

December 31, 2015  
Eccl. 3/Gal. 4

New Years Eve C  
A Word About Time

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Christmas King. Amen.

I want to wish each of you a blessed New Year in the name of Jesus!

We begin with our first text this evening (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)

This text talks quite a bit about time. A time for this and a time for that. What actually is time? The dictionary defines it as interval or a period, between two events or the period during which something happens, whether it be of your life or in history. We measure time in second, minutes, days, weeks, months, years, etc.

But then in the dictionary, it goes on to add: time capsule, time consuming, time deposit, time discount, time exposure, time honored, time immemorial, time keeper, time lapse, timeless, time limit, time loan, time lock, timely, time out, time piece, timer, time saving, time server, time sharing, time sheet, time signature, time study, time table, time tested, time warp, time work, time worn, and last but not least, time zone.

We oftentimes wonder whether or not there will be enough time. Just as this year is coming to an end, so our time on this earth will eventually come to an end. How much time do you have? None of us knows. Whether by our death or by the return of Jesus, our time is limited.

As we ponder this, we Christians have opportunity to share our faith in Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of all Time. The Bible calls him the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega. He is the One who holds all Time in His hands.

That's because Time itself is created by God. So each of us is created by God in time. Indeed, we cannot think without thinking about time. Time moves only in one direction; we cannot go back. It's going forward whether we like it or not, whether we are ready for it or not. That is God's doing too. At the very beginning of time, "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. And God saw that the light was good...God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day." TIME.

"And God said, 'Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the night from the day. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years.'"

Time! It's a part of God's good creation, for our benefit. And that's something for which we give thanks to God this New Year's Eve.

As the Bible talks about it, however, there are actually two different kinds of time. Of course, there is the period that is measured by hours and days and years. But there is

also and more importantly in God's Way of thinking, the time that is NOW , that time that is just the right Time for what God intends to do.

That's the sense in which the text from Ecclesiastes is written. There is a time for every purpose, a proper time, a right time. We are not always in control of that, but we need to recognize what the right time is—that all times are in God's hands.

Think of what goes into preparing for a special time for your family. You mark the date, make the preparations, and then, suddenly, now. Now is the time!

You make preparations for the baby to arrive, but you just don't know when, until the Time is NOW!

Oftentimes, Children have a hard time with this. It seems you're always waiting—waiting for Christmas, waiting for grandparents to come, waiting for your birthday, waiting to start on the team, waiting for your driver's license, waiting to graduate. And then, ready or not, it's Now, now is the Time.

*That's the sense in which I want you to hear our second Scripture text for tonight. It will help us understand how God uses time for us. How God's lordship of time can also increase our faith in Him. (Gal. 4:4-7)*

The key phrase here is "When the fullness of time had come." In other words, when God knew everything was ready, when God had done all he was going to do to prepare, THEN God sent His Son. Sent Him into our Time.

Notice how much God's Son is like us. He has a birthday...we just celebrated it a week ago. He is born to be one of us, to be fully human, to be under the Law for us, in order to redeem us, to make us His own.

The passage explains in terms of family. Because God did everything for us and for our salvation in Jesus, now we who believe in him are adopted into the family. We possess the inheritance. We have the Spirit of His Son in our hearts. We can call God our Father, and there is stored up for us the inheritance of eternal life.

And as God talks about it, this blessing is something we have even NOW! St. Paul writes about this in 2 Corinthians 6. *Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup> For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*<sup>1</sup>

Now is the day of salvation.

And this Now is both a warning and a blessing.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (2 Co 6:1–2). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

It's a warning if you are putting off for some future time anything that has to do with your relationship to God. I can study the Word later. I can repent later. I can apologize to him later. I can always believe more late. I can come to church later. I can live out my baptismal and confirmation vows later.

NO, NOW IS the time. You do not know how much time you have left. If you've been following the news at all over the past week, you've seen how quickly life on this earth at this time can end. A family of four was killed in a car accident. Country Singer Craig Strickland is missing and his friend, Chase Morland, is dead. There's numerous situations where we can point to, perhaps we even know people whose time came far too early by our own estimates. That's why Scripture says, "NOW IS THE TIME."

Don't put it off.

But when you are sorry for your sins, when you do repents, when you do come to the Lord in prayer, when you do hear the Word and trust in him, worship him, desire to serve him, here is the blessing: he does not put *YOU* off, ever. He is there for you, right NOW!

Everything God has done for you, he brings to you. Now here, in His Word. Here is HIS body and blood. God doesn't wait and say, "I'm going to make him wonder and suffer for a while, asking, "Will God turn to me in love, or not?" NO! God comes NOW, comes in Jesus with all His promises.

Here's where the concept that God is the Creator of Time is also such a blessing and comfort for us. Everything God does for our salvation in Jesus is done. IT'S DONE ALREADY! It's FINISHED! When we say the creed together—I believe in Jesus Christ...conceived, born, suffered, was crucified, died, was buried, descended into hell, rose again, ascended into heaven—do you notice all those things are past? They are done, finished.

Remember that God is the Creator of Time!

Remember also that TIME goes in one way: FORWARD!

In some movies, people invent ways to go back in time. How many movie plots employ this device? But I'm thankful that can't be done in reality. You see, the devil, would love to go back and change the cross and the resurrection of Jesus. He would love to convince you and me that it didn't happen or that it wasn't for us. But he can't because it's done! It's all finished in Jesus Christ!

And God brings all that to us NOW!

And that by the way, is how we can go into the future with confidence. Calling God our Father, knowing Jesus is our brother, living by the Holy Spirit's power, members of the family, confident of our inheritance.

Oh we know we're *not yet* there. We still live in a world of sin and death. We do *not yet* fully enjoy the eternal life that Jesus gives us, but it is sure and certain, because it rests on his promises. Rests on what he has DONE!

Listen to another passage from Scripture.

*<sup>20</sup> He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you <sup>21</sup> who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

*<sup>22</sup> Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, <sup>23</sup> since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; <sup>24</sup> for*

*“All flesh is like grass  
and all its glory like the flower of grass.*

*The grass withers,  
and the flower falls,*

*<sup>25</sup> but the word of the Lord remains forever.”  
And this word is the good news that was preached to you. <sup>2</sup>*

God looks at you and sees you in Jesus, already there.

This world, with all its glory and time, with all its worries, will pass away. But the Word of the Lord stands forever. And that is the Word that brought to you, the Word you believe, the Word that gives you eternal life.

So where does that leave us NOW, December 31 at the close of 2015?

God has given you Time and Eternity. Now is the Time to believe. Now is the Time to live for God, to live as God's man, God's woman, right now where he has placed you.

God's Time is NOW! Now the Times, because Jesus has done it ALL FOR YOU!

A blessed New Year to each of you in Jesus. Amen.

*Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus, your Lord and Savior. Amen.*

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<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (1 Pe 1:20–25). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.