

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Saturday, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022  
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Seasons of Life  
New Year's Day  
Ecclesiastes 3:1-11**

**Welcome**

**Call to Worship**

May the light of God's love push back the darkness.  
We come to the light from the four corners of the earth,  
from the north, from the south,  
from the east, and from the west.  
But we are all one in Jesus Christ.  
We come from many nations and many cultures.  
But we are all one in Jesus Christ.  
We come seeking the light that guides us to life.  
But we are all one in Jesus Christ.  
Let us lift up our many voices and praise the God of all people.

**Prayer of Adoration and Invocation**

Almighty Lord God,  
you gave your Son, Jesus Christ, to be the light of the world:  
We praise and magnify your holy name that in him  
you have revealed the wonder of your saving love to all people.  
With those of old who brought their tribute to his feet,  
confessing him as King of heaven and earth,  
we now present the worship of our grateful hearts,  
asking you to give us grace to give ourselves to you,  
through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

**Opening Hymn**

**Prayer for illumination**

We praise you, O God,  
for the sun of righteousness rises  
with healing in its wings.

May the warm and healing rays of the light,  
our Lord Jesus Christ,  
soften, heal, and transform us  
through the power of your Holy Spirit  
as your Word is proclaimed today. **Amen.**

### Scripture

#### **Ecclesiastes 3:1-11**

**1 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: 2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; 3 a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; 4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; 5 a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; 6 a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; 7 a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; 8 a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace. 9 What gain has the worker from his toil? 10 I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.**

### Sermon

A young man with his first job, showed up late for work his first three days in a row. When he showed up late again on the fourth day his manager pulled him into the office for a conversation. He had the young man sit down and then asked him, 'Don't you know what time we start to work around here?'. The young man looked back at his manager with a perplexed look and replied, 'No sir, everyone is already working when I get here'. While we all might be able to tell time, being on time is a difficult task for many. Every person has a different definition of being on time. Personally, I consider myself late if I am not at least 5 minutes early, I also know people that consider themselves on time if they show up within half an hour of when they said they would be there.

Which begs the question, what is time? In the modern digitalized world, we have a pretty good grasp on time. It surrounds us, we have technology that keeps time for us, adds things into our schedule, sets alarms, and has timers, and stopwatches. Years ago, when we would change to Daylight savings time, people would show up early or late for church depending on which way the clock went, but now our phones make the change for us automatically.

However, time in the modern sense is very different than it was even a few hundred years ago.

Did you know that in 1792 the French tried to have a 10-day work week? Even stranger they tried to have 10 hours in a day, 100 minutes in an hour and 100 seconds in a minute! Russia not to be outdone by the French decided in 1929 to create a 5-day week in which each day was named after a color, everyone was given a random day off without thought given to family or friends. In 1931 they adjusted the system and went with a 6-day work week with a common day of rest for most people. It was not until 1940 that they adopted the 7-day work week of the 'Western European Calendar'

You might be thinking that this oddball time is something that was unique to the Russians and the French. But even here in North America time was not standardized until November of 1883.

Before that every community of people was responsible for determining what time it was. This is why Church bells use to ring so many times a day. They rang to indicate when work started and ended, when prayer times were, when supper was and of course to tell people when to come to service. In the US it was the train conductors who finally managed to get the nation to adopt a singular concept of time. In sept of 1883 a train in New York ran on New York time, Chicago ran on Chicago time, but the stations in between ran on Columbus time. In 1884 Greenwich Meridian was suggested to be the prime meridian and the place from which all time around the world would be standardized. Our modern concept of time is in fact very different, in Canada just over 100 years ago the idea of daylight savings time did not exist, it was not adopted anywhere in Canada until when Port Arthur, Ontario enacted it in 1908.

Yet God's concept of time has been eternal. In fact, it was God who created time. Before God began the creation of the world there was nothingness. Not a lack of anything, just a whole lot of nothing. And it was out of this nothingness that God created time.

#### **Genesis 1:5**

**<sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.**

God is the only one capable of understanding time, because he was the one who created it. Mark Twain once said, 'Life would be infinitely happier if we could be born at the age of eighty and gradually approach eighteen.' Yet this is not how it works. Time was not created by man, nor is it controlled by man. Our time is in God's hands.

