

To Everything There is a Season

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 June 2022

Preacher: Taylor Hollingsworth

[0 : 00] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! Ecclesiastes 3, verses 1-15. This is the Word of God. For everything, there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven, a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to pluck up 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 together, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to seek and a time to lose, a time to keep and a time to cast away, a time to tear and a time to sow, a time to keep silence and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

What gain has the worker from his toil? I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

I perceive that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live. Also, that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil. This is God's gift to man. Verse 14, I perceived that whatever God does endures forever. Nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it so that people fear before him.

That which is already has been. That which is to be already has been. And God seeks what has been driven away. May God bless the preaching and the hearing of his word. God wrote a pop song.

[2 : 44] Pete Seeger recycled these words from Ecclesiastes 3 to create the song, you know it, turn, turn, turn, which was later made famous by the birds. And besides the word turn, using the chorus Seeger only added one line at the end of the song that was not original to scripture. You know what it is?

Time for peace. I swear it's not too late. So these last words were essentially a plea for world peace. And for the last 60 years, the song has been bringing comfort to people, leaving the listeners feeling optimistic. No matter how bad it gets, good times are coming. Well, however good the groove may feel, this really wasn't the comfort Solomon was communicating in his poem. In fact, the message may actually more closely resonate with Pink Floyd's time. They vividly capture our changing relationship to time when they sing, you are young and life is long and there's time to kill today. And then one day you find 10 years have got behind you. You ever felt like that? No one told you when to run. You missed the starting gun. And you run and you run to catch up with the sun, but it's sinking, racing around to come up behind you again. The sun is the same in a relative way, but you are older, shorter of breath, and one day closer to death. Every year is getting shorter. Never seemed to find the time. Plans that either come to not or half a page of scribbled lines hanging on in quiet desperation is the English way. The time is gone. The song is over. Thought I'd something more to say. What Pink Floyd captures something quite different. Time does not comfort. Time is fleeting. It's filled with sorrows that often cancel out joy.

For the younger, time often moves too slow. And for the older, time seems like it's going way too fast. But the common thread for all of us is that time frustrates all of us. Why is that?

What does this frustration that we sense teach us about who we are and who God is? And what should we do about it? Well, this morning we are going to walk with the preacher through his poem, and then we'll unpack his findings to understand the meaning of the poem. So I believe the main point for us this morning is straightforward enough. Enjoy life by fearing God, even when you can't understand all that he's doing. We're going to break this out into two points. A poem about the times and the purpose of the times. So let's look at number one. A poem about the times, verses one

through nine. We've already walked with the preacher through a series of his experiments. Y'all remember already, if you've been with us for the last few weeks, that we witnessed the failure of wisdom to solve life's puzzles in chapter one.

Then we heard about the inability of pleasure to offer ultimate meaning to us in chapter two. And then we saw the death, that death is this great equalizer to both the wise and the fool alike.

[6 : 25] We should not put our ultimate hope in any of these things under the sun. But now, chapter three, the experimentation continues here. Chapter three begins a new section. The style starts to change. She's moving from prose to poetry now. And the topic changes from God giving wisdom and joy to God setting a time for everything. Listen to how the preacher kicks off his poem in verse one. He says, for everything, there is a season, a time for every matter under heaven. So there's this appropriately dynamic range of seasons for different moments in our lives. A season, you can think of that as just like winter, spring, summer, fall. It's a fixed time with a predetermined purpose. So the preacher is setting us up here for this poem with this introduction. He's letting us know that what we're about to encounter is like this elaboration on this theme of seasons and times that encompass everything under heaven.

So the poem is really verses two through eight, and it's made up, if you look at it, 14 pairs of opposites. These pairings are descriptive, not prescriptive. This is not a list that we kind of pick from and then try to do something so that we can get a result. You'll notice if you look at this, the preacher doesn't make any kind of moral arguments or comments on any of these pairings. He doesn't say if they're good or bad, wise or foolish. That's not his point here. Instead, he uses the poem to paint a picture of the full breadth of the human experience on earth. And in this picture, the preacher identifies two basic types of times that we will all experience ourselves. Theologian Zach Eswine labels these two polarities of human experiences as disquiets and delights. Disquiets and delights. I think it's a helpful label. It ensures that we have kind of a real realistic grasp of the human experience.

