

Turn, Turn, Turn

The Word in Song IV: Part 5 “Turn, Turn, Turn”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – August 8, 2021

11th Sunday After Pentecost

Readings: Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

Reflection: Psalm 62

Greeting: O sing to the Lord a new song. Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name. Tell of his salvation from day to day! Praise the Lord! (*Psalm 96*)

Prayer: God our protector, you are with us wherever we go. You know our hearts and our innermost thoughts. Help us to see your presence everywhere we go. Give to us a right heart so that we may love as you love and give as you give. Help us to share your peace with the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 62

For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge is in God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. Those of low estate are but a breath, those of high estate are a delusion; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than a breath. Put no confidence in extortion, and set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart on them. Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God, and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord. For you repay to all according to their work. (Psalm 62:5-12 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 62 and we hear of God’s presence in all things. How we need to turn to God at all times. That we should set our sights on salvation and not on human desires. Have you ever lost sight of God in the race for material gain? Do you know in your heart that God is the power that really matters? How do you correct course when you lose sight of Christ? How do you help others regain their path? How do we find hope in Christ?

Prayer: O God, help us to seek you in unexpected places. Help us to see your time and may we always look to you for guidance. May we be blessed to see you wherever we are. Strengthen us in our faith and put hope in our hearts. Hear our prayers and have mercy on us Lord. Let your spirit guide us in your righteous peace. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture reading for today comes from the Common English Bible. Our reading for today comes from Ecclesiastes chapter 3 verses 1 through 15.

There's a season for everything and a time for every matter under the heavens: a time for giving birth and a time for dying, a time for planting and a time for uprooting what was planted, a time for killing and a time for healing, a time for tearing down and a time for building up, a time for crying and a time for laughing, a time for mourning and a time for dancing, a time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones, a time for embracing and a time for avoiding embraces, a time for searching and a time for losing, a time for keeping and a time for throwing away, a time for tearing and a time for repairing, a time for keeping silent and a time for speaking, a time for loving and a time for hating, a time for war and a time for peace. What do workers gain from all their hard work? I have observed the task that God has given human beings. God has made everything fitting in its time, but has also placed eternity in their hearts, without enabling them to discover what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there's nothing better for them but to enjoy themselves and do what's good while they live. Moreover, this is the gift of God: that all people should eat, drink, and enjoy the results of their hard work. I know that whatever God does will last forever; it's impossible to add to it or take away from it. God has done this so that people are reverent before him. Whatever happens has already happened, and whatever will happen has already happened before. And God looks after what is driven away. (Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 CEB+)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Today we finish "The Word in Song" series. Today's message is "Turn, Turn, Turn." This one's a little bit different. And the reason it's a little different is the song itself is a biblical quotation. "Turn! Turn! Turn!" is most remembered as being done by the Byrds and was written by Pete Seeger. It reminded me of Ecclesiastes because it's quoting Ecclesiastes. But I had Ecclesiastes on the mind for some time. And for me, the two are always forever intertwined in my head. It's hard for me to read the words of Ecclesiastes without singing. It also made me think again about what the words mean. As it is put in the song "To everything, turn, turn, turn, there is a season, turn, turn, turn, and a time to every purpose under heaven." What follows is pairings. Each pair seeming to be an act of life and an act of death. An act of creation and act of destruction. But what struck me is that they aren't really times we can predict. It's also that we don't always know which time it is. And this is fleshed out in the author's own reflection. "God has made everything fitting in its time, but has also placed eternity in their hearts, without enabling them to discover what God has done from beginning to end."

There's a great wisdom in Ecclesiastes that I think can get missed in the tone of the text. The tone can feel overwhelming. It can feel negative, even pessimistic. Like it doesn't fit in with

the rest of the Bible. But Ecclesiastes does something that we don't always see in the rest of Scripture. It makes us look at the stark reality of what the world is and what life is. We always seem to be in pursuit of something but what that something is we may not always know or understand. There's always a time for everything but we don't always know correctly which time that is. And that requires a great discernment to understand. It requires a trust in God, that God knows what time it is and we may not. And I think that's hard. It's especially hard because sometimes we don't know which time it is. Is it a time for keeping silent or is it a time for speaking? How often do we confuse the two? How often do we assume we know? But Ecclesiastes shines a light on this and says, "Do you really know what time it is?" And this reading always makes me pause and think. How do we know what time it is? What are the certainties? I think the truth of it is, that for each one of these statements, they will occur in our lives. All of them.

