



ST NINIAN'S UNITING CHURCH

AUGUST 6TH 2025

PRAYERS & REFLECTION

BASED ON ECCLESIASTES 12:1-8



Ecclesiastes 12:1-8

12 Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, “I find no pleasure in them”— ²before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain; ³when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim; ⁴when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when people rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint; ⁵when people are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the Almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags itself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then people go to their eternal home and mourners go about the streets. ⁶Remember him—before the silver cord is severed, and the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, and the wheel broken at the well, ⁷and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. ⁸“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Everything is meaningless!”

OPENING PRAYER

Lord of times past, the present and Lord of what is yet to come, as I remember the Creator of my youth, continue to guide me to cherish each moment and seek your wisdom. Help me to recognise the fleeting nature of life, embracing joy in the passing of every season and looking forward to what the next season brings. May I remain mindful of my mortality and the purpose you have set me despite my age. Teach me to live with gratitude and humility, turning my heart towards your everlasting truth. As the days now grow longer, let your light shine brightly in me. Everlastingly yours, amen.

PRAYER POINTS OF THANKS AND PRAISE

- Thank you, Lord, for the many attempts to build peace in places of war and violence – may the peacemakers keep trying despite the knockbacks.
- Thank you, Lord, for the joy found in new life and new learning experiences – may we always be striving for new learning experiences
- Thank you, Lord, for the bird songs of the new day- it means my nightly slumber is over and my daily morning prayers begin.
- Thank you, Lord, for the people I will share my day with
- I give you praise Lord,
 - for the gift of the Holy Spirit

- for the gift of resilience to keep going in challenging times
- for the gift of kindness, mercy, and grace

PRAYER POINTS OF FORGIVENESS

- Forgive me Lord,
 - For being blind to the needs of the environment
 - For being like a grasshopper without motivation to engage in your Word
 - For thinking life is ‘meaningless’ instead of meaningful.

WORDS OF GRACE

You are forgiven. Your past doesn’t define you, God’s mercy and unconditional love has washed your wrongs away. You are a beloved child of God, your identity is founded in God’s love and purpose for you. In and through Christ your sins are forgiven. Thanks be to God amen.

REFLECTION

*Ecclesiastes falls between Proverbs and the Songs of Solomon, clearly fitting in the broad classification of ‘Wisdom’ books in the Old Testament. The key concepts of Ecclesiastes are that we shouldn’t expect to find ‘meaning’ in life or to experience self-fulfillment in life apart from following God. The author most likely a preacher, isn’t talking about what should be pursued in a faith/covenant context but about what shouldn’t be pursued from a worldly perspective. We are to enjoy life’s good times as gifts from God’s hand and to accept adversity.

The preacher, traditionally identified as Qoheleth, shares his insights about the nature of life, aging, and the inevitability of death. In these verses, we’re called to remember our Creator, especially in our youth, thereby emphasising the significance of recognising God’s presence and influence in our lives as we navigate through our formative years.

Our passage starts with exuberance to ‘remember your Creator in the days of your youth.’ These stirring words require us to think back to the days when we were younger to remember the importance of establishing our relationship with God in our younger years. In a world filled with distractions and temptations, the preoccupation of youth can sometimes lead to a neglect of our spirituality. The preacher here is reminding us that developing a connection with God during our younger years equips us for the challenges we face in the second and third phases of our life providing us with guidance, strength and purpose.

As we move our way through the verses, we encounter a vivid metaphorical description of aging and its accompanying struggles which most of us are familiar with. The imagery used -such as ‘the keepers of the house tremble’ and ‘the strong men bow down’ – depicts the physical decline that comes with age. The imagery used serves as a tender reminder of the fragility of life and the inevitability of mortality. The Preacher encourages us to face these realities with a sense of acceptance and understanding. Recognising our mortality urges us to live intentionally, appreciating each moment while we can.

Whilst it makes us look at our mortality, we are also looking at how temporary life is as it urges us to find joy in our youth before we lose our 'innocence' and life takes a more serious turn as we face the challenges that come with maturing. It challenges us to seek joy not in the superficial things which are so easy to find, but to find joy in the deeper, more meaningful relationships and experiences that mirror the divine nature of our Creator.

