

Daniel 06-01-29a

This is Sunday, the 29th of January, 2006. As time marches ever onward, we continue our study in the book of Daniel. Let's take a moment as we approach our scripture reading and study of God's word to exercise our priesthood, both individually and collectively, as we present ourselves before God to express thanksgiving and to let our request be made known unto him.

We do this because of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We do it in the power of God's Holy Spirit. And in so doing, we claim the grace of God the Father.

Shall we pray? Father, what a privilege it is to set aside the tasks and the exigencies of the world in which we live and the duties that are assigned to us so that we can refresh ourselves, nourish our souls and find guidance and encouragement and motivation in your word. We thank you for the fellowship of believers of like mind. We thank you for the consistent and often unspoken witness that each believer represents in prioritizing the study of your word and the place of your word in our lives.

We thank you for the nation in which we live and its leadership. We thank you for those who are believers and who have an active spiritual life and an active desire to please you in the performance of their duties. We pray especially for our president, for those senators and congressmen and those in the judiciary and all of those at various levels of government and in the military who are seeking to honor you and to respect and implement biblical principles as they lead our nation.

We pray a special blessing on those who cannot be in church because of their duties or because of their situation. We ask a special blessing on those who will not hear your word taught this morning, that the things they have learned in the past will be active and fresh in their memory, that God, the Holy Spirit will minister them afresh and anew so that they will find that comfort and encouragement that comes from your eternal, infallible and all powerful word. We ask your blessing on us as we fellowship and study together.

May each one find in the scriptures those particular truths that will meet the need of the hour and the day and will equip us for every good work in the days ahead. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.

Our theme this morning as we continue our study in the book of Daniel, chapter eight, has to do with time. Time is of the essence. Time management, stewardship of our time is a biblical mandate.

It is a responsibility. The Apostle Paul reminds us to redeem the time because the days are evil. And we find an interesting time notation, this is what really launched me onto this subject this past week, in the verses of chapter eight in which we find ourselves.

So to remind our souls of the importance and the place of time, our script reading this morning

comes from probably the first chapter you would think of in this regard, Ecclesiastes chapter three, Kohelet chapter three. We studied this in great detail in days gone by. And there is a wonderful reminder here of the necessity for discernment of the times.

Jesus chided his generation and even scolded his own disciples about not interpreting the times, not observing the times, not understanding place in history and immediate responsibility. This, as you can see from looking at your New King James, is printed as poetry. It resembles a modern sonnet, it has 14 lines, the first eight lines form two quatrains, the last lines form a quatrain plus a couplet.

So you basically have three quatrains and a couplet. Very tight structure, very beautiful, both in Hebrew and in English. This is not prescriptive.

This is not a section of exhortation or command. This is a section of description. Let's read it together.

Solomon says in Ecclesiastes chapter three, verse one, to everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven, a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to pluck what is planted, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to break down and a time to build up, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to gain and a time to lose, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to sow, a time to keep silence and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time of war and a time of peace. What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? This question is often left out when people read this section, but that is the point and the direction that the first eight verses establish. What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? If we do not understand the times, if we do not discern and function accordingly, we will have no profit from our labors.

God has made everything beautiful in its time, it says in verse 11. Solomon says, I have seen the answer with which the sons of men are to be answered. This translation, if you want the details of how I arrive at that, you have to go back and get the Ecclesiastes tapes from days gone by.

I forget what year that was, but this word in Hebrew is Inyan. And there is a question in verse nine, what profit has the worker from that in which he labors? And in verse 10, Solomon says, I have seen the answer God gives and this is the answer with which the sons of men are answered. It is clear that sometimes our labors seem to be in vain, it is clear that other times our labors seem to yield a profit.

God has put the answer in human experience. God has made everything beautiful in its time and he has put eternity in the hearts of the sons of men, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end. We are under the sun in our lifetime, we look and God has shown us how it works, that if you discern, if you pay attention, if you pay attention to the time, things in that time can be good of intrinsic value, can be beautiful.

Yaffe, so let's take a look at this in just a brief detail, because this informs and illuminates Daniel chapter eight, where we have times and days and evenings and mornings being mentioned. And rather than a simple prophetic calculation or trying to fit pieces of a puzzle together into a chronology, that really doesn't help us on Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to God. Knowing exactly how long the tribulation period is or how long the abomination of desolation is going to be set up or any particular chronological question of scripture is interesting, but it's not helpful unless we understand the content of the first half of this chapter.

To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven. To everything there is an appointed time, Zeman, Z-apostrophe-M-A-N or Z-E-M-A-N, Zeman. There is an appointed time, there is an appointment.

