

Beautiful • Eccl. 3:1-13

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Read Vs. 1-8

1. Solomon wrote these lyrics for the 60's folk-rock band *The Byrds*, who turned it into the international #1 hit song *Turn! Turn! Turn!* // 2. You didn't know Solomon was a **hippie** did you?

B. Pray • Recap

1. Because of our format, we study a little section 1 Sunday, 6 days pass, before we gather again.
2. It's easy to **forget** what we looked at the previous week.
3. On any given Sunday, there are folk here who **weren't** the previous week. They can be a bit lost if we dive in assuming everyone knows what we covered last week.
4. So I need to begin with a little background on Ecclesiastes.
5. Solomon, king of Israel, wrote this toward the end of his life.
6. Endowed by God with supernatural wisdom, he'd gone in pursuit of **more**.
 - a. He wanted to understand the purpose of life.
 - b. In the end he realizes he'd **always know it** because his father David taught it to him.
 - c. But like so many, Solomon thought there must be more & set himself to discover the universe's secrets.
7. Ecclesiastes is the chronicle of his quest.
 - a. He records his frustration as each new avenue of inquiry proved empty.
 - b. But it wasn't all frustration. He picked up some helpful insights along the way.
 - c. We looked at a couple of them last week in Ch. 5.
 - d. Today, we jump back a couple chapters & find more.
8. In ch. 2, Solomon shares the emptiness in trying to find significance "under the sun"— meaning in a life lived **solely in** this material world **without** reference to God.
9. We're born, we live, we die - & everything we've done crumbles or passes to someone else who doesn't appreciate it.
 - a. Solomon's conclusion is that if you think of it that way – you're going to get seriously bummed out.
 - b. And if you do, you'll not enjoy the good times & moments of pleasure that **do come** between birth & death.
10. Here in Ch. 3, he unpacks that idea for us.

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 1-2a

To everything *there is* a season, a time for every purpose under heaven:

² A time to be born, and a time to die;

1. Birth & death are the unavoidable bookends of life.
2. But in between birth & death is LIFE! // 3. Life passes thru different seasons, phases.
4. God has a lesson to teach us in each of those seasons. // 5. In Eph. 2:10 we find this – We are [God's] workmanship [finely-crafted work of art], created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.
6. Christian, God wants to make you one of His masterpieces.
7. The insight Solomon shares is the importance of knowing **WHAT SEASON** you're in.
8. It's crucial we discern what time of life this is, then live faithfully right there!
 - a. We spend too much time wishing we were someplace else. Any place but here!
 - b. When we're young we ache to be older.
 - 1) Old enough to be able to ride the big rides at Disneyland.
 - 2) Old enough to see that movie; to go on that camping trip. // 3) Old enough to drive.
 - c. When we're older, we ache to be young.
 - 1) Oh to have hair again! On top of my head I mean, instead of it coming out of my ears & nose.
 - 2) When I was a teenager, I had thick wavy hair. But I wanted straight hair because that's what surfers had & surfers were the ones all the girls were gaga over.
 - 3) So I bought some chemical straightener for my hair.
 - 4) Didn't work, but it did ruin my scalp for the next decade.
 - 5) By the time it healed, I'd reached the age where it started thinning.

- 6) Oh to be young again – to be able to play a game of softball & wake up the next day without feeling like you’ve been run over by a steam-roller!
9. Children envy adults their age & the privileges they imagine they have.
 10. Adults long for the unworried lives of children & their innocent simplicity.
 11. We’re so busy looking elsewhere, we miss the glory, the pleasures, the life that’s right before us.
 12. Solomon calls us to discern what season we’re in & **live there!**
 - a. Roman poet Horace, a thousand years after Solomon, described this as **Carpe Diem**. = Seize the day.
 - b. Inspired by Eccl 3, the artist John Waterhouse painted the picture behind me – “*Gather Rosebuds While You May*”
 - c. The Christian philosopher & scientist Blaise Pascal said –

Many of us live in the past, reflecting on a season we have already been through; either **regretting** the things that we have should have done, **reminiscing** about the things we shouldn’t have done; or we live in the future, planning, anticipating and expecting that someday, things will be good and I will be happy and I will have a good time.

