

Wisdom Sees Further (Ecclesiastes 7:1-14) 19 April '15

I'd like us this morning to have your attention turned to the book of Ecclesiastes as we resume our series in 'Life Under The Sun'. We've taken a 2-week break from Ecclesiastes because number 1 - there is Easter and number 2 - Pastor Mike was sharing with us about the Great Commission, in preparation for the E-Campaign.

So today I'm glad that we can return to the book of Ecclesiastes – 'Life Under The Sun' and in particular, chapter 7. Chapter 7 marks the transition of the midway point of this book. For the first 6 chapters, Solomon has been telling us about life under the sun, and absolute futility of it, apart from God. He says life without God under the sun is vanity of vanities, absolutely empty and meaningless. But now in chapter 7, he switches gears, having proven to us the emptiness of life apart from God. He tells you now that as you live your life in the presence of God, how wonderful it would be, and what it would look like.

Imagine with me: if the realm of medical science advance only in its diagnostics but not in its therapeutics, how tragic it would be! In other words, if medical science advance only in x-rays and scans and abilities to pick up diseases and cancers, but medical science did not advance in treatment and drugs and surgeries, it will be so sad because all we are left with, is the ability to see our problems more and more, but we can't deal with it.

Now Solomon doesn't treat us this way. He is strong in diagnostics and he's now moving on to the therapeutics. He's telling us life apart from God is cancerous; it's futile; it's empty. But now he gives you the treatment, the remedy to this emptiness of life apart from God.

So, from chapter 7 onwards, for the next 6 chapters, you're going to realise that he speaks a lot about wisdom, about being wise. These 2 words are going to occur some 35 times in the next 6 chapters. So we know he's switching gears; we know he is moving on to the therapeutics. So, from now onwards, we're going to look at wisdom in life under the sun.
02:38.0

I am not sure about you, but this week I think many people are caught up with the latest Internet sensation from Singapore. You know what that is? The latest Internet sensation from this tiny red dot? Well, it is found in this Mathematics question - Cheryl's birthday (picture shown). Now if you have not heard about Cheryl's birthday, you better Google it and find out what it is, because this is the talk of the town. Cheryl's birthday is a question given in a test or examination to Primary 5 children. Now you...if...now don't try to solve the puzzle now, it's not going to be possible, alright? Unless you're absolute genius. Er...but this is so difficult a question and I'm not about to tell you the answer, except that I know it's on the 16 of July. Okay... (Pastor laughing).

Well, this is a tough question, but let me start off with a simpler series of questions. Questions I like you to consider for yourself, before we go into the text of Ecclesiastes 7. First question, they are all true or false or true or false questions:

I like laughter better than crying - true or false for you?

I like weddings better than funerals - true or false?

I like thinking of my birthday better than my dying day.

I like compliments better than criticisms.

I like shortcuts better than the slow way.

Well, score yourself. How many 'trues' do you have? How many 'falses' did you have? If you answer any of them with 'false', congratulations! Because according to the words of Solomon, which we're going to read, you are a wise man or a wise woman. But if you see all 'true' on your paper, or on your phone, you better listen a bit more carefully, alright?

These are questions or choices Solomon presents to us in Ecclesiastes 7, verses 1 to 8. He says, "A good name is better than precious ointment, and a day of death than the day of birth. 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. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth (or cheerfulness or laughter). It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fools; this also is vanity. Surely oppression drives the wise into madness, and a bribe corrupts the heart. Better is the end of a thing than its beginning, and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. (Ecclesiastes 7:1-8 ESV) 06:04.8

One key word...now, probably the first thing that you will have is, what in the world is Solomon talking about? Okay (Pastor laughing)...that's absolutely what I thought when I read this like 10 times; I still couldn't figure out what he was talking about. But if you look at it further, you'd realise there is a key word that occurs in these first 8 verses and the key word is the word 'better'. Occurs 5 times. Solomon here, is pointing out to us what it means to live better. It's not to live wealthier or live richer. He says this is the better way to live. So Solomon here in the wisdom portion of Ecclesiastes is saying, wisdom leads you to live better. That's his main point. But what is it about these verses that concerns wise living? What does wisdom see? What does wisdom give that results in better living?

