

In His Time Ecclesiastics 3:1-14

A poor Chinese farmer had one old horse that
he used for everything on the farm,
for pulling heavy things, for tilling his fields, and
even as a companion.

One day the horse escaped into the hills
leaving him with nothing.

When the farmer's neighbors heard about it,
they sympathized with the old man over his bad luck.
"Bad luck? Good luck? Who knows?" the farmer said.

A week latter,
the horse returned with a herd of wild horses from the hills,
and this time the neighbors congratulated the farmer
for his good luck.
"Good luck? Bad Luck? Who knows?" said the farmer.

Then, when the farmer's son was trying
to tame one of the wild horses,
he fell off its back and broke a leg.
Everyone agreed that this was very bad luck.
Not the farmer, who replied,
"Bad luck? Good Luck? Who know?"

Some weeks latter,
the army marched into town and forced every young
man to go and fight in a bloody war.
When they saw the farmer's son with a broken leg,
they left him behind.
Everyone was very happy at the farmer's good luck.
Do you know what the farmer said?
"Good luck? Bad luck? Who knows?"

This old Chinese farmer and Solomon
had one thing in common.
They agree that it is hard to understand the purpose of
something especially when you are in the midst of it.
In verse 11 Solomon says
we cannot fathom what God is doing
in each stage of our lives, or
each phase of our experience, or
the things that happen to us.
We cannot fathom what God is doing when someone dies,
or something devastating happens to us.

We do not understand why things are happen
either bad or good.
Yet that is the burden God has laid on us.
We try to figure out what the gain is in the midst of toil.
We work our buns of for something and we try to
determine and place our value on it.
We try to stake our well being on it.
On our work, on our health,
on our family, on our church. Especially on its success.

But what Solomon discovered
as he reflects on his life in old age is that
there is a time for everything,
there is season for every activity under heaven.
A time to be born and time to die.
A time to tear down and a time to build up.
A time to mourn and a time to dance.
A time for war and time for peace.
And our problem is we want know in every phase and
in every season what the purpose is.
What the eternal value is.
How this will pan out in the end.
God has placed in our hearts
a longing for something that will last.
For something that has ultimate meaning.
We want to connect all the pieces in our lives
to the eternal scope of things, to its ultimate value.

Solomon says v11 that God has made everything and
every season and every experience and
everything that happens to us beautiful in its time.
God has his purpose for everything.
There is no such thing a good luck
or bad luck or coincidence.
There is purpose for everything and
an appropriate time for everything,
even a beauty in everything
if we are only willing to trust God and be patient and
experience the present moment as God gives it.

Of course when someone dies,
when some part of our life get torn down, or
we are stuck by a disease we grieve.
But who is to say that that is bad or good.
When someone is born who knows if that is Good or Bad.
When we are in a time of healing or a time of love.

Who knows whether that is Good or bad
in the eternal scope of things.
I remember when my mother died last year.
It was a time of mourning and confusion, and
yet when I look back at that time I remember the
family came together,
with relatives from the Netherlands
we have most beautiful time.
It was time of healing and
deeper intimacy and reconciliation.

Often we associate good and bad feelings
with the seasons and the experiences we have in life.
We let our limited interpretation of what is happening to us
determine how we feel and how we see life.
When we judge things are going well,
we are happy and we think God is with us.
When we determine that things are going well
we think they are happening according to God's plan.
When things are going well
we think God loves us.
But when things are going badly according to our
evaluation we get discouraged and depressed.
We think that God must have abandoned us,
God must not love us.
We must have done something wrong to deserve this.

That is our toil in life.
That is our burden we want to see the gain in our toil,
to determine the value or the purpose of our struggle,
our disease, our pain.
But the problem is we do not know.
We do not understand the eternal scope and
God's reason for things.
All we know is things happen in God's time.
In God's time.
And God makes everything beautiful in his time.

There is a time for everything,
a season for every activity under heaven.
As human beings we welcome the time to dance,
and laugh, and to plant and to build, and
love and to enjoy peace.
And we minimize and avoid the times of silence, and
death, and tearing down and scattering of stones.
We want to avoid those times

to get over them as fast as possible.
But often it is during these dark times that the beauty of
God working in our lives is experienced.
God has made everything beautiful in his time.
In his time.
And so Solomon and our old Chinese farmer agree.
Who knows what is good or bad.
Who know knows how things will work out or
how God will use one situation or the other.
We know very little.

But there are two things Solomon does know.
Three things he is positive about. 12-14
V.12 There is nothing better for us to do than to rejoice,
to be happy in every situation and
to do good while we live.
Because we do not know and cannot know
what God is up to in our lives
its best not to worry about the whys and wherefore,
its best not to complain and fret.
Paul in the NT says in Philippians 4 that as Christian,
as someone who knows the love of God in Jesus,
he has learned to be content,
to be happy in every circumstance,
whether in jail, or visiting with friends.
Whether laying in hospital starving or
enjoying a thanksgiving banquet with family.
His happiness and his sense of peace and satisfaction
does nor depend on his circumstances.
He had learned that God makes everything beautiful
in his time. In his time.
Rejoice and do good, that's the first thing.

The second thing Solomon was positive about v.13 is this.
Finding happiness and joy in the little things
like eating or drinking, or being satisfied with your work,
this contentment that Paul talks about
is a gift of God.

This peace with yourself,
this restfulness with who you are and with your life,
this contentment in all the seasons of life
comes as a gift in your relationship with God.
Happiness and meaning and satisfaction
does not come in certain times or seasons,
it does not depend on our circumstances,

it depend on our connection with God.
It is gift we receive when
 we are in fellowship with God.
We know, says Paul in Romans 8:28
 "We know that in everything God works for the
 good of those who love him."
We may not understand this in certain times of our lives
 but it true.
 God works for the good of those who love him.
That's the second thing.

And finally the third thing Solomon was confident about,
 He says in v 14.
I know that everything God does will endure forever;
 everything God does has eternal value and significance.
 Each phase, each experience,
 even the times of depression and sorrow
 are from God and
 God uses them in your life for his purpose.
 Even the times of doubt and sickness and weakness
 God makes beautiful in his time.
And the reason,
 and this is the most important line in the passage,
 the reason God does what he does,
 is so that you and I will revere him.

God desires that we are drawn to him,
 that we begin to experience his grace and his love.
 That we are introduced to His son Jesus and
 know why he came. That is the heart of God.
His desire is that revere him,
 that we glorify him: that we enjoy him in all things.

So let me close by giving you
 a word of comfort from Romans 8.
Know this, says the Spirit of God:
 God is working for our good.
 God is for us.
 God did not spare his own son,
 but gave him up for us.
Who or what can separate us from the love of God?
 Can a time of trouble, or a time of hardship,
 or a time of persecution, or a time of nakedness,
 or a time of danger, or a time of cancer,
 or a time of depression separate us from God?

No. NO!

in everything, and in every season under heaven
God loves us and is working for our good.

I am convinced, we can say with Paul,
that neither the time of death nor time of life,
neither angels nor demons,
neither the past, nor present, nor the future,
nor anything else in all creation
will be able to separate us from the love of God
that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

May God bless you and give this peace. Amen.