

YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME FOR THAT, ECCL.7:1-6

Liar Liar #10

◆Intro: Have you ever noticed how our fantasy tales reveal a longing humanity has for life that doesn't end? Take for example the story of Shangri La, a magical hidden Eden behind snowy mountains where gold is found in the streams and women who appear to be teen hotties are really 90 some years of age. Or Disney's presentation of Atlantis, a sunken city in the Atlantic Ocean where an ancient civilization continues to thrive and though it's inhabitation and centuries old, they appear young and vital. There there are the abundant stories surrounding the search for the Fountain of Youth, such as Pirates of the Caribbean; On Stranger Tides. In all these stories there is a quest for a place or a power that time does not affect. Even though none of us lives in a place like this, many of us still prefer to believe another lie that often messes with our lives: the lie that we have plenty of time. We assume for the most part that people only die when they get really old, which may be more true in our time than in previous history, but is not necessarily so. Living without an awareness of our limited time here is a dangerous way to go. In fact, many philosophers of all stripes of faith or non-faith conclude that no man can really live fully until he has faced the problem of his coming death. So as we conclude this summer series on Lies we often believe, and as we begin business as usual in the school year, I think it wise that we address this lie that we have plenty of time.

◆The lie has corollaries of course: that since we have plenty of time it doesn't matter that much what we do now; and most significantly, since we have plenty of time, we needn't think about what happens

YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME FOR THAT, ECCL.7:1-6

Liar Liar #10

when our heart stops pumping blood through our bodies and our lungs stop breathing air and our bodies return to dust in the ground.

◆**1. The truth that I don't have plenty of time (My coming death) tells me to make the most of my life.** Incidentally, when someone you know dies, try to make it to the funeral. Funerals are important not only for the support that the grieving need to feel from you, but because funerals will help you get a better perspective on your life. When you look at a friend's body in a box, you might realize that people will be looking at your body in much the same way eventually. Everybody dies. The text we're reading today is one of the philosophers I was talking about; King Solomon, who lived about 900 BC. Solomon is observing that pain and struggle teach us more about life than do pleasure and happiness. That's why he says the things he does like...

◆“A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth. It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.” Ecclesiastes 7:1-4, NIV.

◆Now this isn't the way our commercials talk to us, is it? Red Lobster wants you to come feast. McDonald's wants you to stop in for a drink. And Miller Lite would have you think about partying more than crying. Here's a strange paradox though: have you ever been in the middle of a party, a feast, a celebration, or carnival and found yourself still feeling lonely, or

YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME FOR THAT, ECCL.7:1-6

Liar Liar #10

perturbed, or seriously unhappy even though you were supposed to be having a good time? You might have been at odds with a friend, or offended, or missing someone special. The very fact that tasty foods, flaky pastries, and sweet drinks aren't automatically joyful hints that being human is far more serious than that. Many experience this. *We need meaning more than material. We need purpose more than pleasure.*

Strangely enough, pleasure often distracts us from looking for the deeper things and that's why Solomon talks like he does in Ecclesiastes 7

◆“Sorrow is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.” Ecclesiastes 7:3, 4, NIV.

◆Here are some other wisdom bytes that echo the same sentiment:

◆“*Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.*” Proverbs 17:1, NIV.

◆“Better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fattened calf with hatred.” Proverbs 15:17, NIV.

◆B. Part of the lie that we have plenty of time is whispered in other ways as well. Sometimes it sound like, “Pleasure will fill your need for love.” No it won't. That's one of the basic lies of a fallen world that tells us to “focus on the good stuff now and forget your troubles.” In contrast to pleasure, pain (or call it other things: limitation, struggle, hardship, questions) is what helps us really think about life, value and meaning. Think about the funeral thing again. It raises all kinds of questions we don't ask while riding the bus to school, or stopping in at Dairy Queen for a blizzard. Questions like,

◆“What happens to you when you die?”

YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME FOR THAT, ECCL.7:1-6

Liar Liar #10

- ◆Why am I here?
- ◆What am I for?
- ◆Who really cares?
- ◆Who will care when I'm not around anymore?
- ◆Where am I going?"