Well, I think it is really encapsulated in these very simple words: Wisdom Sees Further.

Wisdom allows us to see far; wisdom allows us to move beyond the here and now; wisdom allows us to see the end, so that we may now be wise to live in readiness towards the end. So wisdom is being farsighted. It's willing to be giving up short-term gains in order to arrive at long term benefits. Wisdom sees further. A wise man is not caught up with the here and now, isn't it? A wise man prepares for eventualities; a wise man prepares for the future.

Suppose today you earn a thousand bucks a month, you will be an absolute fool... or let's say you have...you earn ten thousand bucks a month, you will be an absolute fool if every month you spend all your money away and you say, "I just want to live for the here and now." That will not be wise! A wise man prepares for a rainy day; he doesn't splurge it all; he prepares. A wise man will eat healthily, in preparation for a longer life. He doesn't just say, "Oh, I love 'Char Kway Teow' (Hokkien dialect meaning stir-fried rice noodles – a popular Singapore hawker dish) and so everyday I will eat ten plates of 'Char Kway Teow'." That's not being wise. Wisdom is the ability to see far.

This week, I read about an editor or a former MP write about a quote from our founding minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew. She quoted Mr. Lee as saying this years ago: "To keep Singapore on the high road of progress in an increasingly competitive world, the country needed leaders who could take the hard decisions with short-term pain for long-term benefits." Well, I suppose this is called wisdom. To think further, to see far and not to be caught up with the here and now.

Wise Christian living is also in preparation for the eventuality that we'll meet Jesus again. Too many believers, followers of Jesus may be caught up with the here and now and lose sight of what is to come. So Solomon here in these texts, is going to tell us what it means to see further, to live wiser and to enter that better life.

So, I'm glad you came this morning. I'm glad you're able to consider, together with me the words of Solomon here. So let's look at verse 1, he says, "A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth." (Ecclesiastes 7:1 ESV). Solomon here is counselling us. If you want to live the wise life, make this a principle: leave behind a good name. If this is the way you live your life, to consciously say, "I will leave behind a good name", it is precious; it is important, this is better than having precious ointment.

Now, precious ointment in those days are really precious. Now today, you probably can buy it quite easily in any malls - perfume and stuff. But in those days, precious ointment is precious. Remember that woman that had to shatter the alabaster box, and to anoint the feet of Jesus, how much did she has to save up? One year's worth of wages. Now that is during Jesus' time, even before that Solomon says, "Ointment is precious." But let me tell you what is even more important. Not these things that money could buy; not perfume; not riches; not possessions but a good name.

A man who is wise, is not all caught up with riches and wealth. But knowing that he should live for something that last even after his death. Perfume lingers for a season, for a day, but a good name lingers beyond the grave. So Solomon says, "Live a life with this perspective." In fact, he repeats this in Proverbs. Proverbs is also written by Solomon and he says, "The memory of the righteous is a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot." (Proverbs 10:7 ESV)

I'm a Chinese, so pardon me if I use some Chinese idioms or proverbs. Immediately, I think of a Chinese proverb. Anyone here can tell me? I think 90% of you here are racially challenged... 'Hanniel (Pastor Sinon's son), is it? Hahaha (Pastor laughing) Anyone wants to try? It's eh... story between 岳飞 (Yue Fei) and 秦桧 (Qin Hui). Okay, who in the world is that right? (Laughter in the congregation) Some general in China, passed away long time ago, he's a patriot. 秦桧 (Qin Hui) is the villain and because of these 2...2 guys, there is this, I think proverb that emerges. (Response in the congregation) I remember as 流芳百世, 遗臭万年 (liu fang bai shi, yi chou wan nian). Heard of that? Ya... yeah, yeah, yeah, okay. 流芳百世, 遗臭万年 (liu fang bai shi, yi chou wan nian), what does this mean? Leave a fragrance for a hundred generation or leave a foul stench for ten thousand years. These 2 men live their lives in such a way that one leaves an aroma, the other one leaves a stench for a long, long time. 12:50.8