 - d. He says If we live in the past or future, we **never really live** because we **miss the present**.
 13. Solomon describes some of the seasons of life we’ll pass thru ...
- B. Vs. 2b-8
- A time to plant, and a time to pluck *what is* planted;
1. The longer I live the more evidence I see that nature is a vast canvas on which God draws lessons that point to eternity & illustrate spiritual truth.
 2. One of them is here; the **seasons** of the year.
 - a. Depending on what you’re growing, there’s a season to plant, then a time of harvest.
 - b. Farmer & gardeners know this & live by it.
 3. **Beyond** agriculture, there’s a season of life when it’s time to **plant**, to **invest**, lay a foundation.
 - a. Planting requires **both faith & hard work**. You’re **trusting** what you do today will result in a harvest later.
 - b. Throughout most of history, young people understood that their early years when they had strength, was the time to plant, to invest & work hard. They were laying the foundation for their future.
 - c. But for the last 50 years, until the recent financial crisis, our culture was marked by an easy prosperity in which the young grew up thinking money was **easy** to come by.
 - d. They thought that because their parents paid their way. Little did they know those parents were funding their lifestyle on credit. = 40% of Americans spend more than they make.
 - e. Recent studies reveal that a many young adults think a credit card **is the same as money** & use it like cash. = A third of 18 year olds have a credit card, repayment of which is already 30% of income.
 - f. Colleges report that they lose more students to credit card debt than to low grades.
 - g. But youth is the season of life for **planting**.
 - h. Because they begin their adult life up to their neck in debt, they never get a chance to plant.
 - i. They miss that season & go through the rest of life teetering on the edge of financial ruin.
 - j. Get this, the number of young adults under 25 filing for bankruptcy has sky-rocketed in the last 10 years.
 4. If you’re a teen or young adult, **this** is a season to lay the foundation for your future.
 - a. It’s the time to invest in school, develop good works habits, & learn how to organize your life.
 - b. This is the time to invest in how to have healthy & holy relationships with others, **especially** of the opposite sex.
 5. On the other side is the season of harvest, plucking the fruit that season of planting trusted would come.
 - a. One year in our backyard, we grew watermelon.
 - b. Planted it in the spring, then watered & cultivated throughout the Spring & Summer.
 - c. Spent a lot of time digging up weeds, breaking up the top soil to make sure the water got down to the roots. Checking to make sure it wasn’t being eaten by pests.
 - d. Grew big & fat. Time came to pluck it. Cut the vine, & took it into the house & sliced it open.
 - e. It was red & sweet & tasted sooooo good! Just stood in the kitchen enjoying it – just sucking in all the goodness.

6. How sad it would have been to cut a slice of watermelon, then run back out to the garden & chew on it while pre-occupied with what to grow next.
7. There's a time to plant, & a time to plan. Don't miss out on enjoying what all the planting & planning produce!
8. For goodness sake – Plan! Then **be sure** to enjoy what that plan accomplishes.
9. Now, we obviously can't spend as much time on each of the seasons Solomon gives as we have so far.
 - a. Wish we could, but our season to study this morning won't allow it.
 - b. There's a time to go to church & a time to watch the Superbowl & consume massive quantities of ridiculous gastronomical challenges.

