

Ecclesiastes 3: *Doing Time & Living Well*

- In **Ecclesiastes 1** the Preacher shows that the **Whole of Life is vanity** (a breath).
- In **Ecclesiastes 2** the Preacher reveals that even those **specific things we love so much** and hold onto so tightly, also have **little or no lasting satisfaction**.
- **Ecclesiastes 3** brings these thoughts together and explains that because we have **no real control** over both the whole of life and the individual pieces or seasons of life – is a **realization that can give us incredible hope and freedom in living**.

Thinking Clearly About Time Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

For everything there is a season,
a time for every activity under heaven.
²A time to be born and a time to die.
A time to plant and a time to harvest.
³A time to kill and a time to heal.
A time to tear down and a time to build up.
⁴A time to cry and a time to laugh.
A time to grieve and a time to dance.
⁵A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones.
A time to embrace and a time to turn away.
⁶A time to search and a time to quit searching.
A time to keep and a time to throw away.
⁷A time to tear and a time to mend.
A time to be quiet and a time to speak.
⁸A time to love and a time to hate.
A time for war and a time for peace.

- **Sounds like such a beautiful, rhythmic picture of life**
- **Often lifted from its context and used in memorials, funerals, etc.**
 - **No Chronological Sequence**
 - Life is Unpredictable
 - You Can't Control it
 - **Hard to define entirely what is good, bad, or indifferent**
 - Complex and Doesn't Fit Nicely In a Box

The Unexpected Sucker Punch to the Gut:

What do people really get for all their hard work?

(3:9; 2:11; 1:3)

- In other words, so what about all these seasons – at the end you're dead! Life is a breath!
- The Preacher means to shock us into some realizations moving from the beautiful poetry of 3:1-8 to the harsh reality of 3:9.
 - **A return to the endless frustration, anxiety, and vain pursuit:**

We are each building the project of "me," constructing the edifice of our lives, but as we do so, we are neither architect nor site manager. We are each writing the story of our lives, but we are not the author.

-David Gibson

- **It's the remainder of Chapter 3 that the Preacher begins to give us a radically new perspective that will change everything.**

There is a Bigger Picture

• Time

- To Live Well We Must Accept Two Truths:

1. **We humans live within the boundaries and limitation of Time.**
2. **God does not.**

(3:10-11)

- I have seen the burden God has placed on us all. ¹¹Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. **He has planted eternity in the human heart**, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.
 - **God give us a sense that there is something more...**

(3:14-15)

I know that whatever God does is final. Nothing can be added to it or taken from it. God's purpose is that people should fear him. ¹⁵What is happening now has happened before, and what will happen in the future has happened before, because God makes the same things happen over and over again.

- Like a Parent, God can see the Bigger Picture...while we cannot.
- **Yes, there is a time to be born and a time to die in Life under the Sun...**
- **But now, the Preacher begins to show us there is more...and that more begins to bring meaning and a voice to our meaninglessness...**

• Judgment

(3:15-17)

That which is has been already and that which will be has already been, for **God seeks what has passed by.**¹⁶ Furthermore, I have seen under the sun *that* in the place of justice there is wickedness and in the place of righteousness there is wickedness. ¹⁷ I said to myself, “**God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man,**” for a time for every matter and for every deed is there.

So how does this give us hope and freedom in living?

- “God seeks what has passed by”

- 2 Samuel 14:14
- Joel 2:25
- Isaiah 61:7
- Revelation 21:5

So, Even Though You May Not Understand It...

Even Though You Try to Force the World To Bend to Your Will (Justice)...

(3:18-21)

¹⁸I said to myself concerning the sons of men, “God has surely tested them in order for them to see that they are but beasts.” ¹⁹For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. ²⁰All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust. ²¹Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth?

It's Better to Accept the Reality of How Things Are...

Realizing God Will (Beyond Under the Sun) Make All Things Right

(3:12-13, 22)

¹²I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime; ¹³moreover, that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor—it is the gift of God... ²²I have seen that nothing is better than that man should be happy in his activities, for that is his lot. For who will bring him to see what will occur after him?

Once you **accept these realities**, you will be **free to hope** in God's timing and justice, and free to enjoy the gift of a temporal life.

If you **don't accept these realities**, and **attempt to control your life**, and change how things are...your life will be full of **anxiety, frustration, and “chasing the wind.”**