Solomon here is saying, live your life with an understanding that what you do, will impact generations and leave a reputation for a long time. "A good name," he says, "is to be chosen, rather than great riches, and favour is better than silver or gold." This is a wise way to live. Of course, most of us don't quite believe him. Most of us believe that riches is better. Silver or gold is better... doesn't matter if I trample on people along the way; doesn't matter if I'm unpleasant to people; doesn't matter if I'm mean, as long as I'm rich. Solomon says, "No, this is... this is wrong. Wisdom tells me that a good name is to be chosen rather than great riches."

So a good name is better than precious ointment, and if you live that way, then the day of death will be better than the day of birth. Your life would have been meaningful and positive and helpful. No point being a rich man and leaves a bad name. Than your day of death is worse than the day of birth. Very simple logic. 14:01.3

Alfred Nobel, you must have heard of this man. His brother just died and so he woke up the next morning wanting to see what is written of his brother in the obituary. So he opened his papers and to his horror, he saw not the name of his brother, but he saw his own name - Alfred Nobel has died. The publisher somehow has got a case of mistaken identity, and so as he read it he was shocked. But he was interested to find out what people thought about him. And what was written about him is that he is the inventor of the deadly dynamite. So at that point of time, he pondered for himself. "What? They remember me as the inventor of death and destruction?" So he endeavoured within himself, to set apart his funds and started the

Nobel Peace Prize. He looked at what he will be remembered for and decided to turn course, change course in his life. And today, I think most of us would have forgotten that he invented dynamite, but we will remember the Nobel Peace Prize. 15:14.8

Now Solomon says, "Live your life this way: consider what name you will leave behind." What kind of a legacy will you leave behind? Now in order to do this, he progresses in verse 2. He tells us not only is it important to be remembered, to be respected, but he tells us, it's important to be reflective, to think about life. So he gives a very vivid picture. "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting..." Therefore, I ask you, "Do you prefer to go to weddings or do you prefer to go to funerals?" Do you prefer funerals or feasting and frivolities? "That's the choice," Solomon says.

Someone puts it this way: "It's better to go to the cemetery for 30 minutes than to go to the amusement park for a day or Las Vegas for a week." It's better. Now, is Solomon against going to have parties and fun and so...? No, no, no, he's not against that. He's not against feasting; he's not saying that we should never have joy; he's not saying that we should never have fun and...and feasts and happy times. We know he doesn't mean that because right in the book of Ecclesiastes, 8 times - he tells us to enjoy what God has given to us. In fact, he uses the words even: eat, drink, be merry. There's nothing wrong with enjoying the things God gave us. We have laboured that point some sermons back and in the book of Proverbs, 30 times - he tells you to enjoy the life that God has given to you.

There is a balance to the grateful enjoyment of the blessings God has given. But Solomon is not against feasting, he's saying in comparison, however, it is better to go to the house of mourning. Go to the cemetery, go to the funerals and consider, because this is the end of all mankind. When you go to the place of death, you can't help but to lay the reality and the certainty of death to your heart. And it causes you to live soberly and not foolishly.

When I drive by the cemetery, either here or overseas with my kids, I'll tell them that is a cemetery. I'll tell them that is the tomb. "Why am I so morbid?" you say. Well, because I want my children to understand that there is the reality and the certainty of death. Now, the Asian culture, the Chinese culture maybe, is one that avoids discussion about death, isn't it? Yeeee! So suay (Hokkien dialect meaning unlucky)! You talk about si, si, si (Hokkien dialect meaning death). Yeeee! So unlucky to talk about death! That's how we view death in our culture.

