Joy in a Broken World

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[0:00] We'll be reading the first ten verses of Ecclesiastes chapter 9. This is yet again God's word. 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. But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.
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.
[1:23] Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. Let your garments be always white, let not oil be lacking on your head.

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.
Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in shale to which you are going. At the funeral home where I work, we have an event center across the parking lot where we can serve catered meals after a funeral.
So after the funeral is over, family and friends, they can make their way across the parking lot and sit down to enjoy a meal together. And I've often been struck by the contrast between the funeral and the meal.
The funeral, as you might expect, will often be very somber. People are crying, sometimes wailing out loud. Sometimes family members will cling to the casket because they just can't let go of their loved one.
[2:39] But then they do eventually let go, and then they walk across the parking lot. Now, I'm not suggesting that their grief has stopped in an instant, but they will often walk into the event center with a smile on their face, and then they will spend the next hour or two laughing and talking and joking.

It's like night and day. If you were to see those people around the dinner table, you could hardly imagine that they were the same people who were just weeping over a casket minutes before.
Well, we have something of that, that seemingly strange contrast here in this passage of Ecclesiastes. In the first six verses, Solomon addresses the severe brokenness of this world.
Throughout this letter, he keeps coming back to this observation of life where he notices how things don't seem to make sense. For example, he often comments on how the righteous seem to suffer while the wicked seem to prosper.
In other words, justice is upside down. Then, just when you think things might turn around, the end is the same for all mankind. Down to the grave we all go.
[4:02] We all die. End of story, right? If you've ever read Proverbs and Ecclesiastes back to back, you might get the impression that these books were written by two different people.

Proverbs tells us that wisdom generally leads to life, and folly leads to ruin. But Ecclesiastes often comes across as that grumpy old man who complains about everything.

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You know, he looks at Proverbs, his neighbor, and he says, Listen, kid, wait till you get to be my age. You'll see, life is not as black and white as you think it is.
Now, that may be the initial impression we get from these books, but it's a mistaken oversimplification. Proverbs teaches us the ordinary patterns of life in God's world.
And Ecclesiastes forces us to reckon with the fact that these patterns don't always unfold as we expect. And we see that even in this passage.
[5:09] In the first six verses, Solomon does speak to the brokenness of this fallen world, but then he pivots in verse 7 when he gives us the first imperative or command of this chapter.

And it's somewhat shocking to hear what he said in the previous verses. Life is doom and gloom in the first six. But when Solomon finally tells us what we are to do about it, he says, Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart.
What? In verse 3, he says, 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.
Okay, Solomon, what now? What do we do? Eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart. The funeral's over, so get across the parking lot and enjoy your meal.
What do we do? Which is it, Solomon? Are we supposed to mourn the brevity of life? Or enjoy it? Should we be troubled by the confusion and the apparent injustice in the world?
[6:30] Or should we press on like it never happened? What are you saying, Solomon? Well, let me back up and address the refrain that Solomon uses repeatedly throughout this book.

In fact, he begins and ends his speech with it, saying, Vanity of vanities. All is vanity. Some translations render this as, Everything is meaningless.
Or, everything is futile. Now, every one of those translations captures something of the word's meaning, but if we were to translate Solomon literally, he is calling all of life a vapor, or a mist.
And I believe he has two reasons for this. The first is that life is brief. As James says in the New Testament, What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time, and then vanishes.
The vapor rises up, and it disappears almost as quickly. But I also believe Solomon refers to life as a vapor because this world has a mysterious nature to it.
[7:40] This is a recurring theme throughout the book. As Solomon studies the world around him, he finds that many things do not make sense to him. We know the general patterns of life that Proverbs teaches, but those patterns don't always match what we're experiencing.

