

Do Eden Anyway: Wine

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Date: 30 August 2026

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[0:00] We're in the final two chapters of the book of Ecclesiastes this morning. And as I've told you over and over and over again, the preacher is doing a thorough investigation with unlimited resources into whatever is! Possibly the point of life, whatever humans should be doing.

And he keeps saying, life is hard. It's uncertain. It's unfair. Do Eden anyway. And he brings these activities to our mind consistently saying, you gotta do Eden anyway.

You gotta walk with God. You gotta love the people God's given you to love. You gotta do your work. And you gotta live a life of intentional cheerfulness. A life of intentional cheerfulness.

I think it's very important to establish on the front end that cheerfulness will not simply become a thing for you. It's something you must pursue. It's something you must choose.

You must choose to live a life of intentional cheerfulness. And I think that's what he's getting at when he says in various places to put oil on your head, to drink your wine and eat your bread and enjoy the fruits of your toil.

[1:12] He's saying essentially live a life of intentional cheerfulness. Now, before we get into it, that's gonna be the main point of today's message. But before we get there, I wanna show you his last big inventory of how hard life is.

Because it's in the middle of this commendation to be intentionally cheerful. He goes to this very unique place that I wanna walk you through of describing how hard life is. So look at chapter 12, verses 1 through 8.

And just try to keep up. There's over 20 idioms, 20 symbols, word pictures, if you will, in this little section. And it does not make a lot of sense.

But let's read through it and then we'll understand what he's saying. Verse 1 of chapter 12.

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.

Before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain. And the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few.

[2:24] And those who look through the windows are dimmed, 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.

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. 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, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Vanity of vanities, says the preacher. All is vanity. Now, the key to understanding a stew of images like this is what I call the ledges of certainty.

This is how I read the Bible. When I get into one of these spots where I'm like, I have no idea what's going on here, I go back to what I call the first ledge of certainty. Before I fell into the swamp of uncertainty, what was the last thing I understood?

[3:46] And so you go back to that, and in this case, I do understand at the beginning here that he's talking about the shortness of life. You see that in verse 1? Remember also your creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years which draw near, which you will say, I have no pleasure in them.

Shortness of life, I think he's talking about aging, something like that. And then I go to the next ledge of certainty. I read through the swamp of uncertainty, and I find the next hard ground that I can stand on.

And it's the thing after the uncertainty that I understand. And I go down, and I see in verse 7 some things that kind of make sense to me. The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

So I have some clarity that he's talking about aging and death. That doesn't help me actually understand what a grinder is. So you have two choices at that point.

You can either just move on and have some sense of like, well, generally, I know he's getting at this, and those things must be supportive of this in some sense. Or you have to consult somebody's work that has done all the archaeological and cultural work to understand what's going on here.

[4:57] And so this is a good job security passage for me. You know, where it's like, okay, there's no way you're going to crack this without reading a bunch of things written by people who did a lot of work to be able to crack this.

So what this is getting at, it's a comical picture of aging. It's a comical picture of aging. The sunlight and moon and stars darkened.

That's decreation language. It's used throughout the Bible to describe the end of something. It appears often in prophetic or apocalyptic literature. It doesn't mean the literal sun, moon, and stars are darkened.

It means that the thing that God did in creating the world, letting there be light, putting the sun in the sky, the moon, and so forth, is being rewound figuratively. Creation is uncoming, undoing.

When we get into Isaiah, we'll see this kind of language, and we'll probably go into Revelation at some point in the next year or so, and you'll see it there as well. It's also in Acts 2, actually, I think. It's in Joel 2.20, maybe.

[6:01] Anyway, that one is somewhat easy for a theology guy. Like, oh, that's decreation language. You're describing something that's suffering under entropy or being undone. But then it just gets nuts, like clouds returning after the rain.

I don't know what that means. Well, in the Mediterranean climate, it's like Colorado. A storm rolls in, it rains, and then you have a clear day the rest of the day.

That's how it is in that climate. And what it's saying here is that aging is like one thing breaking after another. You don't just get one cloud.

You get cloud after cloud after cloud. And then he says, the keepers of the house tremble. This is referring, most people who have knowledge into this way of speaking think that this is referring to the arms and the hands.

