

Title: Fear God

Text: Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

Outline:

- I. Worship is **Essential** (v. 13)
 - a. The right **heart**
 - b. The right **conduct**
- II. Judgment is **Inescapable** (v. 14)
 - a. Judgment of the **righteous**
 - b. Judgment of the **wicked**

If you would, please open your Bibles to the Old Testament, to the book of Ecclesiastes. We will look at chapter 12, verses 13-14; the last two verses in the last chapter of the book. If you don't have a Bible, our ushers will walk down the aisles and give you one to use if you'd like. Just throw your hand in the air like you just don't care.

The church at large, protestant evangelicalism, struggles from a lack of fear of the LORD. The fact that the Scriptures constantly remind believers to fear the LORD testifies to this weakness.

Pastor and author Steve Lawson wisely observed that many Christians want a god who, "makes us feel comfortable – one we can control and manage, even use." Because of this he writes, "Many churches have become nothing more than entertainment centers, giving slick performance to growing numbers of mesmerized but unproductive churchgoers. Such devices may bring people into the church, but they do not transform them once they arrive."¹

When was the last time you heard it said of a man or woman: "he was a God-fearer"? How many people would want that written in their obituary or carved on their headstone?

The idea of "fearing" God is not appealing to many. It's far more comfortable to have a God who is tolerant of our sins, gentle, and accommodating. Those who have this view treat church as a social alternative to the world, a place to make friends, a pick-up joint for singles, or a place you go to get a weekly pep-talk. They profess commitment to King Jesus with their lips, but easily set aside his commands because they hold them in such low respect. They treat God as an add-on to their life, rather than the very center of it.

The danger not fearing the LORD is that there will be little to no godliness because, as we will see in our text this morning, people are missing the main ingredient for true spiritual growth.

If you are able, please stand with me in honor of the reading of God's word. Follow along with me as I read verses 13-14.

13 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

This is the reading of God's Word; you may be seated. Let's pray.

¹ Steve Lawson, *Made in Our Image* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 2000), 15-16.

Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon and reads like a memoir. Even though he was the wisest man who ever existed,² his life was full of significant failures.³ We learn from the book of 1 Kings that there was one particular sin that plunged him into a world of trouble.

Despite the clear command to only have one wife and not to marry a non-Israelite, he had 700 wives and 300 concubines who influenced him and turned his heart away from serving God.⁴

That's not like narrowly missing the exit on the interstate. That's blowing past it with your pedal to the metal. Solomon's struggle with lust put him in a place where he was influenced by his wives to turn away from God into all sorts of other sin. Even though Solomon reigned over Israel at the height of prosperity, the consequences of his sin would devastate his life and the lives of others.⁵ (For those of you who are single and want to get married, remember that the person you marry will have the greatest impact on your spiritual life – either for positively or negatively – so be discerning).

But by the grace of God, Solomon comes to his senses, and after he repents, he seeks to help others not make the same mistakes - specifically young people.⁶ I don't know about you, but I'd much rather learn from someone else's mistakes, than make those same mistakes myself and learn the hard way (Like when your sibling got a spanking for disobeying and you think – "I'm gonna go ahead and do the opposite of that!")

So Solomon helps us today by answering the most important question of all time: "What is the meaning of life?" At the beginning and the end of the book Solomon despairingly declares "***Vanity of vanities! All is vanity***"⁷ The word "vanity" in the Hebrew means "empty, pointless, all for nothing." What he means is that all good things in life are like the vapor off a cup of coffee or your breath on a cold day – they're there one moment and gone the next. So what's the point of doing anything when nothing can bring you lasting satisfaction?

Today people are led to believe that the "American Dream" is the ideal life – get a good career with nice retirement plan, get married, have a couple of kids, two nice cars, a nice house, and a dog. Then, after you've done your time, ride of into the sunset of retirement and enjoy yourself. If you have that, then you'll be happy and successful. But Solomon says, "trust me, it won't satisfy."

Solomon tried to find meaning in everything that seemed to bring happiness:⁸ he partied and got drunk,⁹ he bought all the nicest stuff a person could ever want,¹⁰ and he tried to satisfy himself with entertainment¹¹ and sex.¹² He also spent a lot of time learning and poured himself into his work and all sorts of projects, but it all turned out empty.¹³ The cherry on top of it all, after all that effort, Solomon realized he was just gonna die. So what's the point?

