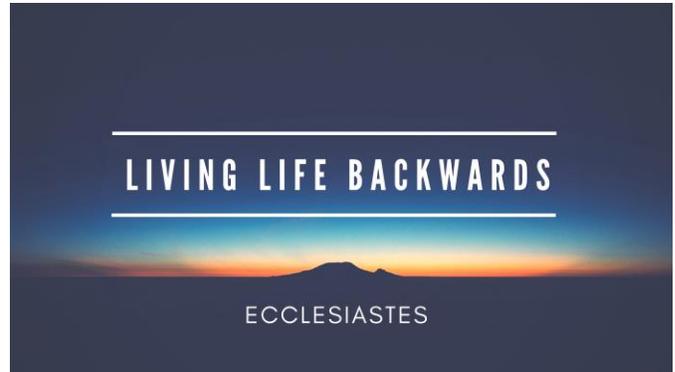


## Remember and Rejoice

### Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:8

#### Living Life Backwards, Part 10

Blake Glosson      August 19, 2018



Let's read Ecclesiastes 11:7 through 12:8:

<sup>7</sup> Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun. <sup>8</sup>  
So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him  
remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is  
vanity. <sup>9</sup> Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart  
cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart  
and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will  
bring you into judgment. <sup>10</sup> Remove vexation from your heart, and put  
away pain from your body, for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.

<sup>12</sup> Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before  
the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, "I  
have no pleasure in them"; <sup>2</sup> before the sun and the light and the  
moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain,  
<sup>3</sup> in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong  
men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and  
those who look through the windows are dimmed, <sup>4</sup> and the doors on  
the street are shut—when the sound of the grinding is low, and one  
rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are  
brought low— <sup>5</sup> they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in  
the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself  
along, and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home, and  
the mourners go about the streets— <sup>6</sup> before the silver cord is  
snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at  
the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, <sup>7</sup> and the dust returns  
to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. <sup>8</sup>  
Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.

Will you join me in prayer?

Eternal God, You are the Creator of the heavens and the earth. It is in You that we live and move and have our being. Lord, we thank You for the sweet joys of this life and for the hope we have of eternal life through the blood of Christ our Savior. Heavenly Father, I ask that You would

bless the preaching of Your Word this morning. Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. In however many days you give us on this earth, please help us to rejoice in them all for the sake of Your glory and our joy. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Two weeks from today I turn 26 years old. Now, you might ask, "How does that make you feel?" Well, it makes me feel pretty old, to be honest with you. Once I turn 26, I will officially be closer to 30 than I will be to 20. And once I turn 30, I will officially be closer to 40 than I will be to my teenage years. And everything changes at 40. As Victor Hugo said, "Forty is the old age of youth, then 50 is the youth of old age."

Speaking of 50, Pastor Patrick Havens is 50 years old. I texted him yesterday and asked him—after reading him this quote from Victor Hugo—if it would give him the warm fuzzies inside if I called him a "youthful old person." He texted back with six words: "Love covers a multitude of sins." So I took that as a no.

Then after you turn 50, you get into your 60s and 70s, which have been shown to be some of the more statistically happy and content decades to be alive. That's when the years begin to feel like days passing by.

So how do I feel to be 25 going on 26? I love it. But I also realize that before I know it, I'm going to be 36. And before I know it, I'll be 46. It's going to feel like seconds. And before I know it, I'll be 56—and then 66 and 76, if the Lord chooses to give me that much time on this earth.

But that's enough about me—what about you? When you think about your age, how does that make you feel? In this passage, Solomon describes one life script and two life stories. The one life script goes like this: First, you're young. Then, you're old. Then you go to your eternal home. One life script.

Then he describes two life stories of two people. Ask yourself which one of these stories better describes your experience.

Person A's life story goes like this:

- When he's young, he dreads getting old (11:10).
- Then when he's old, he dreads being old (12:1b).
- Then he goes to his eternal home (12:5).

Person B's life story, meanwhile, goes like this:

- When he's young, he rejoices in his youth (11:9).
- When he's old, he rejoices in his old age (11:7-8).
- Then he goes to his eternal home (12:5).

Now, what's the difference between Person A and Person B? Well, it's not the script. The script is exactly the same. First you're young, then you're old, then you go to your eternal home. I'd like to propose that the difference hinges entirely on a mindset. We see this mindset depicted in the first three words of Ecclesiastes 12: "Remember your Creator..." I believe what Solomon is showing us is that there is a kind of remembering that leads to rejoicing in every age of life. As Matt Chandler put it, "Remembering rightly redeems our rejoicing."

