



## *The Vanity of Childhood and Youth – Ecclesiastes 11:10*

10 Remove vexation from your heart, and put away pain from your body, for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.

Last week, we focused our attention on the vanity of aging and the struggle to avoid the signs of our aging. This week, we turn our attention the vanity of childhood and youth from the perspective of our idolization of what we perceive as the easier life of our younger days.

Walking with my own sons as they grow up and each year take on additional responsibilities for their own education and as members of our household, they will occasionally express a desire to not have to deal with those changes. Sure they appreciate the additional freedoms that maturity brings, but the corresponding responsibilities, they would rather avoid. This is natural. We idealize our youth and the lack of responsibility that came with our younger years.

Yet, would we really give up on the wisdom and learning that we have accumulated since those halcyon days? Are we confronted with ever deepening challenges as we navigate life? Indeed we are. Still, just as our relationships deepen with time and the overcoming of challenges, there are no short cuts to our maturity. We cannot have the benefit of a life well lived without the cost.

Paul teaches in Romans 5:3-5 that “Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” Looking back on our younger days, we often forget that the lessons we have learned and the wisdom gained did not come without a cost. Endurance that produces character, that produces hope, requires something to endure. In this life, we might look back at our youth with idyllic eyes, but we cannot forget the hard won wisdom that God has formed in us through our growth and maturation.

Therefore let us instead rejoice in the aches and pains of life in the full knowledge that with those bumps and bruises has come growth that has drawn us ever closer to our eternity with God.

## *Thoughts for Reflection*

What are ways in which you have seen youth idealized in our culture?