

Part 3 - March of Time

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[0 : 00] Hey everybody, we're going to jump into Ecclesiastes. Those of you who are old school, you got your Bible with you or you got your Bible on your phone, we're going to be working through Ecclesiastes 3 today.

So before we get started, if you want to get there, you can. Ecclesiastes is in the middle part of your Bible and right after Psalms and Proverbs, you'll see it right there.

So before we get into that, just a couple of things. We had an amazing time as a church representing over at the Chili Fest here in Havelock, which was really awesome. Yeah, it was a good time. It was a really good time. So we fed a bunch of people barbecue and chicken legs, right? Yes, they were amazing.

Anyways, and we got to raise, we got to raise I think a little over \$300 that gets to go to the Havelock Pregnancy Resource Center, which is an awesome thing that in addition to being able to just be there in the community and celebrating with the community, we got to do something amazing for an amazing organization that serves our community.

So I want to say first a huge thanks. This would not have happened without David Kick, if you were to stand up, and Bob and Lindy Zollers, if you guys would stand up. Yeah. All their organization, countless hours, and Dave, if you could pass on to John as well our thanks. Huge, man. Just, yeah. These guys were all-stars working hard. Yeah, yeah. So it was a good time.

[1 : 25] All right. Another cool thing that happened, if I could get Allison Davis up here, and if we can get a mic, I'm going to, oh, she has the mic already. Wow, you're really prepared. So wait, why am I surprised? I shouldn't be. So One Harbor has been doing some stuff at Ocracoke since the hurricane. It got devastated, and we had an opportunity to go back there.

And Allison, what were you guys doing at Ocracoke on Friday and Saturday, or I guess Friday morning? So Phillip and I were able to be a part of a small team that went in on the ferry Friday morning in preparation for feeding as many people as we could chili and baked potatoes Friday night.

And also we're able to have a brief church service there on the island. Very cool. And what was your biggest highlight from that trip? So there was one highlight, but there was something else I wanted to say is that it was just really neat to be able to go back in.

I feel like a lot of times in our ministry and in our efforts to reach people, we see them once, and then we don't see them anymore. And so it was really neat to be able to go back because it felt like we did have, like, a vested interest in the people of Ocracoke.

So that was one thing I wanted to say. But the other thing is I had a moment over a vat of sour cream. I'm like, I'm serving up the fixings for baked potatoes and bacon and cheese, and everybody was so excited because the chili was really good.

[2 : 53] It smelled really good. It was a nice hot meal. It was a cold night. And so I'm serving up sour cream. And this lady comes up and says, are you guys from the same church that were here the week after the storm?

And I said, yes, yes, we are. And she just had tears in her eyes, just like a very genuine thank you. That's cool. And I knew that was going to happen.

Anyway, it just was a neat. You have feelings. Yeah. Don't say sorry. They're in there. It's okay. And now they're out here. It was just a neat moment because it felt like we were doing more than feeding bellies, filling stomachs.

And I just was able to say, you know, we love you. And she said, we love you too. So that was just cool. Yeah, that's awesome. And then lastly, how can we be praying for Oka Cope moving forward?

So I think just endurance. A lot of us are familiar. We were spared from Florence, but we had friends that, you know, really went through it. And so endurance because they're 45 days into a huge, huge project.

[3 : 56] And so they're already feeling weary. You can tell on their faces they feel tired. And it's really just getting started. So just endurance. Okay. Hope for them because, you know, we actually saw a menu item called Where's FEMA?

Like FEMA didn't come. Insurance isn't coming. And so they just need hope. Hope, and we know that the hope is not in FEMA or insurance.

And if we could kind of partner in helping them see that hope is in the Lord, you know, there's other people that are there that are trying to do that. But if One Harbor gets to do that, then that's just kind of gravy.

You know, it's just nice to be able to do that. And then the last thing is that they would just not feel alone. Cool. Yeah, awesome. Well, thank you so much, guys. Thanks, Allison.