What do you make of good people serving God and doing good throughout their entire lives, yet they suffer terribly? Then you turn around, and you see some of the most wicked, vile people seem to have a great life.
They're prospering. Does this make sense? Well, as it happens, it does make sense, even if you and I can't understand it just yet.
As Solomon says in chapter 3, man cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. God has a purpose for all things, but we're not necessarily privy to it at this time.
So much of life is a mystery to us. It's like trying to reach out and grab that mist or grab that vapor in your hand.
[8:52] Not only does it disappear quickly, but it's a physical thing that's impossible to take hold of.
Now, it's important to understand what Solomon means by a phrase that he uses also repeatedly throughout this book, life under the sun.

He is speaking about life as we experience it in this present world from our limited earthly perspective. He's not necessarily looking at matters from a purely secular worldview as though there were no God, no eternity to come.
Solomon knows that God is sovereign. He knows that God has a purpose for everything, but he cannot always see that purpose, and neither can we.
We know God reigns over all things, but we cannot always understand what he's doing, and that's the tension Solomon wants us to feel as we read this.
So with that in mind, let's consider what he says here in chapter 9. Verse 1, 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.
[10:13] Whether it is love or hate, man does not know both are before him. Solomon makes it fairly obvious here that we are joining him in the middle of his train of thought.

So what exactly has he been studying? Well, if we focus on the immediate context, he's been thinking about something that has him so troubled that it actually keeps him up at night.

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And that's the issue I mentioned before. Why do the righteous suffer while the wicked prosper? It shouldn't be this way. But of course, that's the state of our world, and we all know this.
Even so, Solomon concludes the previous chapter saying, I saw all the work of God. God's work in all of this. He has a purpose for all of this.
I saw all the work of God that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out.
[11:19] Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out. But Solomon, for all of his wisdom, says, you and I, we can study as hard as we want, but there will always be limitations to what we can understand about what God is doing.

You know, I mentioned the contrast between Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Well, if we throw Job into the mix, which is also a book of the Bible's wisdom literature, we find the same tension.
Terrible calamities fall upon Job through no direct fault of his own, and his friends insist that he must have sinned in order to deserve it.
They take a general principle of wisdom, and they turn it into a rigid formula. If you suffer, you must have done something wrong. But Job knows that's not what happened.
And then God himself steps in at the end of the book, and what does he say? He begins, where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
[12:31] Tell me if you have understanding. In other words, God's response, if I may summarize it, is, I am God, you are not.

God has a purpose for all things. Of course he does. He is the sovereign God. And of course, we will not understand all of his ways, because we are not God.
Now, if that feels unsettling to us, remember what Solomon says here. The righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God.
So, as we look around this world, and we see all of the injustice, and we see the righteous suffering, and evil prevailing, and maybe we're tempted to think that God has abandoned us, or maybe that God is not in control after all.
Solomon says, wait just a minute. God has not abandoned his people. He not only sees them, and cares about them, but he is actively governing their lives.
[13:41] Make no mistake, they are in his hand. Furthermore, their deeds are in his hand. What does that mean? Well, it means that God is not only sovereign over our present circumstances, but he is also sovereign over the future.

As Paul told the Corinthians, brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work, or the deeds, of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord, your labor, or your deeds, are not in vain.
So, despite any confusion we may feel about what is happening in our world, or in our life, at this particular moment, this is actually a subtle encouragement to press on in the faith, trusting the Lord to accomplish what he will with your good deeds.
But here's the challenge. We cannot make any sound conclusions about what God is doing by judging our present circumstances.
Solomon says, whether it is love or hate, man does not know. Both are before him. Or, as the CSB says, people don't know whether to expect love or hate.
[15:00] Everything lies ahead of them. We can't predict the future. And the present doesn't tell us everything we need to know to make any sound judgments about what God is doing or what he will do.

Think about Joseph in the book of Genesis. His brothers sold him into slavery. And as a slave, he still strove to do what is right.
When Potiphar's wife, his master's wife, tried to seduce him. He resisted the temptation. He fled away from her. And what was the reward for his good work?
Potiphar's wife accused him of trying to rape her. And he was thrown into prison. Now, what do you suppose went through Joseph's mind while he's rotting away in that prison?
I doubt that his first and most natural thought was, wow, God must surely love me.
[16:04] God is surely for me. But God was for him. And even though it would take years to see any tangible evidence of it, God did raise him up out of that prison all the way to second in command over all of Egypt.