This is addressed to believers. It is in the realm of believers. This is Solomon, an Israelite king, speaking to the people of Israel, who are the people of God.

To everything there is an appointed time. If there is an appointment, do you know what that means? There is an appointer. Someone has specified a time, an event.

To everything there is an appointed time, a designated time. It's not random. It isn't happenstance.

It's not the long end of a series of chain events as evolution and secular humanism would have us believe. If you really want to quiet down someone who is noisily touting evolution and the atheistic and secular viewpoint of life, and as they decry Christianity and all of its alleged evils down through the centuries, ask them this, where does religion in general and where does Christianity in particular come from? If everything evolved and it's all a chain reaction from the goo to you, then guess what? Religion and Christianity evolved and they're just as legitimate as your little finger and your appendix and every other thing that evolved. And why are you decrying that which nature itself has decreed and which has obviously been a part of the human psyche for thousands upon thousands of years? You should celebrate it.

It's a function of evolution. Why are you against it? You're not against the platypus and you're not against the rhinoceros and you're not against all of the other products of evolution, the fruit fly, *Drosophila*. So why are you against what has evolved in the human brain and in the human mind? You should embrace it and celebrate it and become a part of it.

Well, of course, they don't want to do that. But you are left with no other cause, no other reason for the season and the time and the event that takes place in it if there is no God. If there's no appointer, if there is no appointment, then it's just happenstance and you might as well just go with the flow.

To everything there is an appointed time, Zaman, and a time for every purpose, every hapets, every desirable goal. And you'll remember that that word led us to go study the last words of

David, where he says there were these desirable goals that did not get fulfilled in his lifetime, that were not fulfilled in his reign in Israel, things that did not sprout, that did not come up and blossom. And indeed, the tree of Jesse is going to be chopped down.

And like Nebuchadnezzar, there is going to be that stump that remains. And in the distant future, from the time of David, a thousand years later, there's going to be a root shoot from the stump of Jesse that comes up from what seemed to be dead and what seemed to be hopeless and is going to fulfill all of those unfulfilled purposes, desirable goals. There is a time, an appointed time for everything and a time, a season for every purpose.

This immediately, if you didn't go any further in this chapter, tells us that there is a requirement in believers for patience. We could do a study on patience that would last us well into the summer. You have need of endurance, faith and patience to inherit the promises.

The trial of your faith worketh patience. Why do we undergo fiery trials? To produce in us patience. We want the answer now.

We want deliverance now. We want provision now. We want answers now.

We want relief now. There is a time. There is an appointed time.

God has a good purpose, a worthy goal that he wants to accomplish in our life. And there is a season in which that will be fulfilled. And if that season is not now, what must we do? It's one of the things, one of the first things you learn to do in the military.

Wait, wait and wait and wait and wait. There is a time for every purpose. You can't think about time without thinking about purpose.

You know, the old saying, if you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time. If you don't establish a goal, if you don't set for yourself priorities and make a list of tasks to be accomplished, if you just kind of float, you haven't aimed. You're taking the shotgun approach to life.

You're just going to load up a 12-gauge shell and pull the trigger and hope something good happens. We have to establish, we have to define, we have to delineate and aim for keppets, desirable goals. And it is in the pursuit of those goals that we exercise faith and we exercise patience.

The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace. Those are sort of abstract, aren't they? Love and joy and peace. Love can be toward God.

Love can be toward one another. Joy, general positive, optimistic attitude. Peace, not unstable, not disrupted, not tossed about by every wind.

Patience. Patience starts to get a little bit more defined because patience is specifically under pressure. Patience is required when you are tested.

Patience is required when you are being pushed in a direction you don't want to go or you are stretched and stressed and taxed in ways that are not comfortable. Love and joy and peace are a comfort zone. Patience is required when we're uncomfortable.

Gentleness, goodness, faith, humility, self-control. So, to everything there is an appointed time. And there is a time for every kephetz, every desirable goal under heaven.

There is next a time to be born. The next thing we see here is the biggest distinction in our world, life and death. It is paralleled with planting and plucking up what is planted.

The idea here is moving from human life. There is a time to be born. We don't choose that time.

There is a time to die. Under normal circumstances, we don't choose that either. A time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted, that is our choice, isn't it? We have conditions that are imposed upon us.

We get born without asking to be born. We're conceived in iniquity, born in sin, inheritors of original sin, possessors of a corrupt nature. We didn't ask for any of that.

It just happened to us. And we got dealt that hand. We get born into this life.

We don't choose our parents. We don't choose our country. We don't choose our race.

We don't choose our genetic makeup. We don't choose our body or our appearance. We have nothing to say about how we come into this world and when we come into this world and what is included in that package deal.

