

## 06.04.2019 FAMILY SEASONS: THE RHYTHMS OF LIFE

***To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. Ecclesiastes 3:1***

The seasons and rhythms of life are centred around Time. Time itself is a gift from God and God is in control of Time.

### **At Creation:**

At Creation God came to this planet and spoke into being a perfect Creation. As a crowning act, He created man and woman in the image and likeness of God.

At Creation, God decreed the rhythms of nature: the day and night, the weekly cycle and the Sabbath rest, the lunar cycle, the water cycle.

*God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day. Genesis 1:4, 5*

*Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years...then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. Genesis 1:14, 16*

*And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Genesis 2:2*

*The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the rivers come from, there they return again. Ecclesiastes 1:6, 7*

At Creation, God created man and woman. They were to live life in communion with God and in communion with each other. This would result in further rhythms of life – the spiritual fruit of holiness and physical bearing and nurture of children, who would in turn be regarded as God's holy offspring (Malachi 2:15).

### **After the Fall:**

Our main study passage this week is Ecclesiastes 3. This was written after the Fall, and in it we see the seasons of life now include the results of the Fall: weeping, mourning, death, hate, war, injustice.

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

*A time to be born and a time to die;*

*A time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted;*

*A time to kill and a time to heal;*

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

*A time to weep, and a time to laugh;*

*A time to mourn and a time to dance;*

*A time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones;*

*A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;*

*A time to gain and a time to lose;*

*A time to keep, and a time to throw away;*

*A time to tear, and a time to sew;*

*A time to keep silence and a time to speak;*

*A time to love, and a time to hate;*

*A time of war and a time of peace. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*

Though man has rebelled against God and lives independent of Him with all the dreadful consequences thereof, God is still sovereign over time, nature and His creatures.

*And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings. Acts 17:26*

He still loves mankind unconditionally.

Despite our rebellion He provides food, water and the necessities of life.

After the judgment of the Flood, because *'the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually'* (Genesis 6:5), God made a covenant after the flood that would be true for as long as this earth shall last:

*"I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease." Genesis 8:21, 22*

God pours His blessings on the righteous and the unrighteous:

*"Your Father in heaven makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew 5:45*

*"Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." Acts 14:17*

### **The Blessing of the Seasons of Life in a Fallen World**

Imagine a world where this life of sin and suffering was eternal. In His mercy, God has allowed men to die (to fall asleep until the resurrection). Imagine if life was a never-ending cycle of physical or mental anguish, of loss, or injustice, hatred or war. Men's hearts would not be able to bear such a burden. In His great mercy, God limits the seasons brought about by sin.

*The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Psalm 90:10*

### **The Response of the Christian to Ecclesiastes chapter 3:**

A Christian does not read Ecclesiastes chapter 3 as a fatalist i.e. one who believes that all the events in his life are pre-determined and that he has no control over it. Neither does he believe that it gives him freedom to hate, to cast stones to make war, to be unjust and to kill.

No, a Christian recognises the Biblical truth of free-will given to man. By our choices today, we can live life for God's glory or live life for our own glory.

The rhythms that can be controlled by humans are subject to the will of God in a Christian's life.

Instead of living in broken relationships, he chooses to be a peacemaker.

Instead of casting stones, he seeks to gather sinners to the love of God.

Instead of hate, he chooses to love.

He knows when to keep silent when he is accused unjustly; he does not seek to make another's sin public.

He continually asks God to make him a channel of healing and blessing to the world through the Holy Spirit.

When the unexpected occurs, as it does in this broken world, a Christian knows that his life is in God's hands and nothing can happen to him that God will not work out for his ultimate good.

*Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ. Philippians 3:8*

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us... And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Romans 8:18, 28*

The Christian recognises that his life in God is a process of change; firstly, that he chose to trust God rather than Satan and subsequently that he is being transformed from glory to glory as he lives by the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The Christian recognises that the saddest consequence of Man's fall is the loss of relationships. Man's relationship to God is broken; his marital relationships are broken, his relationships with siblings and family and society are broken and his relationship with nature is broken. He therefore seeks to live his life as God intended from the beginning (at Creation). He seeks to live in self-giving and unconditional love to God and to his fellow men as he asks the Holy Spirit daily to shed abroad God's love in his heart (Romans 5:5). He does nothing to sever a relationship and everything he can to restore a relationship.

The Christian recognises that it is wisdom to respect life's rhythms as decreed by God.

The Christian recognises the folly of trying to control life's seasons in a broken world.

When faced with the sorrows of life, the Christian recognises by faith that *'God 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.'* Ecclesiastes 3:11

### **Conclusion:**

In the beginning, at Creation, all was good and very good. There was form and order and harmony in nature and Man's relationship with God and with himself.

Satan, the Enemy has destroyed that initial order and harmony. Wherever we see a loss of form and harmony in music and art, we can discern the hand of the Enemy. Wherever we see the loss of health, we see the hand of the Enemy. Wherever we see broken relationships; between husband and wife, parents and children, between siblings, between friends, there is the hand of the Enemy. When there is injustice, when the governed are treated unfairly by those who govern, there is the hand of Satan, the Enemy.

Let us praise God, for Jesus Christ the Lamb has conquered Satan. Satan himself has but a short season left. One day soon, sin and death and the Enemy will be destroyed and God will re-create new heavens and a new earth in which only righteousness will dwell.

As we wait, let us remember that there are no limits to God's grace; no seasons to His mercy. We can choose to go to Him at any time; to repent and become His faithful children, for when it comes to His grace *'all occasions invite His mercies and all times are His seasons'*.

*So teach us to number our days; that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Psalm 90:12*

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