

“A Time for Every Purpose”

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, 11

Barry Noll

3:1 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: 2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; 3 a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; 4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; 5 a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; 6 a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; 7 a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; 8 a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

For Further Reflection:

1. What are the things you seek to control? How does the Preacher's description of time compound the frustration and vanity of the things you try to control (vv. 1-8)?
2. What is the difference between ownership and stewardship? How does the Preacher's description of the seasons underscore the concept of stewardship rather than ownership when it comes to your time, treasure, and relationships (Eph. 5:15-17; Col. 4:5-6; Ps. 24:1; Hag. 2:8; Deut. 8:18; 1 Cor. 6:19-20)?
3. How is God's sense of timing different from yours (vs. 11a; Gen. 1:31; Isa. 58:8-9)? What does it look like to trust in God's timing rather than your own?
4. What frustration has God hardwired into humanity and life under the sun (vs. 11b; 8:17; Job. 5:8-9; Rom. 11:33)? How does the difference between God and man when it comes to time a form of comfort rather than frustration to you (vv. 14-15)?
5. What does the apostle Paul say that God did at the right time (Rom. 5:6; Gal. 4:4-5)? How does this timing lead you to sacrificial service and generosity for those today and future generations to hear the message of the gospel?