From Grey to Glory: How the Gospel transforms our view of Ageing

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Ecclesiastes 12:1-8 | 2 Tim 4:6-8

Why this sermon at this time?

- Population Challenge Singapore will become a "super-aged society" by 2026 – More than 20% of the the population aged 65 and above.
- Discipleship Challenge What is the foundation of our faith as we face the reality of ageing around us?
- Personal Challenge How will we cope with our own ageing, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually?
- Church Life Challenge How should our church life adapt to help ourselves age meaningfully and faithfully?

The book of Ecclesiastes: Assessment of Life "under the sun"

Eccl. 1:14 I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.

Eight realities of Ageing (1/2)

1. Suffering and loss of pleasure:

 Eccl. 12:1 - the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, "I have no pleasure in them"

2. Waves of darkness and sadness:

• Eccl. 12:2 - the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain

3. Failing strength (legs, teeth, eyesight, sleep, hearing):

• Eccl. 12:3-4 - the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed, 4 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

Eight realities of Ageing (2/2)

4. Fear and anxiety of the unknown future:

• Eccl. 12:5a - they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way

5. Functional decline: Hair whitens, mobility slows, appetite wanes:

• Eccl. 12:5b - the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails

6. Grief over fading glory:

• Eccl. 12:6 - 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

7. Seeing peers pass on; when is our turn?

 Eccl. 12:5c - man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets

8. Inevitable return to our Maker:

 Eccl. 12:7 - the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Solomon's Verdict about "Life under the Sun" "Vanity of vanities... all is vanity." (Eccl. 12:8)

How does the Gospel of Christ transform our view of Ageing?

1. Christ makes Eternity no longer fearful but beautiful

Christ has come to remove our fear of Eternity

- Eccl. 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart...
- John 14:6-7 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."
- 1John 4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.

2. Christ enables us to be overcomers in our suffering

We are not forgotten in our suffering

• <u>Luke 12:4-6</u> "...do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do... <u>6</u> Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God.

Christ gives us peace and courage to overcome

- <u>John 16:33</u> I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."
- <u>1 John 5:4-5</u> For everyone who has been born of God <u>overcomes the world</u>. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. <u>5</u> Who is it that <u>overcomes the world</u> except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

3. Christ is daily renewing our inner self to grow in eternal glory

The youthfulness, strength and abilities of our outer self find fulfillment only in eternity.

• <u>2Cor. 4:16</u> So we do not lose heart. Though **our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. <u>17</u> For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, <u>18</u> as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.**

Ageing gracefully in the Gospel

- Age with God Eccl. 12:1 "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth."
- Age with Godly Purpose 1 John 2:17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. | 2 Tim 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
- **Age for God's Reward** 2 Tim 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which **the Lord, the righteous judge**, will award to me on that day