³ A time to kill, and a time to heal;

1. Really Solomon—A time to kill? Healing we understand, but is there a proper time to kill?
2. Indeed there is. God gives to civil government the power of the sword to restrain evil.
 - a. The sad fact is, **some evil** won't stop of its own accord – it must **BE** stopped.
 - b. That's the task God has assigned to civil government.
 - c. When a person shows disregard for the sanctity of human life & murders the innocent, Genesis 6 says society **must** respond by executing the murderer so that the sanctity of life is renewed.
3. On the other end is the season to heal the wounds evil has caused its victims.
4. We can apply this personally & spiritually.
 - a. Growing in Christ means the sometimes painful work of the Spirit healing the broken places inside us.
 - b. But before the healing can begin, we need to see & feel the wound. That's never fun.
 - c. Along with the healing the Spirit brings, comes the awareness there are things that **can't** be healed. They need to die. We need to die TO them, to put them to death.
 - 1) Lust, greed, anger, unforgiveness, bitterness, apathy, envy, selfish ambition.
 - 2) All these need to be put to death; & not in some lingering way.
 - 3) They need to be put down like a rabid dog because that's the kind of damage they can do.
 - d. Jesus spoke of it like this; if your right hand or eye causes you to sin, cut it off, pluck it out.
 - e. Clearly He didn't mean **literally**; you can sin as easily with your left hand & eye as your right.
 - f. He meant – “Don't dally with sin; be radical in cutting it out of your life. **Be done with it.**”

A time to break down, and a time to build up;

5. Solomon isn't saying, “There's a time for an **emotional** meltdown.” Break down = **tear down**.
6. One season of life is for clearing away the rubble of the past.
 - a. Maybe it was useful once, but it's not any more. It's just the **relic** that's lost its relevance.
 - b. And now it's standing in the way of something useful & better.
 - c. Traditions can be like that; meaningless practices that provide false comfort.
 - d. You may have heard the story of the young wife making her first Christmas roast.
 - 1) She cut it in half before putting it into the pan. Her husband asked why. She said, “Oh silly! Everyone knows you cut it in half before putting it in the oven.”
 - 2) He said, “We didn't in our home.” That got her to thinking, so she called her mother & asked why she was supposed to cut the roast in half.
 - 3) Her mother said, “Oh honey, I only did that when you were growing up because we didn't have a pan long enough for a whole roast. The only way to fit it was to cut it in half.”
 - f. We have lots of traditions, some of them fitting & by them we **honor** the past.
 - g. But others are nothing but the bones of long dead rituals we ought to chuck.
7. Then **build up** by pouring the truths God is showing us into **new** forms, **new** practices & traditions.
 - a. **New** music, **new** art, **new** things.
8. In 2 Cor. 10:4 we read,

⁴ For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

- a. Tearing down the strongholds of the lies the world, the flesh, & the devil have told us & stand like outposts of evil in our hearts & minds.
- b. Often times before we can lay hold of the Word of Christ that sets us free we need to demolish the

fortress of deceit standing on the ground truth should occupy.

