



Living With the End in Mind
Part 3 – A Time for Everything
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We're in the third week of *The End in Mind* series. We've been going through the Book of Ecclesiastes, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, and now we are in Chapter 3. The first eight verses of Ecclesiastes 3 are the brads that tie the first two chapters together. So, if you aren't familiar with the book of Ecclesiastes at all, it's a poetical book. So, it's one of five poetical books that sit right in the middle of the Old Testament. So, you have 17 historical books, you have 5 poetical books, and then you have 17 prophetic books. Those are the 39 that make up the Old Testament. Those five poetical books are really good principles for living life. Solomon wrote a lot of them. He wrote a lot of Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes. He was the wisest man, outside of Jesus, to ever walk this earth. He gives us really good principles. They are not promises. That's important to know.

The chapter we're looking at today talks about how there's a time for everything. We will finish with dust to dust. So, I think it's important in Branson to ask a poll question. When is the right time to start putting these up (Christmas lights)? Anybody in here pre-October? Any pre-Halloween? Anybody in here have their Christmas lights up already? Those people are year around just because they're too lazy to every take them down; I'm just saying.

How many of you will wait until the Friday after Thanksgiving? It's tradition and that's when we do Christmas lights. Dad's like, "Eat turkey first, then Christmas lights the next day to burn the turkey off." How many of you have already started listening to Christmas music? I can do Christmas lights because it takes so much work to get them up you want to enjoy them longer. Christmas music is the day after Thanksgiving in my opinion.

There's a time for everything. I traveled to Atlanta this week with my ten-year-old. We went down to Atlanta and back. In the airport, there's a time to gather all your belongings and put everything back in your backpack and your suitcase. And there is a time not to do it. The time not to do it is right at the conveyor belt. There is a whole line of people behind you. It's called social awareness, people. This guy is doing it right. This is the right way to get all your stuff back together as you travel for the holidays. Everyone around you will be a lot happier.

And when you're walking off the plane on the jet bridge, that's not when you start putting everything... There's a whole line of people getting off the plane with you. Social awareness.

So, sports fans, there's a time to gloat over victory and there is not a time to do it. There's a time for everything. Chiefs fans, we know you're good; you don't have to remind us all the time. Proverbs 24: 17 says, **Do not boast in your enemy's defeat**. Yes, I'm speaking to you. I see all the Chiefs jerseys in here today. Like when Ted alluded to Liberty's win over Arkansas the day after Arkansas lost, that's why nobody laughed; it was too soon. All you Arkansas fans, I heard you cheering. It was too soon.

I'm watching the Alabama/ Tennessee game with my ten-year-old the other day. My father-in-Law sitting right here is a big Roll Tide fan. My little ten-year-old starts giggling, and my wife's upset that her Roll Tide... She starts getting upset and says, "Why are you giggling?" He says, I think it's funny because Alabama never loses." It wasn't the right time. I said, "Aden, it's not the right time to start laughing right now."

Here's another one on a little more serious note. When Ted or I or the teaching team are up here and we're praying with people that are literally turning their lives over to Jesus or asking to be prayed for with family members that are sick. We're up here after a service, connecting with people where God is moving in their heart. That is the wrong time to come up and have a theological debate with me. The right time for that is never, but that is definitely the wrong time.

Here's another one. There are people in here that have just gone through a miscarriage. My wife and I went through a miscarriage. You don't realize how many people go through miscarriages until you go through one. Let me encourage you. It's not that I don't want to know that you went through a miscarriage too, but sometimes the most powerful thing is your timing. So, when someone is going through something hard – loss of a loved one, going through a miscarriage, going through a divorce – the response shouldn't be "Me too." The response should be to listen, to press in. There's a time when you can share that story, but not in the immediate moment of somebody's grief. It's not about you know because you're there... No, it's about this person is hurting, so I'm going to step into that space and just listen and comfort and love.

There's a time when you should text and there is a time when you should not text. A time when you should not text is when you're driving. That's called driving while intoxicated; it's not a good idea. There is a time when you should post on social media and there's a time when you shouldn't post on social media. Usually when it has to do with political things, it's never. Or you should ask yourself, *is this honoring to God? Will this give grace to the hearer? Will this build other people up?* Those are all biblical principles.

There's a time to call rather than text. There's a time to call rather than email. I encourage my staff all the time. "Hey, if we have a serious matter and there's conflict, don't text it, don't email it." You can never read the tone or the text in an email or a text message. It's the body language, everything. It's just so much more fruitful. I know some of you hate face to face confrontation and a text let's you hide behind your phone. That just makes the matter worse. So, there is a time for everything.

