To Everything There Is A Season
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (NKJV)

Our scripture text comes to this morning from the Book of Ecclesiastes, chapter three, and let's read verses 1-8.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (NKJV)

1 To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven:
2 A time to be born, And a time to die;
   A time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted;
3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down,
   And a time to build up;
4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
   A time to mourn, and a time to dance;
5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones;
   A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
6 A time to gain, and a time to lose;
   A time to keep, and a time to throw away;
7 A time to tear, and a time to sew;
   A time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
8 A time to love, and a time to hate;
   A time of war, and a time of peace.

PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

This morning we are looking at a very familiar passage of scripture, and if you're like me, it's one of my favorite passages in the Old Testament.
On Veteran's Day, November 11, 1963, President John F. Kennedy visited Arlington National Cemetery to pay his respects to America's fallen heroes. As he gazed across the rolling Virginia hillside from the Arlington House Kennedy remarked, "This is so beautiful, I could stay here forever."

Just two weeks later he returned in a flag-draped coffin bearing his body to be buried beneath the eternal flame.

President Kennedy's favorite passage of scripture was Solomon's poem here in Ecclesiastes 3, which begins: "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. A time to be born, and a time to die."

Ironically that very same year, folk singer Pete Seeger adapted the words from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 to a song he simply entitled: "Turn, Turn, Turn." THE BYRDS' rendition of that same song made it all the way to the top of the music charts.

Solomon begins this passage with a basic fact of life, "To everything there is a season."

Just as SPRING turns into SUMMER and SUMMER into FALL and FALL into WINTER and WINTER back into SPRING, life consists of "seasons. We go from INFANCY .........to ADOLESCENCE........to OUR TEENS........to YOUNG ADULTHOOD........to OUR MIDDLE AGE YEARS........then OUR SENIOR YEARS........then OUR GOLDENTWILIGHT YEARS...........and INTO ETERNITY. "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven."

It is very obvious the theme of this passage is about "time." In fact the word "time" appears thirty times in these eight verses. Upon careful examination, you will notice Solomon gives us 14 comparative statements in VERSES 2-8.

These fourteen comparative statements can be broken down into three main categories:

In VERSES 1-3 we see TIME AND YOUR PHYSICAL LIFE.
In VERSES 4-5 we see TIME AND YOUR EMOTIONAL LIFE.
And in VERSES 6-8 we see TIME AND YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE.

Now let's look at each of these more closely.

First let's consider........
I. Time And Your Physical Life (vs. 1-3)

1. To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven:

2. A time to be born, And a time to die;
   A time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted;

3. A time to kill, and a time to heal;
   A time to break down, and a time to build up;

1. In these verses we see the first four comparative statements.
   (A) There is a time to be BORN and a time to DIE. (v.2a)
   Our birth and our death are no accident. Just as surely as you are born you will die. Both are divine appointments.

   Every 3 seconds someone is born; every 8 seconds someone dies. Life is like a revolving door.

   On a number of occasions over the years I have gone to the hospital to be Church members as they welcomed a new baby into their family; and within a few weeks or months I have been with those same families as they said goodbye to a loved one who died.

   There is a time to be BORN and a time to DIE.

   (B) There is a time to PLANT, and a time to pluck up what is PLANTED. (v.2b)
   Just like humans have a certain lifespan so do plants; every farmer and every gardener knows this truth.

   Being agricultural people, the Jews appreciated the various growing seasons. In fact their religious calendar was based upon the agricultural year.

   The growing season begins when the plants are planted in the ground and it ends when the plants are “plucked up” or harvested. There is a time to plant and time to pluck up what is planted.

   (C) Next Solomon tells us, there is a time to KILL and a time to HEAL. (v.3a)
This one is troublesome to us. Solomon is not telling us there is a time to commit murder. We know God forbids murder. So what does Solomon mean when he says, “there is a time to kill?” It could mean there is a time to put a criminal to death. WAR is a terrible thing, but sometimes killing in war is justified to purge the world of evil men. Sometimes in Old Testament days as well as throughout history, civilizations have been ravaged by plagues, and it was necessary to kill those infected so as to prevent the plague from spreading.

But there is also a time to HEAL. Sickness eventually visits all of us. And there is a time to seek medical help in order to bring about healing. And of course there is a time to pray for the physical healing of those who are sick, as we do each and every Lord’s day.

(D) Next Solomon says, there is a time to BREAK down and a time to BUILD up. (v.3b)

At first glance it seems this is obviously referring to the demolition of a building and the construction of a new one. But Solomon may have had a more “figurative” meaning in mind.

Because this section deals with TIME and OUR PHYSICAL LIFE Solomon could be referring to the building up and strengthening of our bodies in our youth, and the “breaking down” of our bodies as we get older.

Someone once said, “You know when you’re getting older because the print gets smaller......the steps get higher.... the voice gets softer......the muscles get weaker......and the medicine chest gets larger.

There is a time to BREAK DOWN and a TIME to BUILD UP.

As we move on to VERSES 4, 5, Solomon changes from the subject of TIME AND YOUR PHYSICAL LIFE to.................

II. Time And Your Emotional Life (vs. 4,5)

4A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
1. In these verses we see four more comparative statements.

(A) The first two naturally go together: There is a time to **weep** and a time to **laugh**; a time to **mourn** and time to **dance**. (v. 4a, b)

Solomon has two events in mind here; a funeral and a wedding. A funeral is a time to weep and mourn. A wedding is a time to laugh and to dance.