The bodyguards and servants are now shaking. Strong men bent is believed to mean legs and back are bowed and unhealthy.

[7:08] Grinders cease. That image is comparing the women who grind the wheat with the stone to the teeth. And saying, most of the teeth have fallen out. Those who look through the windows dimmed.

The eyes are dimming. Doors on the street are shut, typically considered to be about the ears.

Sound of the grinding is low. Another reference to the mouth is going quiet.

Your appetite stops being significant. You don't have a lot of teeth to chew with anyway. One rises up at the sound of a bird. This is light sleep that comes with aging.

Easily disturbed sleep. Daughters of song are brought low. This either means that your own voice is failing or your enjoyment of music is failing.

I'm not sure. Afraid of what is high as you age. Falling becomes a thing. Stairs become a thing. Terrors are on the way.

[8:08] The ordinary road, the ordinary trip to the grocery store is now fraught with potential stumbling, failing, confusion. The almond tree blossoms refers to a man or woman's hair.

Almond trees blossom white. A grasshopper drags itself along. This is the end stage of a grasshopper's life cycle. It's springy and bouncy beginning at the end when it's all crispy and dragging itself along toward, you know, not far from this time of year.

Desire fails. Desire fails. Sexual desire fades. Desire fails. So what's going on here is detailed symbols about an aging body.

I keep telling you that the preacher goes through and looks at all the evidence of the curse, all the damage that the fall has brought. And this is his final inventory. Crispy grasshoppers who don't want to, like, get with their wife anymore, you know, and can't chew their food, you know. It's this very grim picture of aging. And he uses the word bara in the Hebrew to say, remember your creator, the one who made you.

[9:22] You're on the clock. And he ends the sentence with, you're going to return back to dust. And the breath of God that animates you is going to return back to God.

Some of the language at the end makes a lot more sense with that. The silver cord is snapped. The golden bowl is broken. Your ability to drink from the fountain of life is done. The wheel that you use to pull water out of the cistern, that broke.

So you can't get any more of the water of life and so forth. And so that's what's going on in that passage. Now, why is he doing this final inventory, this final grim inventory, the reality of aging? He's trying to tell young people to get after it. There's a very carpe diem feeling to Ecclesiastes. And certainly the last two chapters, he keeps telling us, seize the day, seize the day. We used to have the Gen X generations not known for being especially well supervised, as I think you probably know, as children.

[10:33] And a lot of free play, a lot of free time, a lot of hours, no one was watching us. And we used to just get the biggest, strongest guy we could. And we'd put all the little kids around on the merry-go-round.

And you would just rip that thing until, like, it would be near taking flight. It was spinning so fast. And, of course, you know, you're spinning and spinning and spinning and spinning.

And then, like, the kids start, you know, flinging off into the pea gravel. And it was just great fun.

There was another part of the merry-go-round lore where it was spinning.

We'd spin it kind of fast. And then the challenge was to jump onto the merry-go-round and stick the landing without one of the bars hitting you, knocking you off, and so on and so forth.

And there's this problem in youth, and Ecclesiastes is handling it, of a tendency to think that you have plenty of time to find the perfect moment to jump.

[11:33] And every rotation is another year passing. And all the things you're thinking about doing and finding the perfect moment to do it, you don't get eternal rotations.

There's actually a really limited window for you to act in meaningful ways. And it's so much of a problem and has been so much of a problem throughout history that this very ancient book is telling young people, get after it.

You don't have unlimited time. Look back at verse 7 of chapter 11. Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.

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.

Verse 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, but know that for all these things, God will bring you into judgment.

[12:46] I believe that that final statement, the third statement in chapter 9, is a challenge for many people in obeying the first statement in chapter 9. We'll talk about that.

Verse 10. Remove vexation from your heart, and put away pain from your body, for youth and the dawn of life are vanity. So he seems to be saying here, live a life of intentional cheerfulness.

Live a life of intentional cheerfulness. Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Verse 10. Remove vexation from your heart.

This really seems to be written, not just to a young person, but I'm going to be honest, to a particular kind of young person that I would have assumed was a modern phenomenon.

I would have assumed it started somewhere around my generation, and certainly not be an issue so old as to necessitate Holy Scripture being written toward it.