◆Let me illustrate. What would you do if you were on a beach in Florida and you just paid \$50 to rent a jet-ski for half an hour? Would you go over to the tiki bar and order a drink and some pretzels? Would you sit down with Grandma under an umbrella and look at pictures of their anniversary? Of course not, the clock is ticking. You want to get as much out of your half hour as you can. You want to jump as many waves as physically possible. You want to race up and down the waterfront as fast as that little water scooter will take you! It's really the limitation, or the time constraint that makes you like this, isn't it? Suppose, for example, that you were in Florida at a friend's cottage who owned 2 jet skis. Your friend said to make yourself at home for the week and use whatever you wanted to, for as long as you wanted to. Well, now the urgency to jump the waves is a bit less, isn't it?

◆Listen, friends it's not being Jonny Raincloud to talk about death. It's a healthy reminder the clock is ticking. Don't you want to get the important things in before time's up? In his book, Dr. Chris Thurman makes the following observation:

- ◆“A motion picture starring Robert De Niro and Robin Williams called *Awakenings* tells the story of a physician who uses a drug to bring people out of a physical disorder referred to as a “sleeping sickness.”

YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME FOR THAT, ECCL.7:1-6

Liar Liar #10

De Niro plays the part of a man who went into a coma-like sleep when he was in his twenties and is brought back to consciousness in his late forties. When De Niro fully realizes what has happened to his life, he frantically seeks to make up for lost time. He reads books, goes dancing, plays sports, and even finds a girlfriend. People who have seen the movie may experience conflicting emotions: on the one hand, they are delighted that this man is well again and so excited about life; on the other hand, they surely have to be uneasy about the fact that their own lives are just as far behind in truly being lived as his—only they haven't been in a coma!"

◆Knowing we are limited, or as Solomon puts it, “going to the house of mourning” makes us seek value while we can. If God told you that you had six months to live, what would you do? Who would you be sure to talk to? Where would you go, and why? You see, now we are pondering real value.

◆C. My value is found in the purpose and meaning of my life. “The Greek word *dunamis* entered the English language when the Swedish chemist and engineer Alfred Bernhard Nobel (1833-96) made the discovery that became his fortune. He discovered a power stronger than anything the world had known up to that time. He asked a friend of his who was a Greek scholar what the word for ‘explosive power’ was in Greek. His friend answered, ‘*Dunamis*’. So called his ‘explosive power’ dynamite.

◆One day, in 1888, Alfred Nobel picked up the morning newspaper and read his obituary. It was his brother who had passed away, but an over-zealous reporter, who had failed to check the facts, wrote that the world saw *Alfred* Nobel as the inventor of dynamite, an armaments manufacturer,

YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME FOR THAT, ECCL.7:1-6

Liar Liar #10

a merchant of death. Arthur was confronted with his death! He resolved to make clear his true desire for peace. So he arranged that the income from all of his fortune would fund an award to be made to those persons who did the most for the cause of peace. Today we remember him not as an arms merchant, but as the founder of the Nobel Prize for Peace.

◆ Alfred Nobel woke up to the question of the meaning of his life when he realized his death was coming. None of us have a guarantee of tomorrow. What are you living for? Why will you get up tomorrow?

◆ *Now, so far what I've said could be said by someone of many religions or philosophies. What I'm going to say next cannot be.*

◆2. The truth that I don't have plenty of time, tells me I need to seek the true God.

◆ Just months after the July 20, 1969 date when Buzz Aldrin Jr became one of the first two men to walk on the moon, Aldrin realized that as a pilot, there were no greater achievements he could strive for in his lifetime, and he had a nervous breakdown. When Alexander the Great conquered the entire known world in 323 BC he sat down and wept. What these men had set up before themselves as their purpose for being, or their life's meaning was not big enough to carry them through. It is really quite common for people who lose a sense of purpose to develop emotional and spiritual problems. Our question is, "what is there that is ultimately big enough to give a person lasting meaning even beyond our existence here?" The Biblical answer is that a friendship with God is the only thing big enough to

YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME FOR THAT, ECCL.7:1-6

Liar Liar #10

last through life and death. Lets survey a few other things Solomon says in his book:

◆*“I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil--this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure for ever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him. Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before; and God will call the past to account.” Ecclesiastes 3:12-15, NIV.*

◆Or this one that my son’s roommate posted on the wall of their dorm...

