

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon title: The Stewardship of Time, Ecclesiastes 3

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INTRODUCTION: Two week ago, I began a series of sermons entitled, Total Life Stewardship. Today, I want us to look at four points regarding time:

1. Solomon said there is a time for everything.
2. Solomon said everything is a race against time.
3. Solomon said God controls time.
4. We must be content with the time in which we live.

When we think of the span of our lives, we would probably agree time is our greatest asset and also our greatest liability. Early on in life we learn this, don't we? We learn how time is both our enemy and our friend. Early on in life, we learn the rewards of careful planning and the cost of poor planning.

I remember in school how I admired those who were disciplined with their time. They were the ones who rose to the top of the class in all ways, it seemed. I remember one girl who was at the top of the class academically, but she had very few friends. So, what I realized was she spent all of her time on school and nothing else. She made her choice, and I hope it paid off for her. Then there were those who spent time with sports or with the band, or perhaps they spent most of their time socializing. But, the truth is: Anyone who is successful at anything, has spent plenty of time working on their goals.

How we spend our time says a lot about who we are. I wonder how many of you spend the majority of your time doing something you do not like. There are periods of time when we must work through difficulties, and there is no other way around it. But, I find the happiest people are those who spend the majority of their time doing what they love.

When we consider this topic of total life stewardship, we've got to put time right up there as our most valuable resource.

When time passes, it's impossible to get it back.

A friend of mine told me how he went to his son's high school football game one Friday night. The game was moving slowly. Nothing was happening, so he decided to go home. Later, when his son came home, he said, "Dad, did you see me make that touchdown?" He told his son he had left the game early, and his tough, football player son broke down in tears. My friend felt so terrible about it, he never missed another game. He realized how important the gift of time was to his son.

Think about songs about time—

If I Could Turn Back Time

Time After Time

If I could Put Time in a Bottle

25 or 6 to 4

Time is On My Side

The Longest Time

Rock Around the Clock

Time Won't Let Me

Don't Blink

Through the Years

I saw a list of 1,174 songs which mentioned time. The man who made the list started it in 2004. He's got more time than I do.

Let me tell you what the hardest thing about being in the ministry is... Here it is: the management of time. I am sure you'd say the same thing about your career and your life. This puts us all on the same playing field, doesn't it? Everything is a race against time. One day this week, I had some unexpected, unpleasant business to take care of. It took the whole day. That's just part of it. There are so many things pulling for my attention, it's really hard to do it all. So, thank you for your patience.

And, right or not, some of you are thinking about this week and wondering how you are going to do everything you need to do. Some of you are looking at your watches right now to see how much longer you'll be here.

First, SOLOMON SAID THERE IS A TIME FOR EVERYTHING.

SCRIPTURE: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 ¹“*There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens:*

² *a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot*

³ *a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build*

⁴ *a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance*

⁵ *a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,*

⁶ *a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away*

⁷ *a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak*

⁸ *a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.”*

The first written record of the word “multi-task” was from 1954, and it was used in a mechanical context. In 1966, the word came to prominence with computer usage. In 1998, people started using the word “multi-task” in reference to human activity.

In the age of multitasking, it's difficult sometimes to realize what time it is. Look at the verses I just read. The concepts don't read as if they overlap each other.

APPLICATION: As good stewards of time, we must learn how to say “yes” at the right time and “no” at the right time. It seems I've said more “no's” his year than I've said, “yes” How many of us have a hard time saying “no” to the point we are completely involved in everything except what we really want to do?

Haven't we all learned the value of good timing? How many of us wish we'd waited until the right time to say something?

So, Solomon said there is a time for everything—

Second, SOLOMON SAID EVERYTHING IS A RACE AGAINST TIME.

SCRIPTURE: Ecclesiastes 3:9-13 ⁹ *What do workers gain from their toil?* ¹⁰ *I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race.* ¹¹ *He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet^[a] no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.* ¹² *I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live.* ¹³ *That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God.*

EXPLANATION: Here Solomon talks about work. He talks about the passing of beauty. He talks about eternity and how we live in just a parenthesis somewhere on the timeline.

We all recognize the passing of time. Every human does, and there is not one thing we can do to stop it. Everything is a race against time it seems. Our household appliances were designed to save us time. Our cars help us cover great distances quickly. Planes are designed to go faster and faster. Our old microwave was fine until I read about one which would cook even faster. I have a cell phone, which gives me the weather forecast, my bank balance, the news, TV shows, the Bible, oh yes, and I can use it to talk on the phone anywhere in the world.