Our reading concludes with the preacher reflecting on the cycle of life and death, stating, "the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." Anyone who has attended a funeral will be familiar with the intent and closure of these words to a family who are grieving the loss of a loved one. This declaration encapsulates the core of human existence – our origins from dust and our ultimate return to the Creator. It invites us to consider our lives in the grand tapestry of God's design. The final proclamation, "Meaningless! Meaningless! Everything is meaningless!" encapsulates the existential quest for purpose and the recognition that without a relationship with God, life can feel light, shallow, and unfulfilling. It highlights the futility of seeking satisfaction in short-lived earthly gains alone and a form of happiness that all too quickly turns to dissatisfaction and emptiness.

Ecclesiastes 12:1-8 gives us two things: a challenge and an invitation. It calls us to form a relationship with God while we're young, to rejoice in the gifts of life, to accept the inevitability of aging and death, and ultimately to recognise that our true meaning resides in our relationship and discipline we have with God. This reading gives us cause to reflect that while we navigate the complexities of life, our purpose is found in remembering and honouring God, the Creator who gives our existence significance. We are special to God. In a world often bogged down by materialism, competition, ageism, and superficiality, the preacher's wisdom remains forever relevant, urging us to seek lasting joy and fulfillment in our Creator God.

Amen

Prayer of Intercession

Creator God, I am still here with you humbly asking for your guidance and grace. As I reflect on the words of the preacher Qoheleth, I recognise the importance of remembering you as a young person, cherishing those formative moments when my heart was innocent and open and my spirit was alive and bristling with young thoughts.

Lord, I pray for my friends, family, and all those around us. May we all find joy and purpose in their daily lives, turning their hearts towards you. Help us all to cultivate a deep relationship with you, recognising that life is fleeting and every moment is a precious gift.

As the days grow challenging and the struggles of life seem to weigh heavily, remind us to seek solace and strength in you. May we understand the importance of truly knowing and leaning on the eternal, especially as the shadows lengthen and the seasons of life change.

Help us all to embrace the wisdom found in these verses. May we encourage one another to live fully, striking a balance between our aspirations and the temporary nature of our earthly existence. Grant us clarity on our paths, courage in our decisions, and peace amidst uncertainty.

Finally, Lord, I lift my heart and eyes to you, acknowledging that life can feel burdensome. Help us to find comfort in the promise of eternal hope beyond this world, reminding everyone that the end isn't a conclusion but a transition into your everlasting embrace.

In your holy name, I pray

Amen.

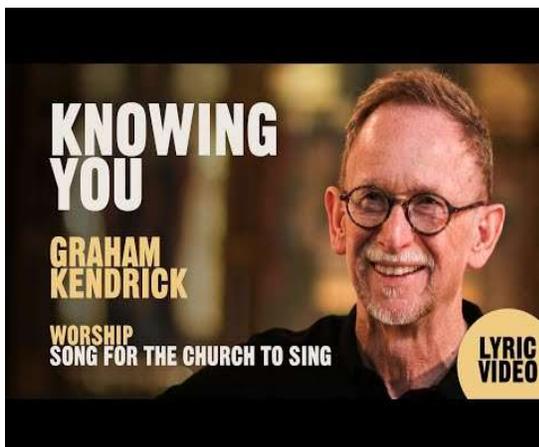
I REMEMBER WELL... by VR © 2025

In the twilight of our days, remember well,
The Creator of our youth, His love to tell.
Before the sun grows dim and the light does fade,
Before the years come when joy feels delayed.

When the keepers of the house begin to shake,
And the strong men bow low, our hearts start to break.
The grinders cease, their songs lose their cheer,
In silence they linger, as the end draws near.

The windows of our spirit, clouded with time,
No longer see the light; the hills don't climb.
The days of mourning come swift as the wind,
But in those quiet moments, our souls can ascend.

Remember your Maker, in the days of your prime,
For life is a fleeting song, a rhythm, a rhyme.
Chase after wisdom, let it guide your way,
Embrace every moment; do not let them sway.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4r8XfE_VNb0&list=RD4r8XfE_VNb0&start_radio=1