You see, for those of us who are prone to draw the world in pastels and who see God's purpose and nearness only in terms of smiles and victories, the preacher boldly identifies disquieting times, such as death, mourning, destruction, loss. And for those of us who tend to be glass half empty kind of people, who describe the world only with pain and who see the world only in terms of its mud, the preacher counters by describing the delightful things. Birth, healing, laughter, dancing. Well, some of us would rather not think about what is delightful. Others of us avoid what's disquieting. Where do you tend to fall? Is your perspective mainly tinted by delight or disquiet? Well, the poem begins with these bookends of the human experience. In verse two, if you look, everything else falls between these two moments, life and death. I have a vivid reminder of birth every time we get close to the intersection of Park

Street and Highway 30, because that's where our daughter, Elia, right there, was born. She was born at Park Street and 30 inside our car. We didn't quite make it to the hospital. It was a crazy and memorable night.

Now, every time we drive past that little intersection, we say, there's Elia's traffic light. There it is. It's a reminder for us. And now she's about the same age as I was when I went to my first funeral.

[10 : 20] And I remember vividly seeing the casket get lifted up in front of my eyes, and my eyes began to fill up with hot tears because I realized my grandma was never coming back. Now, this room is just filled with experiences like that on these two ends of the human experience. So not only does human life in, but so does plant life. It's right there. There's a time to plant. Some people, I think of like a Dina Acres, has a green thumb. I have a black thumb of death. I don't know, maybe some of you are like me.

I remember trying to grow a watermelon as a kid. We didn't know anything about pH levels or like soil types or the right time to plant things, but we tilled that rocky ground and we got a seed planted. Yes, we did it. We watered religiously every day for months, and finally something actually started to grow. We were so excited, but that big, beautiful, juicy melon that we had in our dreams never got bigger than the size of a softball in our actual garden. We tried to harvest it and eat it, but that thing tasted like a wet sock. And don't ask me why I know what a wet sock tastes like. That's a different story, but it was awful to say the least. Verse three says that there's a time to kill and a time to heal. What does the preacher have in mind here? I wonder what I would have done if I were Dietrich Bonhoeffer, if I was in his shoes as a pastor in Nazi Germany. He had to wrestle through the ethics of participating in the assassination plot against Adolf Hitler. Was this the time to kill?

Well, again, this is not intended to be an ethical treatise here. This is a poem, but it's a description of life under the sun. There's also time to heal. Many of us have experienced a slow recovery of like a sprained ankle, for instance, or a broken bone, right, Kelgen? So it's painful. I just went through a season of recovery from surgery, and I wasn't supposed to lift over 10 pounds for a number of weeks, and poor Elizabeth had to change my socks and put my shoes on and tie them up for me. I couldn't mow the lawn, pick up my kids. That was a hard season. It was a difficult season of restless activity, inactivity, as my body was recovering. It was a season of waiting and humble dependence on others. Well, there's a time also to break down and a time to build up. Our community is going through this transition with elementary schools. I know many of you guys actually attended these elementary schools when they were in their prime, but now they got some issues, right? They got a couple issues, structural issues, leaks, flake paint, decay. It's a time to tear down. On the flip side, we live really close to the new building that's being built, the new school. So it's been fun to see over the last year or so, the incremental progress day to day. We just watched as the foundation was laid all the way up until recently, and they wired it and put the windows up. You start to see electricity on the inside.

Building up takes patient, consistent, hard work. Verse four says there's a time to weep. I remember intentionally sucking up one of my big brother's prized bottle caps in the vacuum, just to spite him, just to be mean. He wept when he found out. Then he ripped up my colored pencil dinosaur drawing that I had spent hours working on, and I wept for hours after that. Maybe you have something that comes to mind when you think of weeping. There are moments of sadness and loss, but there's also a time to laugh. I can't help but think about Chris Pritchett last year, the anniversary picnic, giving his dad joke, and he said, you know, what do you call a pile of cats?

[14:13] You remember, Chris? A meownton, right? That's great. That's hilarious. I love that. There's a time to laugh. And then there's also a time to mourn. Maybe you've experienced a sudden job loss, or maybe the sting of a miscarriage, or maybe you've mourned over dreams that have timed out. These are times to reflect on what once was, or what will never be again. But there's also a time to dance. I love seeing little kids dance. I don't know about you. I think it's hilarious. I'll put on some funk music around the house sometimes, and our two-year-old will just intuitively know that it is time to bust a move.

He just goes crazy. He'll start to bounce and stand on his head and clap. It's awesome. Those are wonderful, carefree moments right there. But there's also, in verse 5, a time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones together. There's no total agreement on what this actually means. It's really confusing.

