

Today we are going to read some scripture for this lesson. It's going to be Ecclesiastes 3:1-13. And it starts off 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. What embracing. A time to gain and time to lose. A time to keep and a time to throw away.

A time to tear and a time to sew. 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 from that in which he labors?

I have seen the God given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. He has made everything beautiful in its name. Also he puts eternity in their hearts. Except that no one can find out the work that God has done from beginning to end. I know that nothing is better from them to rejoice and to do good in their lives.

And also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of his labor. It is the gift of God.

It.

Yes. There. Now we. Now, I mean, that's not really worthy of applause, but we're all glad. We're all glad it's working now.

We're glad you're here. As Alan said, this is Mother's Day. And if you don't know that yet, I don't know that we're going to be able to help you this morning. It's a little too late. I asked someone, I said, did you get breakfast in bed?

And they're like, oh, that's what? If you've ever eaten breakfast in bed, that's not the best way to honor your mom. It's just a lot of work to clean up everything when it's done. But I hope, kids, that you did something. You at least said, happy Mother's Day to your mom.

And if you are here this morning and you've not yet said happy Mother's Day to your mom, and I'm not looking at you for any reason, then this is the moment. We're all just going to give you a chance to say happy Mother's Day to your mom. If you're in the room and you're with your mom.

We're glad you're here. We're in a series called Turning down the Noise. And today we're focusing on one of the loudest sources of noise in. In our life. Well, my life at least.

And that's the noise of expectations. Anyone, anyone bump up against the expectations in life? And then. And then the harsh reality of life. And you go, what expectations are our ideas about how life is supposed to go?

Where we get these things from all sorts of places. Maybe the way we were raised, we were raised a certain way. And when we get adults, we think, oh, well, that's how life should be. We should have all the stuff that our parents had. We should live the kind of life our parents had.

And then we live in this world. We go, that ain't gonna happen. We have a different life. Maybe we get it from social media. You see it on the.

On someone's feed. You go, oh, my word, they've got a great life. I should be having that life as well. Maybe you've got people in your life who have opinions about your life and they are giving you all sorts of ideas about what they expect your life should be like. We get expectations from all number of sources and those expectations.

But then, of course, we have the harsh reality of just life. Between the expectation and the reality is where we often hear this noise, the static. It's the noise of disappointment. Maybe your disappointment in life or the fact that you're a disappointment to someone else. I don't know.

The noise of stress when our life isn't going the way we think it should go. The noise of feeling like a failure when you're like, I felt I should have been here by now, and I'm not there yet. What's going on now? If you're a mom, you know, you deal with this disconnect between the expectation and reality almost immediately. I don't know.

When I was growing up, every Mother's Day card had this picture of a mom in a rocking chair and she was swaddling this little baby and there's like a pink glow and a haze around her, and it just felt just beautiful. And then you bring the baby home and you realize you might have four hours of that. And then the colic starts and the crying starts and the feeding starts and the fussiness starts and they don't want to be held or they want to be held all day. The time and the expectation and the reality. Ecclesiastes gives us a reality check about life.

Solomon cuts through all of the illusions, all the pretty pictures. And he says this vanity of vanities, all is vanity. Now, we've talked about this. If you've been part of the services and the sermons leading up to this, we. We understand this idea of vanity.

You're transl. May say meaningless. The word there actually means

temporary. It's fleeting. It's like a breath and then it's gone.

And if you've been a parent for longer than, say, two weeks, you know how this works too. It goes so quick. Ecclesiastes teaches us three realities about expectations and then what God says life should be like. Well, the first reality that we look at with, with Ecclesiastes is the reality of limits. Parenting quickly teaches us something I certainly find hard, and maybe you found this hard as well.

The lesson that we are not in control. There are limits to our control with our kids. We don't control who our children become. We can't make our children love Jesus. We can't do that.

We can try. And I know parents who try really, really hard. And sometimes it has the opposite effect. So just know that you can't make your child love Jesus. That's a work the Holy Spirit will do.

We can't control their choices. They're going to make decisions in life that you are going to have to sit back and just go, okay. And we certainly can't control the outcomes of those choices. We can't slow down our time with them from beginning to end, from colic to college. Ecclesiastes reminds us it's all a brief moment.

You take a breath in, you take a breath out, and then it's gone and you've moved on to the next season. That's pretty humbling. Many of our hopes, fears and dreams for our kids are ultimately outside of our control. And that's the first lesson. That's the first reality check that Ecclesiastes give gives us.

Parenting requires a lot of letting go of control. The second reality that Ecclesiastes has leaned into and even with us, you know this is the truth. He spends a lot of time talking about this reality. And this is the reality of pain, the reality of hardship, the reality of frustration in life. It's hard.