The writer of Ecclesiastes, who many believe was King Solomon, is the preacher in this book. He is the one who has decided to share his understanding of how the world works. He first tells us that there is a time for everything in this world and then illustrates it by going through fourteen different opposites that help explain to us the readers how life is composed of a variety of contrasting seasons. In its simplest form life consists of seasons of good things and bad things which will happen. The preacher is not

saying that they will happen in any particular order, he does not even say which are good or bad, he simply states that these things will occur within our lives and that we should live our life expecting to be in one of or even multiple of these seasons each day we walk on this earth.

He tells us that irrelevant of which season we are in, we are acting out God's plan for time. There may be a season in which we are weeping, however all of life is not weeping, there will also be seasons of laughter. He tells us that there will be times in our life when things may need to be broken down, so that they may be rebuilt. Many people find this very true with their faith and their understanding of their relationship with God. He tells us there will be times when there will be conflict in our lives, or wars within the world around us, but that there will also be times of comfort and peace. This is the conundrum of this thing we call life, as time flows through it, we have little control over what is happening. We cannot stop aging, we cannot stop the world around us, we need to keep on living with whatever it is that the world presents us each day.

All humans go through these seasons of time. At times we may be in a good season and at others in a bad season, together these variations in season make up the time we call our life. Time is a single point in any one of these seasons. I have always wondered what makes someone magically able to make a correct adult life choice suddenly overnight when they reach the legal age of 18. I know a few people under the age of 18 who would make many better choices than the many I know over the age of 18 who should not be allowed to make these choices.

It is not the time that radically shape and alter our lives, but the seasons. We cannot live our lives only in the good times, because the bad times are just as real. We will live in all of these contrasting seasons in our life. Some of these contrasting seasons you may enjoy, and others will hate. Some will be easy and seem to pass quickly, others will be painful or lonely and seem to last forever. The good times seem to fly by, and the rough times seem to last forever, this is a universal truth. When we are in a time or place, we do not want to be in, it is as if time decides to slow down, like I said last week, when a child is missing a minute can seem like an hour. We do not get to go through life and pick and choose our times and our seasons, we simply live them as they come to us. If we got to pick our time and season this church would be filled with young and energetic people and probably completely devoid of the elderly or weak. No one wants to get older, but the reality of living is that we all do.

This is where the preacher notes that this is a beauty in the time and seasons because 'God makes everything beautiful in its time.

**Ecclesiastes 3:11**

**11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.**

The word that is translated as beautiful can also be translated as 'fitting'. We cannot control our time or our season, but God can. The proper season at the right time is what brings about God's purpose for our lives and it is all part of God's beautiful plan for us. We have been learning this as we are going through the book of James. God's plan for his people is a beautiful plan. The more beautiful part is that God has done this for every one of us. He made each of us fit into His plan for our lives. We are here today, sitting in this time and place, in very different seasons of our life, starting off another year, all acting out our parts in God's plan for our lives. God makes all things; he controls all the seasons and times in our life, and he makes them all beautiful because they are all a part of his plan for us.

This is truly an amazing aspect of God's plan. In every group of people there will be people in different seasons of their life. There will be those who are celebrating new life, new beginnings, and new relationships, as well as people who are worried about the end of life, end of careers or the end of relationships. There will be people who are living in excess, those who are content and those who are struggling.

In our very life we are constantly moving through our own seasons while also impacting the season of those around us. When a baby is born it creates a new season for life, husband, and wife, now become mother and father. Grandparents are created, aunts and uncles, cousins, etc. When a baby is born the seasons of life for all the people around that person change. This is what a family is, a reflection of the seasons of life that a person goes through, baby, to child, to teen, to adult, to spouse, to parent to grandparent. As we pass through these seasons of life, we reflect on the relationships we have within our family, sharing in the good and the bad, living the plan that God has for us. Over time the older generations pass on and the younger generations take over, but the cycle of the seasons never ends. Time stands still for no man, we are born, and we die, we cannot even determine the amount of time between these two events. This is why Jesus tells us to always be ready, time is in God's hands not our own.

Congregations and churches also pass-through time and seasons. Some churches are in seasons of decline while others are in seasons of growth. Right now, globally there are many churches closing their doors for the last time, while church planters are beginning new ministries in other places. This is happening in churches and in other organizations and companies all over the world. Nothing lasts forever, there is always a change of seasons. Empire and governments rise to power and fall from power, people become famous and fade away, everyone is born and dies. The good news is that every day we have life should give us fresh hope and energy, we should be joyous regardless of the season, because we have been given the opportunity to find a new season. Endings and beginnings, times for crying and laughing, grieving, and celebrating, all of these contrasting seasons that over a lifetime should teach us the importance of God in our lives.

