

Ecclesiastes: The Way of True Joy

The Gift of Time

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

Death is an imposition on the human race, and no longer acceptable. Man has all but lost his ability to accommodate himself to personal extinction; he must now proceed to physically overcome it. In short, to kill death; to put an end to his own mortality as a consequence of being born.

—
Allan Harington
Wisdom Against the Power of Death

We are obsessed with time. In the late modern age time is the most precious commodity, because as much as we like to try and control time, and maximize our time, it still remains beyond our control. Ecclesiastes teaches us that the elusive nature of time is not something that is meant to be a point of sorrow or frustration but an opportunity to trust in the goodness of God. After the Lord is the Lord of time and in His wisdom he brings the seasons and the ages and He is the one who ultimately controls the time. This is Solomon's confession of faith in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, and Solomon wants us to trust in the Lord of time.

And yet, Solomon knows that God has put eternity in our hearts (v. 11) which means we will always find the passage of time a point of frustration because we were built for eternity, for a world that lasts, not one that fades away with each passing moment. Solomon tells us that the tension that faith draws us into, our lack of control over time and the eternity in our hearts, is another opportunity to trust in the good gifts of God and eat, drink, and take pleasure in our toil (v. 13). So how do we do that? We look "beyond the sun" to the one who comes to make everything beautiful in His time. Jesus, the greater Solomon, promises that He will come to satisfy our deepest longings, to redeem time, and consummate the new heavens and new earth where the eternity in our hearts will find their true rest.

In Christ,
Chris

Look to the Scriptures

- Open in prayer ask God for wisdom to discern, for eyes to see and ears to hear.

Look to the Text

- What is happening in this passage? What phrases jump out at you?
- Faith - How are verses 1-8 an invitation to faith in God when we see them not as a choice between seasons we like to experience but seasons that God brings into our lives? What are ways that we can slow down(ie keeping a Sabbath) that can help us trust in God's timing?
- Love - Not only is slowing down and believing that God makes everything beautiful in his time and act of faith, it is also an act of love. How does receiving each season of our life as a gift from God help us to love God and love our neighbors? For instance, if we are content with the station of life we are in, how might we take up the call to love our neighbor as ourselves?
- Hope- The relentless march of time can lead to hopelessness and despair and leave us longing for the time that has slipped by. How does this passage call us to hope in the Lord of time? Where do we see Jesus reshaping our hopes and calling us to look forward with hope?

Listen to one another

- Consider sharing places where you are facing hardship in this season of your life.
- Or pray a version of the Examen such as sharing the following:
 - ✦ Consolation: A time in the past week where you felt close to God.
 - ✦ Desolation: A time in the past week where you felt far from God.
 - ✦ Looking ahead: What are you looking forward to or most worried about in the coming week

Pray

- Spend time praying for one another and our world incorporating both what you have studied and prayer requests in your time of prayer.