

Ecclesiastes 3:1–15 | “Everything In Its Time, Part 1”

Preached on April 12, 2026 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles this morning to Ecclesiastes 3, and we’ll be starting in verse 1.

[pauseee]

If you haven’t been with us lately, we have been working through the book of Ecclesiastes, and it’s been a great journey so far, and we still have a while to go. *[pause]*

There’s so much packed in these 15 verses that I decided to break this passage into two sermons.

[pause]

Today, we are going to be looking at the well-known passage about how there’s “a time for every matter under heaven.”

So let’s use this *time* to focus on what it teaches us, but first, I’ll READ the passage for you.

[READ]

As humans, we are bound by time. *[pause]*

We cannot escape it, alter it, or twist it in any way.

There are no “time machines” no matter how many scientists try to create one. *[pause]*

We each have the same amount everyday, and that does not change. *[pausee]*

Now, we don’t always like this, right?

Sometimes we wish we could change the *speed* of time. *[pause]*

When you are having a great time doing something, you wish that time would slow down, but when you’re going through something unpleasant, you wish it would speed up. *[pause]*

Likewise, there are times where we feel like there’s too much time, and other times where we feel like there’s not enough time in a day. *[pausee]*

“In 1752, England went from the old Julian calendar to the new Gregorian calendar, [and] in order to make it fit, eleven days had to be removed from the calendar.”¹ *[pause]*

This change led many people to get upset, and a new slogan emerged whereby they said, “Give us our eleven days back!” *[pause]*

Anger over this change even led some uneducated people to incorrectly believe that the removal of the days would take them to their grave sooner.² *[pauseee]*

¹ Robert C. Shannon. Found at: <https://www.preaching.com/sermon-illustrations/time/>.

² <https://www.history.co.uk/article/the-calendar-riots-of-1752-when-britain-lost-11-days>.

That would be an interesting thing to experience: the removal of 11 days in the calendar, yet if you really think about it, they never *truly* lost any time. *[pause]*

The dates may have changed, but time still moved the way it always does. *[pauseeee]*

Time...we are bound by it as humans, but what does this passage teach us about time?...

First...

I. Life is filled with different seasons.

Not long ago, we changed seasons, and some of you are rejoicing because winter can be a tough time for many. *[pause]*

So on March 20th, we moved into spring, and some of you are already looking to June, when we can move into summer! *[pauseee]*

We all know that the seasons change at set times, and each season brings with it various things.

So also, this passage shows us that life is filled with changing seasons. *[pause]*

It says in verse 1, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.” *[pause]*

That word translated as ‘season’ here refers to something’s appointed time.

So in the book of Esther, the Jews determine to keep the Feast of Purim “at the time appointed every year.”³ *[pause]*

“Time appointed” there is the same word as used here for ‘season.’ *[pauseeeee]*

What if we remembered that the seasons of life were appointed times—what a difference it would make! *[pauseeeee]*

To know that a season is an ‘appointed time’ reminds me that the season I’m in is *purposeful*. *[pause]*

The various things that we go through are not meaningless!

The seasons of life have their purpose in your life, Christian! *[pauseee]*

It’s hard to remember this when you are going through the most difficult times, but it’s true.

As Romans 8 says, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”⁴ *[pauseee]*

³ Esther 9:27.

⁴ Romans 8:28.

Our God is purposefully working His plan not only in the world, but in *my* life and *yours*, if you trust in Christ. *[pause]*

The Lord purposefully brings you in and out of seasons, and you and I would do well to remember that. *[pauseeee]*

Since seasons are appointed times, it also means that these things are *orderly*. *[pause]*

The world is not run by chance, but by God Almighty.

And aren't you thankful that the seasons of life don't come to us by chance or luck? *[pause]*

If that was the case, how could we NOT live in constant fear and trepidation?