There's a time to pray. When is the time to pray? Always. 1 Thessalonians 5: 16 – 18 says, **Pray continually**. It's always the right time to pray. Sometimes people probably think I'm crazy and I talk to myself. I'm not. If my lips are moving, I'm just praying. If I'm in my car and my lips are moving and no

one is sitting in my car, I'm just praying. I'm just praying all the time that God would just guide and lead me.

These first eight passages in Ecclesiastes 3 are talking about how there's a time for everything. There's a right time for things and there's a wrong time for things. This is the wisdom of Solomon that he's sharing with us.

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens. I love that he said that there is a *season*. All of you are either in a winter, coming out of winter, or you're leaving winter. You're about to enter into a tough season. Some of you in here would say you are in a tough season right now. You have been going through a tough season. Do you know the beautiful thing about winter in the Ozarks? We all know what's coming. Spring in the Ozarks is beautiful. So, some of you right now are in winter. I want you to know that spring is coming. You're in one of those three seasons your entire life. You're either about to go into a tough season, you're in the middle of a tough season, or you're getting out of a tough season. But through it all, the one constant is the Lord. And he sees you in your tough season, he sees you about to enter the tough season, and he sees you getting out of the tough season because he's the one getting you out of it. He's the one that sustains.

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... People are like "When is it ever a right time to kill?" Well, World War II eradicated a lot of evil. Whether or not you want to debate if war is ever right, that would have been a proper time to stop people that are killing Jews. That would be an appropriate time to stop it. ***...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...*** That goes back to the miscarriage. There's a time to weep and there is a time to laugh. That's what I love about Ted and this church. God wants us to laugh too. We don't have to always be serious. Let's laugh in church. I love it. We just spent the first five minutes together laughing. God wants us to laugh. He wants us to enjoy life. He wants us to step into those moments.

...a time to mourn... We need to be aware of when it's a time to laugh and when it's a time to mourn. ***...and a time to dance...*** You don't want to see me dance I promise. ***5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace...*** If you ever just want to love on Ted, he loves physical touch, so just go give him a hug and love on him. He just loves it. The closer you are to him, the better. ***...and a time to refrain from embracing,*** which is always with Ted.

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... There was another little voting thing that just happened this last two weeks. There's going to be another really big one in another year and a half. ***...and a time to speak...*** I think so many times, as believers, we don't get ourselves in trouble by our silence nearly as much as we get ourselves in trouble by our words. So, it's important to know that the former far outweighs the latter. As a matter of fact, James 1: 19 says, ***Be slow to speak, quick to listen, and slow to become angry.*** There is great healing power in great listeners. There's great healing power in becoming a great listener and being slow to speak. So much of the wisdom that Solomon is pouring out here in these first eight verses is about being slow to speak and listening and comforting others. All those things: comforting, mourning, loving, dancing, all that comes with being a good listener.

Be slow to speak and just listen. Being socially aware of your surroundings. You can't be socially aware without listening. And listening is not always audible noise. Listening is also visual noise. There are different ways you can listen and pick up on things and see what's going on. Feel the room and understand the room and understand what's going on in somebody's life and understand the questions that you need to ask.

It goes on in Ecclesiastes. **38 a time to love and a time to hate...** There is one person in this world you guys get to hate. It's Satan. That's it, end of list. Your list ends there. Satan is the only one anyone in this room gets to hate. You don't get to hate Raiders' fans, all you chief's fans over here. You don't get to hate Broncos fans. You get to hate Satan and that's it, end of list. The only person you get to hate is Satan and you get to hate sin. Those are what you have God's permission to hate. Everything else from you should exude love because Jesus said, "They will know you are mine by your love." That's what Jesus said.

...a time for war and a time for peace. By the way, Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

So, now it shifts gears. That was a time for everything. Now it shifts gears and now this is a God-given task. These next verses are tasks that God has given, and Solomon is saying **9 What do workers gain from their toil?** Ted alluded to this last week. You've never seen a U-Haul follow a Hearst to a funeral. So, what are you working for? Are you working your tail off or what are you trying to build? What castles do you think you are going to take with you to heaven? **10 I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race.**

Do you know what God has given us as a task to be busy with? It's Matthew 18: 19. It's the Great Commission. That's what he's given us to be busy with. So regardless of what your occupation is, what you do, what you work. Whether you are a business man in town, whether you are a stay at home mom, whether you are a lawyer or an architect. Whether you are a coach or a teacher. Regardless of what your occupation, your voca, the Latin word for calling, your vocation, is all the same for every believer in Jesus Christ. Our calling is the Great Commission. Right before Jesus pulled off the coolest hoverboard trick ever and ascended to heave, he said, "Go, therefore, and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to do all that I've commanded you." That Great Commission wasn't to just the pastors at Woodland Hills. You go make disciples. Or just the church people. No, it goes for the business men, the lawyers, the doctors. It goes for every follower of Jesus. He said, "Go, therefore, and make disciples." That is the work he has given you to be busy with. That is the commission he's given all of us regardless of what our occupation may be.

