

sermon study guide

Speaker: Pastor Ashwin Ramani

Date: October 12 / 13, 2019

Sermon Title: A Season for Everything

PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. What was your favourite season as a child? Why? What is your favourite season now?
2. Pastor Ashwin compared the four seasons with the seasons of our life, for example: Springtime as a season of excitement for new things, Summer as a season for work, Fall as a season of harvest, Winter as a season of life's hardships. In what season do you currently find yourself?

PURSUE GOD: Time that is devoted to the Word of God

Read Eccl 3:1-15

1. Pastor Ashwin says of these verses, "We have varied experiences of life and this is what is true of all of us – we cannot control these life experiences. We are simply not in charge!" Why do you find this truth either encouraging or discouraging? How does Ecclesiastes teach us to view life's various experiences?
2. What are verses 12-13 teaching: Hedonism? Escapism? Gratitude? Something else? How do you reconcile the word 'toil' with 'gift from God' (v.13)?

PURSUE MISSION: Seek to be the community of God's people in your community

1. How can our lives reflect the truth that the finite things of this life will not satisfy?
2. How can we bring comfort to those who are in a "winter season", a season of hardship? What approach would you take for someone who is a believer? Someone who is a non-believer?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Pastor Ashwin referenced a hymn called "*Something Beautiful*":

Something beautiful, something good

All my confusion He understood

All I had to offer Him was brokenness and strife

But He made something beautiful of my life

Is there confusion, brokenness, strife that you need to offer up to the Lord? Are there areas where you've tried to be in control but He is calling you to surrender to Him?

This week's writers: Deb Matiko, Thomas Attrell, Edi Dygert, David McMillin, Jared Harrison

THE WORD (NIV)

Eccl 3:1-15

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
² a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
³ a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
⁴ a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
⁵ a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
⁶ a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
⁷ a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
⁸ a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

⁹ What do workers gain from their toil? ¹⁰ I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. ¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. ¹² I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. ¹³ That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God. ¹⁴ I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will fear him.

¹⁵ Whatever is has already been,
and what will be has been before;
and God will call the past to account.

1 Tim 4:4

For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,

Ecc 12:13-14

A Season for Everything

Ecclesiastes 3:1 – 15

Pastor Ashwin Ramani

King Solomon, the author of Ecclesiastes, is painting a picture of life from a worldly perspective, without God who brings it ultimate meaning. “Meaningless” and “chasing after the wind” describe a life which attempts to bring meaning and satisfaction through human pursuits apart from God.

God instituted various seasons in nature with a definite purpose. Although He created them all with diversity, there is an orderliness to each one of them and all of them are needed for life and growth. Just as God created seasons in weather there are seasons in life: Spring when we look forward with excitement to new things, Summer when we work diligently in the warm weather, Fall when we reap and celebrate from our time of work and Winter when hardships come. One season cannot exist without the other.

Although the seasons of life are not as predictable as the weather, they are not random. God has ordained a time and season for everything on earth. Solomon poetically contrasts fourteen pairs of opposite activities, while actually embracing everything that lies in between.

Life’s experiences prove that life’s seasons are controlled by a Sovereign God who views everything from a different vantage point. Living with unknowns and things that do not make sense are uncomfortable and the result is to ask God ‘why’. But to God, it all does make sense because “He has made everything beautiful (appropriate or fitting) in its time.” (Ecclesiastes 3:11a) This is not to say that all things are beautiful but that God by His transforming power makes all things beautiful. Just as one piece of a jigsaw puzzle does not make sense, each piece is essential to complete the picture. In the same way, each season of life is necessary for the end product of transformation that God has in mind for each individual.

Solomon immersed himself in all pleasures: wealth, success, education, building projects and entertainment, and concluded that these finite things cannot satisfy the void deep within that God has created. (Ecclesiastes 3:11b) Solomon, who had it all, proclaims that it is only God who can satisfy the cravings of the human heart. At the end of the book, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, Solomon declares that without honoring and living in obedience to God, life cannot make sense, no matter how hard one tries. Life takes on new meaning with God at the centre because He infuses a new motivation that shapes one’s life and vocation.

Although the pursuit of enjoyment does not bring ultimate meaning to life, Solomon is not saying that pursuing pleasure is wrong. (Ecclesiastes 3:12-13) No matter the season of life, God wants us to enjoy it in all its fullness and not just endure it. Life does have painful seasons and also does require making plans for future seasons. God’s desire is to live a life of contentment in the present. Pleasure is not sin but pleasure without boundaries and principles turns into sin. God, the giver of pleasure, is to be worshipped and not the pleasure. Being able to thank God in prayer for a pleasure in life without embarrassment can provide a test to differentiate between a true and illegitimate pleasure.

Jesus came to give abundant life because He has forgiven us and given us a new outlook on life. Solomon would agree that those who have a relationship with God ought to enjoy life more than anyone else. God has provided pleasures of life for us to enjoy in all seasons of life.