But some believe that scattering stones was like a warfare tactic to cause a field to be unusable for planting. So perhaps like a modern-day equivalent of this would be to protest the flourishing of something like the abortion industry. There is an appropriate time to push back and hinder the progress of such evils. But there's also time to gather stones together. This could be clearing a space for use, or maybe it's collecting stones for building. Either way, the idea is redeeming something that was lost, like a new business owner. Maybe going into a failing business, you kind of troubleshoot all the operations and the systems, and then you make it great. It's this meticulous process of redemption. There's also a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing. There are times when you greet your friends with a hug, and there is a time to sever relationships. I remember my best friend in middle school started hanging out with the wrong crowd, and he actually began to shoplift.

And every time that we were hanging out, I always found myself in an awkward situation. And as painful as it was, I knew that it was time to part ways. I needed to find new friends. It was time to refrain from embracing. Verse 6 says, there's a time to seek and a time to lose. I have had a sock drawer full of single socks for some time now. The Bermuda Triangle is somewhere inside of my dryer, I'm convinced.

I've had times of scouring the house, looking for my poor socks partner to no avail. But eventually, you've just got to call the search party off, you know? You got to just switch over to flip-flops and move on with life.

[16:54] There's a time for diligent searching and a time to call it quits. There's also a time to keep and a time to cast away. My mom kept tons of stuff from when I was a little kid. Maybe you moms are in the same mode right now.

I've got popsicle stick ornaments from kindergarten, dinosaur pictures, the ones that weren't torn up. Even some of my baby teeth, as weird as that is, that's pretty weird. But then, just a few years ago, my mom moved to a new place and decided it was time to move those former treasures to the trash pile.

Everything I didn't want, they hauled to the dump. It was time to cast away. Verse 7 says, there's a time to tear and a time to sew. This is likely a reference to the Jewish practice of tearing their garments in a time of grief, mourning, or repentance. Maybe you've seen this in the Bible. For example, when Jacob thought that his son Joseph had been mauled to death by a wild animal, he tore his clothes in sorrow. There's a time for grieving, but then there's also a time to sew up and move on with life under the sun. There's a time to keep silence and a time to speak.

And it's likely that this phrase refers to the wisdom of discerning the right time to confront or to just keep your mouth shut. Sometimes silence is the right thing. Think about in the context of comforting someone who's just experienced severe loss. Or silence may be the best option when talking to a hot-headed fool. Just stop. And other times, to keep silent would be a disservice.

There are occasions that require a bold confrontation or a word in season that brings life and healing. Verse 8 ends the poem saying that there is a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. There is a right love for that which brings life. We should love the things like the institutions of marriage, the family, the local church. But to love these things means that there will be times we must hate those things which bring death. There's a time to hate addiction, poverty, abuse, neglect, and injustice. And then the preacher moves from personal experience to national experience.

[19:24] The poem is not advocating for war or pacifism. It simply describes part of the human experience. But the reality is that our world is just riddled with conflicting values and these competing powers.

And as humans, we are forced to participate in times of war, just as we have generations that enjoy those seasons of peace. So what are we to make of this poem? Why does the preacher go through all the pains of listing out these points of contrast? Well, for one, as you look back over that list, disquiets and delights, it's clear that there are distinct times to experience each of these.

It doesn't work to fight against them. We can't continue to live in an abandoned house when it needs to be torn down. To do so would be dangerous and foolish. We can't expect a harvest in wintertime when the earth is cold and dead. To do so would be a waste of time and energy. It would be literally fruitless. Part of what the preacher is revealing in this list of distinct times is that we are, in a sense, captive to the times. We are not completely independent and free.

We can't simply just do what we want, when we want, how we want. Time is a tether that tugs us along. Look at verse 9 with me. The preacher concludes the poem with this rhetorical question. What gain has the worker from his toil? Why in the world would he follow up this weird poem about the times with this question about the worker's gain? Well, if you remember, he's asked this question before. It mirrors chapter 1, verses 2 through 4, which says, vanity of vanities, says the preacher.

[21:17] Vanity of vanities. All is vanity. And here it is. What does man gain by all the toil, at which he toils under the sun? A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. So the preacher is connecting the poem of the times with his opening comments at the beginning of the book. What gain is there in this reality? What profit or advantage is there in this world where God has imposed this curse on our toil and our activities? The answer is nothing.

