

*St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church*

*Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz*

*December 31, 2016*

*Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 A Time for Everything*



**3 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: <sup>2</sup> a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot,<sup>3</sup> a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,<sup>4</sup> a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,<sup>5</sup> a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,<sup>6</sup> a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away,<sup>7</sup> a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,<sup>8</sup> a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.**

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

There is no time each year – like new year’s eve – when we stop and think about time! The old “one Mississippi”s that mark the passage of time. This year I got a watch that has a flat black screen. There are no physical mechanical hands to mark hours and minutes – no hair thin hand that sweeps around marking the Mississippis. You can pick all different faces – read outs with hands that are little lights or digital or military time – 1900 hours. You can pick one for a day and another one for tomorrow. It has been said time is relative. There is a TV comedy we like to watch that literally lasts ½ hour that feels like 10 minutes. There are other programs – that are only a few minutes – that seem to drag on and on and on! That’s bad! Fast forward, please! Time is relative. Sometimes it’s happy – sometimes *not so much!* I saw on the Internet the other day – a family that had their family portrait taken by a guy named Zed. He took their picture once a year – in the same place – with the same background – with the same light for 22 years! They started out with a toddler son – each parent holding one arm. Each year the little boy grew – grade school, high school, and more. The father seemed to stay the same. Sometimes he wore a shirt and tie – sometimes a shirt untucked. The son grew from a little boy to a

young man. The mom changed from year to year – her hair different colors and different shapes and different lengths. What struck me most is the expressions. Zed apparently didn't tell them, "Smile!" – didn't tell them to say, "Pizza" or "Bratwurst!" And they didn't. Sometimes the mom seemed to be leaning away from her family. Sometimes the son looked like, "OK, you can make me do this – but you can't make me like it!" And sometimes they smiled – 1,2, even 3 of them but that was by far the exception. And I wonder why? God's Word says, **"Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks under all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus!"** *Under all circumstances* – we can give thanks to Jesus for an inheritance stored up in Heaven, where moth and rust cannot corrupt and thieves cannot break in and steal. Where our treasure is-there will our ♥s be also!

### Time Is In God's Hands!

1. Look back at blessings
2. Look ahead at grace

When Solomon, son of the Great King David – himself became King – the LORD – the Great I AM – the Holy One of Israel – by grace alone promised Solomon he could have any blessing he wanted. What would you pick? What would you choose? Solomon? If you made a hasty choice you might choose what? You might choose a long life – to live to be 100 with eyes that didn't need glasses and ears that didn't need a hearing aid – and teeth that didn't need to be replaced and strong hands and strong knees – no arthritis – no migraines – no heart burn! You might ask for great wealth – for millions of \$s – so you could buy happiness – or at least rent it. You might ask for the death of your enemies – destruction for the kings and the armies that were arraigned against you! Since Solomon asked for wisdom – literally a ♥ with ears – a discerning ♥--the kind of wisdom and knowledge and understanding the likes of which this world has never seen – not before and not since. The LORD would give Solomon great wealth and honor. The LORD would give Solomon the death of his enemies. And if Solomon obeyed the will of his Heavenly Father – the way King David did – the LORD would give him a long life, too! The LORD blessed Solomon – not because he earned it nor deserved it. The LORD was good to Solomon by grace alone. And the LORD blessed Solomon in

countless ways. Sometimes it seems – Solomon strayed from the will of his Heavenly Father – what with 10,000 wives – what with building them places of worship to their false and pagan gods. Still the LORD was good to Solomon and it would seem – in the end Solomon learned the hard way – learned from painful experience that there is a price to be paid – for indulging sinful desires!

Perhaps Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes – the Preacher/the Teacher – near the end of his life – writing down the lessons he had learned from painful experience. Ecclesiastes begins, **“The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem: “Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.” What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun? Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever.....The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing...Is there anything of which one can say, “Look! This is something new”? No one remembers the former generations, and even those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them.** When I came to St. Luke’s – my picture was on the far left end – in a row of pastors – over the serving window in the Church basement. Now our pictures are in the entry way – and there I am literally in the middle – with very dark curly hair that made me look much taller! There is the picture of Prof. Jeske – my teacher at the Seminary in the mid to late 70s! If you are in High School – there is a pretty good chance you don’t remember Prof. Jeske preaching once a month and helping with Lord’s Supper! When I get groceries at the Piggly Wiggly I like to put my groceries in bags. When the checkout girl tells me I don’t need to do that I tell them, “Literally before you were born I used to do this!” The grocery store I used to work at, *“The Jewel – pleasant shopping with friendly people.”* With the sign in the parking lot – where we used to push groceries to put in your trunk said, “No tipping, please! It’s a pleasure to serve you!” That store doesn’t even exist any more! The one thing that doesn’t change is change! No one knows I used to punch the price on every can of soup with a little plunger with purple ink – on every can. Every price punched into a cash register – no how much change to give. Nobody paid with a credit card – cash only! What’s the point? How old do we have to be before we realize it doesn’t matter! It doesn’t matter if there is a little snow on your drive way or not. Doesn’t matter if there is a little salt on the side of your black car. Doesn’t matter if your shoes are shiny or not.

Doesn't matter if your anything is anyway! It doesn't matter! All that really matters is your immortal soul. All that really matters is saving faith in your heart – so that all your sins are forgiven because of Jesus' unconditional forgiving love. That's all that matters. Everything else is just temporary. Forgiveness for Jesus' sake. That matters – nothing else does!

