Its About Time

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 (NKJV)

Today as we continue with our series from Ecclesiastes on “Finding Meaning In A Meaningless World” let’s turn to our scripture text in Ecclesiastes chapter three. And for now 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

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INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION: I’ll never forget the sign that hung on the wall beneath the big clock in my sixth grade home room at Pinnell Elementary School. It read: “Time Will Pass, Will You?”

The portion of scripture we are looking at this morning is very familiar to both Christians and non-Christians alike. We Christians recognize it because it is probably the most familiar passage in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Non-Christians recognize it, because the words of these first eight verses formed the lyrics of a hit song by The Byrds back in the 1960's called, “Turn, Turn, Turn.”

As Solomon continues on his journey to find meaning in this meaningless world he now turns his thoughts to this matter of the time we have here on earth, and how we spend it.

Did you ever stop to consider how much of our lives are governed by time? We have a time to get up and a time to go to bed. We have a time to eat.....a time to be at work or school and a time to be at Church. When you have a doctor’s appointment you have to be there at a certain time. If you fly to a certain destination you will be given a departure time and an arrival time. If you go to see a movie, you will no doubt check out the show times. And of course, your favorite TV show comes on at a certain time. When you cook something in your oven or microwave you set your timer for a certain amount of time. You see, our lives here on earth are lived within a framework of time.
When someone is dying, what is the one thing they want more than anything else? **TIME!** Not money.....not material things.... they wish they had more **TIME.**

Well as we turn our thoughts now to this third chapter of Ecclesiastes, let's see what King Solomon has to say to us about this **precious commodity called time.**

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First, let's consider......

I. **The CREATOR of TIME** (v. 1)

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

1. Those who live by a humanistic worldview believe that man is the **MASTER** of his own fate. Man says, “I will decide when it is time to do something.” The pregnant mother wants to decide when it is time to abort her baby. The crazed killer wants to decide when it is time to walk into a theater and end the lives of others. A former Olympic champion wants to decide when it is time to become a woman.

2. But man is NOT the master of **the times and seasons. GOD is the Master, because GOD is the One who created the times and seasons.**
In **Genesis 1:14 (NKJV)** we read: Then God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years.”

3. And from the moment God spoke those words, **TIME was born**. Now you may say, “Wait a minute, didn’t time exist before the creation of the world?” Yes, time has always existed, but it was not until GOD created the world that timeless eternity was broken down into time segments of **minutes.....hours .....days.....weeks....months....and years.**

4. And this is the beauty of time. **Time was created by our “timeless” Creator.** Peter writes in **II Peter 3:8,** “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the LORD one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

5. GOD did not create **TIMES and SEASONS** for Himself, He created **TIMES and SEASONS** for us. Notice again what Solomon says in this first verse........

“**To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1 NKJV)**
6. What Solomon is saying is that everything that happens in this time-bound world we live in is ultimately under the authority and sovereignty of GOD.

7. GOD is the King of time. He is the One who determines our DAYS. He is the One who determined the time this world would begin and He has determined the time when this world will end. He determined the time when Jesus would be born in Bethlehem and the time when He would die on the cross outside Jerusalem. And God has determined the time when Jesus will come to get His Church, and the time when Jesus will come to bring judgment upon the lost.

8. GOD is the CREATOR of TIME!

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As we move on to those “beautiful, poetic” words in verses 2-8 we see.......
II. The **CYCLES** of **TIME** (vs. 2-8)

1. In **verses 2-8** Solomon makes twenty-eight statements---fourteen are **POSITIVE**, and fourteen are **NEGATIVE**. In each statement, Solomon compares polar opposites. These polar opposite experiences reflect a particular **BALANCE** to life.

2. Time doesn't permit us to go into much depth on these twenty-eight statements, so let me just briefly touch on each of them.

   **v. 2** “A time to be **BORN**, and a time to **DIE**.”

   This means God determined our **BIRTHDAY** and He has determined the day of our **FUNERAL**. God has always known how much time each of us will have on this earth.

   **v. 2** “A time to **PLANT**; and a time to **PLUCK** what is planted.”

   Every **FARMER** and **GARDENER** understands this. There is a time to plant your field or garden and there is a time to harvest the fruit of what you planted.

   **v. 3** “A time to **KILL**, and a time to **HEAL**.”

   The word “kill” here does not refer to **MURDER**. It refers to justified killing in a time of **WAR** or in a case of **SELF-DEFENSE** or in a case of **CAPITAL** punishment.
A time to heal means there is a time to mend broken RELATIONSHIPS, a time to let go of RESENTMENT and BITTERNESS.

v. 3 “A time to BREAK DOWN and a time to BUILD UP.”