Not for Solomon. Think about it! Don't go to Universal Studios, he will say to me, go to cemetery, go Choa Chu Kang. Go there more! Bring your sons there - 30 minutes walk (laughter in the congregation). He says that's better than going to the house of fun because men would lay it to heart. And I think that's very true, because we live in such an entertainment driven world. It's all about having fun; it's all about being happy; it's all about enjoying life. There is nothing wrong to enjoying life but when it's all about it, you're off-

balance. If you don't live life in the light of death, you are going to waste your life away. So, the wise thing, is to frequently reflect and consider and be sobered up as to how your life is going to end one day and live wisely. 19:06.7

I think I should bring my sons more, to cemeteries and at their age, they don't mind it, but probably won't bring them at night, that maybe a bit too...too much. But still, it is wise to consider this. In fact, when I go funeral services, he will ask me, "Daddy, where are you going?" I say, "I'm going to a funeral service." He says, "Why?" "Because someone has died." And (that) leads to discussion to sin and to salvation in Jesus and so on and so forth.

In fact, I queued up for eight and a half hours for Mr. Lee's farewell. Eight and a half hours. "What did you do there?" you say. Sometimes you sleep; sometimes you complain and sometimes you think - what has this man achieved? What is death all about? You know, when you go to things like this, it causes you to think about your life, your goals, your motives, about sin and death and...I...I think it's a sobering environment... sobering opportunity.

I find it very interesting, when Moses himself also says the same thing. Psalm 90 - "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:12 ESV). Some of us think that we are immortals you know? You won't die one lah, so enjoy life now. No, no, no, number your days. Are you 30 years old? You don't have that many days you know? Are you 40 years old? Less number of days. Those better-halfers, 50 - 60 years old, even less. So instead of thinking: "Aiyo...I have only 10, 20, 30, 40 years left, I'm going to enjoy myself." Think about this: how do you want to end on your death bed? How would you want to be remembered for the rest of your generations to come? Well, if you know God, then life is not just about the here and now, isn't it? It is what matters in the light of eternity. So, leave a good name with that understanding. 21:08.8

If you go to the West, you will find that in many churches, country sides churches are built in such a fashion (picture shown). What's interesting to me is not the shape of the church building, but what is surrounding the church building - tombs. A cemetery is beside the church. It's the church's cemetery, by the way. Don't you find it funny? Well, why do they do this? Reason is very simple. The church would want the pastor, the preacher, as he preaches, he would see the cemetery out there, across the windows, out of the windows and be reminding himself that who he's preaching to is...are people who one day go to the grave. That should fill the pastor with a greater sense of urgency and passion.

At the very same time, the members who are sitting in the service, will look outside the cemetery and say, "One day I will be there; I will fill that tomb; I will fill that cemetery and I should listen attentively and live wisely." I think it's a great idea. So in Punggol (laughter in the congregation), I would love to have this, but we don't have enough land, alright? We can't do this. Maybe I'll put stickers that look like this on our windows! Wow! What a church!

Stained glass of saints or stained glass of tombstones. Well, the reality is that we will all go to one of these places, we will. So teach us, we pray to God, to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.

I'm reminded of Richard Teo Keng Siang (picture shown). One of the medical doctors who passed away in 2012. My senior, obviously. He lived his life pursuing wealth and riches, and he was very successful in financial sense. He earned his millions, he got his Ferrari but he passed away from a terminal cancer. Soon after he was diagnosed with terminal cancer, that caused him to have a relook at his whole life. That whole pursue of relook eventually led him of course to the Lord Jesus Christ. And in his time of seeing that he's going to die, it changed his life all around because he started to realise that at the end of the day... at the end of the day, yah, along the way you may enjoy your Ferrari and the millions of dollars, but at the end of the day, millions meant nothing. "So why did I chase millions when I was alive?" he said in the New Paper. "I can't hug my Ferrari." There's no tomb, no coffin so big that your Ferrari can go in with you. I can't hug it and then he said, "Only when we learn how to die, then we learn how to live."

What Richard Teo realised is what Solomon is preaching today. Don't wait till the doctor tells you, you have stage 4 this, stage 3 that. Tell it to yourself today, because that's God's Word to you. It's better, it's wiser to live life, knowing the end in mind. Leave a good name, frequently go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting. By all means, have a good time with your family, friends, loved ones, but this is not what life is all about. Something more, something that goes beyond the grave. So, remind yourself.

