

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Life Is Not Just A Dash

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You probably have heard more than once the statement: “Between the day of your birth and the day of your death is a dash.” It reminds us that life is short, and we should pay attention to its brevity. We should internalize it as we see the tombstone etching, and make needed changes in our life now. We never know how long the dash will last.

Linda Ellis’ poem, “*The Dash*” was written in 1996, and soon became a popular theme for funeral reflections. Her poem exhorts us to focus on filling our brief “dash” with things of utmost importance. “*For it matters not how much we own, the cars the house the cash. What matter is how we live and love, and how we spend our dash.*”

The dash has become a popular symbol. Slowing down to think about life is a good thing. But life is not just a symbolic dash. The Old Testament book Ecclesiastes forces thinking upon the truly profitable life filling out the dots of our dash “*under the sun,*” (Ecclesiastes 1:3). Ecclesiastes concludes with what is important: “*This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: fear God, and keep His*

commandments; for this is the whole (duty) of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Life happens. Things occur repeatedly that we have no control over, but we live in their reality. One generation comes and goes and is soon forgotten. I go, but the earth continues! What’s with that? The sun rises, sets, and returns to its place to start all over again the next day. The wind goes southward and turns northward following established currents. The rivers collect the rainfall and rush to the sea, but the sea is never full. Neither are my eyes ever satisfied with seeing, nor are my ears filled with hearing. There is always room for more sights and sounds. More for the bucket list! The reality of life, dealing with things outside my control and beyond my abilities to achieve can become a wearisome exercise (Ecclesiastes 1:4-11).

Life happens in time that forces us to ask what profit is there in living under the sun? Between the dash of birth and death, there is a seasonal time for all facets of life. There is a time to plant and a time to pluck up what we have planted. There is a time to keep and a time to cast away what was important at one time to have. There is a time to love and a time to hate; a time to

kill and a time to heal; a time to for war and a time for peace. Life seems to be a lot of effort but little or no gain at the end. The preacher of Ecclesiastes is driving us to think in terms of what is real: “*What profit hath he that worketh in that which he laboreth?*” (Ecclesiastes 3:9).

Life happens, then death enters. It enters the ER room where attendants are working frantically to keep you alive, and enters the bedroom in your house where hospice caretakers are working to lessen your pain. But in the end Death separates us... over 60 million times a year.

When death enters our space, we fly away. Completing what God began when He from the dust of the ground created man and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Genesis 2:5), death enters with our body returning as “dust to the earth as it was,” and “the spirit returning to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Ecclesiastes reminds us that there is a judgment after the dash. God will bring every “work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:14). He that hath ears, let him hear!