We can really just go down the list. If I think about it there's always going to be a time for giving birth and a time for dying. We were all born into the world, and we will all pass from the world. Time for planting and time for uprooting what was planted. If we only plant, we soon run out of room and there'll be no room to plant. But we shouldn't uproot before the harvest. There's the uncomfortable one, a time for killing and a time for healing. But anyone who's studied history knows that those times exist. Just as a time for tearing down and a time for building up exists. We have to know when it's time to build things up, and to let them grow and when it's time to tear something down because it's not needed or doesn't serve its purpose anymore. And that applies both to physical buildings and to our emotional state. Connections to each other, to the emotional walls that we put up. Sometimes it's time to tear down the wall and sometimes it's time to put one up, so that there can be a time for healing. A time for crying and a time for laughing, a time for mourning, and a time for dancing. The reflection is that we need to be able to recognize that these are the things that happen in our lives. That we will laugh, and we will cry. We will mourn. We will dance. That we will have reasons to be sad and reasons to be joyous, but none of them drives out the fact that God is there in all of these things. God is there for us regardless of if we are in a time of mourning, or if we are in a time of dancing. God is there. And some of these are harder than others to tell. We may have trouble seeing God in the time for throwing stones, but we may have an easier time seeing God and in a time for gathering them. The same can be said for a time for embracing and a time for avoiding embraces. We have a much easier time looking back on the time for embracing and knowing God is there. And the time where we avoid embraces seems to be the time that we're searching, wondering if God is there. And it was this reminder that we could end each of these statements with "but God is there." A time for searching and a time for losing but God is there. A time for keeping and a time for throwing away, but God is there. A time preparing and a time for repairing, but God is there. And God's the only one knows what time it really is. But the world keeps turning. Whether it's a time for keeping silent or a time for speaking, a time for loving or a time for hating, a time for war or a time for peace. The world keeps turning. Time keeps marching on. But God is still there.

If this seems overwhelming, you should know that it is. And that's the other point. It's a matter of eternity that we can't fully fathom because we this flesh is not eternal. This worldly body has its time and its place. But the conclusion of the writer is that we should eat, drink, and enjoy what our work brings, knowing that whatever God does it will last forever. With the simple reflection of "what do we add or take away from God?" What do any of those things that are listed in Ecclesiastes have to take away from or add to God? We don't add or subtract from God. We simply experience God. We experience God's love and God's grace and God's mercy. We do the best we can with what we know and what we have. And pray that more often than not we get our timing right. But more than that, we shouldn't worry so much about it. To paraphrase Jesus, "Don't you have enough to worry about already without worrying about what tomorrow is?" I find it interesting that Jesus, on reflection, really does match with Ecclesiastes. No matter how bitter and resentful, no matter how pessimistic it may come across, Christ comes to the same conclusion. Remember that God is there and do your best. We may not want those times to be upon us, but when they are, know that God is there to help us get through. When there is a time for war, we may find the time for peace.

I'm remind to the way that "Turn! Turn! Turn!" closes. "A time for love, a time for hate, a time for peace, I swear it's not too late." I think in that added line, they help to sum up the actual hope hidden in Ecclesiastes. Life will come at us in many strange ways and take many turns that we couldn't see. In our limited scope we may not understand where they're coming from or where they're going, but we do our best, with God's help, to make it day by day. That we remember that Christ is with us, to be able to help us to navigate those twists and turns. That even when we mess up and get our time wrong, God is there to help us to know what to do next.

So, I say this to you. Eat, drink, and enjoy each other's company. Thank God for the day that you have, each and every day. In the good, the bad, and the unknown. Remember that God is there to help. Christ is always with us, and we may always turn to him for help. Don't forget to praise God for all that has happened. Thank God for his presence, always and everywhere in our lives, and that the world may turn, turn, turn, but it never turns where God can't find us. It never takes us to a place that Christ is not. That we are to enjoy what we have in life. So that no matter what comes at you in life, remember that we are always there in the presence of Christ and his peace. That we know we are in good hands. That we are in the mercy of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God of grace and glory, we thank you that you judge us not by the perfection of our actions, but by our readiness to live boldly by faith. Help us, as individuals and as a congregation, to trust you and follow where you lead, that in Christ your name may be glorified in all the earth. May we find forgiveness in your love. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – Take Care

Our series is *Take Care* and each week we will look at different aspects of self-care and the ways God helps us to take care of ourselves.

July 11th – *Doctor My Eyes* – Isaiah 38:1-20

July 18th – *On the Turning Away* – Ezekiel 18:21-32

July 25th – *Hold My Hand* – Matthew 14:22-36

August 1st – *Follow Me* – Luke 5:1-11,27-32

August 8th – *Turn, Turn, Turn* – Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup	Ambulance Crew	Angie Veach	Eric Veach
Cathy Devall	Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey
Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney	Nancy Hoke	Don Wells
Tricia Adkins	Don Stewart	Michael & Makenzie Reynolds	Ronnie Winstead
Annie McMorris	Dwight Parsons	Lauren Stewart	Charlie Henderson
Rosalee Chancellor	Phyllis Gable	Sage Martin	Dalton McFarland
Terri Kemper	Darrell Quick	Shelley Murphy	Jeff Davidson
Ruth Ann Finley	Sandy Starwalt	Family of Harold Moss	Allen Goebel & Family
Jodie Bunch	Diane Waggle	Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks
Nora Werner & Family	Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith
Bonnie Hite	Donna Graham	Kevin Drum	Kristen & Zack Morecraft
Lavada Markwell	Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts
Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte	Andie, Ed, Alex, & Katie Kulach	

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