

Worship

Crazy Busy Week 3: Ecclesiastes 3

August 13, 2017

Welcome/intro/vision

REMINDER: next week, 2 services at both locations! Switch to a tag-team teaching model with my co-conspirator Steve Tamayo

I love working with Steve on content creation and delivery and I love that he's a gifted communicator and I love that we're different in how we do things

And I love that the truth of the matter is that there's no ONE best communicator in the world, we've all got different people that we like or connect with

And I know that some of you really prefer Steve's less frenetic, more careful and calm delivery style to mine

and I'm totally great with all of that! And I'm glad that he's agreed to step into this role for the fall, we make for a great team if I do say so myself!

All fall long we're going to mix it up and keep you guessing a bit as to who's going to be where, zero real rhythm to it, mostly random, but hear this:

We're both committed to both campuses, both committed to seeing BOTH PBO and Woods thrive and grow—neither one of us is more biased or more focused on the other campus

We love what God's up to at both locations, all spring and summer long we've seen the Spirit doing crazy great things in individual lives and in the sites as a whole that we both celebrate and rejoice in.

And we know that this team teaching thing is pretty new for many of us

but we believe that hearing from more than one perspective all fall long will actually make us all better, more well-rounded, a more robust understanding of faith and Scriptures we're excited about what the Lord is doing here and looking forward to a great fall

This is our last week of our Crazy Busy series—the school year is right around the corner and for many of us life can get a little crazy busy in the fall

kids are dreading it and parents are conflicted: yay for school, yikes for back to the running around that comes along with the fall

So we wanted to take a couple of weeks to help all of us get our heads and hearts straight about our schedules

what difference does a real-life, real-time faith make in how we do something as practical as make scheduling decisions? All the difference in the world.

Week one we we looked at a guy in the Scriptures named Nehemiah who had a hugely important, God-given task to accomplish, and when a distraction and threat came his way, he uttered this great line:

"I'm doing a great work and I cannot come down"

So we asked the question 2 weeks ago: ***"What's your God-given great work in this season?"***

And we talked about how in the Scriptures we get essentially **6 Great Life Works** that we're to be about over the course of our lives that make for a great life

worship, character, relationships, mission, work, and rest

You do these 6 things with a joyful, faithful excellence, you do these 6 things in ways that match pitch with who God is and what God calls you to do

Then you live a great life, you leave a tremendous legacy, you live a life that is a gift to you and everyone around you

And the problem with Crazy Busy is that you can't crazy busy your way into any one of these things with excellence, which means that you can't Crazy Busy your way into a great life!

So which of these six areas is a place where you might have a great work to do in this season?

This has sparked all kinds of great conversations over the past couple of weeks all around our church as folks are praying about and wrestling with this question.

And then last week we talked about the fact that in order to execute any great work we're going to have to set up some healthy boundaries

And we looked at a passage of Scripture where king David declares that his boundaries are going to line right up with God's boundaries:

that apart from God, he has no good thing and he declares that God's boundary lines have fallen for him in pleasant places.

So we closed last week with this question: ***What boundaries do you need to set in order to accomplish your great work?***

Some of us really struggle to say no, we hate to let people down or disappoint people

So we have no boundaries which is a recipe for Crazy Busy! So we need to set up some good boundaries ***this is the NO that serves that greater yes.***

But for others of us, the word no comes more easily, some of us LOVE to say no, LOVE to maintain our space and in fact, maybe you're actually over-protective, too quick to say no

And for some of you, the boundaries ***need to be stretched*** beyond where they currently are because God's boundary line for you is much broader and further and wider than your OWN boundary lines are

And in order to do the great work God has for you in this season, you're going to need to take a step OUTSIDE what's comfortable, outside what you'd currently prefer to meet the Lord as you take a new step of faith

This morning, we're going to look at a passage of Scripture that both builds on these questions and then really brings this whole series together, and it's from the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes is a deeply reflective and kind of angsty book of the Bible, and really the whole first few chapters of the book are a diatribe on the meaninglessness and emptiness of the Crazy Busy life

And in Ecclesiastes 3 he turns some of those reflections into a poem that a classic rock band turned into a somewhat famous song in the 1960's.

