



Practicing
Life's Rhythms

Ecclesiastes 3

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:

a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,

a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

What do workers gain from their toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. 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. I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God. 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.

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

And I saw something else under the sun:

In the place of judgment—wickedness was there,
in the place of justice—wickedness was there.

I said to myself,
“God will bring into judgment
both the righteous and the wicked,
for there will be a time for every activity,
a time to judge every deed.”

I also said to myself, “As for humans, God tests them so that they may see that they are like the animals. Surely the fate of human beings is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; humans have no advantage over animals. Everything is meaningless.

All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return. Who knows if the human spirit rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?”

So I saw that there is nothing better for a person than to enjoy their work, because that is their lot. For who can bring them to see what will happen after them?

- When you hear this passage what resonates with you?
- Is this different than ways you would have engaged this text in the past?

- “Hallmark” interpretation:
 - comforting reassurance that everything happens exactly when it should and that everything will work out beautifully
- Has that been your experience?

Biblical Wisdom Literature

- Creates a conversation by intentionally disagreeing with each other – inviting the reader into life's complexity
 - **Proverbs** wisdom tends to lead to flourishing.
 - **Job** challenges that idea by portraying a righteous person who suffers profoundly despite his integrity.
 - **Ecclesiastes** questions whether wisdom and righteousness reliably produce predictable outcomes
- Developing the ability to navigate life's complexities.
 - discernment
 - humility
 - attentiveness
 - experience
 - recognizing that life often resists simple formulas

Ecclesiastes 3

- A meditation on:
 - the rhythms of life
 - the limits of human understanding and control
 - the wisdom of embracing God's gifts while acknowledging that the full pattern of reality lies beyond human comprehension
- Integrating a realism about life's unpredictability with a call to humility, gratitude, and reverence before God.
- **What 'season' or 'time' are you waiting to change?**

Practicing the Rhythms of Life

- Radical Acceptance
 - Fully acknowledging reality in the present moment.
 - Making space to celebrate the positive.
 - Not approving of painful events.
 - Not giving up or becoming passive.
 - Conserving energy that would otherwise be spent fighting what has already happened.

R.A.I.N

- Recognize – What difficult emotions am I feeling?
- Allow – Make space to feel them – including their effect in your body
- Investigate – Be curious as you gently inquire the source and energy behind these feelings
- Nurture – Be kind to yourself as these feelings arise

- Jon Kabat-Zinn:
 - Paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, nonjudgmentally.
 - allowing experience to unfold
 - dropping constant evaluation
 - observing rather than controlling
- Sounds a lot like Ecclesiastes!

- Leaning into uncertainty (Pema Chödrön)
 - staying with discomfort
 - letting uncertainty soften us
 - developing courage through openness

Victor Frankl: Acceptance becomes the foundation for **meaning** rather than despair.

Practicing the Rhythms of Life

- I'm not able to control everything
- There is a lot of uncertainty
- There are things to be thankful for
- Invitation to humble conversation with God who created time
- Acceptance is a skill that can be learned
- Intentional attention and consistent reflection can cultivate hope and peace in exchange for despair and resignation

No life is immune from suffering. When we're in solidarity with people facing pain, injustice, war, oppression, colonization—the list goes on and on—we face immense pressure to despair, to become angry or dismissive.... Yet when we're broken, we are most open to contemplation.... We're desperate to resolve our own terror, anger, and disillusionment, and so we allow ourselves to be led into the silence that holds everything together in wholeness.

*The contemplative, nondual mind is not saying, "Everything is beautiful," even when it's not. However, we may come to "Everything is **still** beautiful" by contemplatively facing the conflict between how reality is and how we wish it could be.*

~ Richard Rohr