**3 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: <sup>2</sup> a time to be born and a time to die...** People die! The apostle Paul told the Romans **the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus!** People die. It never ceases to amaze me the different ways people die. Just recently 40 people died in Siberia from alcohol poisoning. They drank *bath oil*. I don't get that! 31 people died down in Mexico at a fireworks factory. Something or someone sparked a fire in the factory – and for a while there were explosions – fire and flames and choking smoke everywhere. What was meant to be beautiful explosions high in the sky that made people say, “Ooooooooooooooh! And Ahhhhhhhhhhh!” instead made people die! The other day there was a football game – I think it was the Dallas Cowboys against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. The Cowboys won – and Mrs. Ruiz's stepson thought she was giving his Dad the berries rubbing it in that the Cowboys beat his Buccaneers – so he leaped over the couch and stabbed his step mother several times – taking her life – over a football game – and she *wasn't* teasing him. He misunderstood. Oops?! People die! Fidel died – the little man who always wore army shirts and liked to smoke Cuban cigars – died. Shimon Perez the former Prime Minister of Israel died. I will never forget Prof. Eickmann saying, “If you don't ever literally set foot in Israel. If you don't ever literally stand at the top of the Mount of Olives – and look at the cemetery with stone boxes – the size of caskets on the top – with the person still buried under ground – with stones in little piles at the head of the grave – from when people come to pay their respects. If you never walk down the curvy path toward Jerusalem – down to the Kidron Valley and up to Jerusalem – to the hill shaped like a skull – and to the garden nearby with a tomb where no one is buried. If you never stand on the grassy hillside where Jesus preached about the kingdom of God--about sparrows and wild flowers – or ride a small fishing boat across the Sea of Galilee – know this. You have been to all those places on the pages of Scripture. And that's all that matters. One of the most painful aspects of actually going to Israel – is to see the people that walk – literally walk where Jesus walked –

yet will tell you to your face – they do not believe this Rabbi from Nazareth is the Messiah – the Christ – the Anointed One – their Savior from sin. They will tell you they have Abraham as their father – they are the chosen people and if there is life after death – they are saved – by keeping the Law concerning the Sabbath and all of that!

**A time to be born and a time to die!** Arnold Palmer died. He always seemed like a gentleman. Arnold Palmer was famous for what? For literally hitting a little ball – originally white – then for the benefit of we who are red/green color blind you can have neon orange golf balls. Arnold Palmer was the best in the world at placing one of those little golfballs with several hundred dimples – on a little wooden or plastic platform – then step, step, step, step and wiggle, wiggle, wiggle, wiggle your golf club – keep your head down – have your thumbs all interlocked – backswing – follow through whack! Where did it go? Where did it go? Into the rough – tall grass and weeds? Did it go into a bunch of sand shaped like a kidney? Did it plunk into a pond with frogs and lily-pads? Or did it go right down the middle of the fairway – onto the green – and plunk into a little hole with this flag with a number from 1 to 18 on it? If you can do that better than anyone you can become rich and famous! And when you play very well – you can wear this grass green sport coat and people will applaud very quietly – golf applause! How much fun is that? And if you make a bad shot – you can become so frustrated – you can smash your very expensive golf club into a tree – the head breaks off – it flies back and strikes your best friend in the neck and he dies! **The wages of sin** again! How would you live with yourself? You would have to remember Jesus died on the  $\dagger$  for that sin and every sin! There was a time for Jesus to be born. A time for Jesus to die! A time for Jesus to live again! And because of that – there will be at time when we will live with Jesus forever – safe from every sin and painful hurtful mistake!

A man named Elie Wiessel died! Do you recognize that name – Elie Wiessel? Elie was a prisoner of the Holocaust in Auschwitz and Buchenwald. He was orphaned there. He survived and wrote 57 books and taught about his unspeakable experiences. If you have ever been to a Holocaust Museum – Yad Vashim in Jerusalem – or in Washington--if you have seen the literal mountain of shoes – men's, women's and small children's shoes all in a heap – you have seen tangible evidence of how utterly depraved people can be – in their godless treatment of their fellow

human beings! I met someone the other day at the grocery store. Somehow they knew I was a pastor so they were so bold as to say standing there in the soda aisle, "I'm in no hurry to go to Heaven – and I'm not afraid to die – because Hell is already here – now!" *I want* to go to Heaven. Saturday would be a good day to die – to go home to Heaven to be with Jesus today would be wonderful. The taxi way – one or two at a time – is painfully slow. I pray that Jesus would as it were send a fleet of buses and a whole bunch of those huge airplanes worth of angels to take us all home to Heaven together. But *Hell on earth* – here and now! I can see if we were in the middle of the Holocaust you might think that. But as horrible as the Holocaust was – it ended. It did not go on forever! Hell is unspeakable and indescribable suffering that never ever ends – ever! The human mind cannot conceive of the horror that never ever ends. It is by the grace of God – that we are forgiven! All our sins washed away. When will we go to Heaven? Maybe today – maybe tonight – maybe tomorrow. When Jesus calls us – he will make us ready and he will bring us home. God bless your new year with His unconditional forgiving love for Jesus' sake. Amen!

*To God alone all glory!*

*Rev. Anthony P. Schatz*