Ecclesiastes 11 says, **He has made everything beautiful in its time.** God's timing is perfect. God doesn't think of time the way we think of time. A lot of times, when you and I say the word *time*, we think of chronos, 24 hours in a day, seven days in a week. God is not referring to chronos here. A lot of times when you see time in the Old Testament, it's actually the word *kairos* meaning moments or opportunities. Remember, when Solomon is writing this, there were no watches. There were no clocks. Time was dictated on the days, so the opportunities, the moments they had each day, they walked in and lived in those. So, God doesn't think of time the way you and I think of time.

He's outside of time, so he's sees time completely differently than you and I do. Time is what puts so much stress on so many of you. Time has changed everything and the stress and the pressure it puts on all of you in here. I'm even on a time crunch right now on what time I have to wrap this service up. Then you travel to the Eleuthera with me in February. They don't care about time. I tried to go run a basketball tournament there a couple of years ago. I said, "First game starts at 6:00." That first game started at 7:15 and they didn't care what my American idea of time meant. They operate differently even in the Bahamas. They operate off the sun. They aren't worried about a watch. They'll start when they want to start. They might be caught up in moments. They might be serving someone on the side of the road. They might be doing something else because they are living in those moments.

He has also set eternity in the human heart... I love that verse. That means that God has put eternity in the heart of every single one of you. That means every single one of you in here knows that there is something more. At one point in your life, you said, "God, there's has to be something more. You've got to have something more for me. I know this can't be it." And you're right. There is more. This is not it. heaven is it and he's put eternity in every man's heart. So, he puts this God shaped hole in the heart of every single one of us. And what do we try to do? We try to fill it with success, money, accolades, all these things only to wonder why our hearts are still empty. It's because you're not filling it with eternity, you're not filling it with Christ. Jesus is the only thing that can fill that God-shaped hole in your heart.

Jim Carrey, famous actor and comedian, said it best. He said, "I wish everybody could be famous and rich to realize happiness is not found there."

So, if you all are like, "There's something empty, something missing in my life." How is your relationship with Jesus? How is your heart toward Jesus. How are you inclined to him? He's the only thing that will fulfill you and he's the only thing that ***will never leave you nor forsake you*** – Hebrews 13: 5 Everything else in this temporal. Earth will forsake you, forsake your deepest longings.

...yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. In the same vein, Clive Staples Lewis, author of *Mere Christianity* and *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, said this: "If I find within myself a desire in which this world cannot satisfy, the only probable explanation is I was made for another world." There is nothing in this world that will satisfy you. It wasn't intended to. He put eternity in your heart so that nothing in this world would ever satisfy you. Maybe for temporary it will. I'm trying to explain this to my eight-year-old now. "Dude, I'm going to get you a present and you're going to ask me for another present the next day. I'm going to get you a gift and you're just going to want a gift a week later. I'm going to get you something and you just keep asking. Why? Because they don't satisfy you. They weren't meant to satisfy you. They weren't meant to bring you completeness. Only Christ can do that." Only Christ can fulfill that deepest longing in your soul that you think something else is going to satisfy and it won't.

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. So, to not enjoy life... God wants you to enjoy life. To not enjoy life is to rob God as a gift to you. Yes, he wants you to be happy. Yes, he wants you to be holy. As I studied this week, they are combined

together. I used to think that happiness and joy were separated. No. Randy Alcorn did a great commentary on this. Everywhere throughout scripture, happiness and joy are actually correlated to one another. They are connected. They are synonyms to one another. So, when we have Jesus, we have a joy that the world cannot take away or explain. And it tries to rob us, but they can't rob what is sealed in us. So, everything in your world and your culture says just do what makes you happy. Be happy. But your happiness is not found in the world when eternity is in your heart. Happiness is found in Christ, and he knows what will bring us happiness and joy far greater than anything in this world or what you think you will. He knows. So, when you pursue him, he's going to bring you joy. He loves to give good gifts to his children. He's a good, good father. He wants to give you what's good for you, not what you think is good for you. Just like with our children. What they think is good for them – a diet of all chocolate and candy – is not good for them. So, what you think is good for you – more money, more materials, more things – may not be good for you.

There's a documentary that came out a couple of years ago. It's a fascinating documentary. It's called "Happy." They go all over the world and they find the people that seem to be the happiest.

[Video plays] If you've never seen the documentary, check it out. It's free. The happiest people in this documentary are the people in the slums of India and Indonesia. It's insane.