- 4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; A time to mourn, and a time to dance;
1. Life swings back & forth between joy & sorrow.
 - a. Graduations, births & birthdays, weddings, baptisms, quincinerias,;
 - b. These are joyous times of celebration. We eat, laugh & dance to celebrate the joy of the moment.
 - c. Then the time of mourning & sorrow comes –
 - d. Divorce, death, the children grow up & move away, you lose your job, a debilitating illness.
 2. Being a pastor, I have a unique perspective because I officiate at **both** weddings & funerals.
 - a. I dedicate a child on Sunday, then bury someone on Tuesday.
 - b. While the transition from a season of joy to sorrow & back to joy is measured over years for most people, it's condensed for a pastor because he's called into the lives of his people as **they** go thru them.
 - c. I've gone to the hospital to visit a couple who's just had a baby, then stopped by the room of someone in the grip of the cancer that will close their eyes.
 - d. Romans 12:15 says to weep with those who weep & rejoice with the joyous.
 - e. I have to tell you when the transition from one to the other is but a few minutes, it's tough.
 3. But it's given me a unique perspective on what Solomon says here.
 - a. Life flows through different seasons.
 - b. The key is to know which season you're in & not miss the lesson it can impart if we'll learn it.
 - c. Let me tell you, walking into the room of the couple who've just had a baby means a **WHOLE LOT MORE** when you've just left the room of a saint taking their last breaths.
 - d. And I go home to my family with a powerfully recharged determination to make every day count.
- 5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones;
1. This causes the commentators fits because they don't know what Solomon means, what ancient practice this refers to.
 2. Here's my take, for what it's worth.
 - a. The land of Israel is **covered** with stones. The soil is incredibly rocky.
 - b. They were forever clearing their fields, removing rocks to the sides where they made fences of them.
 - c. You still see these fences all over Israel that are hundreds of years old.
 - d. They marked off property; this side of the fence is mine, that side is yours.
 - e. I think Solomon is saying there's a season when you work to provide for yourself; it's right & proper to do so.
 - f. But another season is the time to give –to cast your bread on the water as he says later in 11:1.
- A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
1. There are times when a good, tight embrace is good & right.
 2. But at another time such contact would be unwise.
 3. May God give us the wisdom to discern which is which.
 4. What's more embarrassing for a kid of 10 than for his/her mom to give a hug in front of their friends?
- 6 A time to gain, and a time to lose; A time to keep, and a time to throw away;
1. By '**lose**' Solomon means to **count something as lost** – to let it go.
 2. Life ebbs & flows between income & outflow; gain & loss, win & lose.
 3. Friends come, then go.
 4. We need to be as gracious in letting go as we are in taking hold.
 5. And here's something important to glean from this: When one season passes to the next, it's a transition point.
 6. Each transition usually means letting go of something so we can embrace what the new season brings.
 7. Some of you Christians are holding on to the stuff that marked your life BC.
 - a., God has so much to give you but He can't because your hands & heart & head is full of the crud of your past.
 - b. Old friends, old habits, old attitudes, old paraphernalia.
 - c. Let it go, so God can give you the new, good stuff He wants to bless you with.
- 7 A time to tear, and a time to sew;
1. People of the ancient world tore their clothes as a sign of grief.

2. There *is* a time to grieve; **Yes**, even Christians know sorrow.
3. Being a believer doesn't mean bouncing around in a perpetual holy, happy-slappy it's all good-times mode.
4. Even Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus – & that was with knowing He would raise him from the dead!
5. Our grief, real as it is, ***is a season***; And like all seasons, it passes to another – one of sewing, mending.
 - a. Note that! Tear clothes – then mend = like a scar > Evidence of past grief.
 - b. Grief, but past! And life is different now. It's a new season.
 - c. But you couldn't be where you are in this season had you not gone through that season.
 - d. A middle-aged man in ancient Israel loses his wife to some illness.
 - 1) He's gripped by grief so strong he doesn't know if he'll make it.
 - 2) One day as he's walking the street of his village he sees one of the elders approaching with a strong, confident walk.
 - 3) As he gets closer he sees 3 mended lines in the man's outer garment signs of loss & past grief.
 - 4) The newly widowed man stops and lifts his hand, beckoning the elder to stop.
 - 5) "Can you help me?" he asks. [elab]
6. Because this world is fallen & sin is still allowed to run amok, grief & sorrow will be a common experience for all of us.
7. But Heaven is the place of no more tears, no more grief.
A time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
 1. We probably all have said something we wish we'd not. Better to have said nothing than what we did.
 2. Then there are the times we stayed silent & wish we'd spoken.
 3. May God give us the grace to know which moment it is: To speak or stay quiet.
 4. Martin Niemoller was one of the Christian pastors who dared to stand against Hitler & the Nazis.
 - a. Not at first though. Like most Germans, Niemoller was taken in by Hitler's promises to restore the dignity Germany had lost after WWI.
 - b. He heard a few things that troubled him but was willing to overlook them in hopes of the good the Nazis promised to bring.
 - c. One compromise, one bartered silence led to another, until Neimoller found himself muzzled by his own regret at not having spoken up sooner.
 - d. When he finally did say "Enough" to Hitler's attempts to take control of the German church, Niemoller was arrested & spent nearly 8 years in a concentration camp. His crime – "He wasn't enthusiastic enough about the Nazi Movement."
 - e. After the war he gave several speeches in which he repeated the following words . . .
In Germany they first came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist.
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew.
Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant.
Then they came for me — and by that time no one was left to speak up.
5. When we see evil spreading under the guise of good, when we see the wolf dressed up in granny's clothes, it's not the time to be silent It's time to speak up and call evil for what it is.
6. Must say this We need to pray for our nation because we are in peril!
 - a. Egypt is being torn by a conflict that could escalate into a revolution.
 - b. At the heart of it is a sinister terrorist organization the Administration in Washington this week said it supported = The Muslim Brotherhood.
 - c. This is the very same group that murdered the previous president Sadat.
 - d. And this week already, as the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood salivated in anticipation of taking over Egypt, they already began making calls for attacking Israel.
 - e. And THIS is a group the US Administration supports! There is something terribly wrong.
 - f. Egypt is 10% Christian, some 8 million Christians in Egypt.
 - g. If the El-Baradei & Muslim Brotherhood take power, they will be mercilessly persecuted.
8. A time to love, and a time to hate;
 1. Hate? Really? Certainly! We're to hate sin, as God does.
 2. God hates sin because **it** harms those He loves. It inflicts pain & suffering, sorrow & loss.
 - a. Sin never does ***any*** good, only damage. So God hates it. // b. If only we hated sin as God does.