And this poem and the couple of verses after it are going to bring together this Crazy Busy series for us and lead us ultimately the most important thing for us to put in place as we head into fall 2017

Whether you'd call yourself a Crazy Busy type or not, today we're going to talk about the core and most important thing to anchor into our hearts, lives and schedules

Ecclesiastes 3, for some of you this will bring back some old memories: Bible/screen/no Bible:

There is a time for everything,

and a season for every activity under the heavens:

² **a time to be born 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 scatter stones and a time to gather them,**

a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,

- 6 a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,**
- 7 a time to tear and a time to mend,
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.**

In my late 20's, I hit my quarter-life crisis, not old enough for a mid-life crisis, just feeling a little restless, like it was maybe time to move on and do something different

And so I looked into going for more school, and that wasn't quite right. And I threw my resume out to a couple of churches and got an interview at one of them but then I got the rejection email

And all I had left at that point was to roll up my sleeves and plunge back into the work I was already doing

And it was at that point that the Lord opened up some amazing new doors for the ministry I was doing--some incredible new experiences and got to be a part of starting some new work on new campuses with all kinds of great stories to tell

See, Church work WAS in my future, but not in that season. THAT season was for doing new things in the same place where I was--I just didn't know it at the time.

But God did. He knew what work he wanted me to do in which seasons and his hands led and shaped that whole process

Meanwhile, I OCCASIONALLY trusted him and then I occasionally WHINED and questioned his good judgment, which I'm sure NONE of you have ever done!

But my interest in working at a church wasn't actually a NO, it was a "NOT YET"

And as Steve wrote in this past week's Connect Devotional, trusting that God is the one who holds our seasons in his hands is what frees us to be able to focus on our great work

We can focus, as Ecclesiastes tells us here, on planting or uprooting, on tearing down or building up, on searching or giving up, even as there are other things that are pulling at us or that matter to us

Because God can and does hold those other things in his own hands and we can trust that it will come back around to us in his due season when it is the right time

For some of us, naming that great work that we're about in this season and then saying that others things need to recede a little bit, those are hard decisions, I struggle too

But for those of us who are Jesus-followers, *at some point in our lives in order to live the life that God wants for us, we have to stop making excuses and start making hard decisions.*

Nobody gets a pass on that—I don't, you don't, none of us do
all of us at points in the Jesus journey are going to have to stop making excuses and start to make some hard decisions in order to participate in the kind of life the he wants for us

And part of the core work of being a Jesus-person is making peace with the seasons of our lives that God walks us through

And to recognize that he's laying out those seasons in his timing and that there's a method and a purpose behind those seasons, even if we don't always understand it

Think of it this way—we've had a number of people here get bionic body parts: bionic hips and knees especially, I keep waiting to see them sprinting in slow motion across the parking lot outside

And the person who's often the most-hated part of the process is the physical therapist who assigns you excruciatingly difficult exercises, new ones every week or two, in order to strengthen that part of your body

And while you're undergoing physical therapy, you're pretty sure that the person working with you got into this line of work simply because they delighted to inflict pain upon people!

But when you're DONE with physical therapy, if you've followed their lead and walked through the exercises they assigned you over the course of your recovery, do you know what you are? Stronger than you were before

God is the perfect physical therapist walking you through different seasons of your life with different exercises

And if we're following him, the work we do in those seasons should be a gift and a blessing to other people around us, for sure

But do you know who's doing the most changing and the most growing as we allow God to lead us through the different seasons of our lives? We are.

Because God's given us **6 Great works to cultivate in our lives: Worship, Character, Relationships, Mission, Work, and Rest**

And those **first two** especially have disproportionate, cascading impact on everything else and so God is intently focused on those first two and how they're taking shape in our lives.

We'll talk about worship in a minute

But here we're talking about character: if we're the wrong type of person, that will spoil every situation, every relationship, every gift God would want to give us.

If we're proud, selfish, jealous, petty, self-absorbed, manipulative, lazy, prejudiced, mean, greedy

Then we're going to bring that toxicity into every relationship God would want to give us, any mission God would want to give us, into any work environment, all of it

God wants to give his children good gifts! Often the person who's the biggest obstacle to entering into the fullness of God's gifts is us!

And so God as the perfect spiritual physical therapist, walks us through different seasons in our lives to shape our character first and foremost

Because God is always much more interested in who we're becoming than in what we're doing

This character piece has been front and center for me for about the past 18 months. About a year and a half ago I read an article in a Christian magazine that was talking about resilience

And this totally resonated with me, in part because if you haven't noticed I'm a rather enthusiastic and passionate person.