We cannot avoid these seasons, even if we try, the truth is we will all live out seasons of good and bad. Nobody is exempt, this should help you see the lie that is perpetuated by social media, no one is happy 365 days a year, yet if we visit someone Facebook or Instagram, we are led to believe that the rich and famous never have a bad day. The preacher lists off fourteen examples of these seasons of life that cover all the aspects of life. We may not like or even want to experience some of the seasons that are listed, we will almost always prefer one over the other, but we will experience them all over our lifetime. We love births and new beginnings, we all want these, we do not care for the deaths and endings as much. We love the healing, not the killing the same way we all love peace and dislike war.

### **Ecclesiastes 3: 2-8**

**2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; 3 a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; 4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; 5 a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; 6 a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; 7 a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; 8 a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.**

Every aspect of our life, from birth to death and all of the events in between are covered in this short bit of scripture that the preacher has presented to us in Ecclesiastes. We do not get to chose from the list. It is like playing a game of cards. We all use the same deck even if we are playing different games. Some of the cards are better than others depending on the game you are playing. We are all dealt cards and when we look at them, we discover the hand is not the ideal hand we were hopping for, its not the cards we wanted, but they are the cards we have been dealt and they are the cards that we are playing the game with. This list of seasons is like those cards, there are many that we do not want in our lives and others that we want in every season of our life, but we do not get to chose, we simply live out the seasons we are in throughout our lifetime.

The last few years has taught us this, no one would have chosen a global pandemic, restrictions on churches, businesses, and families, yet they have happened. We may not have chosen this season, but it has made us stronger, it has made us more resilient and ready to take on challenges in our lives. After covid many of the things which we use to find exhausting, confusing and infuriating will seem like minor challenges to overcome, and we will take them on with a new outlook and strength. We have learned that no matter how dark things may seem, the light of day will always come again. That the wind will always blow, and the waters will flow, time will continue – and that God’s people will be there to stand in fellowship through all of the seasons.

In the book of Romans, we are presented with the marks of a true Christian.

### Romans 12:9-15

<sup>9</sup> Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup> Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

We are called to live in fellowship with one another. To both rejoice and mourn is part of the human experience in this fallen world. As people of God, we are called to be rejoicing and mourning with one another. To be building each other up in our faith, to support one another and then to reach out to the broken world around us and let them see and hear about God through us. We are called to encouraged one another in the good and call out one another on the bad things we do in our lives. Regardless of the seasons we are in, for better or for worse, whether we are in a season of dancing and embracing or a season of loss and disappointment we are called to stand together as people of God in fellowship.

Know this people of God, regardless of the season in which you are living right now in this very moment you are a member of a church family that love you and cares about you. Together we will carry the burdens, lift the yokes, shoulder the challenges, and comfort the sorrows. Together we will cheer one another on, celebrate the victories, raise our arms in jubilation and praise and worship our God. Know this, that no matter how exhilarating, confusing, exciting or infuriating life can be from one day to the next, the sun will always rise, and the moon will always follow, the winds will always blow and the water will always continue to flow, flowers will blossom, bloom and die – and God's people will stand together in fellowship and worship Him through all of the times and seasons of life.

Let us pray,

### **Invitation to Offering**

#### **Offering**

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3) We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer.

**E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. [standrewspert offering@gmail.com](mailto:standrewspert offering@gmail.com) Please include your Offering Envelope # in**

the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (eg Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

### **Offertory Prayer**

Emmanuel, God with us,  
the Magi followed the star to find you.  
Amazed, they gave gifts.  
We too are amazed by your presence among us,  
by the gift that you are to us.  
With joyful hearts, we bring you our gifts  
of time, of money, of ourselves.  
Use these and us to serve you and your world. **Amen.**

### **Closing Hymn**

### **Pastoral Prayer**

### **Benediction**

Almighty God has given each of us everything we need  
to see our lives as a sheer gift from his hand:  
The Father has created us and sustains our lives daily;  
the Son has paid for our sins and brought us new life;  
the Spirit keeps us in our Savior's love  
and empowers us to live for him.  
All glory be to the triune God,  
the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
May his name be honored and adored,  
now and forevermore.  
Beloved children of God:  
May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love for you,  
and keep you in his peace.  
May you receive strength  
to grow in faith, hope, and love,  
to live with joy and delight,  
and to give God thanks and praise. **Amen.**