[13:53] And once the Bible corrected me on my assumption there, I started seeing it everywhere. I really did think for a while that this kind of angsty, anxious, scrupulous, hesitant young person was a relatively modern phenomenon.

I thought that that was something kind of new on the scene. But the reality is, is that all over the Bible, now I see places where this young, scrupulous, fearful, hesitant, neurotic young person, is actually an archetype that goes all the way back.

I think that when you read Paul's writings to Timothy, the young man, you can see Paul dealing with some of these temperamental issues, even in those writings.

And I'll point you to some of that later on. So I guess in some ways, you should feel better if this describes you. Because I don't think it's modern at all.

I think it's just a part of being young. Certainly not every young person goes through these things, but many do. And as I began to accept that this is actually kind of an ongoing archetype, I was immediately thinking about guys like Karl Marx or Dostoevsky, men in history that I know somewhat well, who also had these very same troubles, and some of them resolved them and some of them did not.

[15 : 23] On December 22nd, 1849, Dostoevsky is later that day about, is going to be marched out to a firing squad to be executed.

Now, to spoil the ending, he doesn't die. But he is thinking that later that day he will be dead. And so he writes a letter to his brother.

And he says this, When I look back at the past and think of how much time was spent in vain, how much of it was lost in delusions, in errors, in idleness, in ignorance of how to live.

How I did not value it, but many times I sinned against my heart and spirit. My heart bleeds. Life is a gift. Life is happiness.

Every minute could have been an eternity of happiness. Now, changing my life, I am being reborn in a new form. And to be a human being among people and to remain one forever, no matter in what circumstances, not to grow despondent and not to lose heart, that's what life is all about.

[16 : 42] That is its task. In other words, he wishes that he had far earlier removed vexation from his heart.

He wishes that he had rejoiced in his youth and let his heart cheer him and that he had chosen an intentional pursuit of cheerfulness. So I want to lean into this a little bit more this morning because I think that the preacher of Ecclesiastes is speaking to a very particular situation that young Christians go through.

I'm hoping that through the Holy Spirit's help this morning, you'll receive a corrective. Let's look back at the text, verse 9 of chapter 11.

Rejoice, O young man, in your youth. 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.

First of all, let's ask this question. Why is it so hard for so many young people to live a life of intentional cheerfulness?

[17 : 56] Why is there so much hesitancy? Why is Dostoevsky's accounting of his own young life recognizable, perhaps even in this room? I believe that one of the answers that we have to be honest about is that in youth, there is a heavy concentration of pride.

It has not yet been diluted with the realities of life, with the realities of how your operating system actually works, the realities of your own failure, and most importantly, the realities of God's grace. But I want to be specific about something. I hear young people make this mistake constantly. Young people often believe that just because they feel badly about themselves, they don't struggle with pride.

pride. That's just wrong. Pride is not about a specific feeling about yourself.

It's a focus on yourself. It's not about a specific positive feeling about yourself. It's a focus on yourself. Pride is self-focus.

[19 : 04] It is vastly overestimating the centrality of you in the story of the world. And you can make yourself out to be the central villain or the central victim or the central hero.

That's all pride. Tim Keller puts it this way. The essence of gospel humility is not thinking more of myself or thinking less of myself.

It is thinking of myself less. Have you ever thought about the connection between fear and pride?

There is an invariable connection between fear and pride and courage and humility because a great deal of fear flows from a false sense of importance about yourself, about your life, about your future, your potential.

True courage is mostly, simply, the exercise of self-forgetfulness applied under battle. This week, on the Elder's Text thread, Dove landed the best joke he's landed in the whole time we've had an Elder's Text thread, and it was accidental.

Lesson, Dove. This is the better. Anyway, we were talking about the tile. I don't know if you noticed, but last week during the potluck, there was a tile that was precariously hanging off of the ceiling right above someone sitting underneath it, and a number of us noticed it.

[20 : 36] We chose not to make a big deal out of it, but it was concerning. So I texted the group. I said, guys, what do we want to do about this? What's the plan? What do you think we should do a small fix, a big fix, and so forth?

I was just getting the conversation rolling. And Dove said, I don't know what the plan is, but whatever the plan is, I want to be helpful. I want to be involved.