² 1 Kings 3:12

³ 1 Kings 11:1-8

⁴ 1 Kings 11:3-4

⁵ 1 Kings 11:9-40.

⁶ Eccl. 12:1, 12

⁷ Eccl. 1:2; 12:8

⁸ Eccl. 2:1-2

⁹ Eccl. 2:3

¹⁰ Eccl. 2:4-7

¹¹ Eccl. 2:8a

¹² Eccl. 2:8b

¹³ Eccl. 2:9-11

It reminds me of this gum I bought when I was a kid called Fruit Stripe – it had colorful packaging and had a zebra on it. It was always in the candy section while you were checking out at the grocery store. It smelled really good and tasted good – for like 30 seconds – but after that the taste wore out. You had to keep cramming stick after stick into your mouth to retain the enjoyment of the flavor. In a sinful and fallen world, all good things are like that piece of gum, you enjoy it for a few moments only for it to become tasteless and wearisome.

So what's the answer? What's the point of life? Verses 13-14 represent his conclusion:

“13 Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

In short, life is unsatisfying apart from God. Life in the midst of fallen world can only be enjoyed when you are a worshipper of God – that is, fearing and obeying Him, because in the end, God's going to judge everyone for everything they've done.

From these two verses, Solomon identifies two truths that we must embrace in order to grow in our godliness.

It is only when you embrace these truths, that true spiritual transformation will happen.

The first truth you need to embrace is that **“Worship is Essential.”**

I. Worship is Essential (v. 13)

Solomon abruptly concludes writing ***“The end of the matter; all has been heard”*** which is his way of wrapping up everything by saying “Enough said, here's the bottom line...” He then gives two commands: 1) Fear God, and 2) keep His commandments.

Why fear and obey? Well he says ***“for this is the whole duty of man.”*** This means that worship is the very purpose for man's existence. It's his very essence – it's essential - it's what we were created to do.

These two commands are the essence of worship. Fearing God is the right heart of and keeping commandments is the right conduct.

Let's look at the right heart of worship.

a. The Right Heart

The Bible has a lot to say about the fear of God. It's specifically mentioned at least 150 times¹⁴ and there are countless other passages that speak about it indirectly. **But what does it mean?**

All of us know what it's like to be afraid and we all have different things we are afraid of – like the dark, spiders, snakes, clowns, public speaking, flying, dying, et cetera. “Fear” is that strong and unpleasant emotion of concern caused by something threatening. But is that the same feeling we are supposed to have toward God?

¹⁴ Jerry Bridges, *The Joy of Fearing God* (New York, New York: WaterBrook Press, 2016), 27.

The short answer is “yes.” The primary term used in the Hebrew is יָרָא [*ya-rē*] and it means “being frightened or threatened”¹⁵ and God is the greatest threat of all.

But it seems strange for Christians to talk about being afraid of God! Afterall, we have been saved from God’s wrath and are adopted as His children.¹⁶ In order to reconcile this many will define “fear” only in terms of “reverence and awe.” And while this is part of the meaning, the idea of “fear” never fully evaporates.¹⁷

I think there are couple of reasons why the idea of “fear” is often left out of the definition: 1) Satan doesn’t want us to fear God and distorts it, 2) living in a constitutional republic desensitizes people to the idea of fearing authority since the government’s power lies in the people, 3) we often overreact to misunderstanding and abuses of the meaning, and lastly, 4) we often grow overfamiliar with God because He doesn’t always execute His judgments in immediate and obvious ways like He did in the Bible.¹⁸

So I’d like to define what it means to fear God and then back up the definition with the Scriptures.

The fear of God is when my heart and mind respond solemnly to God and His works with faith, love, and a consuming desire to glorify Him in all that I do.

As the definition explains, Christians need to fear God because of who He is and what He has done.

Exodus 15:11 says “*Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, fearful in praises, working wonders?*” (NET)

All of God’s characteristics and all of His actions in the past, present, and future produce fear-filled worship in His people.

For example: He has authority and power to do whatever He wants. He destroyed the world with a flood.¹⁹ He took Job’s possessions, the lives of his children, and his health.²⁰ He commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac.²¹ He killed Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu for offering unauthorized fire in the tabernacle.²² He destroyed generations of Israelites before letting the rest enter the Promised land.²³ He struck down Annanias and Sapphira for lying.²⁴ As a father would his child, God also disciplines those he loves through hardship, sickness, and even death.²⁵

In addition to that, His being and His mind are greater than we can comprehend.²⁶ He is holy, transcendent, beyond comparison and imagination.²⁷ His wisdom in creation and all of its wonders is amazing. He sustains the entire universe, every star and planet in the universe to every grain of sand and

¹⁵ s.v. יָרָא, Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, and M. E. J. Richardson, eds. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Accordance electronic edition, version 3.6. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2000), 432.