Life is a mixed bag of **tears** and **laughter**. All of us wish for more times of laughter than tears, don’t we? But the truth is the times of weeping and mourning help us to appreciate the times of laughter and dancing. The valleys help us to appreciate the mountaintops.

(B) There is a time to **cast away** stones, and a time to **gather** stones. (v. 5a)

In Old Testament times if you wanted to hurt an enemy you “cast stones” into his field. In doing this you increased his labor. But if you wanted to mend your contentious relationship with an enemy you helped him gather the stones.

I believe what this is saying to us is there will be times we will have enemies. There will be times we will have trouble getting along with certain people. Should we go cast stones in their yard to make it hard for them to mow their grass? No! We should look for an opportunity to do good to our enemy, an opportunity to gather stones.

(C) There is a time to **embrace** and a time to refrain from **embracing**. (v. 5b)
People in the eastern culture of Solomon's day as well as today openly show affection by hugging and kissing when they meet and when they part. So what Solomon is saying is, "There is a time to say hello and a time to say goodbye."

Have you ever had someone come to your house and just stay and stay and stay and you didn’t think they would ever leave?

Listen to Solomon’s wisdom here: Remember, “there is a time to say hello and a time to say good-bye.”

Well Solomon has talked about **TIME AND YOUR PHYSICAL LIFE. AND TIME AND YOUR EMOTIONAL LIFE.** Now in verses 6-8 he turns his thoughts to.................

### III. Time And Your Spiritual Life  (vs. 6-8)

6 A time to gain, and a time to lose;
   A time to keep, and a time to throw away;

7 A time to tear, and a time to sew;
   A time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

8 A time to love, and a time to hate;
   A time of war, and a time of peace.

1. Here we see the final six comparative statements. Let's briefly look at each of them.

(A) There is a time to GAIN and a time to LOSE. (v.6a)

Solomon isn’t talking about “weight” here. He is talking about investments. There is a time to buy property and a time to sell property. If you own stocks you know there is a time to buy and a time to sell. There is a time to invest and a time to dump your investments.
Spiritually speaking, there is a time when we must weigh which is more important to us, earthly treasures or heavenly treasures.

(B) There is a time to KEEP and a time to THROW AWAY. (v.6b)

Isn't it amazing “how much stuff” we can accumulate over the course of time?

ILLUSTRATION: Several years ago I decided to clean out my shop in the barn one day. I had so much “stuff” in my shop I couldn't even work in it. For years I had held on to stuff I thought I might use one day, but I never did. So that day I made a decision to throw away anything I hadn't used in the last ten years. I can't tell you how good it made me feel to “un-clutter” my shop and get rid of all that stuff I didn't need.

The next time you need to clean out a closet or your shop or garage remember this verse: There is a time to KEEP and a time to THROW AWAY.

(C) The two comparative statements in verse 7 are actually related: There is a time to TEAR, and a time to SEW. There is a time to keep SILENCE and a time to SPEAK. (v.7)

Solomon is referring to the ancient practice of mourning in the eastern culture. In times of death and grief, mourners would “tear” or “rend” their garments to express their intense sorrow. And they would SPEAK and WAIL loudly for days on end.

But there was a time when the grieving needed to cease and it was time to move on with one's life. This transition would be signified by sitting in SILENCE and SEWING the garments which had been torn.

All of us will go through those times in our life when our heart is broken and our spirit is crushed by the loss of a loved one. There is a proper time to spend grieving those losses, but there must come a time when we must move on with our life.
(D) There is a time to LOVE and a time to HATE. (v.8a)

    The "love" part of this statement we get, but is there actually a time when we are to hate? YES! We ought to hate evil. We ought to hate corruption in our government officials and legal officials. We ought to hate acts of cruelty and violence against innocent human beings. We ought to hate the actions of those who cheat and steal to get ahead. There is a time to LOVE and a time to HATE.

(F) There is a time of WAR, and a time of PEACE (v.8b)

    There's not a one of us who doesn't prefer peace to war, especially when we see the bodies of our soldiers coming home from war in flag-draped caskets or grossly disfigured from injuries sustained in battle. But scripturally speaking there is a time when war is morally just and right.

If every conflict in the world could be resolved in a peaceful manner that would be great. But history has shown that hasn't always been possible. When evil tyrants like Adolph Hitler and Saddam Hussein brutally execute countless numbers of innocent lives, WAR is sometimes necessary to put a stop to it. When TERRORISTS carry out suicide bombings and fly air craft into buildings killing thousands of innocent people, WAR is sometimes necessary.

There is a time of WAR and a time of PEACE.

CONCLUSION

In closing I want to share with you some final thoughts on this wonderful passage of scripture from Henry Blackaby in his devotional book, “Experiencing God Day By Day.”

"In God's perfect design for our lives, He has planned for times of fruitfulness and activity. He will also build in times of quiet and rest. There will be times
when He asks us to remain faithful doing the same work day after day. But there will also be periods of excitement and new beginnings. By God's grace, we will enjoy seasons of harvesting the fruit of our faithfulness. By God's grace, we will also overcome the cold winters of heartache and grief, for without winter there would be no spring. Just as it is with the seasons of nature, these seasons in our lives work together to bring about God's perfect will for each one of us.”

(EXPERIENCING GOD DAY BY DAY by Henry Blackaby, p.33, Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN Copyright 1998)

“To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.”