And only in hindsight, Joseph could look back over all of his years of suffering and say to his brothers, when the time came, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.

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Amen. And if we want to see this principle most clearly, look no further than the cross of Jesus Christ. was God for his son?
Did God love his son? Jesus was mocked and tortured both by the Jews and the Gentiles. And then he was hung on a cross, which was a punishment reserved in the Gentile world for the worst of criminals.
And to the Jew, crucifixion represented the very curse of God upon that man. No one looked at Jesus in that moment and thought, God loves this man.
[17:17] Look at all the good God is doing through this man. Oh, but he did love Jesus and he was accomplishing a great good, namely the salvation of his people.

So we can't judge by the present circumstances. Sometimes Christians, they get cancer at a young age. and sometimes godless people, hostile toward Christianity, become millionaires and live a life of ease.
At least it would seem. And regardless of who we are or how we live, we all share the same faith. Look at verse two.
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.
[18:26] 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. Notice how Solomon uses that phrase under the sun here.

When he speaks of this evil and all that is done under the sun, he is describing life in this broken, sinful, fallen world. He's not suggesting that God created things to be this way.
Even so, things are this way. The wicked do prosper while the righteous do suffer. Sin has turned the world upside down and Solomon says it's evil. Things are not happening the way they are supposed to happen.
And in the end, what is the one event that happens to everyone, whether they're righteous or they're wicked? It's death. We see that at the very end of verse 3.
Now at this point, we might want to ask Solomon, what do you mean there's no difference between the righteous and the wicked? When the righteous die, they go home to be with the Lord.
[19:34] So how can you talk about the death of God's people as though there's no difference between the righteous and the wicked? Well, once again, remember that phrase, under the sun.

Solomon is not denying the reality of heaven or the fact that the saints go home to be with the Lord as soon as they breathe their last breath. But he's not evaluating this life from the perspective of heaven.
Instead, he's standing in front of, let's say, two caskets in the house of mourning, as he refers to it back in chapter 7. One casket, in it lies a righteous person, in the other casket lies a wicked person. And he's asking a fair and honest question, what's the difference between the two? From the vantage point of this world and this life, there's no difference.
Both bodies are lying lifelessly in their caskets ready to be placed in the grave. And I, for one, appreciate the fact that Solomon calls this evil.
[20:49] Death, he says, death is evil. But I've been to enough Christian funerals to know that that's not always how we talk about death. While it is true that the believer, for the believer to depart and to be with Christ is far better than life in this fallen world, that reality does not make death good or even neutral.

Death is unnatural. It's a consequence of our sin. The Bible is very clear about this. There is nothing good about it. The Bible goes as far as to call death an enemy. According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, it is the last enemy to be destroyed by Jesus.
God did not create man to die. Death entered this world only because of sin. And Solomon reminds us of that connection here when he says that the hearts of men are full of evil and madness while they live.
So, think about this. Even as every person on the planet knows they are going to die, many still continue to live as though they will just stay on this earth forever and never need to give an account to God.

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We know our days are numbered and yet we may be perfectly willing to waste them on pursuing our own sinful passions in defiance of our Creator.
[22:22] And that's the madness Solomon is describing here. It's not just that we live in a broken world. We ourselves are broken. So, the world is a mess and we can hardly understand what's going on or why and making matters worse.

Every one of us is moving toward the grave. We know death is coming but we don't know when. That's a pretty grim picture, isn't it?
Now, you know why Solomon has the reputation of being a pessimist. However, he's not finished just yet. Verse 4, but he who is joined with all the living has hope for a living dog is better than a dead lion.
So, Solomon says, don't forget this one important fact. You're not dead. You're still alive. You still have hope.
And then he uses what may appear to us to be a very strange illustration. A living dog is better than a dead lion. What in the world does that mean?
[23:37] Well, in Solomon's day, a dog was not man's best friend. It was not the family pet. A dog was a scavenger. It was a lowly, despised creature.