¹⁶ Romans 8:1, 15-17

¹⁷ George J. Zemek, *The Word of God in the Child of God* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005), 142.

¹⁸ Eccl. 8:11

¹⁹ Gen. 6-9

²⁰ Job. 1:8, 20-22; 2:3

²¹ Gen. 22:12

²² Lev. 10:1-3

²³ Num. 32:13

²⁴ Acts 5:1-11

²⁵ Hebrews 12:3ff.; 1 Cor. 11:27-32

²⁶ Is. 55:8; Deut. 29:29

²⁷ Is. 6:3

molecule, and every heart beat in this room, by His power with a mere thought or word.²⁸ He is everlasting without beginning or end.²⁹ He ordains all things that have come to pass and will come to pass and does so skillfully to bring about His greatest glory and your greatest good.³⁰

He is present in all places at all times.³¹ He sees everything you do and knows your thoughts.³² Which is a fearsome thing since Ecclesiastes 12:14 says God will still judge us for everything we have done - including believers saved from God's wrath (we'll talk more about this at the end).

He is a consuming fire, who hates sin and will repay the wicked in His wrath and judgment³³, yet at the same time He is good and just and lavishes His chosen people with love, grace, and blessings.³⁴

Amazingly, all of these characteristics, the same holiness and splendor Isaiah saw and was terrified by,³⁵ were present in human flesh, though veiled, when Jesus walked on the earth. When the disciples saw Jesus exercise His power over storms, demons, sickness, and death, they were afraid and marveled at who He was and what He did.³⁶

When you start to take in what the Bible says about God, you solemnly recognize that our awe and reverence will always be mixed with fear.

It's very much like the feeling you would have if you barely missed a destructive tornado passing by – tossing cars in the air as if they were matchbox cars and ripping trees and houses to shreds. You see its destructive power, you recognize that your life could have been lost, and then your attention is directed toward the power of God behind and manifested in the tornado. You would feel both fear and reverential awe.

Just to be clear, fearing God is not an outdated command found only in the Old Testament. There are several verses that speak to it in the New Testament. The Greek term for “fear” is φοβέω or φόβος which is where we get our word for “phobia.”

Matthew 10:28 says ***“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”***

Philippians 2:12 says ***“work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”*** With your knees knocking together.

Now one of the fascinating things about Biblical fear is that it draws us to cling to Him rather than driving us away. There's a Biblical tension we have to balance. Jerry Bridges noted in his book *The Joy of Fearing God*, that the fear of God is like centripetal and centrifugal forces at work.³⁷

²⁸ Heb. 1:3; Ps. 147:4-5

²⁹ Is. 40:28; Ps. 90:2

³⁰ Is. 46:10-11; Rom. 8:28-29; Gen. 50:20

³¹ Ps. 139:7-12

³² Ps. 139:1-6

³³ Heb. 10:24-31

³⁴ Eph. 1:3-14; Ps. 34:8-9

³⁵ Is. 6:1-5

³⁶ Lk. 8:25

³⁷ Bridges, *The Joy of Fearing God*, 98-99.

These are the opposing forces that you feel when swing a rock tied to string in a circle or round the corner in your car. On one hand the centripetal force keeps you from flying away into the distance, but on the other hand the centrifugal force keeps you from getting too close. In the same way, the fear of God both pushes us away and draws us to Him.

Psalm 130:3-4 describes this tension saying: **“3 If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?”** The rhetorical answer is “no one!” That should cause fear and send us running away! But then the psalmist says in verse 4 **“4 But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.”** Forgiveness draws into the Father’s embrace, but at the same time God’s attributes hold us at a fearfully reverent distance. These two forces are always acting in the heart of the believer.

Like many teachings in Scripture, balance is required so that we don’t fall into error on either side.

One side is to fear God in a legalistic way that distorts the gospel. This type of fear leads someone to obey so that God won’t get angry. That treats God like the mythological Greek god Zeus – that He may just throw a lightning bolt at you if you step out of line. That was the mindset of the wicked servant in the parable of the talents. He hid the master’s money in the ground instead of investing it because he was afraid and thought the master was a harsh man.³⁸ He had a distorted view of God and did not love Him.