Just think about that. As you're together maybe during dinner time as a family, think about those things and just add Ocracoke to your prayer list. Maybe that's just your personal time in prayer.

[4 : 56] That would be really helpful. So hopefully God continues to open doors down there and we get to continue to be able to minister to them and provide that hope.

So cool. All right. Now we're getting into it. Welcome, everybody. My name is Jesse. Jesse, if I haven't met you, my name is Jesse Kintzer, one of the pastors here. And for those of you who are listening to this online, man, we so wish you could be here today.

Understand that you can't for various reasons. And, man, I just want to say, too, for all who are listening, you in the room, those listening later in the week online, is that there is such a value for all of us being here.

So we had this robust time of worship this morning. I think we would all agree. But it's because each of us came with faith. And because you did that, man, your faith lifted my faith. My faith lifted your faith.

And that's what being together as a body of Christ is all about and one of the major powers of coming together. And so church is never this optional extra. And we also can't think like, hey, it doesn't matter if I show up or not.

[5 : 58] It's no big deal. Man, you have no idea how many people in the room have various stories. And they may be struggling right now, but you coming with your bit of faith and raising your voice to Jesus.

And as we sing together, man, the tide rises in all of our hearts, and it affects all of us, right? And so those who are tides way down, way low here, it lifts them up.

And so I just want to encourage you guys with that. And thanks for being here. Thanks for being faithful. And anyways, those who can't be here, we look forward to having you back. All right. Now we're jumping into Ecclesiastes.

This is our third week or third time in here. We're in part three. Guys, I just want to say thanks for coming back for more punishment. I really appreciate that, you know?

I don't know whether to be thankful or concerned about you, right? If it's your first time with us, ignore that last statement. Everything's going to be okay. You're already here. Don't run out, all right? It would make everybody feel really awkward.

[6 : 54] All right. Ecclesiastes is this amazing book. I think it's what you get when you cross Yoda with Eeyore. So you get this really wise guy, but he's uncomfortably honest, and he tells you how it is, but it doesn't come across very happy or joyful all the time.

And a lot of guys comment on it, whether they're believers or not, that this is one of the ultimate books of philosophy. Philosophy is the pursuing of truth, and that's what this book does.

It's pursuing answers to the deeper, harder questions about what life is like under the sun and why it's like that. This shortness of life, this vapor of life that passes.

We're here and we're gone like that. Man, what it does, it dogs all of us. And for some of us, it drives us to try to make the most of it, right? There's this movie, I forget what, Dead Poets Society, where they use the phrase like drinking the marrow out of life.

It's like getting every little bit of what life can offer and making the most of it. I remember an advertisement when I was younger and a lot more fit. I used to work out, believe it or not.

[8 : 03] It's true. But this advertisement was selling muscle supplements, and the tagline said this, you only go around once, so you might as well do it with big biceps, right?

And the point is, is we try to turn this life into the best it can be. We want to make the most of it. But then we realize as we move along and as we start wising up and we get on in our years, we realize that everything we gain in the end because of death goes away.

We cannot hold on to it. Money, wisdom, pleasure, what we've been talking about, it's all gone. And we think about this, guys. This literally happened toward the end of Hugh Hefner's life.

There's this picture of him out in the town, pretty girl on each arm, and his face was a face of absolute misery and hollowness. And people commented on it.

They were like, oh, my gosh. The man who lived the life we thought we all wanted, in the end, he couldn't even find happiness. He's hollowed out and miserable.

[9 : 12] See, if we live life to earn its good rewards, then we're going to be disappointed. If, however, we live believing life is a gift, we can find some joy in it.

Here's the thing. Life is uncontrollable and unpredictable, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's senseless. The experiences that are added to our story along the way, they bring meaning.

Life is a collection of meaningful moments. Which is what we get at in Ecclesiastes 3, verse 1. It says this, 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.

[10 : 12] 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.

