

Time

October 19, 2014

Ecclesiastes 3:1-22

1 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: 2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up 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 together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; 6 a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; 7 a time to rend, 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 for war, and a time for peace. 9 What gain has the worker from his toil? 10 I have seen the business that God has given to the sons of men to be busy with. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. 12 I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; 13 also that it is God's gift to man that every one should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil. 14 I know that whatever God does endures for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has made it so, in order that men should fear before him. 15 That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God seeks what has been driven away. 16 Moreover I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness. 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. 18 I said in my heart with regard to the sons of men that God is testing them to show them that they are but beasts. 19 For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts; for all is vanity. 20 All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. 21 Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth? 22 So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should enjoy his work, for that is his lot; who can bring him to see what will be after him?

Let us take just one minute and still ourselves and close our eyes. How many of us peeked to see if we were done or looked at others to make sure we were all doing it? Felt it was a long time? A short time? Wanted it to go longer, end sooner? Well I can promise it was just one minute, simply 60 seconds.

Our passage today is one of the most popular passages regarding time in our scriptures. Hear it again “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.” (Read 1-8 again) “A time for war and a time for peace”. This is typically where we end our reading but today we purposefully continued out scripture beyond its poetic ending into the meat and potatoes of the passage and how it fits into our stewardship theme. If you turn to verse 12 “there is nothing better for them to do be joyful and do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—that is God’s gift to all [man.]”

What struck me the most in this entire passage is that phrase that is God’s gift to all, to man, to woman, to child, to adult, to youth. Time and satisfaction for how we use it is God’s gift to us. So how we use it becomes even more important because we have been given this by our God. Just as we discussed how our money, our treasure is important and last week witnessed the incredible beauty and use of talents in glory to God, this week we focus on our gift of time.

Time is a strange and relative thing. While we know each minute has 60 seconds and each hour 60 minutes and each day 24 hours and each week 7 days and each month 4 weeks and each year 12 months. This knowledge can mean very little in regards to how we perceive time. Days can speed by quickly or seemingly never end. We can look at the clock at 10:30 and think it is only a little while until we can go grab lunch and then the next time we look it is only 11:15 and we feel like the clock is moving through molasses and then before we know it is 1:00 and if we do not eat we miss lunch entirely. A twenty or so minute sermon can seem like it takes an hour or can be over in five minutes. We often feel like we do not have enough time to finish everything we need to finish before we head out the door or we have to find something to fill our time why we wait to leave. We sometimes feel like we have all the time in the world and in another instant we can see we have so little sand left in our hourglasses.

Time is relative and how we manage our time and give of our time is part of our stewardship of the gifts with which we have been blessed. You see giving of our time is just as important as giving of our money or our talents and perhaps more so.

I do not say that lightly but giving of our time, is giving of ourselves in the life of the church. Because to give of our time, we have to be present. It is not something we can hand over or place in a plate as it is passed around with little thought beyond it or something we can create and leave or give for a short bit and be done. It is giving of ourselves to accomplish what needs to be accomplished.

Time is a commitment in the life of our church to the mission of the church. Church, to be a living vital body of believers, is more than just Sunday worship and Bible studies for its members. Church is also focused on sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in this world by doing what Christ did in this world. It is part of our mission to be Christ to those in need, those who are hungry, hurt, sick, in need of whatever we can give.

We, as a church, do a lot of missions for our size. We do the Joy Soup Kitchen on the first Friday of every month, we have the Ronald McDonald House on the third Tuesdays. We have parking Ministry each fall. We have Operation Christmas Box, Salvation Army Bell Ringing, the Angel Tree, and many more things throughout the year to reach those in need in and around our community. Each of these ministries is important and part of the amazing mission of this church as we share Jesus with the world. What each of these ministries takes to make them possible, is people.

Although technology has made great advancements it has yet to replace the power of physical presence. This is something to remember in the life of our church, our very presence is a powerful testament to Jesus Christ as we give of ourselves by giving of our time. Well, I say our presence is a powerful testament but it is how we are present that most significantly makes the difference. Just as our scripture said in every season there is a time for whatever it is true in how we are present in any given moment. Not only are we asked to be present but also to be engaged in what and where we are at.

This is the true struggle of allocating time to God. We struggle in our ability to not just be there physically but also to be there mentally and spiritually. It is this mental and spiritual engagement that creates the seasons of time in our lives. But how to engage not just physically but also mentally and spiritually? The simplest answer is management, time management. If we are good stewards of our time throughout the week and days then when we give our time to God other things should not encroach and filter into those periods of time with God. We can actually be with the people we are helping or serving. We can turn off our cell phones for an hour and make sandwiches and soup or cook chicken for a day, specifically the 29th of October, next Wednesday.

Though the answer is simple the execution is difficult. Time management is hard. When we have to get up and get going to go to work, add in a couple of kids who have to get ready for school and dropped off where they need to go, work 8+ hours, dinner preparation, homework, soccer practice, dance class, that never ending pile of laundry, dishes, showers, and if we are lucky maybe throw in weekly grocery shopping, meetings, and cleaning. It is not a wonder we struggle to get things done. Our lives are chaotic. Although we might have the semblance of a routine it is often thrown topsy turvy one time or another which throws off the entire week and sometimes the entire month. I know we have all been there, and are still there.

Our scripture ask "What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on Men." (9-10) God sees what we are doing to work, to live, to survive and though we have been given eternity with God by our belief we are still asked to do good on this earth and so we have to fit it in. We need to consciously as a spiritual discipline ask ourselves where and how can we give of ourselves by giving of our time.

That is what we are asking as we continue our study in stewardship this month. We are asking ourselves and this body of believers how we can engage in the time and see not just what the church is doing now but what we are able to do as the seasons change. Amen.