

**SERMON 7<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2021**  
**Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8**

**Friends:**

Nothing takes God by surprise! “Everything” is moving according to a plan and God want’s “you” in that plan!

- The Devil also has a “plan” for the world!
- God has a plan and the Devil has a plan, and you must “decide” which plan you are going to “fit” into!
- Scripture says that God allows us 70 years and some beyond!  
*(Ps. 90:10)*
- The first 15 years are spent in childhood and early adolescence!
- “Twenty years” are spent in bed and in the last 5 physical limitations start to curtail our activities!
- That gives us about 30 years to live as adults!
- We take time out for eating and for figuring out taxes and we are down to perhaps 15 years! Now suppose we use seven of those years watching television!
- That cuts us down to 7 or 8 years! Our “time is short”! The “tyranny of time”!

**Friends:**

The time we can invest for God, in creative things, in reaching our fellow men and women for Christ, in “short”!

- Solomon in “Chapter 3” reflects on time and timing and contrasts finite, mortal and time bound human beings with the infinite and eternal God, whose work lasts forever!
- Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8 affirms that “timing” is essential for success!
- The primary point of this section is to present a “contrast” between human kinds “inability” to get timing right and God’s creation of everything as beautiful or appropriate in it’s time!
- The apostle Paul says in Ephesians 5: 15-16:  
*“Be careful how you walk, not as unwise people but as wise! Marking the most of “your time”, because the days are evil.”*
- Verse 1:  
*“There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens!”*
- The Old Testament commonly sees “purpose” in life coming from God’s providential “oversight” of its events and seasons!
- Each aspect of life has its “TIME”!

- **Leviticus 26:4** “God says I will send you rain IN its season!
- **Deuteronomy 32:35** God will bring the downfall of His enemies in due time!
- “Wisdom” involves knowing “the times”!  
**(Esther 1:13)**
- The “godly person” says:  
*“My times are in “your” hands!”*  
**(Ps. 31:15)**
- Our ‘times’, our ‘years’ are in God’s hands! God gives us the number of years! Sometimes we would like to “know” what the “future” holds but that is God’s “prerogative”!

### **Friends:**

No matter where you might be located, no matter what circumstances you might face, our lives will “not” be at the mercy of “chance”, or someone else’s “decision”! Our lives, at “all times” are held in God’s loving hands of grace and mercy!

- Verse2:  
*“A time to be born and a time to die!”*
- On Veteran’s Day, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1963, President J. F. K. visited Arlington Cemetery to pay his respects to American’s fallen heroes! Grazing over the rolling Virginia Hillside, President Kennedy remarked, “It is so beautiful that I could stay here forever”!
- “Two weeks” later he returned in a flag-draped “coffin” to be buried beneath an eternal flame! He was 46 years old!
- Kennedy’s favourite passage from the Bible was Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8, the passage we are looking at this morning!
- Solomon begins his contemplation with a sobering observation:  
*Birth and death “both” have their appointed times!*
- When you “visit” a hospital to see your new child or new grandchild, “only” a few short steps away, “some” family have gathered to say goodbye in agony to their loved ones!
- We all spend our own time making that trek between “entrance and exit”, “womb and tomb”!
- Man is “not” in charge of a time of birth or a time of death!
- We don’t choose our time to be “born”, nor for the most part; we don’t choose our time to “die”!
- “Birth and death” come to a man and woman “unexpectedly”, yet the times are “fixed” by the “pleasure of God”!

- Solomon is referring to the “totality of life”: all times of a person’s life are “DETERMINED” by God!
- I’m so “glad” that God is in “control of my life”: it gives me “peace” purpose and a reason to “pray”!
- Verse 2 continues:  
*“A time to plant and a time to uproot!”*
- “Meanwhile” there is a time to “plant” and a time to “harvest”!
- Solomon refers to “food supply” because he knows that God “sets” the “boundaries of the season”!
- After the flood God promised Noah:  
*“As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease!”*  

