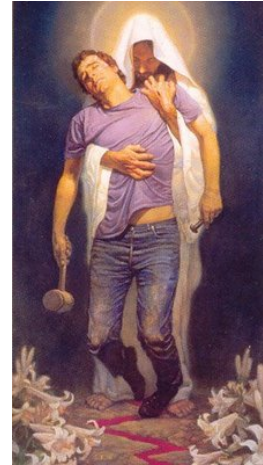


St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E.
Schultz
New Year's Eve/New Year's Day
December 31, 2015 & January 1, 2016
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 HCSB.



The Mystery of Time

3 There is an occasion for everything, and a time for every activity under heaven: ² a time to give birth and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot; ³ a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to tear down and a time to build; ⁴ a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance; ⁵ a time to throw stones and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace and a time to avoid embracing; ⁶ a time to search and a time to count as lost; a time to keep and a time to throw away; ⁷ a time to tear and a time to sew; a time to be silent and a time to speak; ⁸ 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:

Our God, our help in ages past – our hope for years to come. This is the sermon that very neatly divides itself into two parts – looking back and looking forward. There are homiletics – that is preaching professors who think you have to have two sermons – one for new year's eve – to look at the blessings and lessons of the past year – and a very different service new year's day – to talk about the temptations and the opportunities of the new year. Permit my humble effort today – to do both!

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on today was written down – ballpark almost 3,000 years ago by wise King Solomon. How wise was Solomon? God's Word says the LORD – simply because He is gracious and good – blessed by telling Solomon to ask for a blessing – any blessing – and the LORD would grant it! What would you ask for? Would you ask for great earthly wealth – gold and silver and jewels? Would you ask for long life – great health and strength – without painful sickness –

eyes-no glasses – ears-no hearing aids – no arthritis – no accidents – no cancer, no heart attacks, no strokes? Would you want Jesus to squash all the people at work that make your life miserable – all the relatives – all the in-laws that make your life difficult? Solomon – by the grace of God – asked for wisdom – literally a heart with ears – a discerning heart that applied God’s Word to the problems and the opportunities of day to day life as King of God’s lambs and sheep!

We see that insight and understanding – especially – likely near the end of Solomon’s life – as he has learned many lessons – the hard way – from painful experience! There is a very powerful possibility that the blessings of power and riches and long life and the destruction of his enemies – made Solomon a little bit proud. Such a sinful attitude is sure to bring troubles. So the Holy Spirit inspired Solomon to write about the lessons he learned very likely--the hard way: **3 There is an occasion for everything, and a time for every activity under heaven: 2 a time to give birth and a time to die.** About this time every year – there are published lists – including lists of famous or almost famous people who died. One who passed away this year was a neurologist named Oliver. Oliver studied brains – the human mind. Oliver wrote, “There is no one like us when we are gone. When you die you cannot be replaced.” That’s true! When Jesus made you – he didn’t make you with a cookie cutter. There is no one else in this whole wide world quite like you. Oh, there might be someone who looks very much like you on the outside. People have been known to even run up and hug someone – only to find out – that the person they hugged is not the person they thought they were. There are so called identical twins and even triplets who look so much alike on the outside – their parents confuse them. But they are not the same on the inside! They are not! People we know are unique. I have said before, “People are very breakable!” The fact that someone is with us today is no guarantee they will be with us tonight! There was a very gifted guy named Kyle – 21 years old. How gifted? So gifted he was the first black person to have the lead in *Les Miserable*. He could sing and dance and act! But he died. How? He fell off a fire escape! No one saw that coming! A guy named Eric – one of those extreme sports guys died. How is that possible – people said. He was so strong – so fearless – so skilled. He was parachuting – and something went terribly wrong – and he died at 39! A guy named Samuel

was so handsome – he was a model! All he had to do was put on the most expensive designer clothes – and people would pay him a fortune – to let them take his picture! Photographers didn't have to tell Samuel to "Smile!" when they took his picture. He looked so happy on the outside. But he was so sad on the inside – he jumped off a bridge! He despaired! One of the twins from Everybody Loves Raymond – also despaired. How could that be – people asked. He was handsome and gifted and rich! Everybody loved him! He made people laugh – yet he was crying on the inside!

A time to be born – and a time to die. How does it go in the meantime? The fact is – life is full of troubles and problems and frustrations! B.B.King died this year. He was 89 years old. B.B.King was famous for singing the blues! B.B.King said, *"People all over the world have problems. And as long as people have problems the blues will never die!"* Are you singing the blues? Do you have troubles and problems and frustrations? The older I get – the more I think there is something to that prayer that asks Jesus to give me the Serenity to change the things I can change. To accept the things I cannot change and the wisdom to know the difference! There are some things – by the grace of God – by the power of the Holy Spirit that can change. We will grow in faith this new year – when we read our Bible and Meditations and Forward in Christ and watch the live-stream of the chapel at Luther Prep and more. We will grow in faith when we come to Church more and more – and Lord's Supper and come to Bible Class and when we cultivate fellow believers to be our friend.