And sometimes when I meet disappointment or frustration, it can really do a number on me emotionally and internally

sometimes I even know at one level that I'm over-reacting to something that's not that big a deal in the grand scheme of things, but in my high enthusiasm and high energy system, sometimes any set-back can feel devastating

And I also know that my frustration or disappointment sometimes eeks out onto the people around me

And what I find is that naturally I've got two primary gears: either all on, overly hooked into all the ups and downs and really easily discouraged OR I just disengage and check-out

And as I read this article, this idea of resilience seemed to be an invitation to cultivate an active engagement that was still fully present to the good and the bad and the ugly but WITHOUT getting too hooked into any of it

And so I started praying for resilience. It's evolved to praying for a Resurrection Resilience

You don't get much more resilient than resurrection from the dead, Jesus did that, I'm asking him to share a little drop of that power with me

Now when I pray and ask for something like resilience or wisdom or patience, what I really want God to do is simply to wave his magic wand and download it to me

But instead what I've found over the past 18 months is that I've been invited to practice resilience. In fact, I've been given some WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITIES to face some challenging situations and to practice and develop that resilience muscle

God, like a good, perfect physical therapist, is walking me through a season of developing in me that resurrection resilience that I'm asking for.

My part has been prayer, practice, and some intentional study--reading some books about grit and perseverance and what helps people to develop those skills

That's quietly been my great work for the past 18 months, as God's been at work shaping my character through this season

See, time is not a resource to be exhausted it is instead a gift to be received from God who actually has his OWN agenda for how that time might be best used and employed in this season and that frees us from being quite so Crazy Busy around all the wrong things.

Just a couple verses after this poem, Solomon has two gloriously rich and wise statements that are the perfect ways for us to end this series

Here's the first one, just two verses after the poem we read:

¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. [REPEAT WITH ME?]

We don't have time to say all that we could say about this verse, but let me at least touch on it real quick, because maybe this is why some of you are here today

There are many audacious statements of faith in the Bible, but this is perhaps the most audacious and the most bold

That God is utterly committed to making everything beautiful in its time—including your mess, including your pain, including that thing that happened to you or that you did.

This morning, if you're feeling the ache of a scar or a limp that you're carrying around with you, hear and take comfort in this bold and audacious promise from the Scriptures:

God has made and will make everything beautiful in its time

Solomon then makes this delightful move to another wonderful, dizzying statement:

He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

This is a chocolate iced, cream-filled doughnut, one of God's greatest gifts to all of humanity!

On the outside, it looks wonderful enough—a chocolate glazed doughnut is a beautiful thing to behold

But buried at the core of this beautiful outside, is an even better, more wonderful, more tasty, more glorious bit of goodness at the center: sugary creamy goodness that has no equivalent

You are a lot like this donut.

Your outsides and what's obvious about you is marvelous: You have been crafted and created by God, exquisitely and intricately designed, the whole human body alongside our psychology and personality and emotional complexity—all of it is just marvelously and brilliantly put together and we can see that just by getting to know you a bit

But there's this core, this center that the Bible calls the heart

And what God has done, Ecclesiastes tells us, is inject a little bit of eternity into the heart of you and me—and it's the best part of the donut and it's the best part of our hearts,

See, God doesn't live in deep outer space, God lives in deep time, it's called eternity and it has its own ways and its own rhythms, and culture and customs and it moves at it's own pace. And he's placed just a drop of that eternity into every one of our hearts

And deep inside every single heart is this part of us that is only finally at home and at peace and at rest when the drop of eternity inside each of us finds the immense eternity that is our source

C.S. Lewis somewhere wrote that time is an ill-fitting suit—it always passes too slowly or too quickly, do you know those feelings?

because at our core we have been fitted for eternity

And when the eternity placed in us finds resonance with the deep time of eternity that God inhabits, as deep cries out to deep is how the Scriptures describe it

only then are we finally fully alive, fully awake, fully engaged at every level that God designed for us to be

When the eternity placed in our hearts is actively engaged and connected to the source of that eternity and the one who is Lord over that eternity, when we're building our lives around deep time, celebrating the God who is Lord over deep time, that's worship

then we start to relate to all the people and crises and opportunities and opposition and challenges and hopes and dreams from a more centered and rooted place, with a much more resilient and joyful energy

And part of the reason why Crazy Busy is not our friends is that when we live Crazy Busy lives, we're skimming!