*(Genesis 8:22)*
- Just as a composer of beautiful music builds certain rhythms and repetitions into his songs, so God has built certain rhythms into His world!
- The steady repetition of the “seasons” provides comfort and a workable beat to life on earth!
- Verse 3:  
*“A time to “kill” and a time to “heal”!”*
- We are a bit “shocked” to read there is a time to “kill”!
- Scientists tell us that our bodies are in the process of dying every moment.
- There is an ongoing maintenance department in the human machine that is constantly changing out the old for the new.
- And, of course, it’s governed by “time”!
- Cancer cells, infection cells, covid cells or simply worn-out cells must be “KILLED”: so even killing has its time, **(18)** and we are grateful!
- There must be a time to kill so we might also have a time to heal!
- These times listed in this passage are “not commands”; it is “not” God saying that a man must kill at “such and such” an appointed time!
- “Solomon” is saying that when killing takes place God’s purpose is at work!
- “Remember” that the “Devil” is the “father” of all “murder”!

- “Likewise” when “healing” takes place God’s purpose is at work! For God is our “Healer”!  
(Ex. 15:26)
- In our western culture we tend to think of healing as taking place at the command of the doctor, or by following a prescribed course of treatment. But it is God who gives wisdom to the doctor, and it is God who makes the medicine effective for its prescribed purpose!
- Verse 3:  
*“A time to “tear down” and a time to “build”!*
- That is, a time to “DESTROY” and a time to “CONSTRUCT”!
- We ‘build up’ in our early years and we start ‘breaking down’ as we get older – painful but true!
- We are getting older when the “type” gets smaller, the “steps” get higher, the “voices” get softer, the “muscles” get weaker, and our “medicine chest” gets larger!

**Friends:**

How “old” is old?

- You are old at 21 if you are female gymnast! Your performance will peak in your mid to late teens!
- You are over the hill at 30 if you are a professional tennis player!
- Time is “relative” for God’s creatures: “dogs” live about 10-13 years or a little more; one to two months for ‘mosquitos’! Yet “time” rules our agendas and itineraries!
- Yes there is a time for breaking down – “but” God is there!
- God is as “powerful” as He is “loving”, and you have the opportunity to experience His power all the more effectively and vividly when you “turn to Him” in the breakdowns of life!

**Friends:**

“The Lord is close to the “broken hearted”, and saves those who are “crushed in spirit”!

(Ps. 34:18)

- “Don’t turn away” but “turn to God” in times of heartache and struggle!
- Our God has long arms and He wants to “enfold” you in them!
- Verse 4:  
*“A time to weep and a time to laugh!”*
- “Time” is also involved with the operations of the “soul”, the seat of human emotions!
- There’s a time to cry, when “tears” flow freely; there are also times for “laughter”!

- Hopefully “laughter” outnumbers “weeping” for in Proverbs 17:22 Solomon prescribes “cheerfulness” as “good medicine” for the soul!
- Yet “fears” are part of life this side of Heaven!
- Jesus “wept”..... He “groaned” in the spirit and was troubled.  
(Jh. 11: 35, 33)
- Job states:  
“My eyes pour out tears to God!”
- The “psalmist” asks God to store his tears in a heavenly bottle, for they are precious!  
(Ps. 56:8)
- And Psalm 126:5 promises, “Those who sow in “tears” shall reap in “joy”!

### **Friends:**

Your “tears” are God’s jewels; they are precious to Him. The greater your suffering and pain; the greater God’s ministry and grace for you!

- We need to “laugh” but sometimes we must also “cry”!
- The Lord is “near” to us in both sadness and gladness!
- One day God will “wipe away” every tear from our eyes and the days of crying will be long forgotten! “But” for now there’s still a time to laugh and a time to weep!  
(Rev. 21:4)
- Verse 4:  
“A time to “mourn” and a time to “dance”!”
- There is a time to hug, and there are times when hugging is inappropriate! **(V5)**
- God has given us a wide spectrum of emotions: anger, depression, grief, joy – you name it!
- Each emotion we have is simply playing the part allotted to its own special time!
- We all need our “full spectrum of God-given emotions”, for they are emblems of our humanity!
- Our “emotions” mark us as children of a God who also has anger, grief and laughter!  
(Ps. 2:4)

### **Friends:**

Sometimes we have a particular “purpose” in mind!

