

The End of the Matter – Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes 3:1-22

"A Time for Everything" – September 22, 2019



Introduction

Life is made of thousands of moments, that reflect a decision made, relationship, memory, triumph, or tragedy. We can zoom in on a particular moment or step back and try to see how the moments fit together like the pieces of a mosaic make a grand picture. But either way, we're looking at our life in the context of and limits of *time*. Time is inescapable this side of heaven and depending on where we're at in life we relate to time differently: sometimes bored, other times anxious, sometimes impatient, other times regretful. How then are we to live the good life within the constraints of time? What does a wise life look like within the limits of time?

Pray

Before you begin, take some time to ask God to help you understand His word, to reveal what needs to change in you, and for the grace to follow Him in response. To help, use [Psalm 119:33-40](#) as a prayer for God to open His word up to you.

Sermon Outline

- I. Recognize your seasons (3:1-8)
- II. Trust the Shepherd (3:9-22)

Read & Discuss

- 1) Read [Ecclesiastes 3:1-8](#)

There is a time for every *matter* under heaven. The poem in vv1-8 is not meant to be read prescriptively (*do this*) so much as descriptively (*this is what life is like*). God brings the seasons into our lives ([Dan. 2:21](#)) and the wise person seeks to recognize the seasons they're in and submit to or adjust how they're living. That's what the farmer does ([Prov. 10:5](#)) and so should we. We can think of the seasons we're in various ways: with respect to time, relationships, work, or even possessions. After reflecting on the poem what seasons are you in? Can you say you know what wisdom calls you to do in that season? (*This is where Proverbs can be very helpful – serving as a map or guide for wise living. If you're not sure what wisdom looks like in your season...take time to dig into Proverbs, to pray and seek the counsel of a godly friend).

Additional Reading: Proverbs 15:23, Proverbs 18:11, Psalm 127:1-2

- 2) Read [Ecclesiastes 3:9-22](#)

Right when we start to think we are getting the hang of wise living under the sun, v9 reminds us that there is no gain 'under heaven' (a phrase that's synonymous with 'under the sun').

Wise living that recognizes the seasons doesn't change all things from being vain during our time on earth this side of heaven. When we try to put the pieces of life together to make something beautiful of our lives, we don't know how the pieces fit – we “cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end” (v11) though we long to because God has put eternity in our heart. According to [v14](#), why does God do it this way? How is this an expression of mercy rather than cruelty for us? How does accepting the reality of v14 free us up to live out the vision of life in [3:12-13](#)?

Two objections to the joy that flows from the reality of a sovereign God are *injustice* (vv16-17) and *death* (vv18-22). The encouragement and the warning that undergirds both these objections is the reality that God will judge mankind in the end. He will make right all that is wrong and bring justice. How is that an encouragement to the Christian who has suffered injustice? How is this reality a warning? How is the gospel of Jesus Christ the solution to this predicament, the place where justice and mercy meet (see [Romans 3:23-26](#))?

Additional Reading: Romans 12:19-21, Psalm 23

Prayer of Response

- 1) After hearing God's Word, what sin do I need to *confess*? From what do I need to *repent*?
- 2) How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard? What should I *understand*, *believe*, *desire*, or *do*?

Spend time praying together in response to God's word asking for His help and greater faith to follow Him in the week to come.

If you missed the sermon on Sunday or would like to listen again, visit our website at <https://fbcum.org/sermons-new/>

*Next week's sermon text: we turn to Ecclesiastes 4:1-16 “ Work in a fallen world ”
--