Who knows what could come our way, if chance was the driving factor of this world. *[pause]*

No, our order-creating, order-sustaining God will never let the seasons of life get "out of order." *[pauseeee]*

Another encouraging aspect of a season is that *it's not forever*. *[pause]*

Inherent to a season is that it doesn't go on continually, but it will eventually change. *[pause]*

Now obviously there are some seasons that we wish would go on forever, but there are also seasons that we wish would change. *[pauseee]*

In those difficult seasons, one of the most encouraging things to remember is that this season isn't forever. *[pause]*

Peter says, "In this you rejoice, *though now for a little while*, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials."⁵

And Paul calls hardships in this life, "light momentary affliction."⁶ *[pauseee]*

It's easier to go through something when you know that it has an expiration date.

To know that the pain is not forever, but has an appointed time, and then it will be over, is a comfort to the struggling soul. *[pauseeee]*

In verses 2–8, the author gives us various examples of these 'seasons.' *[pause]*

Certainly this list is not exhaustive, but representative of the types of things that we all go through.

But by using *so many* examples, he's telling us that the seasons of life encompass *all* of life, not just one or two things. *[pause]*

⁵ 1 Peter 1:6 (italics are mine).

⁶ 2 Corinthians 4:17.

From the time you are born to the time that you die, you go through seasons. [pause]

From our very life, to our words, to our work, to our emotions, to our relationships—everything has a season. [pauseeee]

He speaks of these seasons by using the phrase “a time to...” and in context, he is saying that everything has a suitable and proper time. [pauseeee]

We all know this—there are times for various things...

When we are hungry, it's usually time to eat. [pause]

If you have little children you often have to say, “It's time for bed,” and when you have teenagers, you have to say, “It's time to get up!” [pause]

For working adults, we look at our watches and see that it's time to go to work—everything has a suitable and proper time. [pauseeee]

When someone dies, it is a suitable time to mourn. [pause]

When you lose something, it is fitting to seek it.

When something is broken, it is proper to cast it away, not keep it forever. [pause]

This is normal life, and we must not lose sight of that, so don't feel bad about crying over loss, or laughing during a good time. [pauseeee]

Likewise, if you have to build something or throw something away, realize that that's not some mistake in the universe, but it's a typical part of life in this world. [pauseeee]

What happens is that we grumble over the seasons that we're in. [pause]

It's time to throw something away because it broke, and we get angry, as if it should never happen. [pause]

It's time to plant, and we think, “I want the harvest *right now*, not months from now.” [pause]

It's time to mourn, and we think, “Why can't life always be happy?” [pause]

But what God is teaching us this morning is that life is filled with a *mixture of things*...

Sometimes there is laughter, but sometimes there is grief. [pause]

Sometimes there's building, gathering, and keeping, and other times, there's tearing down and casting away. [pauseeee]

This is so important for each of us to know, for some of you are struggling with the season of life that you are in. [pause]

Maybe you're a young person, and you wish that you were older...

You think, "I wish I was older, so that I could drive a car," or, "I wish I was older, so that I could be on my own." *[pause]*

Don't wish the time away, young one.

Enjoy the season of life you are in because someday you will look back with longing for the more carefree days of your youth. *[pausee]*

Delight in this time—it has been given to you by God!

Run around, jump, and play, take advantage of all of that energy and good health that you have because you won't always have that. *[pause]*

Explore, get dirty, run around with your friends, laugh until it hurts, without having to worry about bigger responsibilities. *[pauseeee]*

There are others of you who are in the busy years of raising children, and it's hard and demanding. *[pause]*

You sometimes wish that you wouldn't have to face all of what you face, but realize that this is the fitting and suitable time that God has given to you. *[pause]*

It's purposeful, for you are raising children who will grow up and impact others for Christ. *[pausee]*

Realize, too, that it doesn't last forever, no matter how long the days feel.

So live, fully embracing the season of life that you're in. *[pause]*

Cherish their giggles, embrace the mess and loud noises, realizing that someday you will enter a new season, where those things are gone. *[pause]*

These are formative days for your children, so don't waste them by grumbling about them.

Instead, look to the Lord, understanding that since He has placed you in this season, then He will give you what you need for it. *[pauseeeee]*

I know that I struggle with this sometimes in ministry...