But the opposite ditch to avoid is not fearing God at all – to become overfamiliar with Him.

So now that we have a more thorough biblical description of it, let me repeat the definition: The fear of God is when my heart and mind respond solemnly to God and His works with faith, love, and a consuming desire to glorify Him in all that I do.

The 20th century pastor and theologian John Murray wrote “The fear of God is the soul of godliness.”³⁹ And that is why Solomon places it before the command to obey. As one commentator wisely noted, “Conduct derives from worship. A knowledge of God leads to obedience; not vice versa.”⁴⁰ Fearing God is the fountain from which obedience flows.

So that leads to the right conduct of worship: which is obedience.

b. The Right Conduct

“Keeping His commandments” is straight forward and easy to understand, but we know by experience that it is hard to do. As Jesus warned his disciples in the garden, **“The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”**⁴¹ We can all relate with the apostle Paul’s disgust for sin when he wrote **“Wretched man that I am!”**⁴²

It’s pretty easy to notice blatant disobedience in your life, so I think it will more helpful to discern the counterfeit obedience. Just like when a cashier holds up a \$20 bill to the light to check to see if it’s fake, we can hold up our obedience to the light of God’s Word and see if it’s genuine or not.

The first counterfeit form is partial obedience.

³⁸ Matt. 25:24-27

³⁹ Murray, John. *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (p. 229). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

⁴⁰ Eaton, Michael A. *Ecclesiastes: An Introduction and Commentary*. TOTC 18. IVP (Accordance electronic edition, version 2.5. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 177.

⁴¹ Matt. 26:41

⁴² Romans 7:24

Partial obedience is when we don't obey God's commands fully but still think God is pleased. However, unlike school where B's and C's still get degrees, God is not pleased with anything less than 100%.⁴³

The child who only cleans the parts of their room you can see and stuff everything else into their closet or under the bed is only partially obeying. Parents who rebuke their children and use the rod but don't seek to shepherd their hearts are only partially parenting. The person who says "sorry" instead of asking for forgiveness is halfheartedly reconciling. The person who tells a "white lie" or omits the full truth by rounding numbers up or down on their tax return is not telling the truth.

Partial obedience is tempting because we rationalize it to make it better than it sounds, but it doesn't pass God's standard. You can put lipstick on a pig, but it's still a pig at the end of the day.

Postponed obedience is knowing what is right to do, but waiting until it's more convenient to do it. This happens when we are confronted with our sin but are unwilling to take radical steps to repent.

This is the child who says, "Yeah mom, I'll take out the trash when I'm done playing my video game," or the unmarried person who says "Well I know I shouldn't make out or sleep with my boyfriend or girlfriend, but I know that we are going to get married someday." Or the person who says, "Well I know should go to church, but I'm waiting until _____ (fill in the blank)." Or the person who says, "I know I should share the gospel, I just am scared to do it."

Postponed obedience presumes upon the grace of God by believing that He will patiently wait on you and that He will let you live long enough to do it. It's wrongly believes God won't discipline while you delay.

Fake obedience is attempting to carry out God's commands with the wrong resources and the wrong motives.

You can determine if your motives for obedience are wrong by asking "why am I sad about my sin?" 2 Corinthians 7:10 says there is a sorrow we can feel over our sin that motivates people to change for selfish reasons, but doesn't actually produce salvation and spiritual growth. It's called "worldly" sorrow. This kind of sorrow is when people are sad about the consequences and embarrassment of their sin.

The other kind is "godly" sorrow which is when you feel sad first and foremost because your sin is against God which produces a hatred for sin and an eagerness to make things right for God's glory.⁴⁴

The wrong resources are used when we try to obey God in our own strength instead of relying on the Holy Spirit and the common means of grace.

Ephesians 4 says⁴⁵ there are three parts to genuine obedience – First, "put off your old self" which simply means stop doing the sin. The second part is to 2) "be renewed" in your mind – which is where the Holy Spirit works through God's Word to give you new and righteous thoughts and desires. And third, 3) we need to "put on the new self" – that is to obey instead of sin.

These three parts are like a three-legged stool. You need all three for the stool to remain standing. If you try to obey without having your mind renewed by the Spirit, then you are just living a moralistic life.