I want to learn how to do stuff like that. And I wrote back, Dove just volunteered for the top of the scaffold. Which, if you've seen the setup we use to get up there, it's sketchy.

Noah Maher has endangered his life multiple times. Kate has almost become a Providence widow a few times. So I say, Dove just volunteered for the top of the scaffold.

And Dove responded with Acts 20 from Paul. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself.

[21 : 35] If only I may finish my course in the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. Best joke. There's courage.

Where is that courage coming from? I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself. That's where courage flows from. Where does fear flow from?

The exact opposite. Where does social fear flow from? Where does the fear of risk flow from? The exact opposite place. You account yourself as more than you are.

So one of the reasons why this is a continual challenge in youth is that there is a vast overestimation of your significance and the value of your life in general.

Isaiah 51, 12. God just throws out the best zinger of all time. He says this. Why are you afraid, O man who dies?

[22 : 36] Why are you afraid of... What are you afraid of, man who dies? Do you get how that's like a joke? Like, what are you afraid of? You're dead one way or the other.

Some of you know we had a... I think he was an army ranger at Providence for a while and he said that there was an officer...

Actually, I think he was a sergeant in Afghanistan that would tell people, the sooner you make peace with death, the sooner you will be a useful soldier. But I do not count my life as worth anything.

Anything. And so all of this talk about death and aging and how it's inevitable is kind of carpe diem. Life is short, go and grab it. But it's also meant to infuse you with humility.

You are mere decades away from being in the dirt. I read a statistic that if you are embalmed, your body will most likely remain intact under the earth longer than those who visit your grave regularly live.

[23 : 47] You're not a big deal. And feeling the freedom of that is meant to lead you into a kind of happy, self-forgetful cheerfulness.

A lot of these negative hesitation-type feelings are downstream of pride. There's a lot of angst, a lot of scruples, a lot of reservations about just getting out there and just jumping on the merry-go-round today because today's better than tomorrow.

You really need to be a person who fully comprehends and enjoys the grace of God in your tiny little piece of life in order to do what chapter 11, verse 9 through 11 is telling you.

Look at it again. 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.

I believe that only a heart that has been trained in grace is able to walk in the ways of the heart. There is a significant new covenant element to this command.

[25 : 09] Throughout the old covenant, God promises that one day I will write my laws upon your heart and I will give you a spirit that is inclined to do my will. The only people who should even dabble in walking in their hearts are those who have had the law of God written on their hearts.

On those who have been trained by grace. On those who have learned through constant discernment what God's heart really is.

God promises that he'll do this for us. Ezekiel 36, and I will give you a new heart and a new spirit and I will put within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of

flesh and I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Now, I just want to suggest we have done a really good job in the reformed community of saying your heart is wicked and deceitful above all else who can know it. Are we gaslighting people into some sense that the will of God and like obedience to God is this extremely difficult puzzle to unlock and that most of life isn't mostly just, hey, just go do good stuff and God will bless it.

Are we teaching people to doubt at a level that causes this sort of youthful and sometimes not youthful neurosis overthinking everything?

[26 : 30] And are we undervaluing what God has promised to do through Christ and the Holy Spirit and that is to write His law on our hearts and train us with His grace? Ecclesiastes, as usual, is just a good pushback on some of the habits we've developed and some of the notions of piety that we've developed over time.

Now, let's just land the plane by asking this question. Look at that last sentence in verse 9. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

So you've got basically follow your heart at the beginning, carpe diem, seize the day, go for it, and then you've got just know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

What do you think? Just kind of make a call silently in your own head. What do you think that verse is meant to do, that sentence is meant to do? What do you think, what's your guess as to what that sentence, that third sentence is meant to do?

It's obviously some kind of qualifier with the first two sentences. What do you think it's meant to do? I think instinctively for many of us, we would say that this is a seatbelt against reckless hedonism.

[27 : 59] And I think it's likely partly that. But you should know that in the Hebrew the word but does not appear. And so the actual Hebrew says this, know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

Does that radically change our understanding of the text? Not necessarily. But it does let us say this. And this is very biblical.

That last sentence could be serving a different end. And that is something like this. I don't think we appreciate how generally offensive a non-happy, non-joyful Christian is to God.

