

# A Season You Didn't Choose

7.19.26

Message 3

Ecclesiastes 3 (CSB)

## THE MYSTERY OF TIME

**3** There is an occasion for everything,  
and a time for every activity under heaven:  
<sup>2</sup> a time to give birth and a time to die;  
a time to plant and a time to uproot;  
<sup>3</sup> a time to kill and a time to heal;  
a time to tear down and a time to build;  
<sup>4</sup> a time to weep and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn and a time to dance;  
<sup>5</sup> a time to throw stones and a time to gather stones;  
a time to embrace and a time to avoid embracing;  
<sup>6</sup> a time to search and a time to count as lost;  
a time to keep and a time to throw away;  
<sup>7</sup> a time to tear and a time to sew;  
a time to be silent and a time to speak;  
<sup>8</sup> a time to love and a time to hate;  
a time for war and a time for peace.

<sup>9</sup> What does the worker gain from his struggles? <sup>10</sup> I have seen the task that God has given the children of Adam to keep them occupied. <sup>11</sup> He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also put eternity in their hearts, but no one can discover the work God has done from

beginning to end. <sup>12</sup>I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and enjoy the good life. <sup>13</sup>It is also the gift of God whenever anyone eats, drinks, and enjoys all his efforts. <sup>14</sup>I know that everything God does will last forever; there is no adding to it or taking from it. God works so that people will be in awe of him. <sup>15</sup>Whatever is, has already been, and whatever will be, already is. However, God seeks justice for the persecuted.

#### **THE MYSTERY OF INJUSTICE AND DEATH**

<sup>16</sup>I also observed under the sun: there is wickedness at the place of judgment and there is wickedness at the place of righteousness. <sup>17</sup>I said to myself, “God will judge the righteous and the wicked, since there is a time for every activity and every work.” <sup>18</sup>I said to myself, “This happens so that God may test the children of Adam and they may see for themselves that they are like animals.” <sup>19</sup>For the fate of the children of Adam and the fate of animals is the same. As one dies, so dies the other; they all have the same breath. People have no advantage over animals since everything is futile. <sup>20</sup>All are going to the same place; all come from dust, and all return to dust. <sup>21</sup>Who knows if the spirits of the children of Adam go upward and the spirits of animals go downward to the earth? <sup>22</sup>I have seen that there is nothing better than for a person to enjoy his activities because that is his reward. For who can enable him to see what will happen after he dies?

## Intro

A. We are surrounded by choices.

1. Walk down the cereal aisle, and there are hundreds of choices.
2. Go to a car lot, and the options are only limited by your budget.
3. This morning we made a choice to go to church, what to wear, and what kind of attitude we will have

B. The American life is full of choices.

1. We emphasize that we have free will, the right to choose, the right to decide what's best for me.
2. We have rights, choices, and options.
3. Until you don't.

C. You chose one season, and the second season chose you.

1. When peace gives way to war.
2. When love gives way to hate.

3. When you want to keep, but the season dictates a time to throw away.
4. When you spend a season searching, and you have to quit before the thing is found.
5. When the embracing gives way to leaving, and dancing becomes grieving, and laughing turns to crying.

D. What do we do **when we enter into a season we didn't choose, didn't want, and weren't prepared for?**

1. When you stand, like Job, and declare, "That which I feared has come upon me."
2. When it feels like God is absent, the heavens are brass, and you arrive at what Christians for two thousand years have called "The Dark night of the Soul."

## What do we do?

A. Solomon didn't have an answer.

1. He concludes (verse 12-13) to enjoy yourself while you can, eat/drink/be merry for you're going to die.
2. For all of his wisdom, for all of his giftings. All the money, all the palaces, all the glory and all of the girls could not change what God had ordained.
3. Solomon reaches a dark place: He doesn't know what happens after this life.
4. His wisdom had reached its limits.

B. Notice that Solomon talks about God, but God is not present in this discussion.

1. God is mentioned, but not called upon.
2. From Solomon's description, I can't tell if he views God as so distant that he doesn't care or if he is more like a puppet-master, pulling the strings of the universe.
3. **Solomon recognizes God's existence but questions his involvement.**

C. Solomon doesn't know God like his father David did.

1. For David, God was a friend and the all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present God.
2. David's God could be called upon, implored, and trusted.
3. Solomon's God is more like a distant figure and an impartial judge.

D. I really believe that most of us want the kind of relationship with God that David had and not the writer of Ecclesiastes.

1. Even during the hard times of life, we want to feel close to God.
2. Instead, a lot of us feel like Ecclesiastes: What's the point, we are all going to die and God is going to do nothing more than watch.
3. **How can we avoid this cynical view of life and faith?**

Wisdom from Ecclesiastes 3

## Ecclesiastes 3 is honest, but incomplete.

A. I love Ecclesiastes because of its honesty.

1. The smartest man ever doesn't know the answer.
2. When all of the searching is done, Solomon has nothing to show for it.
3. It's all meaningless, futile, vain, Hevel.

