

“If All Your Dreams Come True”
(Senior Day 2008 and Ecclesiastes)

Preached on Senior Day at Parkway

Norman Rockwell captured the faces of dreamers in this cover from the Saturday Evening Post of September 25, 1954 “Breaking Home Ties.” It was the first year when all three of Rockwell’s sons went away to school. Notice the anticipation on the face of the youngest son compared to the father ...and the dog.

Cover of Saturday Evening Post of March 6, 1954. Note the concern for the future as she looks at the picture of the movie star...and then looks at herself.

Movie released in March, 2002. Dennis Quaid played the part of Jim Morris, a real life story.
1983: Minor league pitcher for the Brewers
1986: catastrophic shoulder injury
1989: left baseball

Settled down...married...had three children in Big Lake, Texas. Taught chemistry and coached baseball. His dream lay dormant for 10 years.

His players challenged him to try out. “Coach, when I catch your pitches I have to ice down my hand.” Agreed: “If you win the district championship I’ll try out for the major league.”

They started winning...they won the district....

...they went to the state championship series for the first time in their history.

Jim goes to tryout in 1999. They thought he was there because he’d brought a prospect for the scouts to see. He was called to pitch while he’s changing a child’s diaper. Pitched three fastballs at 98 mph. Signed to the Tampa Devil Rays organization. His wife, Lorri, hadn’t seen him in 3 months while he was in the minor league working his way up....1st major league game in Arlington, Texas in front of 40,000 cheering fans.

He was the oldest rookie to pitch in 40 years. *I’m living proof that you can always achieve whatever it is you pursue as long as you put your full heart into it.* -Jim Morris

What are your dreams? What if they all came true? A book in the Bible that is about just such a possibility.

I. The Problem Declared (1-2)

“Is life really worth living?” life is *not* worth living because life is full of vanity (emptiness). Then he states his reasons:

A. Man is only a cog in a big wheel (1:4-11)

What is man compared to the vastness of the world? Everything in nature continues, century after century, but man is here for a brief space of time, then he dies. It all seems so meaningless. It is vanity. Since life is so short and man so insignificant, why bother to live at all?

B. Man cannot understand it all (1:12-18)

Solomon was the wisest of men, yet when he tried to understand the meaning of life, he was baffled. Is it reasonable to live when you cannot understand what life is all about?

C. Man’s pleasures do not satisfy (2:1-11)

Solomon had plenty of money, pleasure, culture, and fame; yet he admitted that these things did not satisfy. Nor did they last.

II. The Problem Discussed (3-10)

A. God has a purpose in our lives (chap. 3)

God balances life: birth-death, sorrow-joy, meeting-parting. (1) so that we will not think we can easily explain God’s works (v. 11), and (2) so that we will learn to accept and enjoy what we have (vv. 12-13). God has set “eternity” in our hearts. This means that the things of the world can never really satisfy us.

B. God gives riches according to His will (chaps. 4-6)

Why is one person rich and another poor? Why is there injustice and inequality in the world? Because God has a plan for us, that we should not trust in uncertain riches but in the Lord.

C. God’s wisdom can guide us through life (chaps. 7-10)

It is true that man’s wisdom cannot fathom God’s plan, but God can give us wisdom to know and do His will. Simply because we cannot understand everything does not mean we should give up in despair. Trust God and do what He tells you to do.

Did you notice that in each of these sections, Solomon emphasizes the enjoyment of God's blessings and the reality of death?

(1 Kings 4:29-34 NIV) God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. {30} Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. {31} He was wiser than any other man, including Ethan the Ezrahite--wiser than Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. {32} He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. {33} He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. {34} Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.

*(Ecclesiastes 1:12-18 NIV) I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. {13} I **devoted myself to study** and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a heavy burden God has laid on men! {14} I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind. {15} What is twisted cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted. {16} I thought to myself, "Look, I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge." {17} Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind. {18} For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.*

The Dream of Pleasure

● 700 wives and 300 concubines

● "I refused my heart no pleasure."
(Ecclesiastes 2:10-11 NIV) I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor.

