

## Pastor Graham Pfeiffer Sermon for New Year's Day 2023

Text. Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 *There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:*

2022 is done and dusted. So, on a scale of 1-10, how did you rate 2022. Some couldn't wait to put 2022 behind them and begin afresh in a new year. What was it like for you?

Locally, the sugar cane harvest was affected by regular rains. What looked like there would be heaps of mangoes when the trees were flowering is not the case. Rains have affected the setting on of fruit. However, for cattle farmers, the grass in the paddocks have been green all year.

In Australia, devastating floods swept through towns inundating homes and businesses and the surrounding farmland, causing people to mourn and weep, to work out what to keep and what to throw away.

Some areas had good seasons with good crops with plenty of rain during the growing period. When it came time to harvest the rains delayed and spoiled the harvest. In some areas the farmers didn't get a chance to plant at the optimum time, not because of drought but because regular rains kept paddocks saturated.

Worldwide, Putin went to war with the Ukraine, and it is still happening. King Solomon says in Ecclesiastes, there is a time to kill and a time to heal, a time for war and a time for peace. The world still prays and waits for when Putin decides it's time to stop the war, to stop killing and destroying, and seek peace.

King Solomon also wrote there is a to be born and a time to die. How many of you in your family or wider family, celebrated the news of the birth of another family addition. How many of you throughout the year, mourned the loss of a loved one.

In Solomon's effort to understand the "true meaning of life," he sees there is a time for everything. Year in and year out, Life is seasonal. Life brings with it ebbs and flows much like the changing tides of an ocean. We would love to have constantly calm waters and smooth seas everyday of our life, which we know is easier to cope with. But we know that at any time storms will come and catch us unawares. Good times and bad times come to all, and this repeats itself in each coming generation.

Love can quickly turn to hate; peace can quickly escalate to war. Life can quickly change to death. No matter how hard we try to keep things the same we can't avoid the fact that we are in a cycle of life that changes with time. Hate will turn to love, war will change to peace, death to life, tearing down will change to building up, weeping will change to laughter, mourning to dancing.

While we could easily look at life with eyes of doom and gloom, Solomon also writes God has made everything beautiful in its time. Just like a flowering plant which grows, it puts forth a beautiful flower and then it dies.

<sup>9</sup>What do workers gain from their toil? <sup>10</sup>I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. I wonder what Solomon sees as the burden. Is it that everything ebbs and flows in life. That everything has its time.

Is it, the burden that God has placed on the human race when he said to Adam after the fall, "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. <sup>18</sup>It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. <sup>19</sup>By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

When we understand that life is seasonal, that everything comes and goes at a certain time, then we can rejoice in the moments of beauty, and know that when those things happen in our life which cause us to mourn and weep, the time will come again where we will have joy and laughter.

Some people make new year's resolutions, to give more time to certain things. Or less time towards things that are unproductive for their lives. However, none of us can control when the rains come or don't come. None of us can control if serious illness, or if a serious accident may occur, or even if 2023 is when God chooses is our time to be called home.

Solomon wrote, God has set eternity in the hearts of men. This means that we can never be completely satisfied with earthly pleasures. That's because we are created in God's image. Why do you continually seek what is good in this world. It's because God has built in us a restless yearning for a perfect world which can only be found in eternity. Perhaps that is why we gauge whether the year is a good one or not. We gauge the year to how close to perfect the year is. If a lot has happened to you through out the year that has caused hardship and sadness, then that is why we would say, good riddance to that year.

While we live in this world, we have time to tear, to undo those things we have done that aren't of God and then to sew, to mend what we have undone.

Solomon wrote <sup>12</sup> I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live.

The message bible says, I've decided that there's nothing better to do than go ahead and have a good time and get the most we can out of life.

Rejoice, in the gifts God has given. Your ability to find satisfaction in your work depends on your attitude. It is easy to think, what have I gained from all the hours of hard work I put in, when through circumstances out of your control all can soon be gone. Like floods, fire, or hailstorm taking out your hard-earned income. Where competition makes a business unprofitable.

SO how do you still be happy and do good? What does that mean? What then is the purpose of life? Our purpose is to find pleasure in what God gives us through out the year, not in what we think we need to have a better year. Therefore, we enjoy the simple pleasures of eating, drinking and finding satisfaction in our toil, because it is all a gift of God. God does want us to enjoy life and the gifts he blesses us with. Everything has a time and season. It's what keeps the created order regenerating life.

In Lamentations 3:22-33 we read, Lamentations 3:22-23: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Our God created different seasons so we would learn to rely on Him. It is necessary for us to experience the brokenness of this world, to keep our eyes focused on the promise of the world we are destined for as Christians. Therefore we will experience time that cause us to weep. Yet we don't lose sight of the fact that God is with us and remains faithful in the midst of our grief and pain. He has laughter coming for us on the other side. It is through faith in Jesus Christ that God can make your life beautiful, and He does it in His own time.

God is faithful, and in these seasons, He is molding us into who we are meant to be. He is the Creator of all things good. He allows everything to work together to achieve His master plan. That we may have eternal life. What ever this year 2023 brings know that God is with you through the changes seasons, in time and eternity. Amen.