- We want a “time of joy” and there’s nothing wrong with that!

- So we buy a ticket to a footy match! We expect our team will win and that we will have an enjoyable time! But unexpectedly the team performs badly, they lose and rejoicing is turned to mourning!
- Or a couple set off on their honeymoon only to be involved in a car crash in which one of them “dies”!
- “Such events” come along and all of them are in the “hands of God”!
- Some of us might be a little “uncomfortable” with assigning all this “purpose” to God!
- We might think this way because we think we have a “great deal of control” over our lives!
- But in fact, we “do not”!
- There is “nothing” that is either out of the “control” of God or “out of His “purpose”!”
- Job tells us that we must receive both “good and bad” from God!  
(Job 2:10)
- God is “never” the “author” of evil; evil comes from fallen creatures! Though God is “certainly” sovereign “over” evil!
- God “permits” evil agents to work; then “overrules” evil for His own wise and holy ends!
- “Ultimately” God is able to make all things; “good” and “evil”; to work together for His greater good!  
(Rom. 8:28)
- God is “always” in control of all things, small and large and even this dreadful pandemic! God has a purpose for this, we must believe that!
- This is a thought that should comfort the “BELIEVER” and discomfort the “UNBELIEVER”!
- Our “times” are in God’s “hands”!
- Verse 5:  
*“A time to scatter stones, and time to gather them”*
- In the ‘ancient world’, gathering and collecting stones had significance! Stones would be gathered out of a field in order to “cultivate” the field!
- Stones would be gathered for the purpose of “building”!
- They might be “thrown away” as unsuitable stones for a particular purpose!

- Verse 5:  
*“A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing”!*
- There’s a time to display “affection” in public; and there’s not a time!
- During a worldwide pandemic it’s definitely not a time to embrace!
- Verse 6:  
*“A time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away!”*
- These last three verses, 6 to 8, have to do with “inner decisions”: the deep commitments of our lives!
- Sometimes in life we gain; sometimes we lose – money, weight, hair, loved ones, privileges, rights, responsibilities, joys, possessions!
- Sometimes we “store” things in our garages, and sometimes we “clean out” our garages!
- In life we collect and we throw away!
- Even “larger corporations” do this!
- In periods of expansion they swallow smaller companies and when they need to raise cash to retire debt or enter new markets, they sell off part of what they have accumulated!
- “Unfortunately” at the “personal” level we seem far more interested in “accumulating” than in throwing away!

### **Friends:**

Spiritually speaking what do you need to throw away or keep in order to love and trust the Lord Jesus more and more?

- Listen to what the writer to Hebrews says in Ch. 12: 1-2:  
*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us! Fixing our eyes on JESUS, the pioneer and perfecter of faith!”*
- Verse 7:  
*“A time to “tear” and a time to “mend”, a time to be “silent” and a time to “speak”!*
- “Sometimes” we need to “speak up”; “other times” we need to keep our “mouths shut”!
- The “assets and liabilities” of “words” show up repeatedly in Solomon’s proverbs!
- The father in Proverbs continually admonishes his children to pay attention to “words” of wisdom and instruction!

- Pr. 2:1 – My son accepts my words and commands!
- Pr. 4:10 – Listen my son, accept what I say!
- Pr. 5:1 – My son pay attention to my wisdom, turn your ears to my words of insight!
- “Solomon” also warns us against “talking too much”!

(Pr. 17:27)

**Friends:**

The “more we talk”, the more likely we are to “sin”!

- The “wise” person holds their “tongue”!
- The fire of gossip dies out as soon as the talk ceases!
- What some people write on social media is “hurtful” and “hateful”!

(Pr. 10:19)

(Pr. 26:20)

**Friends:**

“Words” can contain life or death; it is up to you to “choose” them carefully!

- Do you “need: to “repent” of foolish talk?
- “Words” can kill; words can give life!
- There is no greater “wisdom” given by God than to know the power of the “tongue” when it is time to “speak” and when it is time to keep “silent”!
- Verse 8:  
*“A time to love and a time to hate, a time to hate and a time for war and a time for peace”!*
- A time to “hate”?
- Are we sure?
- Yes there is a time to “hate”!
- Even Jesus “hated”!
- He hated “sin” and he “hated” its mastery over human souls!
- Jesus “hated” what sin did to human lives: all the “destruction it brings”!
- The apostle Paul tells us in Rom. 12:9: love must be sincere. “Hate” what is “evil”, cling to what is good!