It's hard. And they don't. They don't pull back from that. Ecclesiastes 1:8 begins this way. All things are full of weariness.

Any moms this morning say, I understand exactly what he's talking about. All things are full of weariness. Parenting is beautiful, but it also takes this. This Toll on you, this physical toll, emotional toll, even a spiritual toll. It's exhausting.

There's grocery shopping that needs to be done, like every week. You got to do this. Who knew you got to pay bills. Oh, my word. Like, I'm on a twice a month, twice a month rotation.

Every two weeks I got more. I got. I got to sit down, pay bills. I didn't. No one told me in fifth grade that this was going to be what life was like.

There's laundry.

I mean, I would like to think we do that every two weeks. We do that twice a day. Laundry never stops. You got to cook another meal. These children want to be fed consistently.

And then there's shoes. What happened to \$30 pairs of shoes? Where do you find those? Temu. I don't know where to find them.

You got to buy shoes again. And their feet grow all the time. It's exhausting. It's repetitive. It's physically and emotionally draining.

There's the constant worry laying in wake nights, wondering, is, is. Is. Is. Is. Is that a.

Is, is that a normal cough? Or does my child have tuberculosis? You know, what, is that a headache? Or is that a brain tumor? You know, you know what I'm talking about.

Does this child need a lecture and a smack on the bottom? Or does she need lunch and a nap? And you're like, I, I don't. I don't know. We're going to go with one or the other, and she can work it out in therapy later.

There's the late night prayers. Oh, Jesus, help my kids be kind to each other and to others. Help them be in school and do well in school. Help them be happy. Help them get a job, you know, and then watching them struggle and feeling powerless and knowing the best way for them to learn and grow is to let them learn, oftentimes the hard way, to sit back and let the hard way happen.

It's hard. Life is full of pain, and parenting and mothering is full of pain. You can't control everything. And this is the hard lesson. You can't control everything, and you can't fix everything.

Even if you want to. You can't. In Genesis 3:16, this is what God says to Adam and Eve. It says, listen, in pain you shall bring forth children. And I would say, in pain, you're going to bring them forth, and then you're going to raise them up in pain.

It's just hard. It's hard. This is the reality. This is the reality. Ecclesiastes 1:13 says, what a heavy burden God has laid on us.

Yeah, but the third reality is this. The third reality is joy. Because there's a surprise right here in Ecclesiastes. Right in the middle of all the limits and the pain and the lack of control and the sleepless nights, the teacher says, we can expect joy, and we should expect joy, and we should find it when we look for it. In Ecclesiastes 3:12, he says, Listen, there's nothing better than to be joyful and do good.

What parents learn is that joy doesn't come after everything works out. Joy doesn't come after they're out of the house and on their own and raising beautiful children. Joy doesn't. If you're waiting for that moment that can. That can be a long time.

What you discover is that joy happens right in the middle of all the chaos. Joy happens right in the middle of all the struggles. And joy happens in those ordinary moments. We were driving down the road last week, and I picked Mason up from school or something. We were driving down, and all of a sudden I realized he's talking and he's detailing in minute detail the average highway fuel range for a Dodge Viper.

And I'm catching this moment, and I'm listening to him talk, and. And this is his bag right here. He's going on and on about it. I'm like, I have no clue what he's talking about, but I'm loving this moment right now where he's sharing this important thing to him with me. There's joy right there in that moment, fixing dinner at night, and it's hot, and you're mad because you got to fix food again for him because they want to eat.

And Robert comes in, and he's like, hey, here's what I'm thinking. And he's learning how to. How to craft a good argument, and he's learning negotiating skills. He's learning how to communicate with me in a way that he knows is going to work on me to negotiate for a later curfew. And at this time, you're thinking, I've told you what the curfew is, and I'm not going back on it.

But at the same time, I'm really impressed with how well you're making the case. And so now I'm. I'm listening to you. Let's talk. Let's talk about it.

And those moments are growth moments. There are moments you don't expect. You don't plan for them. But in those moments, you're like, this is fun. This is cool to listen to.

These kids and to watch them grow. And Solomon says, the teacher says of Ecclesiastes, you receive these moments as precious gifts of joy because he makes everything, even those hard seasons, beautiful in its time.

I think Solomon would say this is a key point, though. We can find joy with our children, but be careful about putting on your children the pressure to be your joy. We can find joy with our children, but joy cannot come from our children. And here's why. Because if you're looking for for your joy from your kids, then parenting becomes just full of pressure and a weighty thing.

It becomes a frustrating thing. Kids become a burden because they don't give you the joy that is yours by right. And those expectations

are going to crush you and disappoint you every time. Instead, joy comes from the Lord. Nehemiah says it this way.