There are things we cannot change! We cannot change the past. We do not get the mulligans – the do-overs we would so want. You don't get to redo your teenage years or your college years. You can't do a marriage over – nor can you have your children be small – and dedicate more time to them – and less time and energy to making money. You can't start over with your in-laws. You can't start over with your co-workers or your education. You don't get to live next week or next month or next year either. We have right here and right now. We have a sinful flesh that is flawed in countless ways. And we have a Savior who has washed away all our sins – so we can face the here and now – with a serenity that comes from the Gospel of the Prince of Peace!

We can treasure the time we do have – to serve Jesus and love our neighbors! Dr. James "Red" Duke Jr. died at the age of 86. Do you know

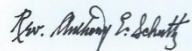
who he was? My family was blessed through him – and I know some of you were, too. You were blessed by Jesus through Dr. Duke Jr. He was the doctor who kind of invented that whole Flight for Life thing. Did you know that? David Canary died. David Canary – was on *All My Children* for some 30 years. David played twins. He was both Adam and Stuart Chandler. Soaps – you say! And yet I would submit there is something to be learned from these stories. The fact is – this story that goes on and on and on and on. You know who used to write stories like that? Charles Dickens used to write stories that went on and on – to the point that one time Dickens took a ship from England to America – and people met him on the pier – crying out did this one character survive or not? Talk about a cliff hanger! How do these stories go on and on? Two reasons. One – people are never content! They are never content – with their spouse – their job – their income – their \$--their life. Their ♥s are infected with envy. The more they have – the more they want. They always think it's better somewhere else. Dr. Arndt was our Veterinarian long ago. He had a picture in his office of a cow pasture – divided by barbed wire. Four cows – each pushing the barbs against their throat – going for the grass in the part by their neighbor! Envy – never content keeps these stories going. And the other thing is – no one ever tells the truth – especially at the beginning. No one tells the truth. They lie again and again. Sometimes it's like the little child – trying to avoid punishment – trying to avoid consequences for their sins. And sometimes it's because they are trying to cover up the inexcusable hurtful choices. They never tell the truth. Oh, the truth always and ultimately comes out. But oh, the painful consequences of all these lies. Love and trust are spoiled when people tell lies. That's what kept David Canary busy for 30 years! How much more godly to have the attitude of Ernie Banks! Ernie Banks played 1st base for the Chicago Cubs! Ernie always used to say, "Let's play two!" Let's play a double header! Again – it's all about attitude. This new year – only Jesus can give us a new ♥--a new attitude! Not bitter! Not angry! Not resentful or envious – but thankful and content – to serve and glorify Jesus!

Dean Jones died this past year. Dean Jones was in a bunch of Disney movies! *Herbie the Love Bug* and *Beethoven* – the St. Bernard. But Dean Jones would trade them all in – for the one man performance where he plays the disciple Jesus loved – the Apostle John. Dean Jones as if in exile on the

Island of Patmos – recounts Jesus’ 3 year ministry – his death on the cross – and his rising from the dead on Easter morning! Every year the last day of 8th grade confirmation we watch this video. The question is always the same. Does Dean Jones believe what he is saying or is he just a hired actor playing a part? Does Dean Jones love Jesus or just pretend for an hour? By the time it’s done – I have never heard anyone doubt or question. By the grace of God – the same can be said of us – that we love Jesus with all our ♥, all our soul, all our strength and all our mind!

Who died this past year? Leonard Nimoy – Spock. When I was at Northwestern College we watched *Star Trek* every day. Down into the TV room – armed with a small bottle of Mt. Dew with little hillbillies – white paint – different people on each bottle and a small bag of Geiser cheese corn – that made your fingers orange. *Star Trek* – 10 seconds in – we all saw this before. No one yelled, “Spoiler alert!” They just said, “This is the one where...” And still we watched to the end. Leonard Nimoy – Spock. The Christmas episode on *Big Bang Theory*. An autographed napkin from Spock – and no other gift could equal that! All Sheldon’s gifts – and still *it’s not enough*. We praise the One True God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We praise Him for eternal salvation as we look back on the countless blessings of the year gone by. We thank Him as the new year is ahead. And through all eternity we will continue to say, “It’s not enough! It’s not enough to say, ‘Thank you, Jesus!’” Amen!

To God alone all



glory!