We have goals, deadlines. We have bills due. We make plans, which takes time. We live by the clock.

Here are a few common phrases we use about time:

A good time was had by all

A hard time

A matter of time

A race against time

A stitch in time

A week is a long time in politics

About time

Ahead of one's time

All in good time

All the time in the world

Did I catch you at a good time?

In the nick of time

These are only a few of some 300 English phrases regarding time. All of them indicate the passing of time. We are all completely aware time passes. The present is only for a second, and then it becomes the past. We are all acutely aware we are moving toward something. What are we moving toward? Look in verse 11. We are all moving toward eternity. Everyone wants to go to heaven, but no one wants to die. And, between now and heaven, we are all trying to do as many things as we can. We all want to beat the clock, don't we?

APPLICATION: As good stewards of time, we must know what's important and what can wait.

- So, Solomon said there is a time for everything.
- Solomon said everything is a race against time, and—

Third, SOLOMON SAID GOD CONTROLS TIME.

SCRIPTURE: Ecclesiastes 3:14-17 ¹⁴ *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.*

¹⁵ *Whatever is has already been,
and what will be has been before;
and God will call the past to account.*

¹⁶ *And I saw something else under the sun:
In the place of judgment—wickedness was there,
in the place of justice—wickedness was there.*

¹⁷ *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.”*

EXPLANATION: Within his insight, Solomon realized that time passes for people, but for God, he's not bound by time. He lives outside of time. He created it. We don't tend to think of time as a creation, do we? But, it is. And, since God created time, he owns it. It's his. It's at his disposal. Solomon reminds us of God's timelessness.

And, the scripture says God will make sure no one is in a hurry. No one will be able to interrupt the judgement for any reason.

On Friday night, I drove on the interstate listening to the radio as Paris was under simultaneous attacks by terrorists. My chest literally ached as I heard what happened. Let me say it very clearly... Those who killed people in the name of Allah are burning in hell at this very moment and some day will face the judgement. Their completely misguided beliefs that killing people in the name of Allah guarantees them a place in heaven is completely false. Folks, believing such nonsense is just down right satanic.

APPLICATION: In this parenthesis of eternity called time, God created man and woman and gave them everything they needed to be successful in this world. Because of their disobedience, sin entered the world. Fast forward eons later, and here you have sin culminating in perverted theology. Someday though, in eternity, God will bring judgement.

In our stewardship of time, we must remind ourselves that we have but one life on this earth to live, therefore, don't waste it. Think of the terrorist. God gave him one life to live, and he wasted it on hating others.

Review—

- Solomon said there is a time for everything.
- Solomon said everything is a race against time.
- Solomon said God controls time, and—

Fourth, WE MUST BE CONTENT WITH THE TIME IN WHICH WE LIVE.

SCRIPTURE: Ecclesiastes 3:18-22 ¹⁸ *I also said to myself, "As for humans, God tests them so that they may see that they are like the animals. ¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ *All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return.* ²¹ *Who knows if the human spirit rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?”*

²² *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?*

EXPLANATION: Many times, Solomon in his writings, pointed out the inconsistencies he saw during his life. He points out: Animals and people have one thing in common—none have any control over time. We must not misinterpret this scripture to say animals and people are the same. The Bible is clear: God made people and put a soul in them—a soul that can know him.

SCRIPTURE: In Verse 21, he said, *“Who knows if the human spirit rises upwards and if the spirit of the animal goes down in to the earth?”*

EXPLANATION: The truth is none of us know. Only God knows. And, God has given humans the opportunity to know him, the one who controls time.

Many, many people live their lives dissatisfied. Perhaps it’s good to be dissatisfied with ourselves to a point. Perhaps it’s good to be dissatisfied with society to a point. But, some people spend their entire lives being dissatisfied with everything.

APPLICATION: If we are to be good stewards of our time, we must make the most of the time in which we live. Wishing you could live during another place in history is really a waste of time. God has put you right here in this time to accomplish his purposes.

If you are worried about the future, you need to learn to be more trusting of God. No one knows what the future holds, and Solomon tells us to find contentment and accept this time as our lot.

CONCLUSION: As people of faith, we must learn to live with the inconsistencies we see. A boat set out for a destination presses on toward the destination in spite of calm or raging waters.

- Time is running out folks. The Apostle Paul said we are only vapor, here one minute and gone the next.
- Time is running out for America. Folks, history is moving, not in a good direction right now.
- The only hope we have is in God because he controls time. It's his.
- God sent Jesus to his earth to be our Savior. The Bible says in John 1:12,
¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God... ”

Won't you put your faith in Jesus this morning?

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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