

**It's Your Time**  
Ecclesiastes 3:1-13  
January 1, 2017

Well, good morning again. Thank you for being here. Isn't this just the perfect place to be to start a New Year, in worship? Remember, our most important purpose in life is to worship God. It doesn't matter if you are 8 or 80, teacher or doctor or homemaker, Bengal fan or Browns fan, our #1 purpose in life is to worship God. So, it is fitting that we are here together today to worship God at the cusp, the beginning of 2017.

It is also fitting that as we begin this year with the renewal of our covenant with God. In fact, that is one of the things we will be focusing all of 2017 on: deepening our relationship with God. I want you to be able to say on January 1, 2018 that you grew significantly in your relationship with the Lord in 2017. Of course, I hope you can say that every year. Silly me.

This morning, I thought we would take a few moments to look at a really unique and incredible passage of Scripture. So, I'd like you to turn to Ecclesiastes 3. Ecclesiastes is in the Old Testament after Psalms and Proverbs. Ecclesiastes 3.

READ ECCLESIASTES 3:1-9

Now, this passage is not written by the Byrds; they took this passage for their song "Turn, Turn, Turn." Anyone know that song? I never pictured you a hippie.

Verse 1: key to the passage.

READ ECCLESIASTES 3:1

Solomon echoes this twice more. First in 3:17:

*I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for he has appointed a time for every matter, and for every work.<sup>1</sup>*

Then in 8:6

*For there is a time and a way for everything, although man's trouble [or evil] lies heavy on him.<sup>2</sup>*

From these passages in Ecclesiastes we learn that everything changes in this life. We understand that change comes and we must adjust to the ever-changing seasons of life. We can do this graciously with great gain as we look to our heavenly Father for aid and guidance.

The theme of the book of Ecclesiastes teaches that all of human existence, when lived apart from God is frustrating and unsatisfactory. All of the pleasures and material things of life, when sought for their own sake, bring nothing but unhappiness and a sense of futility.

The primary aim of Solomon is to show from personal experience that all earthly goals and blessings, when pursued as an end in themselves, lead to dissatisfaction and emptiness. The highest good in life lies in reverencing and obeying God, and in enjoying life while one can.<sup>3</sup> And in chapter 3, we learn a great truth about the reality of life: that is, everything changes.

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<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:17 (NRSV)

<sup>2</sup> Ecclesiastes 8:6 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup> See Ecclesiastes 12:13

As the seasons of nature change, so do the season of life. We must prepare and adjust to these seasons just as we prepare and adjust to the seasons of nature. We can do that only in knowing God and His truth. We must know that the seasons of life bring change and purpose to us in God's grand scheme.

Let me quickly share a few things from this passage.

**First, all of life, including human activity, is part of a determined cycle of life.** Notice what Solomon lists first: "A time to be born." Everything that comes after birth is what we experience in the events of life.

HOSPITAL VISITS DURING WINTER CAMP. I MARVELED AT THE DIFFERENCES IN LIFE.

**Second, to everything there is a season.**

We all experience the seasons of life or the changes that occur in their own time, whether we enjoy them or not. We love some of the changes and we can dread other changes. For example, we love the season of laughing or times of joy, but on the other hand, we do not enjoy the seasons of weeping.

Yet, God has something good to teach us in all the seasons of life we must face. This church has faced some weeping this past church year. We have also experienced some joy together as we observed the Lord at work in our midst. You and your family have experienced the changes that make you rejoice and the changes that bring you sorrow. The important thing to remember is that God is with us to bring good to us from all that we experience.

Paul reminds us of this great truth in Romans 8: 28:

*We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.*<sup>4</sup>

We must understand that God is always working in our behalf to ultimately bring good to us in all that we experience. We may not understand how He will do this, but we do understand that He has promised to do it, and we know He is omniscient (all-knowing) and omnipotent (all-powerful). Therefore, He is able to fulfill His promise.

**Third, we know that God is sovereign as we experience life's changes.**

God in His sovereignty allows for the willing decisions and choices of men and women, while all the time retaining His control. The crucifixion serves as a good example. God determined Christ would come and atone for sinners before the foundation of the world.<sup>5</sup> Yet as scripture bears out, God used the decisions and choices of men to fulfill His promise to redeem sinners by the sacrifice of His own Son. Therefore, no change that we face is a surprise to God.

**Finally, to know this truth is to prepare and plan.**

If we think of the seasons of life like the seasons of the year, we know that we have to prepare for the seasons in order to get through them.

Since change is inevitable we, by God's help, should plan and prepare for it. We trust in God to guide us into tomorrow. He alone knows the changes we will face.

We should pray a similar prayer to that of St Francis of Assisi. "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference."

We must walk by faith in Him.

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<sup>4</sup> Romans 8:28 (NRSV)

<sup>5</sup> See 1 Peter 1:20

Two hunters were out hunting and come upon what appeared at first as an abandoned farm. The barn was sagging, the house was in disrepair, and there were junk cars and car parts lying around. The only thing that made it a working farm were a few chickens pecking away and a goat wandering around.

As they entered the yard they came across an old well.

One asked the other "Wonder how deep it is."

The other said, "We'll have to drop something down and listen for the splash."

They look around for something to drop down the well, but the only thing close by was an old transmission. They both hauled it over to the well and dropped it in. They counted and waited a long time for the splash. It was deep, deep one all right.

They turned to leave and saw the goat was charging at them, head down, horns headed straight for them. At the last moment they jumped aside, and the goat went right past them and straight over the side and down the well. They looked at each other in amazement.

As they started to leave, the owner of the farm came up.

They chatted for a moment and got permission to hunt on his land. The farmer asked, "Have you seen my goat?"

They said, "Your goat almost killed us charging at us. You should have had that goat tied up."

The farmer, "I thought I had him tied up to an old transmission."

The lesson is this: You follow what you're tied to.

Commit this year to the Lord, for it's your time.