● "Meaningless"

The Dream of Accomplishment

● 7 years to build temple 13 years to build palace

● All must be left behind
{11} Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."

(1 Kings 6:38 NIV) In the eleventh year in the month of Bul, the eighth month, the temple was finished in all its details according to its specifications. He had spent seven years building it.

(1 Kings 7:1 NIV) It took Solomon thirteen years, however, to complete the construction of his palace.

(Ecclesiastes 2:18 NIV) I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me.

(Ecclesiastes 2:24 NIV) A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God,

● "Meaningless"

The Dream of Wealth

(1 Kings 10:23 NIV) King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth.

(1 Kings 10:27 NIV) The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig trees in the foothills.

(Ecclesiastes 5:10 NIV) Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.

● Richest man on earth

● Silver as common as stones

● "Meaningless"

Look at your own dreams. What if they all came true...where would you be?

III. The Problem Decided (11-12)

Solomon has already decided that man is not a "cog in the wheel," that there is nothing wrong with enjoying riches and pleasures to God's glory, and that our

inability to understand all that God is doing is no hindrance to a happy life.

In 11-12, Solomon sums up the whole matter with three practical admonitions:

A. Live by faith (11:1-6)

Circumstances are never going to be ideal in this life, but we must go ahead and obey God and trust Him for the results. If you wait for the right wind or the right day, you may miss your opportunity. You may seem to be a fool, like someone who casts bread on moving water, but God will see to it that it will come back to you.

B. Remember that life will end (11:7-12:7)

Is this a morbid suggestion? No. It is a Christian realism. One day you will die, so make the most of the life you now have. This is not the worldly attitude, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

Rather, it is the attitude of Paul in Phil. 1:20-21—*to live is Christ, to die is gain*.

Note the three key words here directed especially to young people: rejoice (11:9), remove (11:10), and remember (12:1). Rejoice in God's blessings while you are young; remove from your life the sins that cause sorrow; and remember to serve God and fear Him in the days of your youth.

In 12:1-7 we have a poetic description of old age and death. See if you can discover what these poetic terms refer to in the human body.

C. Fear God and obey Him (12:8-14)

Live as those who will one day face judgment. When the fire of God tests your works, will they all burn up? (1 Cor. 3:9-17)

You will want to interpret Solomon's conclusions in the light of 1 Cor. 15, the great resurrection chapter of the Bible. If death really ends all, then life is not worth living, and everything truly is "vanity" and emptiness.

But 1 Cor. 15 makes it clear that death is not the end. Because Christ arose from the dead, we shall also be raised. And the glory and reward we enjoy in eternity will depend on the lives we lived here on earth. Therefore, our labor is not "in vain in the Lord" (v. 58).

Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man. --Eccl. 12:13

From the human point of view "under the sun," it seems as if life is futile and empty; all is vanity. But when life is lived **in the power of God for the glory of God, then life becomes meaningful.** A person may live and labor for sixty years, and then die.

Does this mean his life was wasted? Of course not. His labor is not in vain in the Lord. He will receive the rewards of his labors when Christ returns. "*He who does the will of God abides forever*" (1 John 2:17).

The unsaved person loses all at death; so does the carnal, worldly Christian who will be "saved, yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3:15).

But the faithful Christian who rejoices in God's blessings today and uses his life to glorify Christ, will receive abundant rewards in the life to come.

In the light of the NT, Ecclesiastes is not a "pessimistic" book that denies the joys of life.

Rather, it proves that though there are many mysteries in life we cannot explain, we can live so as to enjoy God's blessings and glorify God's name.

Any dream that doesn't have God as the center is a dream that is unworthy of your life.

YOU are eternal! Don't sell your life short!

The best part of the Jim Morris story took place AFTER the movie. He played for three years and had more shoulder and elbow trouble.

He realized baseball was jeopardizing a bigger dream: his family. Baseball wasn't the most important thing in the world after all.

(Psalms 42:1-2) *As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. {2} My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?*

As we stand and sing, give yourself to a dream that is big enough, great enough for someone who is a child of God.