And so another way of seeing this scripture is to see that God is calling you into account for the failure to be intentionally cheerful. And that would bring more meaning and understanding to verse 10 which tells us what?

Remove vexation from your heart. Is this a seatbelt against hedonism? Go out and live life just don't get too crazy God's going to judge you for everything.

[29 : 19] Which is totally appropriate. Or is this a warning against laxity in pursuing joy and cultivating a life of intentional cheerfulness?

Is that what God is judging? I honestly don't know but this I do know because I have been here and I love many young people.

I believe that one of the things that is most pronounced about young Christian life is a constant bouncing between hedonism and asceticism. Hedonism is just the full reckless indulgence of the flesh.

asceticism is rules, scruples, touch not, taste not. Colossians 2 calls it severity to the flesh. To be honest the typical picture of many young people many teenagers in the church today secretly is a bouncing back and forth between anorexia and a sexual addiction.

It's hedonism and severity of the body back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

[30 : 41] Sensuality on one side, scrupulosity on the other side. This is a roller coaster quite familiar and not just to the young.

I think we all know about the teetotaler with the three digit BMI. Sure that drinking is wrong.

Also sure that fried chicken is not ever wrong in any dose. There is actually in the Bible that as a category a person who has severity and sensuality alternating back and forth.

And it is actually I think the reality of saying is this third sentence God will bring you into judgment for whatever you do is this telling you don't be a hedonist or is this telling you don't neglect a pursuit of godly pleasure joy and so forth.

It's like I don't know but I know that God's against both of those things. 1st Timothy 4 1 through 5 Now the spirit expressly says that in the latter time some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teaching of demons through the insincerity of liars whose

consciences are seared who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth for everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is to be received with thanksgiving for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

[32 : 39] here what are the deceitful spirits teaching? Here they are teaching asceticism scruples rules that God himself did not issue elsewhere they're teaching sensualism do whatever you want it's fine God doesn't care my question is whether a Christian young person struggling with the intentional pursuit of cheerfulness and obeying Ecclesiastes 11 9 through 11 is really mostly in need not of a call against hedonism or a call against asceticism but a call to learn the character of God in a way that allows you to live the life he's called you to live which is neither of those two and not reactive to either of those two as well to live a balanced godly earthy but not earthly life in which you are capable of enjoying his creation and slowing down and doing the things that you should do with cheerfulness and so forth what I think is going on is that the pride so inherent in youthfulness has to be expunged with the persistent lavish obstinate stubborn love of

God over and over and over again so that you just wind up seeing the third sentence in verse nine as everything like yes God's watching yes and praise God for it he is my father he has sent his son to bring perfect atonement for my sins I no longer fear condemnation I want to walk in holiness he's written his word upon my heart I want to love people as he has loved me I want to forgive people as he has forgiven me I want to use and enjoy the creation he's given me I want to stop using scruples as a means of differentiating myself and making myself feel holier than I am I want to be done with pride I want Jesus I want more of Jesus and there's a moment where you break through all of this hesitancy and you come on the other side and you see that third sentence as a joy it no longer terrorizes you keeping you struggling between should I be sensuous or should

I be ascetic should I have a ton of rules or no rules and you start saying I'm going to walk with God because that's what I was made to do and the God who made me had this incredible scheme in which almost everything was possible and one thing wasn't and I'm going to assume that's still his heart that God is perfect but not a perfectionist he knows our frame he remembers that we are dust he's created all good things for us to be received with joy and I need to stop hesitating on jumping into the good things that God has provided for me coming the reality is today is the day the Lord has made I'm going to rejoice in it and be glad and I'm just going to jump in and the creator watching me and governing me stops being a threat to me because Jesus Christ is righteous enough to make up for everything I lack there's a sense in which this verse can only be lived by a person who has lived in the gospel of God for a very long time

Richard Baxter says another temptation to confound you in your religion is by filling your heads with practical scrupulosity this means rules upon rules upon rules layers of rules that God didn't create to fill your heads with practical scrupulosity so that you cannot go on for doubting every step whether you go right and when you should go I'm sorry let me so that you cannot go on for doubting every step whether you go right and when you should cheerfully serve your master and you will do nothing but disquiet your minds with scruples whether this or that thing be wrong there's this other section in Baxter where he says how annoying would it be to have a servant and say servant go get me some water and look over and that servant is carefully evaluating whether you want him to take the left foot first or the right foot first that's scrupulosity that's a hesitancy that comes from thinking the wrong things about who God is and thinking the wrong things about yourself and thinking the wrong things about your ability to discern