In the light of such a sober message, severe message actually, Solomon adds on. Now, if you are really serious about life, if you really want to make the best use of life, then your attitude would change. You will realise it is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools (Ecclesiastes 7:5 ESV). You would love to be rebuked. Now of course I say that with tongue-in-cheek. Nobody really loves to be rebuked. Everybody loves to be praised, right? Everyone loves to be flattered. Everybody loves to hear from your fan club. I mean kids are like this. You talk to your kids and when you praise them, they look so happy. It's just natural.

I mean, after sermon, people come to me and say, "Pastor, that was a great message!" (Pastor looked smug on stage) (Laughter in the congregation). You feel a little bit better about yourself, even though you say, "No, it's the Lord's blessing..." (laughter in the congregation). But then ever so often, there will be someone who says, "Pastor, I need to talk to you. Your sermon ah..." Wah, then you "ouch!" That's really painful. But that's natural to men. But a wise man, however says, "It is better, it may not be nicer, but it is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools." The fools can sing great praises about you and to you, but it's not good for you.

Another Chinese proverb? PJ's Chinese lesson. Well, 忠言逆耳 (zhong yan ni er) - Loyal words are contrary to the ears. That's what I think Solomon is saying in a nutshell. When people care about you, they bother to rebuke you and it is better for you to hear their rebuke.

“Let a righteous man strike me,” the Psalmist says, “it is a kindness; let him rebuke me - it is oil for my head; let my head not refuse it.” (Psalm 141:5 ESV).

“The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise.” (Proverbs 15:31 ESV).

“Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear.” (Proverbs 25:12 ESV). It's a beautiful thing to have them speak to you words of rebuke. It's an adornment to your life.

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.” (Proverbs 27:6 ESV). And you know there are many verses in Proverbs that teach about this.

So 忠言逆耳 (zhong yan ni er), it is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise. It may come from your friend. It may come from your care group member. It may come from your family, or for kids here, it may come from your parents. It may even come from your pastor. He scolds you but it is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools. Why? Because the laughter of fools is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. You know what's crackling of thorns is? You try to light up some twigs and thorns and it doesn't burn like er...flames, but it has sparkles. Just a little shimmer or glimmer of little sparks here and there and it crackles but it doesn't do anything, isn't it? You're not going to cook anything with the crackling of thorns. They sound loud, they look flashy but they're ultimately useless. So when we want to surround ourselves with our fan club, people who always cheer us on but not loving us enough to tell us where we can improve. Solomon says, “What's the point?” You live your whole life feeling good about yourself, but you're never going to get better. So, it's better to hear the rebuke of the wise. 29:18.6

And then finally, for our consideration this morning, he says, “If you want to live life, leaving a good name, looking far enough, seeing beyond death, then in this life, don't take shortcuts.” Don't just do things the easy way out. That may compromise your values, your walk with God. He says if you want to take shortcuts, well, this is what happens: “Surely oppression drives the wise into madness, and a bribe corrupts the heart.” (Ecclesiastes 7:7 ESV). You think it's easy, but actually it's a very expensive journey. It's a very long journey because you're going to suffer in your sin; you're going to mess yourself up; you're going to ruin your reputation. So better is the end of a thing, better to be patient doing what is right, doing what is principled and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. (Ecclesiastes 7:8 ESV).

So Solomon says, “See far. Look further, don't just focus on the here and now.” Live with a conscious desire to leave behind a good name because if there is God, that is important.

Frequently reflect upon the reality of death, the certainty that you will pass. Be grateful to rebukes and be resolute in not taking any shortcuts. The end of it all, is that wisdom is going to help you. This better life is good for you. Wisdom is good with an inheritance, an advantage to those who see the sun. For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money, except that there is this added advantage. So money is not a bad thing, by the way. The love of money is a bad thing. Money itself is not a bad thing but wisdom is even better, in that the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it. (Ecclesiastes 7:11-12 ESV).