I have a family of 4 young kids, so family life demands a lot out of me, all the while I'm pastoring a church. *[pause]*

I need to continually remind myself that this is the season of life that I'm in. *[pause]*

Someday I will be in a different season and ministry may look somewhat different from what it does now, but right now, this is the time that God has given to me.

Will I be faithful in the season that I'm in *now*? *[pause]*

That's the question that each of us is faced with...

Don't think, "I'll be faithful once I'm in a different season," but think, "I need to be faithful right here, right now, today." *[pauseeee]*

Some of you are in the empty-nest stage of life, as your kids are mostly out of the home, or completely gone.

And so for some of you, it's really hard. *[pause]*

You miss the noise of activity in your home, the good times, the family dinners, the laughs, and everything else. *[pause]*

Realize that you are in a new season, and that's it OK to cry.

But also realize that you are not to become angry at God or resentful due to your new season. *[pause]*

Seasons come and go, and now you are in the empty-nest stage. *[pause]*

Yes, the dynamics have changed, but what good things has God given to you in this new season? *[pauseeee]*

Think about how your family could expand...

Here comes sons or daughters-in-law, and here comes grandchildren—what a blessing! *[pauseeee]*

You can also interact with your adult children in ways that you never did before. *[pause]*

You no longer change their diapers or set curfews...

But now you can come alongside them like a trusted advisor or constant encourager, as they encounter adult problems and start raising their own family. *[pauseeee]*

Maybe your season of life is on the *older* side of things. *[pause]*

You are what they call a "golden ager," and for some of you, it's a hard season. *[pauseee]*

With old age comes a lot of physical problems, and this can be discouraging. *[pause]*

You are frustrated that you are not able to do what you used to do.

You do not like feeling like a burden on others, who now have to help you do things that you used to be able to do confidently. *[pauseee]*

All those who enter old age encounter this, so you are not alone.

So realize that this is *your* season, and acknowledge it. *[pause]*

Remember that you are no longer young, you've already been through that season, and now this is your season, given by God. *[pause]*

Instead of dwelling upon and grumbling about all the things that you can't do anymore, consider what you're able to do *now*. *[pause]*

You can share vital wisdom and godliness with the younger generation.

You have been through so many experiences, trials, and learned so much about God—we need your wisdom! *[pause]*

In Titus 2, Paul calls on older women to “teach what is good, and so train the young women.”⁷
[pause]

Are you doing that? They need you!

We all need you—you are a vital and valuable part of this church and our lives. *[pause]*

You bring so much to the table, but are you just grumbling about what you can't do anymore?
[pauseeee]

Life is filled with different seasons: we've all been through various ones and we are all in one right now.

But a second truth that comes forth out of this passage is that...

II. We do not control the different seasons of life.

Something that we learn as humans is that *we are limited*. *[pause]*

We only have so much time in a day, we only have so much ability to do something, we only have so many resources, etc. *[pause]*

Take a cup to the ocean, fill it up with water, and what do you discover?

The cup can only hold a certain amount of water—it is limited. *[pause]*

So also, we are limited, we can only know or do or control a certain amount of things in life.

In fact, we are moved along by the seasons of life. *[pauseeee]*

I do not choose the time that I will be born or the time that I die. *[pause]*

I wish that I could choose when something wears out, for I would choose “never,” but life doesn't work that way. *[pause]*

⁷ Titus 2:3–5.

I do not completely control my circumstances, for sometimes there are situations out of my control that cause me to weep. *[pause]*

We are moved along by the seasons, as we do not ultimately control them. *[pauseee]*

Verse 9 reiterates this limitation when it says, “What gain has the worker from his toil?” *[pause]*

It’s reminding us that we can’t control the seasons of our life through our effort.

You can try your best to stay young, but your body will eventually give out as you grow older. *[pause]*

You can try to get out of a trial through your ingenuity and skill, but some trials are not touched by our efforts. *[pauseee]*

How much labor have you put in to try to break yourself free from the season of life that you’re in?

Realize that you cannot do it. *[pause]*

There may be some minor changes made, but ultimately the big seasons of our life are not under our control. *[pauseee]*

Think with me about how there is “a time to die.” *[pause]*

Tragedy can strike, cancer touches our body, or hundreds of other circumstances can lead to our death. *[pause]*

People try their hardest to avoid death, but when it’s our time, it’s our time.

