God. But that life starts today, the moment you believe. He came to give us life and life more abundantly. I say that for you. He wants you to have LifeMax to savor and to labor because of Jesus our Savior. I pray that this will be your life. I pray that you will fear the Lord, obey him and enjoy him. Let's bow for a word of prayer together. Jesus is that corn of wheat that falls to the ground and dies. You say why? Because when he dies, he brings forth life. This morning, this message has absolutely no relevance to you, if you do not fear God, if you do not know God, if you do not know his love. But I want to say to you, my friends, you may be here for the 1st time, this is the 1st Christian message you hear. The main message of the Bible is this, 'God so loved the world he gave His Son'; He gave His Son to dirty, filthy, unworthy sinners who will never be able to earn favor with God. But this is the amazing thing about God's love. He chose to love you and gave His Son for you. His command to you today, is to repent and to believe in Jesus Christ and he will give you a new heart, and there you will receive his love and forever and ever you'll have an unbreakable union with the father. Then you can start life as what it should be. Are you weary and heavy laden, because you're always trying to earn something, always trying to deserve something, always trying to be acceptable before the holy God? He tells you, 'come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest'. He can say that because he has paid the price for your sins. So this morning, LifeMax begins with LoveMax. I pray you'll know this love, this love of God in Jesus. My brothers and sisters in Christ, I speak to you; Are you living life to its fullest? Maybe this morning, you are reminded, again, life is short; worse still, it is absolutely unpredictable. 'Whatever, I'll do it later'- let these words be cast out of your soul. Let Solomon remind you, 'whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might'. There's someone you need to savor today; someone you need to labor for. Some things in your life, you need to re-orientate and re-adjust. Please, don't say to yourself 'I know God wants me to serve Him, but, but let me wait; let me wait till I've got this, let me wait till I've attained that'. You may not wait to that time, you may not get to that time. What is his will for you today? What is his will for you today? Look at your families, folks. They need you. They need you to be the husband, to be the wife, to be the parent you ought to be. On this

Mother's Day, I think the best gift I can share with you today is the Word of God and pray that you will be the mother God wants you to be. God will bless you, your home richly, and that you will live life to its fullest when you give your hundred percent to what God wants you to do. LifeMax: God's desire for you.

Timestamp 48:53

Father, we thank you today for Your Word and I pray that the various applications will be fulfilled as we look to your spirit. Help us today, not just to be hearers but to be doers as well. I pray for each one gathered here. I believe you've a word for all of us. May we leave this place richer as a result of the spiritual deposits you have placed in our lives. Thank you for your spirit, we pray all this now in Jesus' name. Amen.