There is no profit because everything we do is just nullified by the curse. There is no net gain from all the planting, building, and warring. Even the structure of the poem signals this same conclusion. Even though it dynamically moves between the positive and negative, the times ultimately negate each other out. If you look, there's 13 pluses or 14 pluses, 14 negatives adding up to zero. It reinforces this idea of futility. The poem reveals the great futility of the times under the sun. Nothing is gained.

So the poem is intended to show the inevitable sameness of life under the sun. We all go through the same actions of life, birth, work, love, and then death. Nothing really changes here today, gone tomorrow. This is what the preacher presents as another one of life's big barriers, the relentless fixity of seasons. We seek stability and meaning in all of our activities and we come away frustrated. So what do we do? What do we do with this frustration? What do we turn? Let's move the point to the purpose of the times. The purpose of the times. Take a look with me at verse 10.

I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. I want you to notice that this is the first time in our passage that God is mentioned. And for the rest of our text, it is thoroughly God saturated. Just check these out. Verse 10, I have seen the business that God has given. 11, he has made everything beautiful. He has put eternity into man's hearts, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done. Verse 13, this is God's gift to man. 14, whatever God does endures forever.

[23 : 59] God has done it. 15, God seeks what has been driven away. Even though people were the main subjects of the time of the poem, verses 10 through 15 reveal God as the primary actor. The preacher wants us to ask, who apportions these times and seasons? All of these times are ultimately designated by God.

Who determines the time to live and to die? Ultimately, God fashions us within our mothers and he appoints the number of days in our lives, even before we're born. Look at this amazing text in Psalm 139. Verse 13 says, for you were, you formed my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. Life. Verse 16, your eyes saw my unformed substance. In your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me.

Even before there were any of them. Life and death. Who is sovereign over every nation and every ruler in the world? Proverbs 21.1 says, the king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord. He turns it wherever he wills. Daniel 2.21. He, God, changes times and seasons. He removes kings and sets up kings.

He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. Psalm 33, 10 and 11. The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing. He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever. The plans of his heart to all generations. Even in the disquiets of life, God is sovereignly acting. You remember when Job was stripped of everything? He experienced this affliction from Satan and he lost his children, his wealth, even his health. He lost these things, if you remember through theft, through murder, through sickness, natural disasters from his perspective.

Yet when he cries out to God, he does not say that God gives and Satan takes away. That's not what he says. He says in Job 1.21, naked I came from my mother's womb and naked shall I return. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Though they're often carried out indirectly, God's sovereign purposes are being worked out at every level of life in every single moment, even down to the roll of a dice. Proverbs 16.33, the lot is cast into the lap, but it's every decision is from the Lord.

[27 : 16] This is how Joseph, after being betrayed by his own brothers, sold into slavery and enduring years and years of injustice, could look at those who betrayed him in the eyes and he could say in Genesis 50.20, as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today. So God is utterly sovereign over all times under the sun.

But why? Why does the preacher want us to see this? Well, if you've worked in an office, you're quite familiar with keeping a calendar of appointments. The calendar in our office controls our comings and our goings. It greatly limits our freedoms. We don't go into the day with this open-ended question, what should I do today? No, we have to face it with this closed question of what have we already committed ourselves to do? Whatever regulates our time restrains our freedom. So in a much greater way, this text reveals that God has written our times in the calendar. We don't have freedom to alter them or to completely understand them. This is the futility the preacher is wanting us to grasp here.

Our plans are limited and our ability to change our schedules is confined to God's purposes. So the goal of attributing all power to God is not to blame God for tragedy, but to call attention to the ever-present limits of our freedom. We're being told that we have been placed in a world that we did not create and that this world has repetitive cycles that have been assigned by someone else. We're under the authority of these repetitions and have been placed under the authority by the hand and the purpose of God himself. This can produce either a sense of bondage and futility or a sense of reverential awe to the one who holds all things together. Our frustrating restrictions are meant to highlight the one who plans all time. Author and pastor Doug Wilson explains that if God decrees all things, then I cannot escape him, not even by plunging myself into all depravity. A man who embraces evil simply finds himself a tool in the hand of the Almighty. A man who rejects evil and follows wisdom finds himself a son in the family of the Almighty.