So what gain do we have from all of our toil to prevent death? *[pauseee]*

Likewise, you can control the exact day that you “pluck up what’s planted,” but you can’t change the season of plucking. *[pause]*

Go ahead and try harvesting your garden in the winter, and see what happens.

We are limited, for our efforts can only do so much when it comes to the seasons of life. *[pauseee]*

We are also limited in our knowledge. *[pause]*

We long to see how it all works together, but we can’t grasp it. *[pause]*

Verse 11 says, “He has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.” *[pauseee]*

God has “put” eternity in the heart of every single person.

This means that even an unbeliever deep down knows that this isn't all that there is, though they may suppress that truth. *[pauseeee]*

Here's the rub—we live through seasons, but have 'eternity' in our hearts. *[pause]*

This means that as we go through life's seasons, we long to see the big picture.

So going through life is like holding one puzzle piece, fitting it into place, and then doing another, but never being able to make out what the whole puzzle looks like. *[pauseeee]*

Eternity in our hearts causes us to long for that sight, but we "cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end," verse 11 says. *[pause]*

This is why we say, "Why this, why now?" when we go through trials.

Or we think, "How is this meaningful or purposeful in any way?" *[pause]*

We go through those tough times, but can't quite figure out how all of those pieces "work together for good."⁸ *[pauseeee]*

Not knowing how it all fits is normal, for God set it up that way.

So do not think that something's wrong, for it just proves once again that we are limited in our control of the seasons of life. *[pause]*

We can't change them through our efforts, and we can't fully understand how they all work together. *[pauseeee]*

You weren't meant to control the world, and you can't.

That is not some flaw or mistake, but it's a part of being creations of God, who are meant to depend on Him. *[pause]*

Therefore...

The seasons of life should cause us to look to the Lord.

A lot of agony in life is found in people trying to buck up against the season that they're in.

But imagine the relief of not being constantly frustrated with the season of life you are in, but embracing it as God-given and purposeful. *[pause]*

You can think, "This is the season appointed for me by God, and He has a purpose in it. I don't quite know or understand what that is, but I'll trust the Lord through it." *[pauseeee]*

Are you constantly looking backwards at a previous season, longing for it to return?

⁸ Romans 8:28.

Your hope cannot be there, for that season is over.

Trust God where He has you *now*—be faithful *today*. *[pauseeee]*

Are you looking to the side with envy at other people’s seasons?

Don’t do that, but be thankful for what God has given you. *[pauseeee]*

Are you constantly looking forward to a future season that *may* happen?

Our confidence cannot be in *possible* future seasons that we hope for, but *promised* future seasons, which God says can be our hope. *[pauseeee]*

Trust God in your current season today—He is faithful.

Remember that the Lord is in control of all the seasons of life, so even when things seem bleak, He is doing something amazing! *[pauseeeee]*

Think about how we sinned against God and deserved Hell...

We were without hope in this world,⁹ as we couldn’t save ourselves, yet what happened? *[pause]*

Galatians 4 says...

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”¹⁰
[pause]

In God’s perfect timing, He sent Christ to redeem us!

As Romans 5:6 says, “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.” *[pauseeeee]*

God’s grace showed up at the appointed time, and let me tell you today, God’s grace can show up for you in all of your appointed times. *[pause]*

In all of your seasons, He is there, and His grace does not run dry! *[pauseeeee]*

If you have never trusted in Jesus, God’s grace is available to you through the offer of salvation today.

Paul says, “Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation”¹¹!

So don’t delay—the time to trust in Jesus is now, so that you can be forgiven and given eternal life. *[pauseeee]*

⁹ A reference to Ephesians 2:12.

¹⁰ Galatians 4:4–5.

¹¹ 2 Corinthians 6:2.

And for those of us who trust in Christ, keep trusting Him in your seasons—He is faithful, in control, and has stores of grace reserved for you. *[pause]*

He will give you what you need.

So recognize that there are different seasons of life, I can't control them, but I can trust the Lord through them.