

The New Season, David Yeh, 15 Jan 2017

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

The beginning of the year is always exciting because of new events or new things in our lives. What is your new beginning for this year?

Maybe you are or your child is entering a new stage of schooling, going from intermediate school to High school? Or from high school to University? You might have graduated and are looking for a job. You might be in transition from one job to another job. You might have made a new resolution and plan for this year. Pretty exciting!

In a spiritual sense, we are entering into new season too. Some of you might be able to sense it. As we enter into this year I can feel there is going to be a breakthrough for this church this year, a new phase to fulfil the destiny of this church that God has given to us.

1. Know the season

As we turn to the passage in Ecclesiastes, first of all we need to understand what the writer is saying here. He is not saying that these activities are all pre-determined and just happen when they are scheduled in heaven. Nor is he merely writing on the theme of the contrasts between negative and positive. The inspired writer is simply saying, "this is the way it is!" In life we will face all sorts of events and we will experience all sorts of emotional responses, and it is OK to have them because if it happens at the right time then it achieves its purpose.

In Ecc 3:1 it says, "**There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven**"

The word "**time**" in this verse means, man has his appointed cycle of seasons and changes, as the sun, wind, and water (Ecclesiastes 1:5-7). The purpose is, as there is a fixed "time" in God's "purposes" (for example, He has fixed the "time" when man is "to be born," and "to die," Ecclesiastes 3:2), so there is a lawful "time" for man to carry out his "purposes".

The word "**season**" in Hebrew, has a sense of "suitable moment". There is that right or suitable time to do things. But man also has free will. He can choose to do things at the right time, or he can choose not to. In nature we have the 4 seasons – summer, autumn, winter, spring. The sun and the moon have their natural cycles. So too for you and me, there are times and seasons – the right time in life to do things.

From chapter 3:2-8 we see the examples of doing things in different situations.

V2b there will be time to plant and a time to uproot. Just because we want the fruit or the produce of planting we can't just keep on planting without uprooting what is useless, the weeds or the dead plants.

V3a If a person kills someone in normal times he or she is a murderer and will be sentenced accordingly, but in time of war soldiers who kill enemy fighters or terrorists in order to defend their country are not regarded as murderers. So too if you or others are attacked, standing up for what is right and defending yourself or others are perfectly legitimate responses. But there is also a time people need to get healed from their injuries in life. They need to recuperate before they can move forward in life. There is time to heal. God has His times for "healing" our body from sickness or restoring us from emotional pain. There is also 'spiritual' healing. Spiritually God wants to bring us back from our sinful life. Before we can be healed spiritually, we need to recognize the fact we are wounded and need to repent. If we do not recognize that it is time to get right with God we may end up more and more

alienated from God and will only harm ourselves. Yes, it may be painful to admit we are sinners in need of forgiveness but that pain can help bring us back to the right path and back to God.

V3b There is a time to tear down. A leaky house damaged by mould needs repair. Damaged parts have to be pulled down and replaced. Such tearing down might seem a pity or might involve extra expense but if it is not done those living in such a house will suffer. Living in such a house is unhealthy. Sometimes we have to tear down an old building before a new one can be built. So too in our lives, there are things we need to ask God to tear down and replace – bad attitudes, un-forgiveness, pride, etc. Only as He gets rid of the old and bad things in our lives can He build new and beautiful things in our lives.

V4 There are times you feel so sad that you need to weep and mourn. It is OK to do so. Even strong mature Christians face times of sadness and times when they need to weep. When is time to weep let it go and cry, it is good for you. If you don't cry, other parts of your body will cry. If you bottle-up your emotions or try to suppress them in an unhealthy way, it will affect your physical and emotional well-being. There are also times when you are so happy and joyful that you feel like laughing and dancing. Don't suppress your joy – let it out. Laugh and dance.

V5 In the old days to build a house people would need to gather stones, stones to be used in the building. However, there are also times when you get rid of stones, like in gardening when preparing new flower beds or a new vegetable garden.

V8 A time to love is easy to understand but make sure you don't love sin. Love is not the same as lust. Love is not getting involved in unlawful, immoral sexual relationships. That is lust, not love. We must love our spouse, our children, those around us. We must love what is right and good and pure, but as it says in 1 John 2:15, we must “...**not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.**”

There is time to love but there is also time to hate. We are to hate what is wrong, what is sinful. We are to hate the injustice and the moral corruption in the world, we are to hate the sin in our self and in the society, but we are not to hate people, even our enemy.

From the scriptures above we see that there is a purpose in every situation. It means every action has its purpose. It also is saying that there is a right time (and a wrong time) for everything. Right timing is very important. You must be doing the right thing at the right time for it to be a right action. If you want to have the right result, what you do, your actions, must be suitable or appropriate for the time and circumstance.

E.g. Greeting someone is a good thing but if you greet someone at the middle of the night you would be considered inconsiderate.

E.g. Giving a chocolate to a child may be a good thing but not before their meal time.