The lion, on the other hand, was a powerful, majestic creature. So, if you were to be compared to one of these two animals, you would much rather be compared to the lion than the dog. However, there's a subtle twist here.
Solomon says, it would be better to be a living dog than a dead lion. You may prefer to be a lion, but if the lion is dead, then he's already lost everything that made him impressive.
You may not want to be a dog, but at least the dog still has life. And where there's life, Solomon says, there's hope. Now, keep in mind that Solomon here is not talking about the hope of eternal life necessarily.
Again, he is focused upon life under the sun, life on this earth. So, when he's talking about hope, he's talking about opportunities in this present life.
[24:49] In other words, if you're dead, your opportunities in this world, they're gone. But if you're alive, well, you may not know what tomorrow holds, but there's still hope.

There's still time to act. There's still time to work. There's still time to receive what God gives us. In verses 5 and 6, Solomon adds, for the living know 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. For the dead, there are no more opportunities in this life. There are no more chances to do the things we might have done or maybe should have done while we were living. And while this may be tragic and sound terribly depressing, we should pay attention to why Solomon is even telling us this.
Life is confusing and in the end we all die. Solomon, why do you want us to know this? Why do you want us to think about this? What are we supposed to do about it? Can we fix the world? We can't even fix ourselves.
[26:10] Can we prevent death? No. So what are we supposed to do? Well, notice who Solomon is speaking to.

He's speaking to the living. You may be a dog, but you're a living dog. You still have opportunities. You still have time. This is why back in chapter 7 he says it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting for this is the end of all mankind and the living will lay it to heart.
It's not better to be in the house of mourning if you're the one lying in the casket, but if you're alive then there's something to be learned. There's something to be gained from confronting that mortality.
As long as you're on this side of the grave, the message of Ecclesiastes is for you. So what does Solomon want us to do? We've considered the frustrating brokenness of this world.
We've considered our own mortality. Now what, now that we have these things in the forefront of our minds, what's next? Verse 7, go, eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart for God has already approved what you do.
[27:39] That's Solomon's advice? Is this really in our Bibles? It sounds awfully close to the Romans saying, carpe diem, seize the day.

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Is this hedonism? The philosophy that pleasure is man's highest good? Or could it be Epicureanism with its emphasis on pleasure and avoiding all unnecessary suffering?
In fact, the Apostle Paul, he uses almost identical language in 1 Corinthians 15 when he writes, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die. But Paul presents that as the reasoning of people who have no hope of resurrection, no hope of eternal life.
Because shortly afterward, he responds, wake up from your drunken stupor. don't think this way. But you see, there's a big difference between the popular philosophies of an unbelieving world and what Solomon is suggesting here.
Yes, there's some crossover, but Solomon isn't imploring us to eat and drink or we might simply say enjoy life because life is short and there's nothing beyond this life.
[29:02] so get your fill now because you don't have much longer. No, his message to us is enjoy life because God has given it to you.

Enjoy life for God has already approved what you do. Now, that doesn't mean that God approves of everything a person might choose to do.
He certainly isn't giving us permission to sin. rather, Solomon is telling us that God is pleased for us to receive and to enjoy the good things he has given us.
He's provided the gifts you have and he expects you to be thankful and to enjoy them. More than that, he commands it, go, eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart.
We don't honor God by treating every ordinary pleasure in this life with suspicion. There is a way to eat a meal or enjoy a friendship or celebrate an occasion that honors the giver precisely because we receive these things from his hand with thanksgiving in our hearts.
[30:17] Now, just to clarify, we're not told to maximize pleasure above all else. We're not told to be consumed by material things or make idols of them. Let's not forget about the man in Luke 12 who prospered greatly and then he said to himself, you have ample goods laid up for many years.