It just happens. And much as we would like to, in our prime at least, live forever and have a never age. And there's all kinds of songs about where we'll never grow old and we're going to go on and live forever.

We are excited about the prospect of not ever having to die. But that's generally not our choice. Most people want to live longer than they do.

Some people much longer. You have people being killed in Iraq just about every day. Young people, not their choice, not their preference.

Time to be born and a time to die. Things happen to us that are beyond our control. Other things are within our control.

Time to plant, a time to pluck what is planted. And that requires discernment of all of the possible activities. It doesn't say a time to swing a hammer and a time to lay the hammer down in this particular line.

If you're going to plant or if you're going to pluck up what is planted, it requires discernment, doesn't it? You can't plant in December and expect a crop. You can't pluck up six weeks after

you plant and expect profit. Some things we have no control over.

Other things we do have control over. And to exercise that control requires discernment, wisdom, knowledge, intelligent application of our God-given common sense. Verse three, a time to kill and a time to heal.

Planting and plucking what is planted is generally our own little bailiwick. We have our garden. We have our field.

We are growing in the ancient world, the agricultural economy. We grow crops for our own benefit. It's either what we're going to eat and what we're going to plant next year, or this is our business and we're going to sell and barter with others.

But this is how we're going to get by. This is how we're going to sustain our life between being born and dying. We will plant and we will pluck up what is planted.

We're going to sustain ourselves. And it's all about us. In verse three, you begin to look outward.

A time to kill and a time to heal. This is dealing with others. You know, love one another, treat others as better than yourself.

And we have all of the one another passages in the New Testament. Why would there be a time to kill? Well, there is a time to kill. There are some people who need killing.

There are some people who require killing. It is God's will that they be killed. And God has given the responsibility for killing them to people.

This has been true ever since Noah sacrificed on Mount Ararat and God gave him the injunction that when someone spills man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. That was not true. Man was not responsible for capital punishment before the flood, but he is afterward.

God says, look, I have done a huge execution here. I have wiped mankind off the face of the earth with the exception of these eight people. And now it's your job.

I'm not sending another worldwide flood. I'm not going to judge every criminal. I'm giving you that delegated authority and responsibility to judge.

And there is a time to kill. If you shed blood, your blood shall be shed. God mandates capital punishment for capital crimes.

There is a time to heal. There's no clearer place you see this distinction than on the battlefield, where you are actively trying to end the life of those on the other side. But at a point in time when the battle is over, those whom you are trying to kill suddenly become the wounded.

And the ambulances and the corpsmen go out there and treat all of the wounded. At least in

civilized societies, irrespective of which side they're on. Minutes before, when they're healthy and the battle is on, you're trying to kill them.

A few minutes later, they're laying there wounded or they are captured. And somebody that you just one minute before would have happily shot now is a prisoner. And you don't just grab them and shoot them indiscriminately.

When the status changes, when the time changes, what is required in that time changes. And instead of killing, you heal. There is a larger picture in this when nations go to war.

And you see this in our dealing with the nation of Japan in World War II. We did everything humanly possible to wipe out as many Japanese as possible in their little homeland over there and all up and down the Pacific. Once the war was concluded, the United States went in with millions and millions of dollars to reconstruct and rebuild and restructure the nation of Japan.

There is a time to kill and there is a time to heal. The large scale and on the small scale. There is a time to break down and there is a time to build up.

Killing and healing are personal. This deals with people, doesn't it? Breaking down and building up, this has to do with projects. This has to do with achievements.

This has to do with impersonal things. There may be an institution such as slavery. There came a point in our national life where slavery had been built up to a certain point.

Most would argue that there never was a good time for that to be built up. But there it was, somebody had built it and it was time to break it down. Other times something has been broken down and it needs to be built back up.

And this is discernment in the sort of the impersonal realm. There is a need for discernment. All of these require discernment.

There is a time to weep and a time to laugh. This idea is literally a time to dance for joy. Weeping is generally done in private.

Laughing is usually done in a more public setting. I mean, there are exceptions. I chuckle to myself.

Somebody looking through the window would probably think there was something the matter with me. But generally, we have to decide when our expression of emotion is going to be private and when it's going to be public. The time for mourning and the time for dancing.

This line really is an exaggerated or an emphatic form of the first line, isn't it? Mourning corresponds to weeping. Dancing corresponds to laughing. We tend to do the latter two, mourning and dancing, in groups.

We tend to do our weeping and laughing as individuals. And there's a discernment. When do

you share your humor or your grief, your joy and your sorrow? It requires discernment.