So think about which one of these better describes you. When Person A considers the fleetingness of youth and the challenges of old age, that's all he sees, stirring up dreading in his heart. Person B, on the other hand—while he sees the fleetingness of youth and knows about the challenges of old age—sees both through the lens of the biblical worldview with all of God's promises attached. This enables him to rejoice. One story produces dread; one story produces rejoicing. One story produces anxious toil; the other produces restful toil. One story produces fear; the other produces peace. Again, the difference is not the script—it's the perception of the script. One remembers his Creator; the other does not.

So then, which life story better describes your experience? Are you more like Person A or Person B? My desire is that as we study God's Word this morning, it will help each of us remember our Creator and that by God's grace this remembering would better equip us to rejoice in every season of life.

So then we have one question to answer here: what does it mean to remember your Creator? If it really is true that remembering rightly redeems our rejoicing in every age of life, how can we actually do that? What does it look like practically? I'd like to offer you three general responses. The first will be for all age groups, then I'd like to look at how Solomon specifically answers this question for the young and for the old.

### **For all age groups, what does it mean to remember your Creator?**

This expression, "Remember your Creator," says something really important about who you are, plus something really important about Who God is. First, consider what it says about who you are. The fact that you have a Creator has really important implications. For example, it means you're a creature. It means you're finite. It means you are limited. It means you are dependent. And how about this—it means you're not God.

Now, you might be sitting there thinking, "Duh. Why did I even come to church this morning? That's obvious." But there are ways we can live functionally as if we believed we were not creatures. There are ways we can actually live functionally as if we believe we are the infinite,

self-sufficient creator. As French philosopher Jacques Ellul put it, “You are a creature and all the evils in this world stem from us taking us to be the creator.”

You hear that and you may think, “Is that really true, that all the evils of this world stem from us taking ourselves to be the creator?” I mean, how many times have we had a conversation after church and I whisper to you, “Don’t tell anyone, but I’m actually God and I created everything you see”? I have never said that before. I have never even thought that before. But even if we don’t consciously think these words, there are many ways we can live as if we actually believe them. Let me give you five life scenarios that could be indicators that you are living like the creator and not like the creature you are. Ask yourself if you can relate with any of these.

1. You get anxious when you get in a situation you feel like you cannot control. What is going on?
2. You get anxious when you don’t know what your future looks like.
3. You try to please everyone in your life and you find it difficult to ever say no. Then you always feel like you’ve let someone down because you couldn’t be everywhere at once. Have you ever felt that way before?
4. Any time you don’t do something perfectly, you beat yourself up because you feel like you’ve failed yourself or you’ve failed the world.
5. You feel as though it’s your job to save others or to change their hearts. Then when they don’t change or when they don’t get saved right away, you bear this burden on your own shoulders.

Notice that in all five of these situations, we are condemning ourselves for not possessing an attribute that is entirely exclusive to the Creator God. Let’s walk through the list again quickly:

1. If you get anxious when you’re in situations where you feel like you aren’t in control, in a sense you’re condemning yourself for not being omnipotent, for not being all-powerful.
2. If you get overly anxious when you don’t know what your future looks like, then in a sense you’re condemning yourself for not being omniscient, all-knowing.
3. If you try to please everyone and feel like you’ve always let someone down because you couldn’t be everywhere at once, then you’re condemning yourself in a sense for not being omnipresent.
4. If you’re a perfectionist and feel you’ve failed yourself or the people around you, then you’re condemning yourself for not being perfect, which again is an attribute exclusive to the Creator God.
5. If you feel as though it’s your job to save someone and are really trying but their heart is not changing—and you take that burden on your own shoulders—in a sense you’re condemning yourself for not being the Savior, for not being Jesus.

In all five of these scenarios, we're forgetting our Creator and condemning ourselves for being creatures, for not being God. In other words, in each of these scenarios our failure to remember our Creator and to remember our creatureliness is what hinders our rejoicing.