We're just skimming the surface of the donuts of our hearts! And there's good stuff here, nothing against chocolate icing or the donut! You could totally settle here on the surface and have a decent donut experience!

But what makes this a cream-filled donut is the cream in the middle. And what makes you a fully alive man or a woman made in God's image

Is when you take the time to root yourself into a connection with the God who inhabits eternity and who has placed a bit of his eternity in your heart

in order that you might be live out of and into NOT Crazy Busy time, not temporary and fleeting time, but in deep time

Not skimming and frantic but settled, rested, wide awake to all that's going on around you, able to attend to other people and at the same time able to have good boundaries

Willing to hold what we call 'our time' loosely, because ultimately this time is passing and fleeting and not what matters most, what matters most is deep time

And when I'm rooted in deep time it frees me to live here in temporary time more joyfully, more patiently, more wisely, more courageously

and able to go against the grain of what everyone else is doing all around me if what they're doing is not in keeping with the work that I know that God has given me to do.

How do you get rooted in deep time? You've got to intentionally access it regularly, daily, maybe multiple times a day.

FIND WAYS FOR THE ETERNITY PLANTED IN YOU TO TOUCH AND RESONATE AND COME ALIVE AS IT COMES IN CONTACT WITH THE ETERNITY THAT GOD INHABITS

intentional decision to un-hook from temporary time and root yourself in deep time

Prayer does this—it takes the eternity planted in us and invites us into the eternity that God inhabits reading the Scriptures does, too

these spaces that are eternal and remind us that there's more to life than merely being
Crazy Busy

When we lift our voices together in worship, the Scriptures say that there's a joyful crowd of angels and those who have gone before us in heaven worshipping as well.

We're joining our songs with theirs on Sunday mornings, together stepping into deep time where worship is perpetually and always going up to God

When we get together in small groups, we're making decisions together in community to journey with one another into deep time, we're all headed there together, all cultivating that life here and now together

And we're all learning how to live in temporary time, doing every day stuff like jobs and kids and marriages and conflicts and challenges

All while being rooted in and nourished by and resourced by that eternity that God's placed in our hearts

Connecting with that eternity in our hearts those two things.

One it helps us to live here or alive for a week less frantic.

Secondly as we practice eternity it prepares us for eternity. The goal of our lives eventually is that we might live more and more rooted in the eternity that God has placed in our hearts.

When we do that we are the best gift we could be to the people around us. And we are most able to participate in the work God is doing all around us.

For some of us, we're here trying to decide if we believe any of it, so glad that you're here.

Some voices in the world will tell you that you're just a donut, no jelly.

Matter is all that matters, you're just a random accidental collection of bones and DNA and synapses firing

And so you should just try to do your best, ignore the restless longing you have for more meaning and more purpose

We're here to encourage you to listen to those voices for meaning and purpose and to start to find answers as you connect to God and deep time through Christ's death on the cross that makes a way for us to get there.

Other voices will tell you that there's all kinds of spiritualities, you've got lots of different jellies so there must be lots of different spirits and gods out there, just go exploring and see what you discover

But the Scriptures declare that we can actually know the God who put that eternity in your heart

he's made himself most fully and finally known in Jesus, the one who has come to show us who God is

The best way to unhook from the Crazy Busy life is to root ourselves in deep time. In re-thinking our relationship to time, it frees us to ask better questions and make wiser, less anxious, less striving decisions

And so as we close this series, this is the final question we need to wrestle with

Take-With: Wildly Important Take-Home Questions for this series build on each other:

1. *What's your God-given great work in this season?*

Some of you still wrestling with that, for some of you asking this question IS the great work this season

2. *What boundaries do you need to set in order to accomplish that great work?*

For some it's learning to say "no" and for others it's being willing to be stretched and to grow, try new things beyond what's comfortable for you.

3. *How might you make these and other decisions rooted in the eternity God has placed in your heart?*

What would it look like for you to make connecting and rooting yourself in deep time a priority this fall? To make focused and deliberate decisions for prayer and solitude and Scripture and worship

And to do this intentionally in community here on Sunday mornings and in a small group?

All in part so that you might engage with the questions and opportunities and challenges of fleeting time in a settled deliberateness, in faith, hope, and love.

May the Lord continue to use these questions to make all of us a little more connected, rooted, and settled in him and for those of us who struggle with it, may it make us a little less Crazy Busy!