◆*“Young man, it’s wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it. Do everything you want to do; take it all in. But remember that you must give an account to God for everything you do. So banish grief and pain, but remember that youth, with a whole life before it, still faces the threat of meaninglessness. Don’t let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator.” Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:1, NLT.*

◆What is his key emphasis? That meaning and purpose come from your creator. *What, my friend, are you doing to seek God in your day? That, by the way, is why this church is here; to help you seek God.* If you are an evolutionary accident, you have no meaning or purpose. Don’t seek God. If you are only momentary, it matters little what you experience, what happens to you. If there is no life after this one, party on, Dude ‘cuz nothing really matters. There’s a popular activist group around today called “Black Lives Matter.” Some black leaders have pointed out that it is actually more of a racist group itself, since followers of the group seem to think it

YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME FOR THAT, ECCL.7:1-6

Liar Liar #10

permissible to attack and kill white police officers. It would be more accurate to have a group of activists called “All Lives Matter.” But that can only be true if we are not mere accidents that appear on the sonar screen of life for a blip or two and then are gone. It is the Bible that teaches that all lives matter. And they matter for the simple reason that their Creator made them for his own reasons, not the least of which is that he may love them and they may love him back!

◆Some religions don't believe all lives matter. Some, like Hinduism, teach that “not living” is to be preferred. Welcome death. Join the destiny of not being created again. Cease to struggle with identity and individuality. And that, by the way, is why there are some many poor who suffer in India for example, while people don't do anything about it. It's the Christians who go there to help the poor because Christ says all lives matter.

◆Christianity wholly disagrees with eastern mystic religions. Christianity does not believe death is a friend. It's our enemy (1Cor. 15) Paying attention to the reality of death is important for living well, but death is not a good thing in itself. Death is our enemy because we matter. We matter because God made us on purpose, for a purpose. Ultimately the question of death leads us to the question of God.

Doesn't it make sense to use your life to seek God if that's where your purpose comes from and where your destiny is leading you?

◆“ the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.” ...“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his

YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME FOR THAT, ECCL.7:1-6

Liar Liar #10

commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” Ecclesiastes 12:7,13, NIV.

◆**Conclusion:** The good news of the Bible is that Jesus has conquered your death by dying for you!

◆*“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23, NIV.*

◆*“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.” Hebrews 2:9, NIV.*

◆*“Christ Jesus, ... has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” 2 Timothy 1:10, NIV.*

◆Will you accept his leadership in your life? Will you turn your back on sin and choose to walk with God through life? Will you invite him to the throne of your heart and to lead you through your day?

◆If you get 8 hours of sleep a night, you will spend approximately 122 days a year sleeping. If you spend one hour each for breakfast, lunch and dinner every day, you will spend 46 days a year eating. Sleeping and eating cost you half of each year you are alive. Add to that time spent on personal grooming (and for the female species, there goes another 5.5 months of the year leaving only 15 days in which to live! ...Well that last fact was a slight exaggeration.) But take the time spent in lines, paying bills, traveling to and from work –and you can see how easily time slips away. It’s a lie that we have plenty of time. That lie can mess up our lives so that we miss that which is actually lasting and then we live in anxiety,

YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME FOR THAT, ECCL.7:1-6

Liar Liar #10

pressure, hurry, and frantic paces and wonder why all we want to do is escape!

◆ I want to challenge you to two things in light of the brevity of life. 1) Seek God daily. 2) Enjoy life. The biblical writer puts it...

◆“Don’t let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honor him in your youth before you grow old and no longer enjoy living. It will be too late then to remember him, when the light of the sun and moon and stars is dim to your old eyes, and there is no silver lining left among the clouds. Your limbs will tremble with age, and your strong legs will grow weak. Your teeth will be too few to do their work, and you will be blind, too. And when your teeth are gone, keep your lips tightly closed when you eat! Even the chirping of birds will wake you up. But you yourself will be deaf and tuneless, with a quavering voice. You will be afraid of heights and of falling, white-haired and withered, dragging along without any sexual desire. You will be standing at death’s door. And as you near your everlasting home, the mourners will walk along the streets. Yes, remember your Creator now while you are young, before the silver cord of life snaps and the golden bowl is broken. Don’t wait until the water jar is smashed at the spring and the pulley is broken at the well. For then the dust will return to the earth, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. “All is meaningless,” says the Teacher, “utterly meaningless.””
Ecclesiastes 12:1-8, NLT. “Here is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is the duty of every person.”
Ecclesiastes 12:13, NLT.