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Making Time
Ecclesiastes 3

We've been **using clocks** for about 6000 years,
 using the sun, the stars, and the water to mark time.

In his book, **Time Wars**, Jeremy Rifkin writes that the idea of our lives and the events in them being controlled by the clock, is a relatively new idea, in terms of centuries at least. It comes from the Benedictine monks, "whose passion for organizing and filling every minute of the day, grew out of St. Benedict's conviction that 'idleness is the enemy of the soul.'"

525, 600 minutes a year....365 days a year,
 24 hours a day, 60 minutes an hour, 60 seconds a minute....
 Each of us is given the same amount of time,

And yet the way we talk about time,
 you'd think that some of us have **more** time than others,
 that we could squeeze more time into some days,
 while others days surely have much **less** time.

But no, it's always the same 24 hours a day, 60 minutes an hour.
 We each get the same amount of time in life.
 The difference is just **what we do with it**.

Ecclesiastes asks us to look at that question.
 Ecclesiastes is one of those strange books that people sometimes wonder,
 How did this book make it into the Bible?
 Boiled down, it's message is something like, 'life is hard, then you die'.
 It takes a realistic look at time on earth.
 But it's also very **spiritual**.
 It asks us to place our hope in nothing, except God.

It's written by a teacher of wisdom, some say Solomon.
 In Hebrew the author is named **Qoholeth**, also known as The Preacher,
 or in Greek, Ecclesiastes.

And the **Preacher** is a realist, a cynic, some would say.
 He doesn't want anyone wearing rose-colored glasses in life.
 He looks at life, and 38 times says 'All is vanity'.
 He asks again and again, what is the purpose of it all?

So much of the Bible offers God's plan and purpose,
 God's love and mercy,
 The Prophets offer God's judgment and justice.
 Ecclesiastes offers **realism** about the world.
 It's fallen and imperfect. It is what it is.

Here in chapter 3, he reminds us of how **time orders everything**.
 We cannot change time, add to it, or subtract from it. We must accept it.
 Life has natural rhythms.
 So don't try to change it, just try to find joy in this life.

Qoheleth advises, "The best thing to do is to be happy and enjoy yourself for as long as you can."
 Since there are so many things over which we have no control,
 it is wise to be happy and to look for joy.

Ecclesiastes 3 says there is a **time and a season** for everything.
 The Preacher mentions 28 times and seasons,
 Some seasons of life we **do not control**.
 Like when....There is a time to be born and a time to die.

We do not control our birth, and most of us do not control our death.
 But God---**God is in control** of those times,
 God is in control of ALL time,
 In fact, this is part of the Preacher's message ---
 God is in each time and season, God is with us all the times of our lives.

But sometimes we don't realize that **God is with us all the TIME**.
 It's like the parable told by Sister Joan Chittister:

*"Where shall I find God in life?" the disciples asked the elder.
 "God is with you everywhere," the holy one replied.
 "But if that is true," the disciple asked, "Why can I not see this presence?"
 "Because," said the elder, "you are like the fish who,
 when in the ocean, never notice the water."*

But—do you always feel like God is with you? In every time?
 Or have you had those times when you've felt **God can't be here**,
 God can't be in control of THIS time, of THIS season of my life?
 Have you ever wondered if God is in *this* time?

The Preacher reminds us that even when we don't feel it,
 God is in every time, every season.

And God is not just in every time, God **balances** time.
 For every time to be born, there is a time to die.
 For every time to kill there is a time to heal,
 For every time to break down, there is a time to build up....

Some seasons of life are not so out of our control
 We have some power over the **balance** in our lives.

But we aren't always so good at balancing the times of our lives are we?

Some thrive on **doing too much**—having chaos and clutter in their lives
 Saying yes to nearly everything, overcommitted and overwhelmed,
 They fill their time with the building and seeking and keeping.....

Forgetting that there is also a time to
 Break down, and lose, and throw away.

I think about someone in my last church who insisted on
 Being the **volunteer secretary**, copier, newsletter writer,
 Cook, cleaner, women's group coordinator, session member, choir member,
 liturgist, some-time Sunday school teacher, party-planner, fellowship
 coordinator, outreach leader, decorator, in addition to helping run a family
 restaurant. Her schedule could make your head swim.
 It was no surprise to hear when her **heart** needed a tune-up.

Some thrive on **doing too little**— not having enough in their lives,
 Saying no to nearly everything, having either been burned out before,
 or simply too scared to say yes to life.
 They fill their time by simply marking time,
 making excuses to break down or pluck up, to lose, or tear or throw away.

Forgetting that life is really life when there are times to
 Laugh, and dance, to keep and speak, to love and gather together.

There was a ***couple*** in a former church who were ***so sad*** after having served on the session for several years together, they felt they had given everything they had to give. they had hurt feelings after an idea had not been used. So much to everyone's heartache, they refused to help with any church event, they turned down every invitation to fellowship and fun gatherings, Here were vibrant, talented, precious children of God, Beloved by the entire church, living out their time, Out of balance, out of sync with God, and the body of Christ.

The Preacher reminds us that this is not the way it should be, There is a ***time and a season*** for everything under heaven, There is ***balance*** for every time and season.

God wants ***balance*** in the times and seasons of our lives. When have YOU been out of balance? Doing too much or too little? Saying yes or no too much? Forgetting the other seasons of life that await you?

What ***time is it now*** in your life? A time to build up? Or tear down? Is it a time to weep or a time to laugh?

The Good News is that no matter the time or the season right now, There is another time and season just around the corner, And another one after that. For everything there is a time and a season. And God is present in every season of our lives.

In fact, when ***Jesus*** came to bring the Good News of the kingdom of God, He said, the kingdom is at hand, the time is now. As Christians we believe that our new life in Christ has already begun—and will be complete when he returns.

So it is Jesus Christ who is with us in every season of life. May we take comfort in the assurance that we do not walk this path of life alone. Amen.