This refers to the breaking down of something OLD to replace it with something NEW, such as a house, a fence, or a wall.

v. 4 “A time to WEEP, and a time to LAUGH.”

Life alternates back and forth between TRAGEDY and COMEDY. You ladies, think of watching a romantic comedy movie that has you crying one minute and laughing the next. There is a time to weep and a time to laugh.

v. 4 “A time to MOURN, and a time to DANCE.”

Think of the sorrow of attending a FUNERAL compared to the joy of attending a WEDDING. At one you weep, at the other you laugh.

v. 5 “A time to cast away STONES, and a time to gather STONES.”

Anyone who has ever had kidney stones or gall stones would certainly agree with this. But that isn't what Solomon is talking about. This had special meaning to Jews in Solomon's day.
If you wanted to hurt an ENEMY you would cast STONES in his field to make his work twice as difficult. If you wanted to mend the relationship with that enemy you would help him GATHER stones out of his field to make it ready for cultivation.

v. 5 “A time to EMBRACE, and a time to refrain from EMBRACING.”

People in the Middle East hug and kiss to show their affection when they meet and when they part. What Solomon is saying is, “There is a time to say HELLO and there's a time to say GOOD-BYE.”

v. 6 “A time to GAIN and a time to LOSE.”

Solomon isn’t talking about “Weight Watchers” or making a New Year’s resolution to shed a few unwanted pounds. This refers to BUSINESS cycles. Any of you who have ever invested in the stock market can relate to this. There’s a time when you BUY more stock and there’s a time to SELL the stock you have.

v. 6 “A time to KEEP and a time to THROW away.”

Can anybody here say, “YARD SALE?” Ladies, its OK to keep several pairs of shoes, but do you really need a hundred pair? And REALLY guys, do we need 25 screw drivers? And what are we going to do with that 5 miles of old electrical cord. There is a time to keep, and a time to throw away.
v. 7  “A time to TEAR; and a time to SEW.”

This probably refers to the Jewish practice of tearing one’s garments during a time of GRIEF or REPENTANCE. But there comes a time we must move on from our grief and sorrow, thus a time to sew what was torn.

v. 7  “A time to keep SILENCE; and a time to SPEAK.”

What Solomon is saying is there are times when the best thing to say is NOTHING at all. Often when someone has lost a loved one, well-meaning people will say things like, “Well they are better off now,” or “Well the angels must have needed some help in heaven.” In times like that, SILENCE is better than speaking.

But there are times when we need to speak. When something IMMORAL is going on in the Church or Community that is a time to speak. When something UNETHICAL is going on at your place of work, that is a time to speak.

v.8  “A time to LOVE; and a time to HATE.”

We don’t have any problem with the “love” part of this statement. Its the “hate” part of it we struggle with. Solomon is not saying we should hate PEOPLE, but that we should hate the EVIL in people. For example, we should hate the sin of DRUNKENNESS, but we should love the one who is struggling with alcohol addiction.
v. 8  "A time of WAR, and a time of PEACE."

No one likes war. War is as UGLY as it is COSTLY. But sometimes war is necessary in order to rid the world of evil DICTATORS and oppressive GOVERNMENTS.
Eventually once a war has ended it will result in a time of peace, though history shows times of peace are often short-lived before we go back to war.

3. From the time we are BORN until the time we DIE, God takes us through the cycles of time while we are here on earth.

Finally, let's consider ..... 

III. The CONCLUSIONS About TIME (vs. 9-11)

1. As Solomon contemplated man's time here on earth, what conclusion did he reach?

Ecclesiastes 3:9-11 (NKJV)

9 What profit has the worker from that in which he labors?

10 I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied.

11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.
2. In these verses we see two conclusions Solomon has reached about time.

(A) Time is a GIFT from GOD so enjoy it. (v.11a)

Every single day God blesses each of us with 24 hours of time. What we do with this gift of time is our GIFT back to GOD. We can use our time here on earth WISELY or we can use our time FOOLISHLY. We can sit around COUNTING our days or we can make our days COUNT.

(B) We are moving towards a TIMELESS eternity. (v.11b)

v. 11b “He has put eternity in their hearts.”

Every day you and live is bringing us one day closer to ETERNITY. You see, in heaven there will be no days or nights….no minutes or hours…..no months or years. As Christians we are moving towards a place where time won't matter any more.

CONCLUSION

What Happened to Time?

• When as a child I laughed and wept, time crept.
• When as a youth I dreamed and talked, time walked.
• When I became a full grown man, time ran.
• And later as I older grew, time flew.
• Soon I shall find while traveling on, time is gone….time is gone.