

April 7, 2019

Pastor David Gardner

“This is a good time!” Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 (Voice)

Our teacher today is the sage who gives us this amazing “wisdom” poetry, Ecclesiastes 3:1-11. Earlier, that “teacher” has said in effect, “all is vanity.” (The Hebrew word ‘hevel’ is more like ‘vapor’ or ‘meaningless’ than ‘vanity.’) Our “teacher” doesn’t think that everything in the universe is without a purpose. Our “teacher” has more than one point of view. Let’s consider this from the outside, looking in:

“**Teacher:** For everything *that happens in life*—there is a season, a right time for everything under heaven:

A time to be born, a time to die;
a time to plant, a time to collect the harvest;

A time to kill, a time to heal;
a time to tear down, a time to build up;

A time to cry, a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, a time to dance;

A time to scatter stones, a time to pile them up;
a time for a *warm* embrace, a time for keeping your distance;

A time to search, a time to give up as lost;
a time to keep, a time to throw out;

A time to tear apart, a time to bind together;
a time to be quiet, a time to speak up;

A time to love, a time to hate;
a time to go to war, a time to make peace.”

{If we look at this poem - God, the creator, has a purpose and time for everything. But if we look at this from the inside, looking out, without God, there is no sense to work hard just so that everything we have accumulated goes to someone else. Without God, there is no point in trying to make a name for ourselves, when in a few short years, who we are and what we have done is lost from memory.}

The “teacher” continues:

“What good comes to anyone who works so hard, all to gain *a few possessions*? I have seen the *kinds of* tasks God has given each of us to do to keep one busy, *and I know* God has made everything beautiful for its time. God has also placed in our minds a sense of eternity; we look back on the past and ponder over the future, yet we cannot understand the doings of God.”

THIS IS THE WORD OF GOD FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD!

THANKS BE TO GOD! Amen

We have looked at the outside, looking in. We have acknowledged the inside, looking out.

Now we have to see things from up, above. God has made everything beautiful for its time. God has placed within us a sense of eternity. That is part of the image of God, the eternal. What our “teacher”, Ecclesiastes, is saying that, with the up, above point of view, we humbly acknowledge God as our purpose and as our center. To do anything else is out of step and foolish.

Let's end with a quick story:

Fred Craddock, pastor and story-teller, shares the memory he heard from a chaplain who was on duty when little Elizabeth was born at the tiny hospital in his rural community. After offering congratulations to Elizabeth's parents, the chaplain tried to strike up a conversation with the young father—a man of few words—as he and the chaplain stood silently before the nursery window watching this beautiful little girl squirm and scream in her crib. Trying to make conversation, the chaplain thought he could reassure the first-time dad that his baby daughter's crying was completely normal: “she's not sick, you know. It's good for her to cry, it's clearing out her lungs.” The dad looked oddly at the chaplain and responded, “I know she's not sick. She's crying 'cause she's just mad.”

Kind of taken aback and curious what the dad meant, the chaplain asked him why he thought she was mad. “Well,

wouldn't you be mad? One minute you're with God in heaven and the next minute you're in Georgia!" Now really surprised at this unexpected response, the chaplain tentatively asked, "So, you believe she was with God before she came here?" "Of course!"

The chaplain pressed on, "Do you think she will always remember she came from God?"

"Well," said the young dad, "that's up to her mother and me, and to our church. We've got to see to it that she remembers." (adapted story)

AND THAT'S THE MESSAGE!