

A Time For Everything
Ecclesiastes Ch 3 v 1-15

Our new theme 'A Time For Everything' once more reminds me of a song. Pete Seeger first recorded it in the 1950's as an anti war protest song against the Vietnam War and added the words at the end 'A time of peace, I swear it's not too late'. Was he correct? One of the pop groups of the time, the Byrds, again made it famous in 1965. It goes something like this:

There is a season turn, turn, turn,
And a time to every purpose under heaven.

The words are, of course, taken from the book of Ecclesiastes - the well known passage in Chapter three. The author and deep thinking philosopher who wrote this book, reflects on how short and contradictory human life is. At first he appears negative and even depressing but he also offers hope, the hope that God gives – that life has a greater meaning.

Time is a strange thing. There are 60 seconds in every minute, 60 minutes in every hour, 24 hours in every day, 7 days in every week, 52 weeks in every year and 365 days in every year. We cannot change the ebb and flow of the ocean tides or alter the earth revolving on its axis. We cannot rewind or fast forward one second. We often say that we 'don't have enough time' or 'where has the time gone?' We all are given the same amount of time but, at the same time, are all given a free will in the way that we spend our time. Life is a little like a coin. We can spend it in any way we wish but we can only spend it once. Having spent it we cannot re-spend it or, indeed, retract our thoughts or words or actions. We are not in charge of our lives. The opening sentence of Ecclesiastes chapter three states quite clearly who is in charge. God has over-all control. It is his world and we are just one part of it. Everything happens at a time that God chooses. As the words above say – He changes the seasons and he also gives each one of us a purpose under heaven.

Most of us are either in full time or part time work or have been at some time. We may have worked our way up to senior levels in the company or just been a conscientious and loyal member of the team. We may have been valued for the hours of work we have put in and devoted our whole lives to 'furthering the cause,' whatever it may be. Then suddenly we are dropped, asked to leave, sacked! Within hours devastation and loss of purpose in life set in. Other things change in our lives, maybe not as catastrophic as that, but we lose our direction in life. Our situations and changes in life are transient. They pass and we move on. Verse 9 asks the question 'What do we gain from all our work?' We are asked not to work for things that are transient. Work for things that are constant. God never changes. His purposes for us never change and neither does his unconditional love. God has set the right time for everything. He knows the plans he has for us (Jeremiah Ch 29 v 11) and will not let us down. Our pattern of life may change but God has seen it all before – the ins and outs – the ups and downs. All we need to remember is that God is always there.

For Discussion

1. What season of life are you in right now?
2. Have you felt God with you as your pattern of life has changed?

Diane Thornton