God's will at a level does God care whether or not you have green beans today he does he has a plan eternal plan is God going to tell you about that plan no the level of scrupulosity and seeking God's perfect will through means outside the Bible is pride you're assuming you have a level of discernment that God did not disclose through his word just get on with your life and go get the water because he told you to go get the water just go get married because he told you to get married or you can waste your life getting ready to jump on the merry go round that's what this text is saying remove the vexation from your heart Baxter continues God has commanded you a sweeter work it is a life of love and joy and cheerful progress toward eternal joy that he requires of you and no more fear or grief that is necessary to separate you from sin and teach you to value and use the remedy there's a misapprehension from people like a man

[38 : 51] I love like John Piper or Paul Washer that the more sorrow and vexation you feel the godly you are no sorrow and vexation are used as medicines to dislodge you from sin and you

move back to cheerfulness having twenty pounds of scrupulosity and sorrow is not going to make you godlier the gospel Baxter continues sets before you such abundant matter of joy and peace as would make these the very temper and constitution of your souls if you receive them as they are offered religious fears when they are excessive and harmful are sinful and indeed are against religion they must be resisted like any other harmful passion get better acquainted with Christ and his promises and you will find enough in him to quiet the soul and give you confidence and holy boldness in your approach to god the spirit he gives is not the spirit of bondage but the spirit of adoption of love and of confidence he's quoting paul's command to timothy second timothy one six through seven for this reason i remind you to fan and to flame the gift of god which is in you through the laying on of hands for god gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self control not of fearful self importance but of humble love power and self control neither scrupulosity or sensuality is permitted in this spirit so let's end with dostoevsky he really did think he was dead that day but inexplicably when it came turn for him to receive the rifles shot he was given a last minute commutation and sent to work four brutal years in siberia as he left the firing squad and was being loaded onto the transport to the work camp a woman handed him a new testament the only possession that dostoevsky was allowed to keep for his four years of hard labor constantly thumbing through that new testament day after day after day in between his work he fed himself on the grace of god those four years of hard labor and the new testament transformed a man who was like many of you a dr jekyll and mr hyde alternating between asceticism and sensuality transformed him into a real man and he became a stable man and he became a cheerful man and he became a loving man and so many years later when his eyes were dimming and his teeth were failing and the full weight of the fall was catching up to him he laid on his deathbed and he had his wife bring him that new testament and he had his children read the story of the prodigal son what makes a person an intentionally cheerful self forgetful person what makes a person a humble person hebrews says it well it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace there is a sense in which everything ecclesiastes has commanded us leads us to this question is the creator who is governing this weird world on my side or not

and we have the answer to that in the gospel of Jesus Christ which is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe so that even when our sins abound God's grace abounds much more because Christ's payment for our sins was as the theologians say super abundant more than enough to cover our wickedness so Romans 8 1 becomes the portal by which we live a cheerful life there is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus and that's what we're going to think about as we pivot to the table in a moment you'll come if you're a follower of Jesus Christ you'll come and take the bread and the wine as representations of Jesus's great sacrifice to free your soul from both hedonism and scrupulosity and to let you pursue a life of intentional cheerful godliness let me pray

Father God we praise your holy name for the great gift of the gospel that you've brought to us so that Richard Baxter could say we have been given a sweet work praise your name God we doubt in all sorts of ways but even now Lord let us resist the temptation of even focusing on ourselves in this moment and rather simply rejoicing in the great God that we don't deserve Lord as we observe this Lord's table would you fill our hearts full of faith to see that you have made it possible for us to live a life before you where we gladly do our work we love the people you've given us to love we celebrate God we cultivate intentional cheerfulness we do all of that before your face not hiding from you not concerned about the fact that you are watching but glad that you have drawn near to us through Jesus

Christ may your table Lord minister to us this morning in a way that overcome so many of these issues that are so deep in our own hearts and bring the gift of self forgetfulness Lord today as we worship our Lord and Savior we pray these things in Jesus name amen come may your