Having money but being a fool means you would lose that money anyway. But having wisdom preserves the life. It redeems your life, it changes your life and it is a good thing to do. Solomon moves on, in verses 13 and 14 and it gives a very practical situation. How does wisdom help you in difficult times? Well, wisdom has this knowledge. He says, "If you are in adversity, consider this, all right? Consider this; think about this: who can make straight what he has made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him." (Ecclesiastes 7:13-14 ESV). Well, what I think this verse is saying is, when you are in difficulties or in straits or in tribulations, you can't change that state or that reality. What God has made straight or made crooked, you can't make it straight. But realise that He is sovereign, realise that He is in control. He gave you both the day of prosperity and the day of adversity. He made one as well as the other.

So, in times of difficulty, look beyond yourself, look beyond the here and now and consider the fact: God knows. He is in control. So rejoice, be grateful that He never wastes the pains and sorrows inflicted in your life, for your good. He never does that. Wisdom allows a person to pull through hard times, because if you don't see far, if you don't see God, you don't see his long-term purposes and plans, you will be a complaining person when you go through sickness or loss. But it's the ability to see further that causes you to rejoice, He is sovereign. Now, God has lessons for us we don't realise.

A poem goes like this: I walked a mile with Pleasure... that's what we all want, right? But a wise man says, no, pleasure is not necessarily the better thing. I walked a mile... "Why?" you say. I walked a mile with Pleasure, she chatted all the way, but left me none the wiser, for all she had to say. All the pleasure taught me nothing; all the house of feasting taught me nothing. But I walked a mile with Sorrow, and never a word said she, but all the things I learned from her, when sorrow walked with me!

God has his divine, beautiful, purposeful plans for you. So as you go through trials and losses, look beyond the here and now and realise that He would never waste these pains and is working something beautiful for you. This is wisdom in life under the sun. It allows us to see further. I want to ask you today, where do you see? Right now, look at the week you lived, the last week. What have you been living for? Will you leave behind a good name or will you

leave behind an inheritance, but not a good name? What will you leave behind? You may be very intelligent because you have Masters and PhDs and all kinds of degrees, but are you wise? An intelligent man may be able to fix the problem today, but he can't see far enough. That's wisdom. Are you living wisely? 35:22.3

There are 2 men in the Bible I want to share with you about wisdom. Solomon, of course is already mentioned. The other man I want to mention here is Moses. I thought he is very wise. Now the Bible says he is very meek, but I also think he's very wise. Maybe that's why he wrote Psalm 90 verse 12, to say: teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. But the tremendous wisdom of Moses is that when he was grown up, you know, he could have been the next mega power in the world. He could be the monarch of the entire world of Egypt, probably the most powerful nation then. But he strangely refused, I mean what a strange thing! Instead he chose to be ill-treated, mistreated, abused, kicked out of his Egypt with the people of God, rather than to enjoy pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. (Hebrews 11:24-26 ESV)

I've no doubt Moses is an extremely intelligent man, being learned in all the wisdom of Egypt. But I think he's a really wise man, to be daring, to make a choice that says, "I'm not going to live for the here and now; I'm not going to live for the glory and pomp and possessions of this great empire Egypt, but I look further, to the rewards that will come when I see my Saviour face-to-face." This is faith, folks. Wisdom to see what normal people can't see. How's your life? Are you wise to live your life in the presence of God? That's my question for you.

You know, I tell you someone else who's far wiser. Solomon is wise, thankful for Ecclesiastes. Moses is wise, thankful for his great example here. But have you considered Jesus? Is he wise? How is He wise? Wisdom is the ability to see far and not exchange long-term benefits for short-term gain, isn't it? And I think the supreme example I could think of, is in the temptation he faced in the wilderness. You know what did the devil try to do? Now you say, "The devil tried to tempt Jesus." Okay. What did he try to do? How did he try to tempt Jesus? I think he tried to tempt Jesus...there's one angle of looking at that temptation this way. He tried to tempt Jesus to take the shortcuts and not patiently wait on the Father.

