



1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; 2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: 3 In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, 4 And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; 5 Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: 6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. 7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. (Eccl 12:1-7)

The Collect

Seventh Sunday after Trinity

LORD of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things; Graft in our hearts the love of thy Name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

These seven verses from Ecclesiastes are arguably the most beautiful combination of seven verses, for allegorical meaning and metaphorical impact, of all such combinations in Holy Scripture. They speak to the heart, the imagination, the soul, and to the mind by painting a picture of the great and urgent need to be right with God as early as the relationship can be sealed. Time is fleeting and opportunity wanes. Several reasons are apparent for early commitment of one's soul to God: 1) Tomorrow is never assured. We

may arise from our beds at morning and never return at the toll of even. 2) The youthful mind can more readily grasp the beauty of the truth of God. Once old, our sensitivities fade and wilt. 3) We have many profitable years to serve God and our fellow man when we have come as young babes to Christ. We are not left to beg pardon of the Governor on the night before our execution.

1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. To remember a thing requires a conscious effort. Forgetting requires no effort at all; it is most often the result of carelessness. So God commands us to **REMEMBER** Him by a conscious dedication to the effort. We should do so before the trials and concerns of life in old age overtake us. Once we become concentered all in self by pains and failing health, we are less able to see beauty and loveliness. ***Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*** (Psalms 100:3)

The young mind is perfectly suited to see truth and beauty, and will respond to that vision when it is presented to them by loving parents or friends. Old age dims the dreams of youth. Well did the poet of Naishipur, *Omar Khayam*, illuminate this truth in his poem the Rubaiyat:

*Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring
The Winter Garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To fly--and lo! the Bird is on the Wing.*

*The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.*

2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain To grow old without the Fountain of Wonders available only to the children of God is a grievous tragedy. I have known the very aged who have had far greater joy in Christ at ninety years of age than many children of nine who have not had the introduction. ***Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.*** (Jer 13:16) There are NO dark mountains to those who love the Lord; even in advanced age. When we have lived long upon the earth, our eyes have been blessed to witness a million profound beauties of God's nature. There is no artist who can compare with the Lord our God. He paints the most beautiful sunrises with colors that Van Gogh could never have even imagined. His scenes of mountain, desert, and meadow are perfectly balanced in color and bursts of unimaginable radiance. These physical expressions of God's beauty are everywhere and may be had, free of charge, by every soul who has the gift of sight. But what of the hidden Fountains of Life and Seas of Love that belong to God? Only the true heart can taste of these. When you are grown weary with age, and the sun is dimmed with failing sight, along with the moon and stars, what vision shall your soul have to sustain it at such a time? When the relentless rains and storms of failing health continually return, upon what shall your hope rest then? Have you stocked the Hidden Manna in your heart for that day? **3 In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened.** In its best sense, the aging process us just a drawing nearer to God and His Heaven. In its worst sense, it is a terrible dread of that which is to come upon one's soul without God. Our hands begin to shake and tremble with age (the keepers of the house), and our legs

become bowed and clumsy of gait (the strong men), and our teeth begin to fail us for their scarcity and poor state (grinders), and our eyes see less and less from our lids as the darkness deepens (those that look out of the windows). These can be very sweet and tender years for those who know the Lord and are certain of their reward. But what of those whose hearts are darkened and consciences calloused?

4 And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low When men are very old, their mouths are kept shut tightly since there are no teeth to keep their lips apart. They do not crunch their food, but simply press it with their gums. *Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.* (Psalms 141:3) The elderly are fearful of many things. Amazingly, their ears can no longer hear music, but they are startled even by the chirping of a little bird. Without the knowledge of God, they sense the Angel of Death slowly advancing behind them.

5 Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets It is true that the elderly must be very careful of stairs or other high places for their bones are brittle and easily broken. There seems to be a bogey man behind every bush. The almond tree is the only tree that blossoms in winter with white flowers even before the leaves appear. It then sheds its white leaves as the aged their grey hairs. Though walking itself is a burden, even a grasshopper would be a greater burden. Another point here illustrates the boney back and sharp knees of the aged which the grasshopper pictures. The long passed desires of youth are now forgotten. What shall replace those desires in the heart that knows not God? As we grow older, our friends and neighbors succumb to death with increasing regularity; the mourners go about the streets every day it seems. Age brings man unrelentingly to his long home; the grave (for the Rich man) and to the bosom of Abraham (for Lazarus).

6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Perhaps Leonardo DaVinci could have profited from this passage before writing and drawing his renowned work, *Anatomy*. There is an excellent description of meaning in a Commentary I have of the Bible (JFB):

(1) A lamp of frail material, but gilded over, often in the East hung from roofs by a cord of silk and silver interwoven; as the lamp is dashed down and broken, when the cord breaks, so man at death; the golden bowl of the lamp answers to the skull, which, from the vital preciousness of its contents, may be called "golden"; "the silver cord" is the spinal marrow, which is white and precious as silver, and is attached to the brain. (2) A fountain, from which water is drawn by a pitcher let down by a rope wound round a wheel; as, when the pitcher and wheel are broken, water can no more be drawn, so life ceases when the vital energies are gone. The "fountain" may mean the right ventricle of the heart; the "cistern," the left; the pitcher, the veins; the wheel the aorta, or great artery; **Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary**

Though the wicked have nothing but an ever-declining hope, the righteous have a joy and an ebullience of anticipation on that which shall come to them at last: *And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.* (Gen 15:15)

7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. We, at last, lay down our bodies before our fathers who gave them, and present our souls to God who gave it. Our soul is the only thing that we have ever owned on earth, Heaven, or Hell. God gave us an immortal soul that will not perish when the body returns to the dust of the earth. That soul will spend an eternity in either

of two places; Heaven or Hell. If it is the kind of soul that has been reconciled to God and one to which He imputes the righteousness of His only Begotten Son, that soul is assured of citizenship in Heaven. However, if that soul has rejected God either in utterance or in living testimony, it shall not be admitted into Heaven (for God cannot brood sin). That soul has only one destiny for its eternity; Hell. Ironically, it shall find its way there under its own steam. Have you booked passage for your eternal soul?