The only one option not offered us is that of thwarting and restricting the purposes of God. So not only does God have all power over time, but he also has a unique perspective on time. Look at verse 11. He has made everything beautiful in its time. So according to God's vantage point, all of these appointed times are beautiful. I don't know about you, but I've had moments in my life where I would want to disagree with that assessment. Am I right? There are other words I could think of for the experience of my life under the sun, including painful, agonizing, sad, bland, disappointing.

[31 : 02] So what are we to make of this whenever it says, every time is beautiful? Well, it really depends on perspective.

I'm reminded of a little boy resting against the couch at his grandmother's feet while she works on embroidery. And from below, he only sees this jumbled mess of strings hanging down from her needlework.

Ecclesiastes shows what life is like under the loom. We long to see the pattern from above, to behold the beauty of this creator, the weaving in and out. But our perspective is limited. God has a complete view, but all we have is a point of view. And our limited perspective is unable to span the mind of God. We desperately want to understand what's going on, but only God knows.

In fact, this is exactly what the rest of verse 11 goes on to explain. He has put eternity into man's heart. He has put eternity into man's heart. He has put eternity into man's heart. He has put out what God has done from the beginning to the end. God, he's placed this sense of concern for the future.

We're made to be curious over our destiny, to wonder about our fate. God has placed the urge there, but we have no capacity to satisfy the urge. Why is that? Well, it seems to me that this is a fork in the road for us. Will we embrace or will we fight our God-given limitations? It reminds me of a dog Elizabeth and I used to have. He was a Jack Russell Beagle named Bongo. On the weekends, we would like to try and sit next to the Hawassi River and read. But notice I said try. When we took Bongo with us, we would tie him to a tree and he had literally a 40-foot radius to work in. But he would always just sprint as fast as he could to the extreme outer perimeter and literally choke himself the entire time we were sitting there.

[33 : 25] Elizabeth and I would be just sitting there trying to read and he would be at the end of his just spazzing out. And we're like, what are you doing? So he just lurched again and again at the end of his leash. And instead of enjoying the sphere of freedom and pleasure that he was given, he insisted on just fighting and only found himself choked and miserable. We're not much different.

We're not much different than that. How do you respond to your creatureliness? Do you sprint to the edge of the season that you are in? Are you miserable and suffocating because there's always something better just around the corner for you? Do you lack contentment in your season of singleness?

Let me plead with you not to miss the freedom of serving others during this season and to grow. Are you frustrated by the life stage of your kids? Oh, don't despise this precious, messy season of life. Because we'll be looking back wishing we had it again soon, guys. Do you find yourself slowing down and longing for the good old days?

Let me encourage you to not fix your heart on what once was. Instead, embrace this season God has you in to invest the wisdom that the Lord's given you over all these years in the next generation.

[35 : 15] Don't waste this season. These are all God-appointed seasons of life. Embrace the wonderful freedoms within the boundaries that He has assigned to you today.

So, how does the recognition of God's power and perspective shape how we should live in these God-given times? Look at 12 and 13 with me.

I perceive that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live. Also, that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil. This is God's gift to man. Well, in light of our creaturely limitations, we ought to recognize God's good gifts to us. Notice that almost every term in here is positive. They're all happy terms. The preacher speaks of pleasure and enjoyment. He talks about eating and drinking, the good things of life. He encourages us to do good. And best of all, he reminds us that all these things are God's good gifts to man.

So, when he says that there is nothing better than doing God's business, he's not telling us to settle for something second-rate. The preacher is saying that there's meaning and there's joy in the regular things of everyday life. Of course, it's always a temptation for us to live for earthly pleasure.

[36 : 49] But the way to resist temptation is not by avoiding everything. Rather, as Pastor Kent Hughes has said so well, don't be a user and a taker, be a receiver and a thanker. That's the key. That's the difference.

So, what does it mean when he says to be joyful? Well, one of the best ways, I think, to live in light of God's sovereignty is to trace out the good gifts back to the giver. I've got a wonderful prayer for you that you could use, a scripture that you can use throughout the day. I remember the week before my uncle passed away from cancer. He sat in his sunroom, weak and frail from the cancer, but with a big smile on his face. He was soaking up the sun and the beauty of his friendship with his wife by his side. And he rehearsed this verse quite often. Psalm 118 24, even to the day that he died, this was his verse that he kept saying, this is the day that the Lord has made.

Even the day with cancer, even the deathbed. So, let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Because every day is rich with its own set of gifts that we can trace back to the giver. Every day.

We are to eat and to marvel at the beautiful array of flavors. Amen, John?