The joy of the Lord is your strength. The joy of the Lord is what gives you the ability to work through those anxious moments where you realize you have control and those moments where it's really, really hard and yet you find joy from the Lord. And the Lord is your sustainer. And the Lord pushes you through those moments when your joy, your identity, comes from God. Then you're free just to enjoy your kids.

You're free from needing them to validate you. And you get to validate them. You get to cheer them on. You can just do what God called you to do as a parent, to be a gardener. This is the season where we're all out in our yards.

We're all digging in the soil. We've got some seeds out in the foyer for moms to pick up. And honestly, anyone who likes to plant seeds, grab a packet of seeds and plant some seeds this year. Make your world a little prettier than it was last year. Plant some seeds, plant some flowers.

Because this is what God calls us to do. He calls us to be good gardeners, to do the work. There's a time to plant and then to leave the outcome to God. This is what farmers do, don't they? They do the work and then they leave the outcome to God.

The girls reminded us this morning, for everything there is a season. A season for babies, a season for no sleep. A season for first steps, and a season for putting everything up on a higher shelf. Remember that season. A season for school struggles and playground drama.

A season for teenage angst and awkward conversations. A season of holding kids really, really close. And then a season for letting them go. And each one passes faster than we expect. You take a breath in, take a Breath out.

And it's gone. And the moment is over.

Through all those seasons, you garden, you plant, you water, you dig out those weeds as much as you can. And then you wait and you pray and you trust God. And then when God brings the growth and those flowers begin to bloom and those petals unfold, you go, lord, thank you for making all things beautiful in its time, in its right season. You have done this. And as he's doing his beautiful work, he invites you to just enjoy the good gifts he sees you to embrace each season of your life.

Moms, you got a little card this morning that we're going to send home with you, a reminder of that on those hard seasons to go. This is a

season God has put me in to find joy and delight in it. It's hard, but I'm going to look for the joy that God has promised in this moment. These seasons look different, don't they? A sticky toddler kiss coming at you from a face covered in peanut butter and jelly or something you do not recognize those meaningful conversations in the car that just seem to go from fuel mileage to future dreams and goals completed and turned in Homework.

Anyone find joy in that? Like I do find joy in saying, oh, oh, you turned it in, too. Great family dinners where everyone's there and there's no fighting, no fussing, everyone's just talking and enjoying each other. These are not small things. These are gifts that God gives you.

Joy moments. I know there are people in this room who didn't have the best experience with their own parents. Here's the deal. You can't choose the kind of parent you got, but you can choose the kind of parent you're going to be. And that's going to change everything.

Parenting requires recognizing your limits. It requires walking through pain, but it promises something absolutely beautiful. God says, listen, rejoice, do good. Rejoice and do good. Enjoy the gift.

The moments that God gives you, those seasons that you're in, and embrace them. Because I'm making all things beautiful. And in its season, you will see the beauty of God in your life, the goodness of God. So today, yeah, you can't choose the kind of parent you get. You can choose the kind of parent you are.

And so turn down the noise of expectations of how you think things should be, look dead in the eye and say, this is how things are. Embrace it, and experience God's joy in the middle of it. Amen. Amen. Happy Mother's Day.

You're doing better than you think you are, Moms. And what you're doing matters more than you know. We're going to take communion here. And Ecclesiastes reminds us of some of the realities that we've talked about. Reminds us that life has seasons, we have limits.

Those seasons and limits include real pain. And yet in those moments and seasons, there's real joy. And that's what we see at the cross. Jesus stepped into our reality with our limits, our pain, our brokenness. And he offered himself.

He didn't avoid it. He entered right into it. And on the night where he gathered with disciples in that upper room at the Last Supper, he takes the bread and he breaks it. He says, this is my body broken for you. And that's the ultimate picture of the reality of pain.

But he doesn't avoid it. He steps into it. He takes the cup. He says,

this is the blood of a new covenant that I'm giving to you. And this is the beginning of how we experience real, eternal joy.

Because through his sacrifice, our sins are forgiven, our identity is secure, our hope is eternal. And remember what the girl said. God's placed eternity in our hearts, and he does that. We are anchored in Christ. So as you take the cup and the bread today, remember his body given in love.

Remember his blood poured out for you. And remember that God is at work in our lives in every season, even the hard ones, even in the ordinary ones. He's making something beautiful out of it. And so come to the table and give thanks for it. Jesus, in this moment, we turn down the noise.

We turn down the noise of expectations. We lay those down at your feet and say, lord, here's what. Here's what I thought I wanted. And here's what you brought into my life. And you are good and wise and you only give me.

So in this moment where I feel limited, where I feel life is painful, let me experience your joy. Let me receive your grace in this moment. Let me know your presence and let me just bless me with the joy that only you can give. And I pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

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