I read this quote this week I wanted to share with you. *"Our assumptions about what happiness should be are what makes us unhappy. Let go of your expectations about what you think would make you happy and treasure your life for what it is and what God has given you."*

So, if you live with, "If only I had _____, then I would be happy." Unless that blank is Jesus, it's a lie. If only I had a promotion. If only I had a girlfriend. If only I had a boyfriend. If only I was married. If only I had kids. If only I had a boat. Anything you put in that blank other than Jesus is a lie. It won't make you happy.

Ted said this last week. Somebody outside of Los Angeles won the \$2 billion prize. A year from now they won't be happy. If they weren't happy before the \$2 billion, they are not going to be happy after the \$2 billion. If only I had Jesus is the only answer that will suffice. Look at these statistics if you think I'm making this up. The top 10 countries with the highest rates of depression. Number one is Ukraine, which makes sense. They are under tyranny right now for Russia. That makes sense. These statistics are from last year. Number 2 is a three-way tie – United States, Estonia, and Australia. The most affluent, opportunistic country in the world (United States) is second highest in depression. Canada isn't invading our borders. We aren't at war. Australia also extremely affluent. So, it's proving to you that money and materials do not accumulate to happiness.

Now, look at the top ten countries with the lowest rates of depression. They are all islands. They are all impoverished islands. Really low income. Common denominator with the lowest rates of depression? Low materialism, low money, lots of sunshine. Lots of vitamin D. That is literally it.

The United States is number 2, right behind a war-stricken country. That's insane to me because we think materials and money will make us happy. That's the lie the devil wants you to believe.

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.”

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. Every Hillbilly in here just disagreed with that. And man has no advantage over the animals. Remington and Winchester might disagree with that. **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... I want you guys to hear this. Work is not a product of the fall. Work was pre-fall. So, God created Adam and said, “Here, toil the ground, work the ground, farm the ground, and name all the animals. So, he gave him both a labor task and a tedious task. Imagine when Adam was naming the animals, he was really creative at first. He was like, “Hippopotamus, Rhinoceros, Giraffe, brontosaurus.” And then he got really bored and just worn out. That’s a tedious task naming all the animals. So, he gets bored and he’s like, “Ant. That is eating that so anteater.”

Work is our opportunity to worship God. So, we never retire. We may retire from our occupation, but like I told you about the Great Commission, we never retire. Doing God’s kingdom and God’s work is never done until you are with God. Or else he wouldn’t still have you here. Welfare and trying to get free hand outs is not God’s design. God’s design is that we work, and we get to worship him in our work. And that work looks different for everybody in here. But God’s design is never for us to sit on our laurels. He did not design it that way. We get to worship God. It is not a product of the fall.

Because that is their lot. For who can bring them to see what will happen after them? What’s the answer? You’re in church. You’ll be right 99% of the time if you’ll just shout this name. What’s the answer. Come on, man, my eight-year-old got it. Jesus.

You guys see time like a watch. It’s ticking. For some of you in here, this time will be done faster than others of you. But God says, “I’m patient and I want everyone to know me.” So, I don’t know how you walked in here today. I don’t know how your time has looked up to this point in your life. I don’t know how much time you have left in your life. No one does. But I know that God didn’t send you on earth to be killed, stolen, and destroyed were you can’t even have life and have it to the full. Whatever time you have left, I know God wants to use it. And I know God has put eternity in your heart. God wants a relationship with you. He wants a personal relationship. He wants to use you to advance his kingdom through making disciples and teaching others. That’s his nature. That’s his business. That’s what he has designed. So, God puts everything on pause for you so you can come to know him. And you want to be consumed with all this other stuff. God says, “I love you. I know all your junk. I know all your past. I

know everything you've done – good, bad, and ugly. I know everything about you. I want you to come just as you are. I have a plan for your life and it's not to accumulate more money and materials.”

So, if you've never trusted Jesus, if you've never surrendered, if you've never filled that God-shaped hole in your heart, I want to ask you to meet me over at the Chapel. If you've never made the decision to be baptized, we're doing spontaneous baptisms over there. They'll have towels, change of clothes, it will be warm over there. If you want to jump over there and do baptisms right now, I'm going to pray us out of here and I'm headed straight to that Chapel to talk to you. If you've never trusted Jesus as your savior or to hang out and celebrate you as you decide to get baptized for the first time.

Father God, thank you so much for this church family. Thank you so much for its leadership. Thank you so much for the work you are doing in here, the generosity this church gives to so many in the community. God, I pray for the hearts in here that don't know you. Would you capture them? Would you get hold of them? Would you do a work? We celebrate you, Lord. Thank you for the time you have given us. May we make the most of it. I pray for all these people and their holidays and the opportunity they have to influence their families that they are with during the holidays.

We lift up today to you in the mighty and matchless name of Jesus we pray. And all God's people said... Amen.