I would like to just give one more example that I recently shared at The Rock, our young adult ministry. For me, it can be tempting at times to feel like I'm failing God whenever I don't love Him infinitely. After all, if God's value is infinite, isn't it my duty to love Him infinitely? The answer the Bible gives is no and here's why it's not my duty. A creature by definition is finite. We get tired. We get sick. Our capacity to love is limited. If it was true that God called us to love Him infinitely, then whenever we fall short of this, God will be condemning us—not for being sinners, but for being creatures. But God never condemns us for being creatures. God never calls us to love Him infinitely. Instead, He calls us to love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength (Matthew 22:37). In other words, He calls you to love Him with everything you have in a given moment.

This means when you're feeling tired or weak, God is not calling you to love Him with enthusiastic energy. He's calling you to love Him in your tiredness and your weakness. When you're in a season of mourning, He's not calling you to love him with glib happiness. He's calling you to love Him in your mourning. When you're confused or frustrated—or when you're in a goofy mood or you're in a serious mood—God calls you to love Him in that.

Why is it that God can accept these finite, creaturely offerings of worship? It's because while we remember our Creator, our Creator also remembers our frame. Do you remember Psalm 103:13-14? *"As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame"*—which literally means He knows how we were formed and—*"...he remembers that we are dust."* God remembers that you are a creature and He doesn't call you to be anything more than that.

If God Himself doesn't call you to be more than what He has created you to be, then we don't have to put that same pressure on ourselves to be more than what He created us to be. True joy does not come when we pretend as though we are unlimited or when we hide our limitations. True joy comes when we embrace our limitations and when we turn to the God Who is unlimited.

One of my favorite quotes is this by A.W. Tozer: "How completely satisfying it is to turn from our limitations to a God Who has none."

So what does it mean for all age groups to remember your Creator? First, it means to embrace the freeing reality that we are finite, limited, dependent creatures. Every second that we remember our Creator is a second that we're not living like we are God, which is a very healthy place to be. But the words "remember your Creator" also tell us something about Who God is. It

tells us God is unlimited. Unlike us, God the Creator is infinite. He is self-sufficient. He does not grow weak or weary. In all the ways we are limited, God the Creator is not.

These words also remind us that God owns us. Now, out of curiosity, how many of you in here are under the age of 18? Keep your hands raised. How many of you guys who have your hands raised have seen one of the Toy Story movies? Good. Now, keep your hands raised. How many of you who have seen those movies liked those movies? Okay, keep your hands raised. Parents, look around, because herein lies the hope of the future of this country. For those of you with your hands raised,—and for any of us in this room who have seen the Toy Story movies—you'll know that one of the best parts about these movies is the way they depict the beauty of the relationships between the toys and their owner Andy.

I heard one pastor use these relationships to describe the beauty of God's ownership of us. Listen to what he wrote:

You are not your own. As your Creator, God owns you. This can sound a little oppressive at first, but I'd like you to think about ownership in terms of Toy Story. Toy Story is a series of films that are all about the beauty of being owned. What does being owned mean for the toys in Toy Story? It means they have a place, an identity and a purpose in this world that is directly related to their owner. To know that God is your Creator, to know that He owns you, is to know that He loves you and to know that you have a purpose and a place and a role in this world, and it is all in relationship to God. In one sense, you have God's name written on the sole of your shoe. And as we're told in Isaiah 49, God has your name written on the palms of His hands.



So for all age groups, what does it mean to remember your Creator? Well, it means to daily and consciously embrace the freeing reality of who you are as a finite, limited, dependent creature, embracing the freeing reality of Who God is as the unlimited Creator Who knows you, Who owns you and Who loves you. That's how we all are to remember our Creator. But how does Solomon address this question specifically for the young? And how does he address this specifically for the more seasoned people among us?

### **For those who are young, what does it mean to remember your Creator?**

If you're a young person, there are three ways to remember your Creator, each of which we will dive into:

- Enjoy the vast freedom of your Creator, (11:9)
- Trust the future grace of your Creator (11:10).
- Obey the current call of your Creator (12:1).

How are you to enjoy the vast freedom of your Creator? Look back at what Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 11:9: “*Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes.*” I’m so glad the Holy Spirit inspired Solomon to write these words, because it is a wonderful reminder for all of us that God created this world for us to enjoy. It’s one of the reasons He created it.