- We need to “learn to hate” that which is “evil” “without hating” the people who are evil! In fact we are to pray that God will show His mercy and “forgiveness to them”!
- We may “hate” the act of “abortion”, but we have compassion on both the “aborted” and the “aborting”!
- We may “hate” the ravages of “alcohol”, but we love those who struggle with alcoholism, and we want to do whatever we can to help them!

### **Friends:**

If you are “struggling” with any sort of “addiction”: alcohol, gambling, heroin, cocaine, sex, internet, food, exercise, work, video-games, porn, self-harm, prescription drugs: just to name a few!!! **We are here to help!**

- I “know” it’s not “easy” to admit you are “struggling”; “but” let me tell you the “Lord Jesus is” more than ready to “help you”!
- Jesus is “gentle and lowly”; and has a soft heart for the sinner who is “struggling”!
- He’s a friend of “sinners”!

### **Friends:**

We are all “weary” and “faltering” on our journey towards Heaven!

- Jesus “longs” that we will “rest” spiritually in Him.
- Jesus has “tender love” for the sinful struggling and suffering believer!
- Jesus came to “SAVE” us not “condemn” us; our lives constantly have their ups and downs but Jesus wants to “sustain” us, “nurture” us, and “lead” us in the ways of righteousness and love!
- Verse 8:  
*“A time for war and a time for peace”!*
- The “passage” ends by reminding us that while we all long for a more “peaceful” world; there is even a time when “war” is “morally necessary”!
- You can’t live in a broken, sinful, God-denying world and expect “peace”: it just “won’t happen”! Yes there will be a time when there is “no more war” – “but” that will only be when the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus returns in “glory” at the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming!
- And the New Testament is “clear” that the Christian life is “warfare”!
- Put on the full “armor” of God, so that you can stand against the Devil’s schemes!  
*(Eph. 6)*
- “Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you”  
*(James 4)*

**Friends:**

What Solomon is teaching us in 3:1-8 is that “all of life” unfolds “under” the appointment of “providence”!

- Birth and death,
  - \* sowing and harvest,
    - \* joys and sorrows,
      - \* acquiring and losing,
        - \* speech and silence,
          - \* war and peace –

“EVERYTHING” has its appointed time “from God”!

- God rules “over” all!
- And He is always “faithful” to His “promises”!

**Friends:**

Our Christian lives need to reflect God’s Divine “pacing”!

- We “need” the beat of His call, the rhythm of God’s wisdom running through, our moments, our days, our years!
- We need to know God’s leading and follow it, no matter the cost!
- Psalm 25: 4-5 says:  
*“Show me how you work God, school me in your ways. Take me by the hand; Lead me down the path of truth! For you God are my Saviour!”*

**Friends:**

Are you wandering “aimlessly” OR are you “walking in the footsteps” of Christ?

- “Yes” there is an appropriate time for everything; the “unpleasant” as well as “pleasant” experiences!
- All of verses “1 to 8” is God’s wonderful “plan” for your life!
- If we were given the right to plan our “own lives” we would have “no” unpleasantness at all!
- But that would “ruin” us!
- God knows that people who are protected from everything almost invariably end up being impossible to live with: they are selfish, cruel, vicious, shallow and unprincipled?

- God sends the “unpleasantness” in order that we might be “taught”!

**Friends:**

There is a time for “everything” in life!

- “Learn to see” God’s wise direction and “providence” in “your life”: He’s doing it all so you will “conform” to the “image” of Jesus, His Son!
- How would you like to spend “2” years making phone calls to people who aren’t home?
- Sound absurd? Well that is the amount of time the average person spends trying to “return” phone calls to people who “never seem to answer”!
- Each minute God “gives” us is precious and valuable here on earth!
- Don’t “waste” your God given “time”!
- Are you using you “time: to love Christ more and tell others of His majesty and forgiveness?

**Let’s Pray**