Relax, eat, drink, be merry. You may remember that God said to him, fool, this night your soul is required of you and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?
And Jesus concluded that parable saying, so is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. You'll also notice that Solomon doesn't suggest that we forsake our ordinary responsibilities or quit our jobs or go travel the world or just do anything extravagant that comes to our mind.
He's talking here about very ordinary, everyday, simple pleasures. Have you ever wondered why God gave you taste buds?
He didn't have to. Eating could be a purely mechanical process but instead God gave us taste buds so that we might enjoy our food.
[31:42] And Solomon is telling us to do just that, enjoy the simple pleasures that God has given us. He says essentially the same thing in chapter 3 when he says, I perceive that there is nothing better for the children of man than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil.

This is God's gift to man. In verse 8 here he adds, let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.
White garments and oil on your head, these are elements of celebration. Don't put on the sackcloth. Put on your white garments and enjoy your life. Don't live as though you're perpetually attending a funeral.
Yes, there is a time to mourn which Solomon tells us in chapter 3. But because the time is short, you should enjoy the blessings of God while you still have them.
The fact that the time is short should make those gifts all the more precious to us. And this doesn't mean that sorrow must disappear altogether before we can rejoice.
[32:55] Sometimes gratitude and grief will occupy the same heart at the same time. Then in verse 9, Solomon goes further to indicate that we should not only enjoy the material things we've been given, but also the people we've been given.

He says, 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 your toil at which you toil under the sun.
Husbands, please listen to me. Don't merely fulfill your responsibilities to your wives.
Enjoy them. Enjoy your wife's company. Enjoy your friendship together. Enjoy the affection you share. Cultivate it. Seek after it.

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Protect it. You know, a common regret I hear from people at the funeral home who have lost their spouse whether they were married for only a few years or for 50 or more.
[34:03] I always hear some variation of I wish I had made more effort to enjoy my husband or wife. We were there. We were together. We did life.

You know, we did all the routines. We did all the stuff. But we didn't enjoy one another like we should have. You will never regret the time you spent enjoying your wife or your husband or your children or your parents or your friends.
I believe this is a principle that extends beyond marriage but it most certainly applies to marriage. If you are unmarried or widowed, Solomon's broader principle still applies to the people of God that the people that God has placed in your life.
Enjoy the companionship and the affection he gives rather than overlooking those gifts or constantly wishing for something else. And then, in case we think that Solomon is only concerned about our pleasure, he adds 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 or the place of the dead to which you are going.
So in addition to enjoying our food and celebrating life and delighting in our families, Solomon also tells us work hard. And this is not a contradiction.
[35:34] Both enjoying life and working faithfully are part of the life God has given us. You'll remember that even Adam was given work to do in the garden and this was before sin entered the world.

So whatever responsibilities God has called you to, whatever vocation you have, give yourself to it. Do it with all of your might or as Paul says, whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men knowing that from the Lord you will receive your inheritance as your reward.
You are serving, he says, the Lord Christ. Yes, you're serving your employer and maybe your colleagues and maybe the community, but you are serving first and foremost the Lord Christ in that job you are doing.
Our time, obviously, for this work is limited and that's just one more reason to do it faithfully while we can. In short, Solomon says, we have two big problems.
The first is our broken world where things don't always make sense and the second is that our lives are terribly brief and while his response to these problems may seem naive or insufficient, he basically tells us to continue living life as we always have, but do it with joy, do it with thanksgiving, there's more to it than that.
[37:11] Solomon isn't telling us to enjoy life because everything is going well. He's already made it abundantly clear that everything is not going well. Neither is he telling us to enjoy life because, you know, our troubles, they don't really matter.

He's telling us to enjoy life because, despite all of its troubles, life remains a gift from God. We may not understand his providence, but we can recognize the goodness of God and the gifts that he places before us and there is something profoundly humble in that response.
Rather than demanding that God explain everything before we're thankful for anything, we receive what he gives us today with gratitude, to trusting him with all of those things that we don't understand.
Paul writes, rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
And why is this the appropriate response? Verse 1 again, the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God.
[38:35] We may not understand what God is doing, but we know he is good and we know he is sovereign. Our lives and our deeds are in his hands, so the fact that life is short should make us all the more grateful for the days he gives us and we don't have to control tomorrow to enjoy today.

