



INSIGHTS FOR DARK DAYS FROM ALISTAIR BEGG:

The Brevity of Life

“Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’; before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain, in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent...”

ECCLESIASTES 12:1–3

Life passes us by a lot more quickly than we imagine. I vividly remember the birth of my first child—and then, it seemed that he was a teenager only a few weeks later. Suddenly, we wake up older and we realize that any given moment may be the only moment we have left to live for Jesus Christ, because life is very brief.

“With the minutes that remain in our lives, we can lift up our eyes and look on the fields, because, as Jesus said, they’re already ‘white for harvest.’”

As we age, our physical and mental abilities fade, old friends pass away, familiar customs which have been routine disintegrate, and our long-held ambitions lose their potential. These realities, though, shouldn’t drive us into despair but stimulate us. There is opportunity in every day! As Derek Kidner writes, “Death has not yet reached out to us: let it rattle its chains at us and stir us into action.”¹ With the minutes that remain in our lives, we can lift up our eyes and look on the fields, because, as Jesus said, they’re already “white for harvest.”²

The Bible doesn’t encourage us to wait until we graduate or get married or settle down or sort ourselves out or retire to serve Christ. Rather, it encourages us to live in the awareness of what James, the brother of Jesus, says: that we shouldn’t say, “Tomorrow, we’ll go here or go there and get gain and do this and all these things,” but instead respond, “If the Lord wills, we will do this or that.”³ We do so because, as James also reminds us, our lives are but “a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.”⁴

Before the strength in our hands fails us and our teeth, eyes, and ears grow weak, will we choose to live for Jesus Christ? If we wait until tomorrow, tomorrow may be too late. As C. T. Studd once put it, there is

Only one life,
'Twill soon be past.
Only what’s done
For Christ will last.

¹ Derek Kidner, *The Message of Ecclesiastes*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity, 1976), 104

² John 4:35

³ James 4:13, 15

⁴ James 4:14