You can create a lot of awkward situations if you try to share something that someone wants to keep private. You can be equally awkward. If you share something that ought to be private and you make it public, it requires discernment.

It's not something you can buy on the store. It's not something you can get out of a can. It's something that God has to create in us through the wisdom of his word.

Verse five, there is a time to cast stones and a time to gather stones. And you may recall that this is not just picking up rocks and stoning someone. The word used here, these pebbles that are being spoken of, are not really the kind that you execute someone with.

These are the kinds of rocks that were used to add up accounts. They didn't have pads of paper and carbon pads and that sort of thing for receipts and IOUs and so on. So they would use pebbles to do their math.

It's kind of like an abacus without the string. They would sometimes write on pebbles and shards to track their sheep, to remember a situation. There is a time to gather stones and keep account.

There's a time to cast away the stones and say, ah, forget it. This speaks on several different levels. You could look at a field and there's a time to go into a field and clear it.

And remove the stones from it. David, of course, cast away one smooth stone and changed the course of history for his entire nation. One smooth stone, properly directed, motivated by faith, encouraged and made confident by God and His word and His promises.

One stone cast away changed history. There is a time to embrace. There is a time to refrain from embracing.

This distinction has largely disappeared in our modern culture in a lot of different ways. There is a time to gain and a time to lose. Once again, you have a correspondence here.

Time to gain, a time to lose, a time to keep and a time to throw away. All some of us have to do is look in our garage or our closet or our attic and we know how difficult this can be. But the second line, again, intensifies the first.

You remember Jesus saying, the one who tries to hold on to his life will lose it. The one who loses his life for my sake and the gospels will find it. There's a time to deny yourself and take up your cross.

The cross is the symbol of a form of execution where your property was confiscated and taken away from you. And it was a humiliating and shameful way to go. It wasn't the noble, in Roman eyes anyway, beheading.

It was ignominious, shameful. You were not worth giving a dignified death. And in the process of being convicted and sent to crucifixion, your property was confiscated and taken away and your relatives were left with nothing.

There is that word from Jesus that says, accept a man, deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. He can't be my disciple. There's a time to give away.

Peter asks Jesus, well, what about us? We've forsaken a lot to follow you. And Jesus says, if you have forsaken family and possessions for my sake, it'll be restored a hundredfold. But you have to have patience.

You have to look ahead. You have to see beyond the setting of the sun. You have to look at the larger view of life.

To everything there is an appointed time. There is a time for possession and it's not always now. Sometimes we have to let things go.

Whether it's a relationship, whether it is a possession, whether it is an opportunity. Other times we have to gather it to ourselves. We have to embrace it.

We have to gain it. We have to keep it. We have to cherish it and nurture it and value it and treat it with respect and make it a priority.

There's no way to just talk and figure this out. We have to learn discernment in our souls. And the only way to do that is to meditate in the law of the Lord day and night.

That's when Psalm 1 applies. We become like that tree that is planted by the rivers of water that brings forth his fruit in his season. Very same word that's used here in Ecclesiastes chapter 3. When do you soak up nourishment? When do you make it through the winter when your leaves are blown off and the weather is harsh? When does the sap flow? When is renewal? When is growth? And when is that production of fruit? We dwell by that river of living water and we bring forth our fruit in our season.

It's the only way we can achieve that discernment and arrive at that level of perspicacity is to make a priority, not just of hearing God's word, but of incorporating it into our souls. And that requires meditating on it day and night. Think about it as we're in the act of living.

Verse 7 says a time to tear and a time to sew. Why would one want to tear cloth? We think, you know, in the ancient world, especially the making of cloth was done by hand, was a tedious process, time consuming process. Cloth was valuable.

Why would you tear a garment? Well, one of the most common times was in great distress. How many times in the Bible do you see somebody tearing their garments because they are expressing their outrage? There is a godly sorrow. There is a righteous indignation.

And in both of those situations, when you are distressed and rightly distressed, you tear. There

is also a time to sew, a time to bring things back together, a time to start fresh and make something new. You don't just keep tearing all the time.

You don't just run around in every new garment you get. You rend it. And as you can see in each of these different areas of human life, what is the overarching idea? Balance.

Discernment leads to balance. There is a time for one and there is a time for the other. You do not become a terror in the T-E-A-R sense.

You are not a one who rends constantly. And you are not a constant sewer. Where you are always mending and you are always creating and you never balance out your life.

There is a time for each of these extremes, a time for these opposites. And the only way to discern those and to operate effectively and biblically in them is to be balanced. It requires discernment.