So there's a lot of seasons, right? We read there. I didn't say it was going to be life was in a collection of easy moments. But it's a collection of meaningful moments.

I remember being a kid and thinking about this passage. And it totally made sense to me. And to be honest, it really came in handy at times, right? It's time to throw rocks. Mom and dad's in the Bible.

There's a time to embrace. I can't say that I didn't try that one on the ladies in my teen years. Fortunately, God saved me from myself.

And I experienced more of the, it was a time to refrain from embracing. So as we age, as we age in this life, the wisdom of this we find proves true again and again.

[11 : 10] Life ebbs and flows between seasons. And it's different seasons. Some of those seasons are amazing and wonderful. And we want to stay in those seasons.

But let's be honest, man. Some of the seasons aren't that great. They're not that fun. They're seasons. Those are the seasons we try to avoid if we're honest. Or they're seasons that, frankly, we just pretend we're not in.

When I first got married, I still had those moments where I forgot I had a wife waiting at home. I didn't realize the new season I was in. Unrelated tip.

Don't spend four hours at your parents' house without letting your wife know about it. All right? See, the wise man, he reads the seasons and he adjusts. He adjusts to them.

But the fool fights it. The fool fights the seasons. My sons, they've been playing soccer since they were about eight years old, roughly around there. And it's funny to watch their progression.

[12 : 09] They learn the game a lot more. But when they started, they weren't very wise to the game. Actually, nobody in that age was very wise to the game. They played it in one direction. The ball must go forward at all costs.

Don't pass. Just dribble. I can do this all by myself. And it's funny. When you watch young kids play soccer, they don't play it right. Everybody wants to play offense. Chase the ball and score a goal.

Why? Why do they do that? They don't fully understand how the game works. And we're the same when we fail to understand that life has appointed times and seasons that we're meant to live in and live through.

And we would prefer to have life just be moving in one unchanging direction, wouldn't we? Always upward. Always onward. Always forward. Always scoring. Always winning. Always winning.

But wisdom, the wise man, they step back and understand, man, life doesn't work that way. It's offense and defense. It's backwards and forwards. It's ups and downs.

[13 : 07] And just like soccer, when life is played well, it can be a beautiful thing. It can look very beautiful. Life is beautiful when we see the seasons and surrender to it.

Verse 9, it says, 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 hearts, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. You and I, I want to let you in on this.

You and I are born with this big lie inside of us. And we believe this. The more I'm in control, the better life will be. That's the big lie. The more I get to be control, the better life is going to be.

It's called the God complex. We want to be the sovereign over our lives. We need to be in charge. We need to be able to determine our seasons, what they are and when they come.

[14 : 10] Or at least be able to predict their coming and their going. But these seasons, they're not up to our control. They're not up to our predictions. We can't find out what God has done from the beginning to the end, it says.

That's his. That's his mystery hidden to him and him alone. We don't know his plan. And guess what, guys? There isn't some cosmic calendar that God created and gave to us, right?

March isn't the official month for tearing apart. And April isn't the official month for sewing together. It just doesn't work that way. We wish it would.

And we try our best to figure out what's coming. We try our best to figure out what season's up next. Did you know that the USA alone spends over \$2 billion on psychics?

We can't determine our seasons. And if we can't determine our seasons, we go to psychics because maybe we can figure out how to change or influence what's coming up next.

[15 : 12] But life, for you and me, isn't this buffet that we just get to pick the seasons we want. We can't look into the future to understand the reason for every season, right?

Ignore the cheesy Christmas-like thing there. But it's not ours to understand the reason for every season. All that we can do is perceive which season we are in and flow with it.

And here's the thing. When we stop fighting against God's appointed seasons, what happens is we start learning their purpose and the beauty of each one. Now, fairly enough, you're probably thinking, wait a minute, hold on, time out.

You listed some seasons. Death, war, tearing down. How is that beautiful? How is that beautiful? Well, there are two answers to that question.

I'm going to give you one now and one later. So many of us, we think of beauty, we limit beauty to the appearance of a woman or a man we find attractive. We think of beauty of something that stirs up desire in our hearts.

[16 : 16] Now, that is true, but that isn't the whole story on beauty. There is beauty that we can find in landscapes and architecture and music. But not all landscapes, not all buildings, and not all music is equally beautiful.

Their beauty is determined in how the parts fit together to make the whole. And God, if you think about it, he is the architect of our life who makes everything beautiful in its time.

So what does he do? He, each season fits together within the greater whole of our lives, and it adds to the story of our life, and it's a beautiful thing. Think of it like a symphony.

Now, let me just say, before I start talking about symphonies, that I'm not speaking as an expert here, okay? I once got an honorable mention award in an orchestral contest, and we were the only group in the contest, right?

That's like, think about it this way, it's like running a race in track, and you're the only one running, and you still didn't make the podium. It's like that bad, right? So think of life, but think of life as a symphony.

[17 : 28] In a symphony, there's different movements. Some are faster moments. Some are slower moments. Some parts are a little quieter. Some parts are louder. And the great composers knew when to bring in discord and contrast that heightened the interest and the drama and the beauty to the music.

But in order to capture the beauty of the whole piece, every part, every instrument had to be played in its appropriate time. And everything, even the flat seasons of life, even the sharp seasons of life, man, they can be beautiful in its time.

Now, maybe you're not convinced just yet, so let's play devil's advocate here. What does it look like to do things out of season? Well, think about this. It's laughing and dancing at a funeral.

That's not beautiful in its time, is it? It's actually an ugly thing. It doesn't fit. It's not the right time. After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and declared war on us, it wasn't time for the USA to declare peace, right?

It didn't fit. It wasn't appropriate in its time. Now, let me be a little cheeky here, which is a good South African word that I learned from my wife.

[18 : 47] Aging is beautiful. Fighting age with facelifts and tucks and pulls, and it just doesn't fit. It makes us look off, out of season.

Let's be honest. Seasons can bring amazing gifts, like new kids, new friends, new wrinkles. But we have to see that other seasons can bring a different kind of gift.

It can bring deeper empathy for others, new wisdom for future decisions. It can bring humility through failure. And God can use each season to produce something beautifully unique if we surrender to it.

Now, this is tough because it means surrendering that God complex that we have inside of us. We have to let it go. We have to settle it that you can't understand the reason for every season.

But don't let that drive you to despair. It shouldn't. Don't let what you can't control rob you of what you can enjoy. In verse 12, it says this, I perceived that there is nothing better for them.

[19 : 57] Talking about the children of Adam, all of us here. There's 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. Just because we can't be in charge doesn't mean that the joy of life is robbed from us.

Some of the happiest people I have ever met were some of the most poor and powerless people I've ever met. They didn't even know what they were missing out on. And to be honest, they didn't care. They had clothes on their back.

They had food and water to drink. They lived life at a pace where they could take pleasure in the few things that they had. See, we live differently here in America. We think the good life means filling it up with more and more stuff, more and more things, having more and more events on our social calendar.

See, and more is this quantity that never ends. It's never satisfied. As the saying goes, mo' money, mo' problems.

[21 : 01] Ah, my hip-hop friends out there. I like that. See, the more stuff we have, the more responsibilities we have.

But we don't seem to get that. And so we are busy getting more. And then the more we get demands more of our time and more of our money. And that is why we can't slow down to take pleasure in the simple things.

It's always one eye in the moment and one eye on the next thing. And this, I believe, more than anything else, contributes to our rapidly growing anxiety problems today.

And Jesus calls us out on this. He gives it to us straight. He says, man, don't be anxious for anything. And then he launches out, like, how we don't need to be worrying about tomorrow. Today has enough worries of its own.

Just live in today, enjoy today while it lasts. One eye here, but we live one eye here, the other on tomorrow. Worried about what's going to happen next, right? But here's where joy comes in.

[22 : 03] Joy comes when we stop obsessing about tomorrow and just enjoy today. So today, while things are going good for you, invite friends over for a cookout.

Go fishing. Grow a beard. Pop some popcorn. Watch Nacho Libre. Do something fun. Tomorrow, you might get food poisoning. Lose your hair.

Or if I'm honest, get a call that your mom's passed away. But today, today, you're okay. And so make the most of it.

Go outside and throw the ball around with your kids. Go have a coffee with a friend. And don't obsess about tomorrow's unknowns so that you can't enjoy the gifts in front of you right now.

Now, some of us are probably thinking, if you're like me, hold on. Doesn't a wise man save up? Doesn't a wise man plan for the future? Absolutely. And that's why it's good to work hard and buy insurance.

[23 : 04] It's good to have a savings account. But those things won't buy you happiness or peace. They won't eliminate anxiety. And here's why, guys.

Plans, our best plans, don't come with guarantees and warranties. All right? You can plan your kid's life from the cradle to med school. That won't guarantee the result you want.

Because God alone knows the end from the beginning. Only God knows every season that's coming your way. That's going to come into your life. Not only does he know they are coming, but guess what?

He is in control of their coming and their going. And when we settle that, when we come to terms with that, that is the antidote to fear and anxiety, knowing that he is in control.

And isn't it strange that anxiety is at an all-time high at the same time that choice, wealth, and freedom are at an all-time high? Perhaps it's because we believe we are in control more than any other previous generation.

[24 : 11] And that's the big irony. Man, we live in this age of the individual being the most sovereign over their own lives. I get to make my own choices. I get to live on my own terms. I get to do what I want.

I get to define my own truth. But that hasn't produced peace at all. It's produced fear and growing anxiety. See, the antidote isn't inside of us.

It isn't anything under the sun. The antidote comes from outside, from the one who sits in heaven. Life seasons come and go, but God stays the same forever.

Verse 14, I perceive 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.

[25 : 11] Here is a big, big concept. A lot bigger and more important than you probably realize. Solomon is pointing to an important attribute of God.

He's defining who God is to us. And God is revealing himself right here. Who he is. And this is it. He never changes.

He never changes. Whatever he does lasts forever. Whatever he does is perfect. It's perfect. Nothing can be added to it.

And nothing can be taken away from it. Have you and I ever made anything like that? Or done anything like that? Think about it. Man invents a car. It's pretty good.

But it's not perfect. We're not driving Model Ts anymore, right? We're driving way better cars. Subsequent models improved on the first one. We invent the computer. Man, it's so revolutionary.

[26 : 10] It ushers in a whole new era. But it's not perfect. It's always improving. They're always getting faster and better. What we do as men.

And what we create, it always needs to be perfected. It's incomplete. Because it takes complete knowledge and perfect wisdom to be unchanging. Imagine that.

Imagine that. Having all the knowledge from history, past, and all the knowledge of the future. Imagine that. Imagine having all the wisdom of knowing what is the absolute right thing to do in every single event.

Then, and only then, is it possible you can make something perfect. Then you can crank out something that can't be improved on. But that's God.

That's not us. That's God. He's all-knowing. He's all-wise. Therefore, he is unchanging. And the big fancy theological term for this attribute of God is his immutability.

[27 : 09] He's immutable. He is unchanging. When this truth that God is unchanging, when it grabs our hearts, man, let me tell you guys, it is joy.

It is peace. It settles you into just rest and gratitude. Why? Because it's true. Because it's true.

And because God is good. And if he is good, then all his good things will never end. Which means good will triumph in the end. And that's amazing. And that should fill us with awe and wonder and thankfulness and gratitude, right?

But there's still this bigger question hanging out there that I've yet to answer. What do we do with the evil that is done today? What do we do with the evil that is done all around us and that we see in this life?

Because remember, we said everything is beautiful in its time. So how can that be true of evil? And now I'll give the second answer that I promised.

