

## ***“For everything there is a season”***

**January 3, 2010**

*Text: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, John 1:1-9*

### I.

What’s it all about? What’s the meaning of life? Why do we do all that we do—make the commitments and life-sacrifices we make? What’s all of our striving about? All our ambition mixed with life-purpose? All our hoping and yearning? What’s it all about?

*For everything there is a season, says Ecclesiastes, a time for everything under the sun.*

In a deeply reflective mood, Ecclesiastes draws us in with his philosophical musings:

*There’s a time to be born and a time to die ... a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance.*

Indeed, *there’s time for everything under the sun.*

About all of this, after much discernment, Ecclesiastes has a sobering observation: it’s all been done before. In this sense, he’s a fatalist. And he has a point. And not only that; to hear him tell it, he has done pretty much everything himself ... tried it all.

He’s made great works ... had great possessions ... applied his mind to the deepest murmurings of wisdom. Ecclesiastes has apparently had quite a life. His problem is with ultimate meanings.

- What does it all mean? What final sense does it all make?
- Does any of it make a difference?

Here, he’s not sure and, finally, concludes that *All is vanity*.

No matter what you achieve, someone has achieved it before. No matter what you do, someone has done it before. No matter how much you have, someone has had as much or more before.

Finally, no doubt out of frustration, he says:

*Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and again, all was vanity and a chasing after wind, and there was nothing new under the sun.*

Ecclesiastes has a point, of course. There is, indeed, this aspect to life of repetition and duplication ... this element of life-doldrums ... of same ole’, same ole’ or, as people like to say, *been there, done that!*

Ultimately, Ecclesiastes concludes that God is sovereign, omniscient and omnipotent; God's will and purposes reign over all. And while it is not for us to make sense of God's ways, God is awesome, to the ends of the earth.

## II.

What I like about Ecclesiastes is that he makes us think ... he prompts us to take measure of our lives. He nudges us into the deep waters of our personal search for meaning and truth and life-purpose.

In many ways, it's regrettable that Ecclesiastes—which was probably written in the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE—never had a chance to hear the words from the prologue to John's gospel, which I just shared with us.

- If he had, he would have heard about a new vision of life which came into the world—a vision of life which was a *light* to all people.
- He would have heard about how this light shined in darkness and how there was no darkness that could put it out.
- He would have heard about the hope people attached to this light ... hope for the future ... hope for a new day.

And he might well have remembered the vision of **Second Isaiah**, the great prophet of the Exile, in whom the future opened up with a fresh voice—a voice of immense promise and hope.

You'll remember that this was the historical period of almost fifty years—some 300 years before Ecclesiastes—when Israel was in exile in Babylon. Israel had been utterly defeated ... lost everything. Jerusalem had been destroyed, along with the temple. The king and the aristocracy, along with the upper and middle classes, had all been deported.

However, towards the end of the exilic period, Cyrus of Persia had come to power, eventually defeating the Babylonians and issuing a decree that the Israelites who wished could return to their homeland. In anticipation of this, the prophetic voice of Second Isaiah rose up with a word of hope for his people:

***Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.***

O what a day! When the future opens up at the prompting of God and there is no darkness that can overcome it; indeed, the promises of God/ the future of God's envisioning cannot be held back.

### III.

As the New Year breaks forth ... and as the baptismal waters remind us of new beginnings, echoes of the future sound out ...

*For everything there is a season, a time for everything under the sun.*

Of what would the New Year sing? What kind of a world is on the horizon, bursting to break through?

Always, the future has a voice. It speaks of anticipated unfoldings. It begs the important question: What would we want our future to say about us?

As I prepared to baptize my little granddaughter today, this question kept running through my mind: *20 to 30 years from now, what would we want her generation to say about us?*

What memories would we want lifted up? What values and commitments would we want recalled? Again, of what would the future sing?

The point is, we have to act today in ways that bring about the world we want our children to live in tomorrow. That's why—again—that what we do matters.

If we want our children to know our sacred story—whatever it is—and the story of our families, our traditions, we have to teach them. On the pathway of them discovering who they are, we have to paint them a picture, a flowing mosaic of the life we pass on to them.

Of what would the future sing?

O that it would sing of beauty and the passionate pursuit of truth! O that it would sing of the inter-relatedness of all things, of the richness of cultural diversity and a global view of life!

Indeed, the verse of its song would invite in us a *largeness of spirit*. The words would ring out:

***Be big ... be big ... have a big spirit ... be welcoming of all, inclusive of all. Open your arms, spread your wings ... be big ...***

- *value poetry more than prose, compassion more than money.*
- *value education, equal opportunity, and peace with justice for all peoples.*

For the truth sounds out: *For everything there is a season, a time for everything under the sun.*

#### IV.

Friends, it's a New Year, a new beginning for people everywhere. Of what would our future sing?

O that it would sing of a world where love and simple decency and civility for all people fill the morning air. Of a planet that takes responsibility for the beauty of its creation and for the sanctity of its heavenly endowments.

O that it would sing of a people—people like you and me—who came to know that the hope of humankind anywhere is to be sister and brother to humankind everywhere.

Always, this is God's vision; this is God's hope. For the light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it.

*Come, O Holy One, come ...through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**All praise be unto God! Amen!**

Dr. Jeffrey E. Frantz  
Miami Lakes Congregational Church, *United Church of Christ*  
6701 Miami Lakeway South  
Miami Lakes, Florida 33014  
On the web at **[www.mlchurch.com](http://www.mlchurch.com)**