**Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 || *Time* || 5-3-20 @ RCBC**

It seems no matter what age we are, we are frustrated by time.

When we’re younger time frustrates us *because it moves too slowly*.

* All the waiting is frustrating because you wish time would go by faster.

But as you get older we all get to the point when time is frustrating *because it moves too quickly*.

* The speed of time is frustrating because you just wish it would slow down.

So what do we do? How do we respond?

*“All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us*”. - Gandalf in *The Fellowship of the Ring*

You don’t get to decide the number of days you get here on earth, and you don’t even get to decide what always happens to you in this life, but you do choose how you spend your time.

We reach for meaning in our activities but often come away frustrated. In his poem, he mentions the reality of what life encompasses on this earth, good and bad. Solomon just lists them as the facts of life.

* Most of them are self-explanatory, but let me comment on a few of them for clarification.

**v.3a** – There are different words in the Hebrew for “*kill*” and “*murder*”. *Murder* is mentioned in Exodus 20 in commandment #6 – “*Do not murder*”. The word used there is *rasah* and it means premeditated & intentional and it always refers to the killing of a person.

*Kill* is used here in v.3 and the Hebrew word is *harag*. It means to *kill* or *slay*, but not to murder. So if this is referring to human death, I think we should understand it as the difference between pre-ordained murder & something more like corporal punishment.

* + Justice is the motivation when giving out the death penalty, which would be considered an appropriate time for someone to be killed in that way. Romans 13:1-4 make it clear that the governing authorities are ordained by God and have been given the authority to do this as a way to render justice. They “do not bear the sword in vain”, he says in v.4.

But death by murder is not appropriate because it is always an act of injustice.

There’s another context to consider here, too. Look back at the end of Ecc. 3:2 – What’s going on here? What’s the context? ---- agriculture / farming

Every animal farmer knows that there is a time to mend an animal’s broken leg, and then there’s also a time to put an animal down.

**v.3b** –There are houses that can be rehabilitated to their former glory and there are houses that have to be torn down for something new to be built.

**v.5a** –This isn’t referring to judging someone and “*casting stones*” in that sense. In OT times, armies would throw stones into the fields of enemy territories to disrupt their farming.

In 2 Kings 3 the Israelite army pushed back the Moabite army and covered their fields with stones and stopped up their wells. This was a military tactic.

There’s a time to let those things go and deal with other things, but then there’s also a time to reclaim that ground for growing crops again. (Isaiah 5)

**v.5b** – No, this is not talking about social distancing due to a pandemic. There are times when you greet your friend with a hug, and there are times when you have to say hard things to your friend and you don’t greet them with a hug.

* + This is a hard part of life that Solomon points out.

**v.7a** – This was the custom for people in OT times when they received bad news --- tear clothing. But when the time of mourning was over, they would mend the garment.

**v.8a** – Remember the words of Jesus in Luke 14 – unless one *hates* his family, even his own life, they cannot be His disciple. Does this mean Christians are supposed to hate their families? No – Jesus is using the teaching tool of *comparison*. If a man was going to follow Him and be His disciple, he would have to love Jesus so much that it made the love he has for his family look as if he hated them by comparison.

If your life is only about getting ahead or making a name for yourself or the other commonplace things that Solomon describes in this poem, you WILL be frustrated and disillusioned about your purpose here.

It’s tempting to sink into despair and *hate life* as Solomon did, or to slip into depression thinking there’s no way to break the cycle, to get out of the rut of the *business that God has given to the children of men to be busy with* [v.10].

The timing of the and the timing of our are important – they matter.

* + There’s a right time for everything that happens in life.

In respect to timing, the proper in the right is a beautiful part of God’s divine plan.

If you look behind or underneath a tapestry, you would think it was a child’s creation rather than a master weaver’s. There are knots & loose string everywhere. It’s a mess. But the maker of the tapestry has a specific purpose for the placement of each thread and – viewed from the right perspective – it can be breathtaking to behold.

The difference between whether you see a mess or something beautiful is in your .

 Verse 11 and the idea of beauty is more real to us in the than we realize.

When you believe that God *does* make everything beautiful in its time, when you can look up from the pit, from the regions dark and deep, and know that what you’re experiencing is – in fact – a season, there’s light within the darkness. There’s hope down there with you in the pit.

God has allotted a time for this in your life, but it will not remain forever – *it is a season*. And one day, even though you may not believe it now, you may look back and see some beauty in that season – there might be something positive that comes from the pit after all. But we are NOT God, and we can’t know what He is doing in these seasons that we’re in.

**v.11**:God has “*put eternity into man’s heart*”to definitively reveal that there is more to this life than just what we find “*under the sun*” on this earth. If we live life like that’s all there is, then we are wasting our time and not living as we should.

He appoints the events of our lives as part of His much bigger, much wiser, but plan.

* + Kind of like the weaving of a tapestry.

But there’s a power struggle going on under the surface as God is weaving. A lot of times we want to know God’s plan to make sure it lines up with what we want. We want to try and control the situation.

Think about the conversation God has with Job in Job 38.

When we compare our understanding to the all-wise God of creation, we are hopefully put back in our place.

He’s *put eternity into man’s heart* not so that we would know everything as He does, but that we would be driven to trust Him and His good plan. There is a limit to your understanding, and Ecclesiastes is exposing that reality in order to drive you to faith in God.

We don’t control the Creator God, and the seasons of life are designed to help us trust in His .

- Seasons come and seasons go. Time marches on, and our lives are always changing, but God remains unchanged.

Solomon’s purpose from the start has been to expose the foolishness of a life lived without God, in order to push us

to enjoy God and His good gifts *in their* .

Solomon takes our minds from the temporal things of this life in v.12-13 to the eternal nature of God and what He has done in v.14-15.

***What you do with your life matters to God, and what Jesus did with His life matters to you.***

He gave His life up so that yours would have meaning & purpose; so that you could enjoy this life AND the life to come. I think what Ecclesiastes is saying so far can be boiled down to this:

**Everything is meaningless if you don’t have Jesus.**

**But if you have Jesus, everything in life has meaning.**

With Christ, even when the temporary pleasures of life fade, our hope *does not* because Jesus’ life & death & resurrection still matter, and they will forever. God wants us to enjoy this life, but not to put our hope in it.

* + He knows there is no lasting happiness apart from Him, & He wants us to learn that.

No matter what season you are in right now in your life, God has not abandoned you and He is not wasting one second of your time here “*under the sun*”.

* He is weaving each part – each thread – no matter how small, no matter how painful, into the whole of the tapestry that is your life.

Corrie Ten Boom would often quote a beautiful poem written by Grant Tuller called “*The Weaver*”:

*My life is but a weaving between my God and me.
I cannot choose the colors He weaveth steadily.*

*Oft’ times He weaveth sorrow; And I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper And I the underside.*

*Not ’til the loom is silent And the shuttles cease to fly
Will God unroll the canvas And reveal the reason why.*

*The dark threads are as needful In the weaver’s skillful hand
As the threads of gold and silver In the pattern He has planned*

*He knows, He loves, He cares; Nothing this truth can dim.
He gives the very best to those Who leave the choice to Him.*

CLOSING PRAYER*: Father, help our unbelief. We so often view our difficult seasons so wrongly. Pour out Your grace and remind us that even though we are not capable of seeing the whole picture, we can still trust You. Thank you for the seasons of life, and that You walk with us through them all. Thank you for Your Son, Jesus. Thank you that our lives have meaning because He laid down His life & then rose again. Thank you that He willingly paid the debt that none of us could so that we could be reconciled to You. Help us to live our lives with purpose and to enjoy Your gifts as we enjoy You.*