

Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, 17

Preached March 2, 2025

Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is? Do you remember that song? It's from Chicago, 1969. I have been thinking back on it all week. And it led me to think about how I learned about time, from my mother's lessons on reading a clock, to my dad's guidance on reading the signs of the earth and the sky. Knowing time, and the right time, has long been a characteristic of humanity. Even Jesus once commented "...When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once that it is going to rain, and so it does. And when you feel the south wind blowing, you say that it is going to be hot, and so it is. You fools! You know how to interpret the look of the earth and the sky. Why can't you interpret the meaning of the times in which you live?" (Luke 12:54-56 Phil)

That seems to be the theme of the day. The reading from Ecclesiastes is all about time, not time by the clock, but the times of life. There is a time, literally a season, for everything; good, bad and in between, from birth to death, and every possibility of life. We need to discern and keep abreast of the time we are living in. From our ages and our aches, to our community and politics, and for us, right here in the church, we need to discern this time, this time in the congregation's life. Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?

In a few minutes Alison will be talking about our time and our challenges, the need to acknowledge the season we are in, and the need to act; to rift on Ecclesiastes, a season to hold on and the season to let go. And to be true to God's time, and more importantly God's will for us, takes great courage and discernment. That has always been the challenge for the people of God. Like the nation of Israel, we are, and have been, on a journey, and we will continue to journey with God, right up to our last days. But the places and people, the challenges and the gifts will keep on changing, and we must move with it. The promise for us, is that God is with us, that God will lead us, and by God's grace there will always be a blessing, ever when we can't perceive it.

So how do we really know our time and know God's will? Here are a few insights for you to consider.

First, consider Jesus, the one who fully accomplished God's will, (thank the Lord). Now, I 'm not talking here about his teaching or good works; I'm talking about the cross. Was it easy – No! The cross was a horrible death, and Jesus was none too eager when it came to his time. Do you remember what he said in the garden "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will but yours be done." (Luke 22:42) That is the first step for all of us. Not what I want, what God wants. If you are true in that intention, God will be with you, even in the hard choices and the hard realities.

Second, remember the Spirit of Christ is here. Jesus said he will send us "another counselor... who will lead you and guide you...he will take what is mine and give it to you..." (John 16:12ff) The Spirit will guide us according to Christ's way. So study his ways and imitate them. Ask yourself, "Is this new direction, or idea, or plan of action that we are considering *consistent* with God's Word, and with the true life modeled for us and taught to us by Jesus, "the Word made flesh"? [SSJE] Will this direction meet God's first covenantal promise...I bless you that you might bless the world.... (Gen 12:2,3) Will this path help the world, help others, or will it just serve yourself and your desires.

Third, Pray, pray, pray. That is a directive throughout Scripture. But it's not a matter of simply praying, it's what you pray for. Like Jesus, ultimately pray "Your will be done." But if you have trouble getting there (don't we all), try praying for a transformed mind, a perspective that sees things from God's eyes, like literally asking "God how do you see this?" (cf Rom 12:2) And ask for wisdom, the skill that takes

the things you know to be true (like God's word) and knows how to put it into action. (cf James 1:5) That is wisdom, and that is something God willing gives to everyone who asks.

And lastly, (but not finally) trust God. God has sworn he will never fail us nor forsake us (Johua 1:5) ... Look back at biblical history, through it all God has always been working for good, even when things were tough. (Bill told you story of Joseph last week, who was sold into slavery, yet became a leader in Egypt. After a lifetime of challenges, he told his brothers ... 'You meant it for evil, God worked for good, to preserve life'. (Gen 50:20) From Joseph to Jesus life has come from seeming death; That's the Gospel. Think of your own life. There have been times of difficulty, for sure, times when you cried out NO, and still God answered with you with Yes. And through it all you have grown in faith, and hope, and love. We are blessed in every season, in every time. That is always God's way.

So really, if you consider it, you do know the time, don't you?