We don't have to understand the mystery of providence to recognize God's goodness in the blessings right there in front of us. And we certainly shouldn't allow the thoughts of future sorrow to rob us of present joy.
Now, that doesn't mean we must pretend not to grieve. You may be carrying a sorrow that will remain with you for the rest of your life. Solomon isn't asking you to pretend otherwise.
There is a time to weep and a time to mourn, but even in the midst of sorrow, God continues to give us reasons for gratitude and occasions for joy.

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Paul describes the Christian life as sorrowful yet always rejoicing. We don't need to choose between acknowledging the pain of this fallen world and receiving the good gifts of our Heavenly Father.
[39:51] So, as you move through the world and you read the news and we even suffer on occasion, lift up your head, Christian.

Smile, Christian. You have reasons to rejoice. But having said all of this, we need to realize that this passage alone is not Solomon's full message.
when we come to the end of the book, in chapter 12, verse 1, he says, remember also your Creator.
Enjoying God's gifts is not the same thing as being reconciled to the giver.
Even an unbeliever can enjoy a good meal. Even an unbeliever can love his family or find satisfaction in his work. For God gives good gifts to all sorts of people. But no one should imagine that enjoying those gifts is enough.
In fact, chapter 12 goes on to say, fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing whether good or evil.
[41:11] Now that puts things into perspective, doesn't it? Life may seem terribly unjust now, but judgment is coming. Every wrong that we see now will be addressed and every person will give an account to God.

Remember what Solomon said about the evil and madness in our hearts? We've all sinned against God and none of us can make ourselves righteous by our own efforts. But here's the good news.
God sent his son, Jesus Christ, to save sinners, to free us from the madness. He lived the perfectly righteous life we have failed to live.
He died on the cross bearing our punishments, bearing the punishment for our sins, conquering death itself when he rose again from the grave. His resurrection assures us that the grave will not have the last word.
The very enemy that Solomon forces us to confront has been defeated by Christ and one day it will be destroyed forever and now God commands everywhere to repent and to believe in him.
[42:22] Trust in him for that salvation, for that everlasting life. So if you're not yet a Christian, if you have not yet put your full trust in Christ for salvation, consider how many of God's gifts you have enjoyed throughout your life but also that you have not been reconciled to the giver himself.

You've enjoyed the food he provides, these relationships he has given you, the countless blessings of his providence but have you acknowledged the giver? Have you trusted his son?
Those gifts will not save you from the judgment to come. While you're still alive, while there's still hope left, you living dog, you're still alive, hallelujah, turn to Christ and be saved.
And for those of us who are safe in Christ, we can face the brokenness and the brevity of life with genuine joy.
Like that family gathering for a meal after the funeral, we can mourn what we've lost while also enjoying what God continues to give with thanksgiving.
[43:47] Those people aren't laughing around the table because their sorrow has all disappeared. They're laughing even while their sorrow remains. And in much the same way, Christians can be sorrowful yet always rejoicing.

Better yet, we can do so with the assurance that even death itself will one day be destroyed. And here's our wonderful hope in Jesus Christ.
The day is coming when there will be no more funerals. I will be out of a job and I will never have been more thankful. No more caskets, no more graves.
Christ has conquered the grave and he will make all things new. Until then, of course, we live in this broken world, but we remain grateful for every good gift our Father gives us, faithful in whatever work he places before us and confident that everything he has promised will come to pass.
We may not understand what God is doing today, but we know where his purposes are leading because he has told us so. So, enjoy the life God has given you.
[45:03] Use it faithfully for his glory and trust in the Savior who has conquered the grave and will one day make all things right. Let's pray.

Father of lights, we thank you for every gift. We thank you for your goodness and faithfulness even in a world full of sorrow and uncertainty.
I pray that you would teach us how to live in this broken world while receiving and being thankful for your gifts with joy in our hearts. Help us to trust your sovereign hand in all things.

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And above all, we thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ who has conquered sin and death and secured for us an everlasting hope. Help us to live each day in light of that hope until the day when you make all things new.
And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

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