+ Funny the Way It Is

A sermon on Ecclesiastes 12
Buckland Road Baptist Church

INTRODUCTION

"Lying in the park, on a beautiful day.
Sunshine in the grass, and the children play.
Sirens passing, fire engine red —
someone's house is burning down on a day like this."

That's how a contemporary song begins — Funny the Way It Is, by the Dave Matthews Band.

It's not funny, of course. Not haha. Not like a joke.

It's funny like a lump in your throat.

Funny like standing at a funeral and hearing a baby cry in the back row. Funny like how life keeps moving, even when your heart doesn't.

And that's exactly the tension Ecclesiastes lives in.

This ancient, aching book at the heart of the Bible doesn't sound like a sermon —

It sounds like life. Confusing. Honest. Smoke-like.

A chaplain during the Vietnam War once said that of all the books in the Bible, only Ecclesiastes managed to capture the attention of soldiers in the field.

Not the triumphalism of Joshua.

Not the lofty comfort of Romans.

But the dry-mouthed realism of Ecclesiastes.

Because when life feels like dust and ash and missed chances and sudden loss —

You don't want clichés.

You want a voice that says,

"I too see the moral absurdity of what is around us.

And God is still here."

Ecclesiastes 12:1

"Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them."

This isn't just advice for teenagers. This is not about being young. This is about remembering *before it's too late*.

Before the grind of life dulls your heart.

Before the illusions of control give way.

Before you wake up and realise: "I spent all my strength on chasing the wind."

Tim Mackie from the BibleProject says Ecclesiastes is like a wise, cranky old teacher.

He's not here to make us feel good — he's here to tell us the truth.

And the truth is: this world is hevel.

A mist. A vapour.

It looks solid but slips through your fingers.

Like laughter that fades.

Like applause that dies out when the spotlight goes dark.

Like breath in the cold.

"Funny the way it is," sings Dave,

"Someone's going hungry, and someone else is eating out."
"Someone's heart is breaking, and it becomes your favourite song."

That's *hevel*. That's the ache of the Teacher's voice. Life is not meaningless — but it *is* out of your control.

So he says: Remember your Creator.

Not just recall God like a memory.

But *orient* yourself.

Let your life turn toward the One who gave it to you in the first place.

Ecclesiastes 12:2-7

"The sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark..."

"The keepers of the house tremble, the strong men stoop, the grinders cease..."

"The almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along..."

"Then people go to their eternal home..."

What a poem.

It's one of the most haunting, tender, honest depictions of ageing and death in all of Scripture.

This isn't just about growing old — it's about becoming the house that creaks, and cracks, and eventually crumbles.

The windows grow dim — your eyesight.

The doors on the street are shut — your hearing fades.

The grinders stop — your teeth are gone.

The almond tree blossoms — white hair.

The grasshopper drags along — mobility goes.

And then — the silver cord is severed.

The dust returns to the ground.

And the spirit returns to God.

It's not funny.

But it's true.

And the Teacher doesn't flinch.

He doesn't look away from death — he walks us through it. And he says, This too is hevel.

Not pointless.

Not evil.

But ephemeral.

You don't get to hold onto your breath forever.

"Funny the way it is," Dave sings, "Not right or wrong — just different."

"Funny the way it is — if you think about it..."

And the Teacher has thought about it.

That's what this whole book is.

A journal from a man who tried everything. Wisdom. Pleasure. Work. Riches. And in the end, he says:

"It's all breath. Don't chase it. Receive it."

Ecclesiastes 12:13–14

"Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment..."

When the Teacher finally steps back and lets someone else speak — this is what's said.

Not: "Life is meaningless."

But: "Life is accountable."

Life is a gift, yes. But a gift with weight. A breath that matters.

Because God sees it all. Every moment. Every tear. Every joy. Every injustice.

"The fear of the Lord is the only thing that will keep you from despair in a hevel world."

You can't control your days.

But you can entrust them.

You can fear God. Not in terror — but in awe.

A deep breath before the vastness of eternity.

The kind of reverence that says:

"I didn't make myself.

I don't own myself.

But I've been given this moment — and I will live it with open hands."

Dave Matthews lyrics include the lines:

"Somebody's going hungry, and someone else is eating out. Funny the way it is — if you think about it..."

We don't always know what to do with this kind of world.

Where grief and joy hold hands.

Where death walks beside us while babies are born.

Where breath slips away — and yet we wake up to birdsong.

And yet — here is the good news:

Jesus entered the hevel.

He came into the mist.

He walked through the house that's falling down.

And he gave up his breath — so that ours could return to God.

And the same Jesus says:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

He doesn't take the vapour away.

But he gives it meaning.

He turns it into something sacred.

So beloved — remember your Creator.

Before the silver cord snaps.

Before the dust settles.

Before the music fades.

Remember him while you still have breath — And then entrust that breath to him, one day at a time.

Because, funny the way it is but — God is not vapour.

He is the Rock beneath the mist.

Amen.