He tried to tell Jesus, "Why don't you turn that piece of rock into bread now? You can do it. God did not tell you, but you can take a shortcut and do it now." "You could jump off and prove that you are the Son of God now. Don't have to wait later!" Shortcut. "You can bow before me Jesus, and you know what? You don't have to go to the cross anymore. Bow before me and I will give you the glories of this world." Shortcut - forget the long-term things! I give you what you want right now. Food, affirmation, the glories of this world. If you would just worship me. What's wisdom? Wisdom is saying, "No" to these things because His eyes are fixed further than that piece of rock, or that bread or that affirmation, or even the glories of

this world to come. Think about Jesus at the garden of Gethsemane. He actually agonised, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” The short-term thing to do is to run away from the cross. But the wise thing to do is to die on the cross and therefore he added quickly, “Nevertheless, if it be thy will.”

Wisdom and this is the thinking in Jesus because the Bible reveals, “...looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross...” (Hebrews 12:2 ESV). He looked further than the cross. He looked beyond His death, He lived wisely. My friends, Jesus today, lives in us and He is our supreme example. I ask you today, where are your eyes? Are you going to succumb to the temptation of Satan? That says, “Turn your life to be pieces of bread.” “Prove to everyone that you are the child of God.” Or would you say today, “I will bow to the god of this world, to have the glory in this world”?

Choose today to follow the path of Jesus. That's the wise way. Can I say to you? If you're here, friends with us for the first time, the only way to live your life is when you are prepared to die. Think about it. The only way to live your life well, is when you're prepared to die. Because if you're not thinking about death, you're not going to live your life soberly, properly. And the only way you can prepare to die, is when you know Jesus as your Saviour. The wisest thing to do, for you today, is to turn from your sin and believe in Jesus who died for your sin. I am prepared to die. I'm prepared to die. I don't want to die. I'm scared of the pain but if I should die and God calls me to die, I am prepared to die. Why? Is it because I've been a pastor? I've been a good man, I help people? No! But because Jesus died for my sins and He is my Saviour.

Today, are you prepared to die? The Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world has given His life on the cross for you. The wisest thing for you today, is to turn from sin and to believe in Him. Have you seen far enough? I pray this morning in the quietness of your heart, you will begin to do that. Let's bow for a word of prayer together. 42:52.6

These are practical words of wisdom, pearls of wisdom that flows from Solomon's pen. Life is very fast-paced here in this tiny island, you probably rush to church, and you probably will rush away from the service. And on Monday, you're going to rush back into your work, and on Friday you're going to rush away from your work. And you know, you could just go through week after week like this and not live purposefully, meaningfully, intentionally. So, would you listen to Solomon's advice? A good name is better than precious ointment. Would your life have that conclusion that says, your day of death is better than the day of birth. Have you lived in a significant way? Are your eyes fixated on just the here and now? The ointments, the silvers, the golds? Or would you, like Moses, esteem the reproach of Christ greater, better than the pleasures of sin for a season? Two ways to live, two choices to make. Wisdom takes the better way.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, I'm glad you came like I said, but I think God would be even more glad if you could choose the right way today. He's giving you His Word today, to help you, to guide you, to nudge you, to gently prod you back to Himself. Would you hear His voice? Is there something you need to deal with in your heart? Something you need to repent of? Something you need to reaffirm and recommit? What will people say of you when you die? What will be God's verdict on you when you die? What would you think of yourself on your dying day? Are you prepared for that? Then start today.

Friends, are you here and you do not know Jesus? You do not know when you are going to die, and you're not going to know where you go after you die. Make full preparation for that by looking to the Lamb of God, Jesus. He will be your Saviour and He will never fail because He died on the cross and He rose victorious. He has conquered sin, death and hell. The Bible tells us, he who believes in Him shall never be ashamed. You are absolutely prepared to die. My friends, death is not the unlucky thing to talk about. It's a real and certain thing for you to consider. So come to Jesus, I pray.

Lord, we thank You this morning, in the solemnity of it all, we can hear Your Words. I pray this place is now like a house of mourning, so that by the sadness of our faces, our hearts will be made glad. Because we know the truth and will live now in the light of truth. Bless each one here, according to the needs of our hearts. Thank you for wisdom found in Scriptures, to lead us to a better life. As each week goes by, I pray more and more of us will be aligned to Your will and Your Word. So bless everyone here. We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.