

Embracing God's Timing Ecclesiastes 3:9-15

Introduction

The Hebrew Tanakh lists the book of Ecclesiastes as one of the books of wisdom. It is an interesting read of only twelve chapters contrasting two views of life. The writer poses the question, "Should we view life from a human or a divine perspective?" Is God's presence eternal or temporal? That question makes Ecclesiastes a very relevant book.

Two statements from Ecclesiastes represent each of these positions. One of the famous sayings from the book of Ecclesiastes you've probably heard many times, "Vanity, Vanity, all is vanity." It first appears in verse 2 of Chapter 1 but is a reoccurring theme throughout the book. It is the temporal view of life viewed through human eyes.

The second view is the eternal one from verse 1 of Chapter 12, "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth." Chapter 12 concludes with these words, "The conclusion, when all has been heard, *is*: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to* every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil." ([Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 NASB](#))

The word "Ecclesiastes" comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew title Kohelet. That is the name of "The Preacher," who is the main speaker in the book. Kohelet introduces himself as "a son of David and a king in Jerusalem." He endorses wisdom and says it is a means for a well-lived earthly life.

But humanly speaking, he cannot ascribe any lasting meaning to this life without a view of the eternal. No wonder so many people decide to enjoy the pleasures of this life. Their view is, "Eat, drink, and be merry." But in the end, the Preacher says even the enjoyment we take in our work comes to us as a gift from the hand of God.

According to the Talmud, the point of Kohelet is that everything under the sun is futile. Therefore, a person should put all their effort towards that which is above the sun. The Preacher's final advice is to fear God and keep His commandments, for that is the whole duty of every person.

So is life worth living? That is the question that Kohelet is asking us this morning. What about your life? Are you happy with the way you are living your life? God wants us to encounter his eternal presence and see His eternal purpose to make sense of our temporal human existence on this planet.

Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 is a well-known passage of scripture. "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 NKJV)

Timing is crucial to every endeavor. The Apostle Paul writes in Galatians Chapter 4 that when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son. The Preacher says that timing has an important impact on everything. Verse 9 says, "What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. He 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. I know that nothing *is* better for them than to rejoice and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it *is* the gift of God. I know that whatever God does, It shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, And nothing taken from it. God does *it*, that men should fear before Him. That which is has already been, And what is to be has already been; And God requires an account of what is past." (Ecclesiastes 3:9-15 NKJV)

The problem is that every avenue inspired by our humanity ultimately leads us to frustration and futility. The Preacher says whenever you look around you, the only conclusion you can come to is that all is vanity. And that is the way it is for so many people, each day of their lives. That's why we need to share God's good news with them, especially as it relates to them personally! God did not create you to live a life of futility! God wants you to look up and discover what the Preacher did in Chapter 8 verse 12 that "I know it shall be well with them that fear God."

God has an eternal plan and purpose for your life! To understand God's purpose for your life, you must experience His presence and receive His gift of eternal life. Discovering that Jesus is real is the only lasting solution to the problems and questions we face in life. In verse 11, the Preacher says, "He 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 NKJV)

Only through God's grace can we achieve the eternal purpose and destiny God has designed for us. Even though this life may be temporal and all that you do quickly fades away, whatever you do that is motivated by the Holy Spirit has eternal value. Whatever God does is eternal and cannot pass away! Since God has chosen to work through us, that work of God will abide forever as an eternal testimony of God's divine presence.

How do you cultivate this divine perspective? How can we learn to recognize the eternal presence of God?

I. God's Presence Around You

We start by recognizing that God's presence is around us. Verse 11 says that He has made everything beautiful in its time. The work of God in creation manifests His eternal beauty every day of your life. David writes in Psalm 19, "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork." ([Psalms 19:1 NKJV](#))

The interesting thing about beauty is that all of us have different ideas about what it is. Beauty is something difficult to define, specifically. You've probably heard someone say, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." The most incredible beauty is God's art.

Beauty is not merely the surface adornment of creation, like paint on a house or pictures on the wall. Beauty permeates nature through and through. The closer you look at it, the more astonished you become. We see it under the microscope, and we view it through the telescope. We marvel at the intricacies of the tiniest things and are captivated by the immenseness of gigantic things. The core of fruit holds as much beauty and discovery as the rind. That is the nature of the perfect work of God. All of nature is saturated with a deep and detailed quality of beauty.

When you break out of the humanistic tunnel vision that we all seem to gravitate to and begin to discover and enjoy the incredible beauty God has placed all around you, you begin to experience the eternal presence of God that is with you every day of your life.

