

Ecclesiastes 8:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.

Analysis

Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry—after wrestling with delayed justice and moral inversions (vv.10-14), the Preacher advocates receiving God's gifts with joy. The Hebrew 'simchah' (שִׂמְחָה, mirth/joy) doesn't mean hedonistic pleasure but grateful enjoyment of daily provisions as divine gifts. The phrase 'no better thing' (עַיִן טוֹב, ein tov) indicates optimal response within creaturely limitations—since humans cannot control outcomes or ensure justice, they should gratefully receive present blessings.

For that shall abide with him of his labour—enjoyment of work's fruits represents the sustainable portion of human toil. The verb 'yilavenu' (יָלַוְנוּ, abide/accompany) suggests that joy in daily provision accompanies people through life's hardships. This isn't resignation but wisdom: receive God's gifts gratefully rather than anxiously striving to control what only God governs.

Historical Context

Ancient agricultural societies understood labor's connection to daily bread—crops required planting, tending, harvesting, and preparation before providing meals. The Preacher advocates grateful reception rather than anxious accumulation. This

echoes Deuteronomy's call to rejoice in God's provision (Deuteronomy 12:7; 14:26). Jesus later taught not to worry about tomorrow but to seek first God's kingdom (Matthew 6:25-34)—similar balance between responsible labor and grateful trust. Paul commanded that those who refuse to work shouldn't eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10) while also teaching contentment with daily provision (Philippians 4:11-13; 1 Timothy 6:6-8). The Reformers emphasized vocation: common work done faithfully as service to God brings joy, while labor pursued as ultimate meaning produces anxiety.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does receiving your daily provision with gratitude differ from anxiously striving for security through accumulation?
2. In what ways does enjoying 'eating, drinking, and being merry' as gifts from God differ from secular hedonism?

Interlinear Text

ט וּב	אֵין	אֲשֶׁר	הַשֶּׁמֶחַ	אֶת	אֲנִי	וְשַׁבַּחְתִּי
hath no better thing	hath	no	better	thing	Then I commended	
H2896	H369	H834	H8057	H853	H589	H7623
וְלִשְׁתּוֹת	לֶאֱכֹל	אִם	כִּי	הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ:	תַּחַת	לְאָדָם
and to drink	than to eat	am	for	him under the sun	because a man	
H8354	H398	H518	H3588	H8121	H8478	H120
יָמָיו	בְּעֵמָל	וְ	יָלֵךְ	וְ	יֵא	וְלִשְׁמֹחַ
the days	with him of his labour	for that shall abide	and to be merry			
H3117	H5999	H3867	H8055		H1931	
הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ:	תַּחַת	הָאֵלֹהִים	לֵו	נָתַן	אֲשֶׁר	חַיֵּיו
him under the sun	which God	giveth	of his life			
H8121	H8478	H430	H5414	H0	H834	H2416

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 2:24 (References God): There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.

Ecclesiastes 5:18 (References God): Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion.

Ecclesiastes 3:22 (Parallel theme): Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

1 Timothy 6:17 (References God): Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