A time to keep silence and a time to speak. I think I mentioned this to you before. Ben Sirah, one of the sages of Israel who's not found in scripture, says, There is one who keeps silent because he has no answer, while another keeps silent because he knows when to speak.

Two different kinds of silence. There is one who keeps silent because he has no answer. And our modern corollary to that is better to remain silent and be thoughtful than to open one's mouth and remove all doubt.

There is one who keeps silent because he has no answer, while another keeps silent because he knows when to speak. This is a function of self-control. This is a function of discernment.

You may know the answer. And all of us, you remember sitting in the seat at school as a child and the teacher asks a question and you just know the answer. What is the dynamic there? Why does a child love to raise his hand and give the answer? If you answer that question, you will find a lot of the motivation for gossip.

Because it's the same basic instinct. I know something and I want you to know that I know. That's essentially it.

And it requires self-control when you know an answer and you can speak and nail it. And yet it's not a good time to speak. Another keeps silent because he knows when to speak.

There is a time to keep silent and there is a time to speak. And this is one of the hardest tests for all of us. And I think it's one of the reasons at the end of this list.

James says what about the tongue? The man who can put a bridle on his tongue brings his whole body into subjection. The tongue is one of the smallest visible members of the body and yet it does more damage than all the rest of them put together. It is set on fire by the flames of hell, James says.

There is a time to love and a time to hate. A time of war and a time of peace. You notice how in many of these other lines, the first line and the second line in the verse correspond directly.

Remember verse four, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance. You have weeping and mourning corresponding, laughing and dancing correspond. But look at this last.

There is a time to love and a time to hate, a time of war and a time of peace. And they cross. Once again, there is the idea of intensification.

Once again, there is the idea of personal and private versus public and corporate. Love and hate are individual personal attitudes. War and peace are corporate public activities and expressions.

Then you go back to the very beginning. There is a time to be born and a time to die and you come full circle. There is a time of war and a time of peace.

Peace, prosperity are characterized by the bringing in of new life. War is a time of bloodshed and death. It is up to us as history flows, as we enter into the time stream of humanity and we exit it at some point, to redeem that time, to make it count.

Life is either something that happens to us or something that we exploit and in which we make things happen. God has given us that gift. He's given us that ability.

It is up to us to exercise it. Hannah, the mother of Samuel back in 1 Samuel 2, in her song says and recognizes in a time of birth when she is promised that she's going to have this long sought for child. She says it is the Lord who judges.

It is the Lord who controls the boundaries. It is the Lord who resolves the paradoxes. The condemnation of Israel, both the northern and the southern kingdoms.

You can look through the scripture and as an example you can look at Hosea chapter 6 and chapter 7. The condemnation of Israel, they did not know the times. If you flip forward in Ecclesiastes to chapter 5 and verse 18, in your New King James it says, Here is what I have seen, it is good and fitting for one to eat and drink and to enjoy the good of all his labor. But what it literally says there is good that is beautiful, tov that is yafei.

God has made everything yafei in its time. The good, the genuine good that is beautiful is to eat and drink and see prosperity in all one's labor which he labors under the sun from the number of days of his life that God gives to him because it is his allotment, it is his portion. This is how to redeem the time.

This is how to respect the time. Solomon says, I myself have seen this. I myself have proved it out.

Good that is beautiful, the tov that is yafei, Y-A-P-H-E-H. Good that is beautiful is to eat and

drink, sustain yourself, take advantage of provision from God that keeps us alive and functional and to see prosperity, to see blessing, to see the fruit that is born in its proper season in all one's labor which he labors under the sun in this brief life. The number of days of his life that God gives to him because it is to his allotment.

Goes on in the next verse to say, also every man to whom God has given wealth and treasures and the power to partake from them and to receive his portion and rejoice in his labor, this itself is the gift of God. Because not much will he remember the years of his life for God is producing the answer. God is creating the answer.

That same idea of Enyon. It says God keeps him busy in your New King James. That answer that we look for in life, the meaning of life, the purpose of life, the fulfillment in life.

God is creating, God is causing that answer and giving us joy in the heart. Well, that was a great study, if you remember, both in chapter three and chapter five and all of that Ecclesiastes study. But this gives us a perspective on time.

Why is time important? Why is discerning the time and the season important? It's not just a calculation. It's not just so we can mark a calendar and figure out when God is doing what in the prophetic scriptures. It is personal.

It is practical. It is essential. If we are to redeem our time and accomplish God's purpose and find God's answer under the sun, we have to have discernment.

We have to know when to tear and when to sow, when to cast away stones and when to gather them, when to love and when to hate. All of these wonderful principles and live a life of balance. Well, we're going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to see how this is borne out and applied in the study of Daniel chapter eight.