3. “God, just as you teach us how to love, teach us to hate *what* You hate, *when & where* You hate it.”
A time of war, and a time of peace.
 1. As much as we abhor the violence & loss of war, there *is* a time for it.
 2. We live in a fallen world where real evil exists. And some evil can’t be negotiated with.
 - a. It’s infernally pledged to the destruction of good.
 - b. There’s no compromise or accord that can be reached with it.
 - c. It will only use negotiation as a way to further its position for its inevitable campaign against good.
 - d. The only way to rid the world of such evil is to go to war & defeat it.
 - e. Winston Churchill understood this & called loudly for resistance against Nazi German.
 - f. But Neville Chamberlain, prime minister of Great Britain, thought he could negotiate with the Hitler.
 - g. Hitler promised to play nice & Chamberlain flew home, announcing there would be peace in Europe.
 - h. Hitler laughed at the stupidity of the British as he sent his tanks on their blitzkrieg across Poland.
 - i. There was only one way to rid the world of the evil that was the Nazis – War!
 3. I saw a bumper sticker a while back that said, “War is Never Right.”
 - a. Really? Never? Then the Nazis control a third of the globe. Japan is *brutalizing* another third.
 - b. Blacks are still slaves in the South.
 - c. And Americans are still living under the tyrannical thumb of a despotic English monarch.
 - d. In fact, no Constitution has been written with its Bill of Rights that gives you the power of free speech to say something as utterly absurd as your idiotic bumper sticker!
 - e. Without a war, you could not post that on your car.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Vs. 9-13

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

1. This repeats a theme common to Eccl – the seemingly futility of all the work a person does.

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. ¹² I know that nothing *is* better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives,

¹³ and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it *is* the gift of God.

2. After his long pursuit of trying to figure out the meaning of life & what God’s grand plan in it all was, he says – “Yeah, ummmm, God’s not letting us in on that.”

a. He’s got a plan – but it’s not for us to know the whole thing – just our little part of it.

b. And here’s what that is = Through all the seasons of life, God works to make us beautiful.

c. He makes everything beautiful in its time.

d. In all those times Solomon had just listed, God is at work to mold & shape us into something stunning.

3. Think of this – God created the universe in 6 days. Consider the astounding, mind-blowing gorgisoity God made in nature.

a. Those galaxies that we’re only now seeing for the first time out there.

b. The wonderment of a flower. 6 days!

4. Now, how many *years* has God been working on you?

5. In Ephesians 5, it says when Jesus comes for us, we’ll meet Him as a bride on her wedding day.

6. And there will never have been a more gorgeous bride! Ladies, as beautiful as you were at your wedding, sorry, the Bride of Christ will surpass you.

B. Eternity in the Heart

[Use this as the evangelistic appeal It’s the call home]

¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts,