

Time is trippy.

Time is trippy.

It's sort of a weird thing.

Do you remember the kids saying, Are we there yet?

Is that something that you're in that season right now?

I remember in the Sutherland Shire, we were leaving for, I guess, a nine-hour drive to Melbourne and Sutherland Shire, we set off and we probably don't know the area that well, but Angadine, are you familiar with that?

By Angadine, one of the four kids was saying, Are we there yet?

And I was like, whoa, it's going to be a long day.

I said, let's play I Spy.

This is a picture from last Monday night in my garage.

And Neville is on what's called the Echo Bike.

And when you're on the Echo Bike, if you're not fit, time is elastic.

Time takes a really long time.

When you are fit on the bike, it's like two minutes goes too fast.

You want to achieve something on it.

But raise your hand if you know what it's like for the time.

Two minutes to feel like ten minutes on the Echo Bike.

Oh, cool.

We know that.

Time feels different, doesn't it?

It's sort of trippy.

It's strange.

From varied perspectives, it can race by or seemingly take forever.

But of course, we all have the same number of hours in each day, the same time in each month or year.

We can spend our time well or we can not spend it well.

Titus 3.14 said, Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives because it can happen.

We can waste our time.

2 Peter 1 verse 8 says, If you possess these qualities, there was a list of qualities that we were given in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We can misuse our time on this earth.

We can misuse our maybe 85 plus or minus years if we're fortunate.

Ephesians 5 says, in, I think it's the New King James, which is the passage I remembered, see then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, redeeming the time because the days are evil.

This morning, we're going to consider how we might redeem the time, how we might take time in and by the grace of God that has been used for less important purposes and make it worthy of the Lord.

And we'll see that by God's grace, we can redeem seasonal time, eternal time, and temporal time.

Richard read for us this well-known passage.

Let me read a little bit of it again.

Seasonal time, there's a time, the teacher says, for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens, a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a

time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

It's a very well-known passage of the Bible, but is it God's inspired word of ultimate truth?

Because you have to ask the question, some of the teacher's musings, as much as many of us love them, they're not quite, this is a question and a statement at the same time, they're not quite bankable ultimate truth, are they?

Or is everything you read any time in the Bible absolutely true no matter what?

Well, Ecclesiastes is written by an author, and he speaks at the very start and at the end, and then he speaks through a teacher's voice that sounds a lot like Solomon, whether it is or not, it's what Solomon would have thought from the author's perspective.

And sometimes the musings of the teacher don't quite exactly sound like ultimate truth.

How does that sit with you?

Well, if you didn't know, the book of Job is not a book that you should bank every verse in.

There's many chapters, chapter 42 verse 7 of Job.

God says, after the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Teminite, I am angry with you and your two friends because you have not spoken the truth about me as my servant Job has.

Now, much of the book of Job is the friends rattling on stuff that God says in chapter 42 verse 7 says, don't listen much to them.

So there's just a little warning.

If your habit is this, thus says the Lord, be careful because we have to just consider what the scripture says and think, is it in line with the broader revelation of scripture?

So let's just have a look at a table to help us in this.

The type of statement, is it a God-aligned truth?

That is, does it match the teaching of scripture?

Here's one of the ones that we looked at today.

There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens.

Is that the musings of teacher, the teacher?

Or is that bankable, totally from God truth?

Well, if you look at other portions of scripture, like Daniel 2.21, we read, God changes times and seasons.

He deposes kings and raises up others.

Or Acts 17, verse 26, from one man he had made all nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth, and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.

It would seem that that statement that we looked at today, in Chapter 3 of Ecclesiastes, is fully affirmed by the rest of Scripture.

Would you agree?

It can be preached directly.

But you might see that there's something a bit different in all is hevel, all is meaningless.

Is that the same?

Well, 1 Corinthians 15, 58 says, always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

It's not all meaningless.

So you've gotta hold these two together.

So we'd say, well, that truth from Ecclesiastes needs to be interpreted through the whole Bible.

And it's true from the teacher's vantage point, but not the final word.

Well, what about in chapter 3, verse 19 of Ecclesiastes?

The fate of humans and animals is the same.

Is that bankable, inspired?

It is inspired, absolutely.

But is it the final revelation?

Well, no.

1 Corinthians 15 talks about the resurrection of humanity, something different to the animals.

What about chapter 8?

So, I commend the enjoyment of life, the teacher says.

Well, this is a provisional conclusion from his search for meaning.

It's not wrong, but not the highest biblical ethic.

It needs the gospel, doesn't it, for a fuller context.

And then we come to the end of Ecclesiastes, Fear God and Keep His Commandments, chapter 12 verse 13.

Absolutely, this is the lens for interpreting the rest of the book.

So, can you see that there are times in the Book of Ecclesiastes that we have to just check, how much should I take that and run with it?

Are you with me?

I would say, and it's very important, this passage about the seasons and there's a time for everything, I think that's the bankable stuff.

That's really clearly what Scripture teaches.

So what does that mean for us today?

Well, there is a time in our life for a lot of different and varied experiences.

Has anyone discovered that's actually the reality of life?

Of course it is.

It's often said that life has mountaintop experiences and valley experiences.

And of course we've all experienced that.

But it's probably closer to the fact that there's a journey we're on like on a train.

And it has two tracks.

And there are highs and there are lows, but there are always two tracks.

Some things that are great and concurrently, some things not so great.

Would you agree?

That's life.

There are seasons and sometimes the seasons are concurrently quite different.

A time to be born and a time to die to kill and a time to heal.

Life is seasonal.

So can I encourage you, if you're in a time right now where there's a lot of weeping, it won't always stay like that.

Praise the Lord.

And if it's just a lot of joy and winds, it won't stay like that either.

It's going to go up and down.

And you know, something that is just wonderfully encouraging is that we have a Lord, the Lord Jesus, who has experienced life in its fullness, and he knows what it is to be tempted in every way, like us, and he knows what it's like to have the highs and the lows.

Galatians 4 says, When the set time had fully come, God sent his Son.

He entered from eternity into life, into this life as a human being, and he experienced everything that the teacher talks about.

And you know, there's a little, maybe a little bit of stretching here, but I'm going to very quickly run you through an interesting table I found that just proves the teacher of Ecclesiastes is explaining what the Lord Jesus went through, just like we go through these things.

So have a look on the screen.

I hope you can read it.

So a time to be born.

Yes, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, incarnated, eternal into the frame of a human being, God, man, a time to die.

Yeah, he went to the cross, John 19, a time to plant.

He taught about it, didn't he?

Planting the kingdom in Mark 4, a time to uproot.

He cleansed the temple in John 2, a time to kill, confronted the demonic powers in Mark 1.

I'm going to keep reading pretty quick, but a time to heal.

He healed the sick in many places, a time to tear down.

He prophesied the destruction of the temple in Mark 13, a time to build.

Well, he talked about building his church, Mark 16, a time to weep.

Yes, he did it at Lazarus' tomb, John 11, a time to laugh, of course he did, rejoiced with his disciples, a time to mourn in Gethsemane, a time to dance.

Well, it was the wedding at Cana, John 2, a time to scatter stones, the judging of the unfaithful in Mark 11, a time to gather them, gathering the lost in Luke 15, a time to embrace.

He welcomed the children in Mark 10, a time to refrain from embracing.

He withdrew to prayer, a time to search, of course, seeking the lost in Luke 19, a time to give up, yielding to his father's will at the cross, a time to keep, keeping the law perfectly, Matthew 5, a time to throw away, letting go of earthly glory, Philippians 2, a time to tear his garments torn at the cross, a time to mend, restoring Peter after failure, a time to be silent, silent before his accusers, a time to speak, teaching in the synagogues, a time to love, laying down his life for his friends, a time to hate, hating evil and hypocrisy, Matthew 23, a time for war, the spiritual battle against sin, death and Satan, a time for peace, rising from the dead, he said, peace be with you.

Time is seasonal and the Lord Jesus has experienced all of it, amen?

He has walked the journey that you are walking.

In all the feelings that you are experiencing in your life, we can trust him, hallelujah?

We can trust him.

You are not outside of Christ's care and his plan for your life, like the magnificent plan that he has working out, even though it looks like this, Romans 8, a little bit of a dog's breakfast from our perspective.

But we know the other side of the tapestry is something beautiful.

And in the seasons of your life, there is meaning to be found and there is a redeeming that can be done by reframing the season and seeing the goodness of God all over it.

Amen?

Time is seasonal and time is eternal.

What do workers gain from their toil?

The teacher writes, I've seen the burden God has laid on the human race.

He has made everything beautiful in its time.

He has also set eternity in the heart of man.

Sorry, I couldn't help but do my memorised version.

He has also set eternity in the human heart, yet no one can fathom what God has done from



beginning to end.

Isn't it weird in Ecclesiastes how there are these odd musings and then there are these boom, amazing lines that we know.

He has set eternity in the human heart.

Has anyone heard of Don and Carol Richardson?

Online, help me.

Yes, there's a few online, I can see their hands.

Don and Carol, oh, there was a hand.

Awesome.

Don and Carol Richardson were missionaries in 1962 to the Sawi people in what was known then as Dutch New Guinea, West Papua, Indonesia.

And they were sent with, how's this for a great mission organisation name?

Regions Beyond Missionary Union.

I think that's got a great ring about it.

Regions Beyond Missionary Union.

And their early years were learning language and of course culture.

And their real desire was to find what redemptive analogies the Spirit of God had placed in the culture.

Because Don Richardson, in particular, believed that this passage from Ecclesiastes was a missional promise that God has put inside of every culture on earth a clue, a redemptive analogy, a part of their story and their worldview, their system of beliefs that could be unlocked by someone who would come and tell them the specific truth of the gospel.

And so they were struggling along as they were missionaries to the Sawui people.

And they found that the big challenge was they had as their highest virtue, the Sawui people, their

highest virtue was to befriend someone, befriend someone from another tribe, gain their trust and then betray them and kill them.

That was seen as a very recommendable, highly virtuous thing to do.

And so he's trying to preach the gospel into that.

And he's like, oh Lord, where on earth is the redemptive analogy here?

But then one time in the years that he was with them, he saw this incredible rite of passage happen, where two warring tribes came together and they gave an infant to the other tribe.

Anyone remember what, Stuart, what was the child called?

Sorry, I didn't mean to put you on the spot.

You're such a good historian.

The Peace Child.

In the culture of the Sawi people was a belief that if two warring tribes would offer an infant to each other, so long as the child remained alive, they would stay at peace.

And it was called the Peace Child.

Don Richardson was like, I've got a way in here.

This is amazing.

And he told them the gospel and the tribe ended up becoming followers of Jesus.

A redemptive analogy.

God had placed eternity in the hearts of the Sawi people.

They knew that there was a way to find the God that had made them.

They just didn't know how to explain that or what the Peace Child meant.

Jesus is God's Peace Child.

He came and died in our place.

And when we put our faith in Him, we access that which is in our heart, in every human heart, there is a longing for transcendence, for the eternal, to know the God who made us.

And of course, there are these wonderful passages that many of us are familiar with.

John 3.16, God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

John 5.24, the same.

John 6.24.

1 John 5.11.13 says this is the testimony, God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

Whoever has the Son has life.

Whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Talk about redeeming the time.

Do you know that you're going to live forever?

Hallelujah.

Thank you for the response.

Reminds me we're a living group of people.

Do you know that you have eternal life?

Because you can.

It's not because you are good enough.

It's not because you somehow tick all the boxes of righteousness.

It is simply because you have turned from your sin and embraced the gift of God in Jesus.

I believe that you died for me in my place.

Would you forgive me, Lord Jesus?

Holy Spirit, come and live in me.

Change me.

This is the essence of salvation.

Eternal life is available.

Your hope for that can be redeemed.

Purchased back by the blood of Christ.

Time is seasonal and we can redeem the seasons by reframing them by the grace of God.

Time is eternal.

We can access eternal life by Jesus and through Him.

And time is also now, it's temporal.

The teacher writes, I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live, that each of them may eat and drink and find satisfaction in all their toil.

This is the gift of God.

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.

The kingdom of God is the power of God in every season God ordains.

It is eternal, this power, and it's also now.

The eternal God entered into this world in Jesus, didn't He?

The immortal embraced mortality and then transformed that mortality by His own resurrection from the grave.

Time is now, but God can affect our now as though now is history because He's outside of time.

Time is trippy, isn't it?

Do you know that you've never seen anyone smile at you at a coffee shop?

Maybe you've sat across someone.

You've never seen them smile at you real time, have you?

It's always history.

Whenever we see anything, see it.

You could feel it.

I could close my eyes and I could feel myself touching my chest, but I'll never see anything real time.

It's always a nanosecond or two late, isn't it?

Because light takes time.

So it's more obvious if I was having a coffee with Will and he was on the sun, warm there, but if he was on the sun and he smiled at me, which he's often likely to do, it'd be eight minutes before I got to see the smile.

It'd be eight minutes long.

If he was on Alpha Centauri, the closest star we have to us, it'd be four years.

So I'd be looking at history.

Did you know when you have those wonderful moments of life reflection and connection with God, and when you look at the stars around the campfire, you're a historian, aren't you?

You're looking at history.

All those smiling stars, satellites, they're closer, but certainly the stars, they're a long way away, so they are talking to you, declaring the glory of God back in time.

Time is trippy, right?

Time is often experienced through looking back without knowing it, and yet God, we're told in Psalm 90, a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by.

God is not bound by time the way we are.

We only see the past, but He sees past, present, and future all at once.

Is that incredible?

Is that the God you know?

He understands and comprehends the past, the now, and the future.

He's Alpha and Omega all at once.

So He already understands our present and our tomorrow before we get there, and He knows, isn't this just the most wonderful truth?

He knows the prayer we're going to pray tomorrow, and He's already been answering it yesterday.

Hallelujah.

He's answering our prayers now.

In fact, sometimes you hear stories that He answered them generations ago.

Isn't that trippy, for want of a better word?

It's weird.

It does your mind in.

God is outside of time, and so He can make our momentary existence, our seemingly meaningless time on this earth, filled with the weight of an eternal glory.

Amen?

Isn't that the incredible thing that God does as He redeems the now?

We look at it like the teacher, and we go, well, it's just another moment in church.

We've all done it before, maybe most of us, unless this is your first time.

But we've all done it before, but the weight of the glory of God in our lives takes the eternal and invests it into the now.

Hallelujah.

Your life and mine matters now, right now, because God is doing something through us for His eternal glory.

The teacher says, there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live, that each of them may eat and drink and find satisfaction in all their toil.

This is the gift of God.

Well, I think this is clearly incomplete, pre-Christ, pre-the Spirit.

But after, after Christ's life, death and resurrection, after the sending of the Spirit, can't this be true?

May we learn to live in the power of the Spirit, taught by the grace of God in the now, doing good, enjoying the provision of the Father, finding satisfaction in the work of our hands, for this is the will of God for our lives.

To redeem the time, this season, this moment, this life, we can do it by the grace of God.

And I think, I don't think we do this so well at our church.

We don't have much of a culture of response.

We're a little bit reluctant to believe that God could invest his power into a moment.

But we have passages in the scriptures that are, this is bankable, absolutely.

This is the Spirit of God speaking through Paul, 2 Corinthians, all this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

We in Christ have been given a job to do, haven't we?

To be ministers to each other and the world of the power of God that brings peace between humanity and him.

Brings peace between people, like the Sawui people.

God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ.

This is the story we have to tell.

Not counting people's sins against them, and he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

So let's minister to one another.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank you that you have given us a way to be redeemed with you.

To redeem our souls, to redeem our circumstances, to redeem the season that we're in.

And we pray for that over the ones that have raised their hands, but also the other hearts that are here now.

That Lord, you would open our eyes to understand clearly the seasons that we are walking in, the stages in our life, the circumstances in our family, the circumstances in our children, the circumstances in our marriage, in our health.

Lord, of all those circumstances there of where you have called us to live in the now.

And Father, for the things that have robbed that, that have taken away, that have misled us, we say no more to those things.

And Father, we say not our ways, but your ways.

That Father, we would walk in the fullness of what you have given us in Christ.



That we would live in the kingdom and we would walk with confidence and with peace.

And Father, I pray your Holy Spirit will come now, and to touch our lives, our circumstances, our minds.

That we will walk out of here confident.

That we are loved, we are known, and we are guided by you.

And Father, for where there needs to be the miraculous, where there needs to be a way where there is no way in the natural, I pray that you will make that way now by the power of your Spirit.

And as individuals, we would be great at bringing people into redemption with you.

As Jonah was talking about, you give us boldness, confidence, to walk in what you have given us.

We would know it as truth, we would know it as power, and we would share and encourage one another in that, in Jesus' name.

And we all said, Amen.

Lord, we thank you that you love us so much, no matter who we are, no matter whether we're young or old, whether we're facing major decisions in life, or whether we're looking at the end of our life and all the steps in between.

You are right, walking right with us, every day, every step of the way.

Lord God, sometimes we need you more than at other times.

We need your presence, we need your blessing.

And for each of us in that time, Lord, let your spirit provide the comfort that only your spirit can.

Give us that heart of openness to receive your comfort and your strength.

And thank you, Lord, that your promises are true and that you do strengthen us.

And we can last through this time of difficulty and challenge and hardship and pain.

And Lord, some of us are going through times of high and joy and blessing.

Lord, help us to see where that blessing has come from.

Lord, you are the provider of all good things.

We know that.

And we know that there are people around us who are perhaps not in the same time of life.

Help us to share our blessings and our joys so that we can be sad together, but we can also celebrate together.

And Lord, we trust that no matter what time we're going through, that this is the right time for us because you are God and you are sovereign and you will lead us through each of these times of our life.

And we thank you in Jesus' name.