C.S. Lewis put this in The Screwtape Letters: “God is a hedonist at heart. He has filled this world full of pleasures for us to enjoy. There are things for humans to do all day long without His minding in the least—sleeping, washing, eating, drinking, making love, playing, praying, working. Everything has to be twisted before it’s of any use to the devil.” Or as one pastor said about Ecclesiastes 11:9, “This is a liberating verse: ‘Walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes.’” What Solomon is saying is that youth is a special, short, unique time, so take advantage of it. What is your heart’s desire? Do it. What do your eyes desire? Do it. Do you want to travel to Europe? Do you want to start a business? Do it. Start a ministry. Go to Guatemala. Put in water wells. Climb a fourteener. Learn a language. Memorize Romans. Ride a bull. [His words, not mine on that last one.]

Every time we have fun, God is not sitting up in heaven saying, “Hey, what are you doing? Cut that out!” No. Not only does God allow us to enjoy this life, in this verse He actually commands it. That’s pretty neat. According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, “The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” One of the primary ways we glorify and enjoy God is by relishing in His creation with thankfulness in our hearts to God.

You might ask, “But what about that second part of verse nine? That looks a little ominous.” It says, “*Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.*” It’s a very important part of the verse. I love Dave Anderson’s commentary on this part of the verse. He says, “The statement is not a wet blanket.” I like that term. None of us cuddle up with a blanket and think, “Ooh, it’s got a little wet spot on it. I kind of like that.” No. He says, “This term is not a wet blanket.” This isn’t, “Yes! I get to do whatever I want. Oh. God’s going to judge me.”

No. He says, “There’s a lot of freedom here. Have fun. Enjoy your youth. But filter everything you do by the judgment of God. Remember that every single one of your actions matters. Remember that all of your works are before the eyes of God.” As Paul says in 2

Corinthians 5:10, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”* So enjoy this life. Enjoy the fact that every single one of your works matters. Then honor God by the way you live. As St. Augustine famously put it, *“Love God, and do whatever you please.”* If we’re filtering what we’re doing by the judgment of God, we are safe.

So, young person, what does it mean to remember your Creator? First, rejoice in the vast freedom your Creator has given you. Secondly, trust in the future grace of your Creator. Look back at verse ten for a moment. He says, *“Remove vexation from your heart, and put away pain from your body, for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.”* Given the context of aging, this could be a call to put off the grief or anger that comes from fixating too much on the fleetingness of youth. Here’s how Derek Kidner put it:

To idolize the state of youth and to dread the loss of it is disastrous. It spoils the gift, even while we have it. To see youth instead as a passing phase, beautiful in its time but not beyond that, is to be free from its frustrations.

Or I really like how Alastair Begg put it:

Don’t idolize being young, and don’t dread not being young. Just enjoy being young. If you dread its loss, it will spoil the experience. If you try to perpetuate its experience, you will look like a clown. Therefore, leave your clown clothes at home. Get rid of the black leather vest—you’ll look weird in it.

Now, I don’t know exactly what he’s talking about with the black leather vest part. If you chose to wear your black leather vest to church today, please don’t be offended. We are not the anti-black-leather-vest church here. But the point remains. As youth, we should be conscious that life is short and that difficult seasons are ahead of us. But instead of dreading that, we can trust and hope in God’s future grace. We can rest in His future grace.

What do I mean by future grace? Well, let me give you an illustration that might help. I’ve had the privilege with meeting with Jan VanDellen pretty regularly these past couple of years. One of the last times we met, she was telling me about some of her health issues, specifically how she’s lost some of the functioning in her fingers and hands. [She gave me the okay to tell this story, by the way.] I told her, *“It’s so encouraging for me to see the joy you have, even with these physical challenges.”* And I was honest with her, saying, *“I don’t know if I could handle those same trials with the same level of joy you’re experiencing.”*

She responded, “Wait. Remember God does not give you the grace to handle other people’s trials, nor does He give you the grace today to handle your own future trials. He hasn’t given you that grace yet, but He will on the day you need it.”

She then went on to tell me Corrie ten Boom’s train ticket story in The Hiding Place. Some of you might be familiar with this story. Basically, when Corrie ten Boom was six years old, she visited a neighbor who had a child pass away. For the first time in her life, Corrie came to the realization that her family members could die at any moment—her mom, her dad, her brothers and sisters. According to the book, she was so distressed that at the sight of her father coming home from work, she burst into tears.

“I need you,” Corrie sobbed. “You can’t die. You can’t.”

Her father sat down beside her and said gently, “Corrie, when you and I go to Amsterdam, when do I give you your train ticket?”

“Well,” she said, “just before we get on the train.”