[28 : 08] And here it is. Verse 16. Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness. And in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness. And I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked.

For there is a time for every matter and for every work. There will be a time when God will right all wrongs and fulfill all justice.

It goes on to say this in verse 18. I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them. That they may see that they themselves are but beasts. For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beast is the same.

As one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath and man has no advantage over the beasts. For all is vanity. All go to one place. All are from the dust and to dust all return.

Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of beasts goes down into the earth. So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work. For that is his lot.

[29 : 12] Who can bring him to see what will be after him? Everything is beautiful in his time. And I want to hold this out to you. Today is the time of God's mercy and grace while we're still living.

But one day there will be a time of judgment and justice. Sometimes God defers justice. But he never denies justice.

Justice deferred is not justice denied. There is a time coming when we will all be judged. And all his judgments will endure forever.

That is a big reason why I believe in heaven and hell. Because it's consistent with the character of God. Deep down, if we're honest with ourselves, we want a judge of what's right and wrong.

We have referees in sports because we don't trust players' bias. We have instant replays because we don't trust the referees to get it right 100% of the time. We want judgments.

- [30 : 13] We want judgments that are 100% right, if possible. Again, that's God. He wrote the rule book on right and wrong. He's got better insight than instant replay.
- So his judgments will be 100% accurate. Now, if you're righteous, that's good news. But, if you're wicked, that's bad news.
- And I'm not talking right and wrong by your standards. You didn't write the rule book God's judging by. And neither did your grandma. It says God uses this life under the sun to test us.
- That is true. Whether you like it or not, it is true. God is tracking all of our actions, thoughts, motives, everything that we do. And you know what? None of us make it out as righteous.
- None of us. I don't care how good you think you are. None of us make it out as righteous on our own. Which means we are all under judgment. But here's the thing.
- [31 : 11] God knows that. And so, he chose to rescue us from his judgment. He sent Jesus to live the perfect life.
- Perfect. Right? Nothing needed to be erased from Jesus' life because it was bad and he messed up. Nothing needed to be added to it because he didn't do enough.
- Nothing in his life was lacking. He fulfilled every requirement of what it means to be righteous. And then what did he do? He went to the cross.
- He took our punishment. Our punishment for being wicked. That's what the cross was all about. Jesus stood in our place. Our sins were put on him and he was punished for them.
- But not only that, his righteousness was put on us. And that is the ultimate moment. That is the ultimate appointed time, season and time of redemption.
- [32 : 08] God changed it for us. Communion, it reminds us of this as the band comes up. As Christians, those who believe in Jesus, we come and we take communion.
- We look at it and we see the bread. It's his broken body. His body that was broken and shredded for our sake. His cup. His blood that was shed for the forgiveness of our sins.
- And what we do is we eat and drink God's judgment upon Jesus to remind ourselves that we don't live under that judgment anymore. We don't live under that judgment anymore.
- No matter what season you might be in, that season is going to pass. All seasons are going to pass. And then we will be with him, the perfect one, in a perfect place, forever and ever.
- Unchanging. Eternal. If you're not a Christian, man, Jesus, Jesus' salvation from God, from his judgment, it's free.
- [33 : 19] It doesn't cost you anything. You can't buy your way out of it. You can't work your way out of it. All it requires you to do is come to him in faith. Come to him believing that he died for your sins.
- That he is who he claims to be. The son of God. Lord and Savior. And I want to say, don't put this off. This life you're living is a test. And guess what?
- You failed. You failed. We all have. And I want to invite you today. Put your faith and your hope in Jesus. Let's pray.
- Father, give us faith to trust in you.
- Whether we believe or we're seeking, that we would look to you and be reminded that you are unchanging. Because you are perfect.
- [34 : 21] You are all-wise, all-knowing. All your ways are good. Nothing needs to be added to them or taken away. Help us to believe this, Lord.
- Help us to believe this. Amen. Amen.