B. Honest moments produce honest results.

1. When a person hits rock bottom, when the season comes we weren't ready for, our response is honest.
2. It reveals what is in us.
3. It reveals the gold we've tucked away.
4. It reveals the junk that had been hiding below the surface.
5. It reveals the real condition of a person.

C. Solomon found that his wisdom was incomplete.

1. What he knew and experienced wasn't enough to carry him through.
2. His wisdom had limits, and instead of going deeper with God, he stopped.
3. His perspective ended with this world, this feeling, this pleasure, this pain.

D. When the season changes, when it all feels like Hevel, do you find your wisdom incomplete?

1. You know how to work hard, but then the season changes and the work is different;

2. You've lived in war and hatred so long that when the season changes, you don't know what to feel or act.
3. Changes and transitions are exciting and dangerous.
  - a. Marriages often fall apart when the kids move out.
  - b. Men fall apart when the thrill of retirement gives way to purposelessness.
  - c. Young people come apart when the structure of home gives way to the freedom of college.
  - d. Part of this is because we learn how to work and thrive in a season, and don't realize that each season of life requires a different kind of work.

The right work, in the wrong season, is the wrong work.

A. For everything, there is a season.

1. God created this planet to have seasons.
2. Not every planet has them, but ours does.
3. Seasons are necessary for life and part of God's beautiful design.

B. But seasons are transient.

1. They don't stick around or stay.
2. Just as soon as you get comfortable, it changes.
3. Seasons have rhythms.
4. "When we ignore the rhythms of the season, we risk no longer living in the fullness of what God created and called good." Dubose.

C. One of our struggles is that we want to control the seasons.

1. But we can't control the season; we can only control the work we do in that season.
2. There are seasons of life where it seems:
  - a. All is conflict.
  - b. All is suffering.
  - c. All is joy.

d. Sometimes you are in one season, and your family, your spouse, or your organization is in another.

3. Rick Dubose: “You can’t control the seasons, but you can learn to recognize God’s presence with you in every season.”<sup>1</sup>

D. Solomon experienced it all apart from God’s presence.

1. When we ignore God’s presence in the season we are in, we miss the work we are called to do in that season.

2. There is a kind of work to do when the season calls for weeping.

3. There is a different kind of work for seasons of mourning.

4. There is another kind of work for when the joy comes in the morning.

## Wisdom that is God-adjacent Vs.9-15

A. A few years back, I began hearing people add the word “adjacent” to their sentences.

1. Adjacent means alongside, but not physically connected.

2. It would be like saying, “That’s kind of close, but not the same.”

In slang, “-adjacent” is a suffix used to describe someone or something that is close to, associated with, or possesses the vibe of a specific group, culture, or aesthetic without being entirely a part of it

3. Associated with, but not entirely part of it.

B. Solomon talks about God-adjacent wisdom.

1. True, God has made everything beautiful in its time.

2. True, we cannot see the scope of God’s work from beginning to end.

3. True, God has planted eternity in our hearts.

C. VERSE 12: So I concluded...there is nothing better...

1. This kind of wisdom is close to God, associated with God, has a certain vibe to it, but is not entirely part of it.

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<sup>1</sup> The Creator’s Wheel, 103.

2. If we were brutally honest, a lot of us are more God-adjacent than we would want to admit.

a. We include God, talk about God, and recognize Him in the room.

b. But we aren't surrendering.

c. God is our friend, our helper, but not our Lord or King.

3. We aren't atheists; we believe in God.

a. We would all ourselves realists: and believe that everything depends upon us.

b. So we live our lives marked by a wisdom that is incomplete.

c. And our lives aren't wrapped up fully in Jesus, but are Jesus adjacent.

## An Eternity that isn't centered around God is meaningless. 3:16-22

A. Solomon saw the world with eyes blind to eternity.

1. He wasn't sure what happens after we die.

2. He concludes that there is no advantage, because all die, and who knows what happens.

3. And when we view life like this, life really is pointless, vain, and Hevel.

B. Two things you can do today to add meaning into your meaningless life:

1. Live for Jesus.

2. Work with eternity in mind.

3. If you will live your life with these two strands, your life will have meaning.

4. Have fun, enjoy life, do the right work in the right season, and don't forget that this life with Jesus is preparing us for our eternity with Jesus.

## When the Time comes for a season you didn't want or choose:

A. When our lives are centered on Jesus, even the hardest seasons draw us closer to Him.

1. Pain is never neutral; we will either draw closer to God or further away.
2. And the times of mourning will come.
3. Though weeping may last for the night, Joy comes in the morning.

B. I like this quote from Charles Spurgeon:

1. I have learned to kiss the wave that throws me against the Rock of Ages.
2. If you are in a season you didn't choose, don't be like Solomon.
3. Don't let these circumstances drive you to cynicism, numbness, jadedness, or hard-heartedness.
4. Instead, cling to Jesus and get to know the Rock of Ages.

## Prayer