“Exactly,” he said. “And our wise Father in heaven knows when we’re going to need things too. Don’t run out ahead of Him, Corrie. When the time comes that some of us will have to die, you will look into your heart and find the strength you need just in time.”

In other words, God does not give you the strength now to handle the challenges and trials in the future. But part of remembering your Creator is trusting that He will give you the grace and strength exactly when you need it. That’s why in Lamentations 3, Jeremiah talks about God’s daily mercies. God has not given you the mercy and grace today for the rest of your life, but He will give you that mercy and grace on a daily basis. In the words of Billy Graham, “Take this to heart: the will of God will never take us where the grace of God cannot sustain us.”

So, young person, how can you remember your Creator? First, enjoy the vast freedom of your Creator. Second, trust and rest in the future grace of your Creator. And finally, obey the current call of your Creator. Look back at Ecclesiastes 12:1: “*Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come.*”

Ed Walsh wrote a book entitled When People Are Big and God Is Small in which he describes a dangerous attitude that many young people have. He said, “There are masses of people who temporarily put their faith on the shelf. They say, ‘Death is not immanent, so why hurry into a decision? Surely there will be time later to get things straight with God.’”

For all of my young friends here, please do not let this be you. Let’s not wait to start to live for God. Let’s give God our best while we still have the energy. Let’s not think, “You know, maybe there will be time later to get things straight with God.” None of us know if there will be a

tomorrow. This is why the writer of Hebrews says, *“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion”* (Hebrews 3:15). While you cannot know what will happen tomorrow, you can know that God is calling you today.

Think about Jesus’ example. He took on flesh like us and He did not wait. He answered God’s call from a young age. Think about Him as a child Who submitted to and obeyed God. Then he became a teenager, like many of you. He obeyed and submitted to God in His teenage years. Then He became a young adult like us, and He obeyed and submitted to God then. In all of this, He was building a foundation so that on that evil day when He was crucified, He obeyed and submitted to God again. You can be sure that as Jesus obeyed His calling on the day of His crucifixion, He was thinking of you.

Jesus said, *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”* (Matthew 11:28-29). Young person, if you hear this call, please do not wait. Please do not think there will always be later, because there isn’t always a “later.” As Charles Bridges said, “Many have remembered their Creator too late, but none too soon.”

So, for the youth, what does it mean to remember your Creator? First, enjoy the vast freedom of your Creator. Second, trust the future grace of your Creator. And third, obey the current call of your Creator.

### **For those who are older, what does it mean to remember your Creator?**

For all of my older brothers and sisters in Christ here, what does it mean to remember your Creator? What exhortations does Solomon give? I see two that he gave us.

First, praise your Creator for the sweetness of life. Look back with me at Ecclesiastes 11:7-8: *“Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.”* In other words, there’s a sweetness and a pleasantness to being alive. Then he says, *“So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.”* In other words, yes, this life is short. In comparison to eternity, this life is very fleeting. But there’s also sweetness that we can enjoy in it.

I was walking at Pottawatomie Park this last Wednesday and came across a bench with an elderly lady sitting on it along with her daughter. I typically say hi to people when I walk past, because I enjoy being a nice guy, but a lot of people don’t really respond, or they’ll just give me a little glance. Still, I said, “Hi,” and this elderly lady gave me a really hearty, “Why, hello there!!” I was thinking, “Great. This person actually is willing to talk.”

So we began talking and she told me that the bench she was sitting on was actually a tribute to her husband who had passed away. She said, “Today, August 15, was his birthday.” She then showed me the plaque on the bench which began with the words, “Bee happy.” It had two e’s in the word “bee.” It was perhaps the perfect plaque for this woman to design, because we talked for about ten minutes and the entire time she was just smiling ear to ear. She was “beeing” very happy.

She also had a shirt with bees on it—not live bees, but embroidered ones. She told me that she and her husband were bee keepers and they spent many years harvesting honey. I said, “You know, I’m studying a passage in Ecclesiastes that begins with the words *‘Life is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.’* In Hebrew, that word ‘sweet’ probably had connotations connected to the sweetness of honey.” I told her, “You seem like a really happy woman. Can I ask you a question?” She said, “Sure.” I said, “What makes life sweet to you?”

She gave me two answers. One was nonverbal; the other one was verbal. She began with the nonverbal one, just giving me a little hand motion and pointing to her daughter, which of course made her daughter blush. Then she told me about the hope she had for eternal life through her relationship with Christ. She said, “I can’t imagine what it would be like to believe that this life is all there is.” So even in her old age, even on the birthday of her deceased husband, she found life to be sweet because she remembered her Creator and because she remembered the promises He had made to her.