That's where you need to start! Examine some of the things God has created! Start taking in some sunrises and sunsets. Get out of the rut of rushing into your hectic workday. Acknowledge the eternal presence of God that is all around you! And be inspired by that! If you do, you will begin to realize that there is a beautiful and positive purpose to the ordered events of your life in Christ.

This simple discovery will release you from the tension and stress of working and striving to achieve recognition and self-worth. Don't get lost in the details and tasks of life! Rest in the fact that you are a product of God's creative genius. That alone gives you special value!

Start recognizing the beauty that God has placed around you and in you, and you'll begin to recognize God's eternal presence is always with you.

II. God's Presence Within You

Secondly, we need to welcome the presence of God into our life. The Preacher says, "He has set eternity in our heart." Within the heart of every person is a consciousness of eternity and with that the longing after it. Even though the material world is aging and decaying right before our eyes, we struggle desperately to slow and even halt its inevitable process.

No one really wants to die! We deplore the thought of death because God has put within us a consciousness of eternal life! Even though you may try to ignore it or disavow it, there is still deep within you the seed of eternity.

The Preacher says that God has set this eternity in our hearts. Strive as we will; we cannot comprehend God's work from the beginning even to the end. Discovering God is not a matter of intellectual achievement. It is a matter of the heart. It is immersed in relationship.

It's not just acquiring the tangibles of creation. It's enjoying the fellowship of the Creator. The scriptures say that the law of eternity is written upon the fleshly tablets of our heart. God created us as worshipping creatures. Every person worships something! That is our created nature. When we let God's eternal presence in and begin to fellowship with Him the desire within us to have eternal life, it becomes easy to open our heart to God and pray, "Fill me, O God, with your eternal presence and purpose." That is the objective and mission of Jesus so that inwardly and outwardly, we can stretch our hands towards heaven and commune with the everlasting God.

God wants you to embrace His eternal presence and invite Jesus to come into your life and fill you with a personal sense of God's divine and eternal presence and purpose for your life. The work of God through Jesus Christ is to manifest eternity within you.

God uses what happens around you to reveal himself to you, so you will allow the Holy Spirit to create an awaking within your spirit. It's an awaking that causes you to recognize that Jesus Christ is the eternal presence of God revealed in human flesh. It is an awaking that creates a desire for Christ to flood you with His eternal life.

God's eternal presence is all around us. And he reveals that to us so that we will want his eternal life within us. God's eternal presence transcends all of creation.

III. God's Presence Above You

Verse 11 says, "yet so, man cannot find out the work that God has done from the beginning even to the end."

The finite can never attain infinity. Trying to take God's place will only lead you to insanity. Satan tried and look where it has gotten him. That is precisely what the Preacher says will happen. Everywhere you turn, you will only come to vanity and vexation of spirit.

We live in a time-defined world, yet we have the consciousness of eternity in our hearts. Every day problems and crises intimidate and threaten us with ruin. We need divine transformation. We need eternal intervention.

Nothing in this life will ever be sufficient to meet the need of preparing us for eternity. Only Jesus can bring peace to the great struggle that goes on within us. The joy for all those who believe in Christ is that there are greater things to experience and enjoy beyond the bounds of time and space.

We won't be limited to a physical body forever. God has plans to outfit us with a body that is not limited by time and space. No space suits needed, no oxygen tanks, God plans to give us eternal, glorified bodies. Bodies that will allow us to discover for eternity just how great He really is!

We spend far too much time identifying and describing God in terms that relate to our circumstances. But God is greater than any of our circumstances! Jesus is still the master of the winds and the waves, but He is the sovereign Lord regardless of our circumstances. At any moment, God can conquer and order the circumstances of your life. What Jesus wants you to learn is that whatever your circumstances - He is God!

The Preacher says that the eyes of man grow weary with the sight of things. From the first time our eyes look out into this world, they begin to see only mortality and decay. Not only do the leaves and flowers wither and fade, but even the stars in the heavens dim and fade away. And the natural conclusion of this mortal life, even by the most gifted mind, can only be, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

But to the one who discovers the beauty and eternal presence of God and welcomes that eternal life within - to that one comes the joy and peace of knowing that there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven to everything.

Conclusion

Don't let yourself become a captive of time and a victim of your circumstances. Embrace the divine presence of God and become a conqueror of time and victor over your circumstances. Stretch out and touch eternity by receiving the eternal life offered in Jesus Christ.

God does not cause everything that happens to you. But he can use whatever has happened to show you his beauty and his eternity and sovereignty until even the worst of situations work towards your eternal benefit. When you allow the presence of God to become that real to you, no situation of life can destroy you because the work of His glory is complete in you.

The Preacher's final words are in Chapter 12. He says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil." ([Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 NKJV](#))

So the final question is, "Are you going to keep on struggling with your circumstances, or will you let Jesus come in and remove that struggle."