We are to drink and to find satisfaction. These point to a spread of creaturely blessings that the Lord's given us. The idea is simply to enjoy the pleasures of life that God has created and enjoy the results of your work. These are good gifts. What does he mean when he says, do good in that verse?

[38 : 51] What is that talking about? I think Ephesians 2 10 brings this and just blossoms it for us. It says, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Isn't that fascinating? There is God appointed good for us to do each and every day. Let's not concern ourselves with the distant future and the endless possibilities.

What good works has God laid out for your today? Who has he connected you in this season to serve? What good can you do in your home or your family? What good can you do in your job with your co-workers?

What good can you do for the people you rub shoulders with in the community? What good can you do for the people in this church? Presbyterian pastor Thomas Boston once said, each generation has its work assigned it by the sovereign Lord, and each person in the generation has his also. And now is our time. We cannot be useful in the generation that went before us, for then we were not. Nor can we be useful personally in that which shall come after us, for then we shall be cut off the stage.

Now is our time. Let us not neglect usefulness in our generation. One of the ways that we can move forward in this is to put these verses in the first person and to use it as a job description.

[40 : 33] This is what I mean. You can go ahead and put it up there. There is nothing better for me than to be joyful and to do good as long as I live. Also, that I should eat and drink and take pleasure in all my toil. This is God's gift to me.

That's helpful. That's very helpful. The preacher concludes this section with one more observation in verse 14. He says, I perceived that whatever God does endures forever. Nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it.

God has done it so that people fear before him. What's he talking about when he says, whatever God does endures forever? The preacher is highlighting here God's inscrutable power to bring all of his purposes to pass.

The God-appointed times that shape our lives are purposefully designed. Every single one of them. His enduring sovereignty really should encourage us as we live as creatures under the sun.

As Zach Eswine said, no matter what time it is, we learn to adjust to it on the basis of the hope and purpose that God has in it. That everything has a beauty to it, by which the preacher declares that every disquieting, and delightful moment under the sun has been fitted by God for his purposes.

[42 : 00] With God, everything fits. Nothing is wasted or lost. God does not abandon even one second of life under the sun.

No disquiet is God forsaken. No true delight is God neglected. What's the purpose of these God-appointed times that we're looking at here?

God has done it so that people fear before him. Let me be clear. God is not trying to scare us into submission.

Fear of God in the Bible is always a positive concept. Theologian Michael Reeves said that true fear of God is true love for God defined.

It is the right response to God's full-orbed revelation of himself in all his grace and glory. So to fear God is not to give up on finding the meaning of life, but to rest our lives on the one and only solid foundation for time and all eternity.

[43 : 05] To fear God is to believe that he's still in control, even when we can't see what he's doing. This corrects a sinful fear that drives us away from God, and this kind of fear drives us toward him in love and in awe.

This is the fear that the preacher wants to highlight for us. We recognize our creaturely limitations and our power and our perspective, and we cast ourselves on our sovereign God in staggered faith and praise.

But how can we know that we can trust him with our times? How can we know that he actually cares for us? We can trust him because he is the God who arranged all the events of all history to climax in the rescuing grace of Jesus Christ for sinners like you and me.

Just look at this wonderful text in Galatians 4 verses 4 through 5. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Romans 5, 6, For while we were still weak at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. The God who Jesus revealed can be trusted with the pages of our lives.

[44 : 38] The hand that writes your schedule is the same hand that was pierced for your sin. The God who steers you into his future is a God whose trustworthiness has been clearly and beautifully demonstrated through Jesus Christ.

So I think it's fitting that we close with these wise words from David Hubbard. He says, God's unyielding sovereignty is attested in life's happenings.

Our responses are to trust him with our whys and whys, to be thankful for the what's that ease our pain and spark our joy. And with the rest of creation, to say yes to his ground rules for our existence.

So let's be a church that enjoys life by fearing God, even when we can't understand all that he's doing. And let's enjoy it together.

Let's pray. Father, we are so grateful that you are a God of all power and all perspective and that we can trust you with every moment of our lives, knowing that you are weaving something beautiful together.

[46 : 05] And when we stand back on that last day, when we don't just have a perspective, but we have your perspective, we can see all things in this tapestry that you're creating. We can stand back and say, God, you are good.

You are so good. Thank you for rescuing us. Thank you for saving us from ourselves. We pray all these things in the name of Jesus. Amen. You've been listening to a message at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens.

For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com. Thank you forwasser, you