⁴³ 1 Sam. 15:22; Hos. 6:6; Micah 6:8

⁴⁴ 2 Cor. 7:11

⁴⁵ Eph. 4:22-24

You're not doing it for God. If you try to put off sin, but don't replace it with the right action, then you will just sin in a different way.

This means the husband who angrily snaps at his wife and kids only truly obeys when he has stopped his verbal assaults, puts on kindness, tenderness, and forgiveness toward others because Christ has freely forgiven Him of far more and far worse sin.⁴⁶

This means the person who struggles with sexual lusts puts off the greed, covetousness, and idolatry behind pornography, adultery, and fornication, and puts on self-control and contentment instead, because they have found satisfaction and contentment in Christ.

It means the person who struggles with their tongue, with gossiping or slandering, or telling dirty jokes and using foul language, truly obeys when they speak the what is good for building people up, as fits the occasion, so that the body of Christ is built up and edified.⁴⁷

The fear of God is the ultimate motivator for rooting out all types of fake obedience. It also helps motivate us to know that God is going to judge all of it in the end.

This leads us to our final point, the second truth that we must embrace if we want to grow in godliness: Judgment is Inescapable.

II. Judgment is Inescapable (v. 14)

Solomon concludes his book with the ultimate motivation for fearing the Lord and obeying His commandments. Verse 14 reminds us of the universal and inescapable reality of judgment.

“For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

Now there are two different types of judgment described in the Bible, with two different purposes. One for the righteous and one for the unrighteous. One before the judgment seat of Christ and one before the Great White throne. One for measuring out reward, and one for measuring out wrath.

Let's look at the judgment of the righteous.

a. Judgment of the righteous

2 Corinthians 5:10 is perhaps the most concise description of this judgment. ***“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”*** It sounds a lot like Ecclesiastes 12:14 and Paul is talking to Christians.

What does he mean we will receive what is due? Well, he gives some more details in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15:

“12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation [the gospel] with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.”

⁴⁶ Eph. 4:31-32

⁴⁷ Eph. 4:29

So Christians will stand before Jesus one day, and give an account for every word we have said, every thought that passed in our mind, and every action we took, whether good or bad, and watch rewards be given and taken away as a result. The ultimate reward of eternal life will not be taken away, but additional rewards meant to be enjoyed in the new heavens and the new earth, for all eternity, will be at stake. This is a motivating reason to fear the LORD – this is why we should strive to grow in godliness.

b. Judgment of the wicked

However, the judgment of the wicked will be very different. This is described in Revelation 20:11-15:

“11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. 13 And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. 14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

The terrifying reality and fate of those who reject Jesus as Savior and King of their lives is a future day when they will stand before the Great White Throne and be judged. They will be given special resurrected bodies made to last through suffering before they are thrown into the lake of fire with Satan and his demons to endure the wrath of God without pause, without relief, without hope, for all eternity.

The difference between the fate of the wicked and the righteous is the fear of the LORD. Those who fear the LORD will desperately cry out to God for mercy and salvation and find it in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross to save sinners from the wrath of God so that they might fear the one who punishes rather than the punishment.

But those who do not fear God will continually harden their hearts against the only one who can save them. The famous 18th century revivalist preacher Jonathan Edwards soberly said in his most famous sermon “Almost every natural man that hears of hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it.”⁴⁸

III. Conclusion

Such a sobering reality demands that we examine ourselves to see if we truly fear the LORD.

2 Corinthians 13:5 says *“Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves...”* Look at the pattern of your life. You’re not looking for perfection, but what is the overall trajectory? Do you look like a God-fearer? Or are you a hypocrite. One who talks the talk, who wears the Christian mask, but your obedience is always partial, postponed, or fake.

Jesus warns us that “many” people will appear before the LORD one day and think they are saved when they are not because they do not fear the LORD.⁴⁹ The parable of the soils reminds us that many people seem to respond well to the gospel. They are like a plant that springs up initially from the seed, only to be

⁴⁸ Jonathan Edwards, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” Sermon, preached at Enfield, July 8th, 1741. Accessed <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1053&context=etas> on 01/05/2024.

⁴⁹ Matt. 7:21-23

choked out by the scorching sun or thorns and thistles.⁵⁰ Some may seem to fear God and turn to Jesus, only to find out that they were afraid of hell and didn't actually want Jesus.