If things happen at the right time then they are acceptable but if not, they are unacceptable. The result may not be good or beneficial. It may even be negative or bad. But doing or saying things at the right time could be of great benefit and bring great blessing. There might be things you were not able to do in the past, but this year could be the time for you to try. This year might be the time for breakthrough.

PPT: May be this is the time to have breakthrough in having exercise

Think: what were the things you couldn't do it before but now you can? May be because of your physical maturity or mental maturity or spiritual maturity. It is because the season is right at this current time. When the season is right what you have planted will grow and bring fruit, but if planted in the wrong season, no matter how good the plant is, it will not grow, but it will wither away.

I am excited about what God will do for all of us this year, because the season is right to move on. Just like an army that needed to be mobilised for war (infantry, navy, air force) God has mobilised the new team of staff for the new phase of spiritual war. I believe that this year God is going to take us to a place we have not been before. There will be greater growth in your spiritual life and your everyday life too.

For the church to grow in maturity and to fulfil the great commission of Jesus Christ we need to make disciples – not just being a disciple but making disciples. Secondly, for the church to grow in numbers and to fulfil the great commission of Jesus Christ, we need to evangelise people.

2. To enter a new season we must often strip off the last season.

We need to learn to put aside the past failure, past hurt, past feeling (discouragement, disappointment, bitterness) and move on. If we don't, these things will be a hindrance for the new season.

Even some of the old mentality, the ways we are used to do things in the past can be hindrance for us to receive the blessing in the new season.

This is the season to uproot the past hindrances and plant the new hope and vision of your life.

There are so many lessons we can get from seasons and nature.

For example:

When the seasons change the weather can be very unstable. The changes can be abrupt and accompanied by storms. I think life is often also like this. Storms often signal a change in season, and not necessarily a bad change. Storms come before the cold weather arrives but storms also come before the warmer weather arrives. So there can be unsettledness in our life when there are changes around us, but we may be entering a better season of life.

Another example is in the area of pruning. Pruning often takes place just before winter. Taking that example and applying it to our lives – we see we are cut and pruned during a time of little fruit or no fruit. We have to deal with the normal trials that a winter season brings. Some of the difficult things you are going through are like pruning. God is getting rid of what may hinder you growing.

I chose the picture because of the happy face of the gardener. Every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. (John 15:2)

We feel the pain of being pruned, but the gardener sees the multiplied fruit down the road. He knows what he is doing. Our God knows what He is doing. So we need to take advantage of every season, even the season of hardship and pain.

But after going through the cold stormy winter, after the waiting, when the season for you to grow arrives, your life will flourish with new blessing. You will find that you have become more mature, able to see things from a different perspective, able to handle more prominent work in ministry.

Just like we saw in verse 3, there is a time to tear down – a time to tear down the strongholds of lust, of fear, or bitterness. As we saw in verse 5, there is time to scatter stones – we need to get rid of the things that keep us from living according to God's purpose. We need to get rid of the things that take away our time with God.

The question is, what are your discouragements, disappointments? What are your old mentalities, the way you do things? (Ask them to write it down, and spend time bring it to the Lord)

The best way to seize the day at the end of a year, is to close the door on the past, and the best way to seize the day at the beginning of the year is to start it with prayer for God's blessings in the year ahead.

To enter a new season, you must often be stripped of the past.
A major reason for that is very simple, you cannot safely drive forward looking in the rear view mirror.

Illustration of PPT Watching Rear view mirror: I chose this one because it shows the woman was totally focused on the past. You will crash your present and hinder your future if your focus is too much on the past, on looking backwards.

When we drive a car our attention has to be where we are now, and where we are going. Yes we do need to look in the rear-mirror from time to time to make sure there is no danger coming up behind us that might be a danger hindering our forward movement. But if we look too much in the rear view mirror and focus on what or who is behind us, we will almost certainly crash. In life we are to glance back, but focus forward. Too many people have let what happened in 2015 mess up 2016, or what happened in 2000 mess up 2016, or what happened in 1985 mess up 2016. Don't let the past mess up your 2017!

If you are in a season you don't like, take encouragement:

The prophet Daniel said by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

"He changes the times and the seasons." Daniel 2:21

The principle that we ought to be forward looking is found in numerous passages in the Bible:

Isa 43:19 **"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland."**

Philippians 3:13 & 14, **"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."**

What about those things in our past that are good? Glance back, focus forward.

I really believe God is going to do new things in this church. It is a new season. I know we have come a long way, since Peter and Elizabeth started leading this church, and have seen the people grow in number and maturity in the Lord. But I believe as seasons move on so does the church need to move on spiritually.

As we have passed 2016, it is a good time to mentally and prayerfully let go of some things, so that we can grasp what God has for us in the year ahead. Let go of hurts, let go of failures, let go of let-downs, of disappointments.

In Chinese culture, what do we do in the Chinese New Year? 大扫除 big cleaning, to get rid of the old and welcome the new. Sweep out hurts, sweep out failures, sweep out ill will towards others. Don't let 2016 ruin 2017 because you spend too much time looking in the rear-view mirror of hurt, mistakes, rejections, painful circumstances.

Let us enter into the new season God has prepared for you and me, and the Mairangi Bay community Church.