So for older Christians, what does it mean to remember your Creator? Well, first, praise and thank God for the sweetness of life. There is sweetness and there is a pleasantness to this life. Second and last, remember that God’s love for you is not dependent on you remembering Him. Norman Wisdom, a British actor and clown, once said, “As people get older, three things happen. First is that your memory goes, and I can’t remember the other two.”

In Ecclesiastes 12:2-8, Solomon compares our bodies to a decaying house. If you just glance over those verses, you might be able to see some of these connections. For example, the “keepers of the house” in verse three, which now tremble, refers to your hands. The “strong men,” later on in verse three, which are now stooping, refers to your legs. “Grinders” are teeth, “windows” are eyes, “doors” are ears, and so forth. Solomon says that each of these, over time, will eventually begin to fail us. Or in the words of a more modern person, “When you get old, everything hurts, and what doesn’t hurt doesn’t work.” That’s not so funny, is it?

Now for me, I see this reality most clearly in my grandma, whom I call Nanny. She’s 90 years old and has Alzheimer’s. It’s very clear that her brain and memory do not work in the ways they have her whole life. She usually forgets who I am and she even forgets who my mom is

frequently, her own daughter. I've wondered before, "What if Nanny's Alzheimer's causes her to forget Who God is?"

I was really encouraged a few weeks ago when I heard a pastor actually talking about Alzheimer's and he spoke a very simple sentence that filled me with a lot of hope. He said, "Even if you don't remember the Lord, He will always remember you." In other words, when Paul says in Romans 8:35-39 that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, that includes Alzheimer's. That includes any physical illness or ailment that we might have. Even when our brains fail us, that doesn't stop God from loving us or keeping His promises to us. As Jesus said in John 6:39-40:

*And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."*

The reason why our Creator is not dependent on us or even our failing brains is because our Creator is also our Savior. As Colossians 1:16 says, all things were created through Christ and for Christ.

I love these words of John Newton that we spoke toward the end of his life: "Even though my memory is fading, I remember two things very clearly: I'm a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior." This is where all of our hope lies. It's not in us remembering God, but in God remembering us. No matter what stage of life you're in, let's rejoice in the fact that we have a Creator Who loves us and Who gave Himself for us.

Before I close in prayer, I want to give one more exhortation by way of illustration. Imagine you're in your kitchen, maybe you're cutting up mangoes or doing whatever you do in the kitchen. You look out your kitchen window and behold, a dog is digging in your backyard. You think, "That's strange."

So you go out there and you realize the dog has dug something up. It's a bottle, a broken bottle. You take it out of his mouth and see that inside this bottle there's a little crumpled-up piece of paper. You think, "That's weird." You smooth out the paper and it becomes clear to you that it's a map. Then you realize, "Wait a minute. I think this is a map of my backyard." Then you notice that right where you're standing there's a big black X with the words, "Buried treasure chest filled with gold" scribbled next to it.

Now, depending on what kind of person you are, you might go and grab a friend to dig it up with you. Or maybe you would just try to keep it for yourself, digging it right then and there. But

no matter what, it would be silly for any of us to be in that situation and think, “Oh, it’s just gold. I don’t need any of that.” No. All of us would begin digging.

So to all my younger friends here, I want to exhort you from personal experience and tell you that in this very church there is gold buried one inch deep all around you. Every older person in this church has wisdom, experience, knowledge and insight just waiting to be tapped into—right in your backyard. I would encourage you, young people, for your own good, do not neglect this treasure. If you’re thinking, “Well, I don’t know what to do—how can I tap into this?” you can go up to someone older than you and invite them to have some coffee. Unless they don’t like coffee, they’ll probably say yes.

For our older people in this church, I want to exhort you as well. Please do not check out. Please do not think, “My days of investing in the church are behind me.” Because if you do this—if you just set your faith on cruise control and check out—you’re not only hurting yourself, but you’re hurting the church. As young people, we legitimately need you. So if you push forward and continue to run the race, you can be confident that there is actually gold to be had for you as well.

God created every person in this room to thrive when we are being used by Him. Our lifelong ministry to one another is to help each other remember our Creator. As we go from here, let’s be faithful to remember our Creator and also to look around us and see who else we might help to remember our Creator as well.

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*All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.*

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