But all genuine believers will have some level of fear of the LORD. It may be a little ember, or a nicely maintained log fire, but wherever you are on the spectrum, you must continually fan the flame. **How do you do that?**

a. Pray

The first thing you must do is pray. In Ps. 86:11 David prays, ***“Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.”***

The fear of the LORD is a gift from God. The Holy Spirit renews your heart and mind to fear Him. We must continually ask the LORD to help us fan the flame in dependent faith.

b. Consume God's Word

The second thing we must do is consume God's Word.

In Deuteronomy 4:10, Moses told the people of Israel ***“the LORD said to me, ‘Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.’”***

Fear is learned through hearing His Word. This is why reading your Bible, fellowshiping with Christians, hearing preaching every Sunday, attending Life Groups, attending Equipping classes are all so important. Each of these are common means of grace that can be used to put another log on the fire of fearing the LORD.

We must intentionally work at being influenced by God's Word rather than passively being influenced by the constant barrage of worldly messaging that comes from social media, movies, news, and worldly behavior we see every day.

c. Live ready to die

Third, we need to live ready to die. God has numbered our days. Our lives are short and none of us know when we will die or when the Lord will return. So Moses prayed in Psalm 90:12 ***“teach us to number our days so that we may get a heart of wisdom.”***

We ought to live as if today is the last day we have. This means you repent of sin and don't let it linger any longer. When someone comes over to your house, you usually tidy up the place before they come so that you aren't embarrassed by your mess. If we live ready to die, it means we make sure that each day our spiritual life is in order so that we don't shrink in fear at the judgment seat of Christ.⁵¹

d. Go to the throne of grace

Finally, to grow in the fear of the LORD you need to approach His throne regularly in confession of your sin. Since Jesus is our great High Priest who died for us and mediates for us, Hebrew 4:16 says ***“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace...”*** Not an arrogant confidence, but one that does not have to fear punishment. Why should we draw near? ***“that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*** So that we may find mercy in forgiveness and grace to help us fight temptation.

⁵⁰ Matt. 13:1-23

⁵¹ 1 John 2:28

I. Communion

We can do this practically now as we prepare our hearts for communion. If you don't have the cracker and juice, our ushers will walk down the aisles and you can raise your hand to get some.

Without using the word, Paul reminds us to fear the LORD when we take communion in 1 Corinthians 11:27-32. He wrote:

“27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.”
(1 Corinthians 11:27–32 ESV)

In this passage he warns against taking communion in an ***“unworthy manner.”*** All of us probably feel unworthy to take communion because we struggle with sin. But the presence of a struggle is important! To actually BE “unworthy” refers to living hypocritically - to profess belief in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection while going on sinning deliberately in your life.

Paul is writing this because some of the Corinthians were partying and getting drunk during communion and not sharing with those who had nothing to eat.⁵² There was no struggle with sin. They were taking communion without confessing and forsaking ongoing sin their life.

If you do that, you are ***“guilty concerning the body and blood of the LORD.”***

If you threw the American flag on the ground and stomped on it, you would be guilty of dishonoring the United States because the flag is a symbol of our country. In a similar but far more serious way, taking communion in an unworthy manner is dishonoring Jesus.

Paul says that some of the Corinthians had suffered judgement in the form of illness and even death. The Greek word for judgement does not refer to damnation to hell. He makes that clear at the end that even those who have died were “disciplined” so that they would NOT be condemned. God takes communion so seriously that he takes people out of this world in order to keep them from profaning the name of Christ.

While communion is a joyous celebration, it's also one that should cause us to examine our hearts and fear the LORD. If you have unreconciled sin, I would encourage you to take a moment and confess that to the LORD before you take the elements. Approach the throne of God with reverent confidence that you will receive mercy in forgiveness and grace to repent of your sin moving forward.

But if you have sin that you have not reconciled yet, with another person and the LORD, then I would encourage you to abstain from taking communion until that can be done.

At this time, please remove the cellophane and get the bread.

⁵² 1 Cor. 11:20-22

As we take communion we remember the Lord's sacrifice that saved us from the penalty and power of our sins and washed our conscience white as snow. Paul wrote in verse 23:

“23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Let us eat together.

Now please remove the lid from the juice.

25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” Let us take and drink.
(1 Corinthians 11:23–26 ESV)

"Fear God"

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 - *Pastor Tysin Smith*

I. Worship is _____ (v. 13)

a. The right _____

b. The right _____

II. Judgment is _____ (v. 14)

a. Judgment of the _____

b. Judgment of the _____