

Sunday 2nd January 2022 – Time, God’s Time

WELCOME to everyone here in person and also online for our first service in 2022. Time is such a strange thing. The number of people who have said to me, “It can’t be 2022 already. Where has the time gone. It goes faster the older you get!” The Bible has interesting perspectives on time some of which we will look at today. Just before Christmas I had a conversation with someone who said, “God’s timing is never our timing – it’s too late for us!” That has echoed sentiments I’ve felt over the years, yet always I’ve discovered that God’s timing is the right timing. Here are two verses which might help put things into perspective. *2 Peter 3:8 Beloved do not forget not forget this one thing, with the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day.*

Ecclesiastes 3:11 God has made everything beautiful in its time

We come to worship the God who, in faith, we believe has everything under His control.

HYMN 120 God we praise You

God, we praise you, God we bless you.

God, we name you sovereign Lord.

Mighty King whom angels worship,

Father, by your church adored:

all creation shows your glory,

heaven and earth draw near your throne

singing ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts and God alone!’

True apostles, faithful prophets,

saints who set their world ablaze,

martyrs, once unknown, unheeded,

join one growing song of praise,

while your Church on earth confesses

one majestic Trinity:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God, our hope eternally.

Jesus Christ, the King of glory,

everlasting Son of God,

humble was your virgin mother,

hard the lonely path you trod:

by your cross is sin defeated,

hell confronted face to face,
heaven opened to believers, sinners justified by grace.

Christ, at God's right hand victorious,
you will judge the world you made;
Lord, in mercy help your servants
for whose freedom you have paid:
raise us up from dust to glory,
guard us from all sin today;

King enthroned above all praises, save your people, God, we pray.

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PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

Tick tock, tick tock the clock moves on – we worship you Lord God the God of the past – for all that you have done for Your people down through history, for the way in which You have loved them. Creator God we worship and thank You, the One who brought order out of chaos giving us light and dark, day and night, the seasons of the year.

Tick tock, tick tock, the clock moves on – we worship you Lord, the God who came into space and time as a baby, a man, willing to die in order to defeat death for your people – Saviour God we worship and thank You.

Tick tock, tick tock, the clock moves on – we worship you Lord God the God of the present who by your Holy Spirit comes to each one of us today to reassure us of your love for us, to remind us that You are the same today as You were yesterday and You will be the same tomorrow. Eternity is such a difficult concept for us Your people who are still bound by time and space. Holy Spirit, the intimate Presence of God we worship and thank You.

Forgive us when we try to hurry you on. Your ways are not our ways and we often think that You have forgotten about us, we think You have not heard or answered our prayers. Reassure us that You have our best interests at heart; that nothing that happens to us is beyond Your saving power. Forgive us when we fail you.

Lord God ruler of time and space come to us now with the assurance of Your forgiveness.

Loving Father we give You all that we have knowing that in the first place it all came from You. Take our money and our lives and use them when and where You will so that You will be given the glory and others will be given the opportunity to know and love You for themselves

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In Jesus' name we pray saying together the family prayer He taught: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are Yours, now and forever. Amen.

READING **Ecclesiastes 3:1-9, 11**

Read by Chris Carroll

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: ² a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet^{no} no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end

REFLECTION **Part 1 Time**

What things do you use to help you manage your time appropriately? A watch, a clock, the sun and moon, a sundial, an egg timer, a calendar, a diary, your phone or something else.

We move into the future unknowing, yet believing that God will help us. This year is going to be very different for all of us for different reasons. We look back into the past and see that He has been with us, today we invite His Presence into our lives once more, resting in His Presence allowing ourselves to be enveloped in His love which assures us that He will be with us every step of the way into the future.

Ecclesiastes 8:6/7 There is a right time and a right way to do everything but we know so little – none of us knows what is going to happen....

Which is true but then we have

Jeremiah 29:11 God says, I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity not disaster, plans to bring about a future full of hope.

Let us take time to savour this promise for ourselves as individuals, for our churches in the linkage, for our church nationally as it grapples with logistical problems, our country and our world. Let us pray that God will help people return to Himself and His ways in order that His new life will grow peace, justice, fairness, hope and love.

HYMN 159 Lord for the years

Lord for the years Your love has kept and guided

Urged and inspired us cheered us on our way

Sought us and saved us pardon'd and provided
Lord of the years we bring our thanks today

Lord for that word the word of life which fires us
Speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze
Teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us
Lord of the word receive Your people's praise

Lord for our land in this our generation
Spirits oppressed by pleasure wealth and care
For young and old, for commonwealth and nation
Lord of our land be pleased to hear our prayer

Lord for our world when we disown and doubt You
Loveless in strength and comfortless in pain
Hungry and helpless lost indeed without You
Lord of the world we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord for ourselves in living pow'r remake us
Self on the cross and Christ upon the throne
Past put behind us for the future take us
Lord of our lives to live for Christ alone

REFLECTION Part 2 Our worth in God's eyes

Why would we think that God wants us to be with Him to help Him in all He does? Psalm 8 helps us answer that.

³ When I look at the sky, which you have made, at the moon and the stars, which you set in their places— ⁴ what are human beings, that you think of them; mere mortals, that you care for them?

⁵ Yet you made them inferior only to yourself. You crowned them with glory and honour.

⁶ You appointed them rulers over everything you made; you placed them over all creation:

⁷ sheep and cattle, and the wild animals too; ⁸ the birds and the fish and the creatures in the seas.

⁹ O LORD, our Lord your greatness is seen in all the world!

Psalm 8 reminds us of three things that are important for us as we go forward into a new year. We are **Created by God**. God is not only the Creator of the Universe, He is the Creator of you and me. We've been made a little lower than God Himself. Human beings, you and I, are God's most marvellous creation. That the God of the Universe bothered to create you, proves just how important you are and how

valuable you are to Him. You are not an accident. You're not fluke of nature or a bi-product of irresponsible parents. You are handmade by God Himself. God prescribed every single detail of your body. He deliberately chose your race, the colour of your skin, your hair, and every other feature. He custom-made you the way He wanted you. You are wonderfully made! But your value and God's majesty don't stop at creation. David also tells us that we are cared for by God.

Cared for by God The Bible says, *"I have carried you since you were born; I have taken care of you from your birth. Even when you are old, I will be the same. Even when your hair has turned gray, I will take care of you. I made you and I will take care of you. I will carry you and save you"* (Isaiah 46:3-4 NCV).

Commanded by God David goes on to remind us that God commanded man to be ruler over all creation - over all the animals on the ground, over all the birds in the air, over all the fish of the sea.

Does that mean that man can do whatever he wants with creation? Well of course that's a resounding NO! Because the word used in Genesis 2 : *"The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it"* The verbs here are very significant. The word translated "work" is the Hebrew word for "serve." The word translated "take care" is a word that means "to keep, to guard, to watch over and protect." In other words, man is not to be a lord it over creation, but to be a servant leader, just as Jesus showed us how to be a servant leader. God gave man the stewardship of the earth, to serve the land and take care of it under God's care. God gave man both ruler-ship and responsibility.

If you leave out one or the other, you are going to be out of balance. If you leave out responsibility, you get the view that the world is ours to do with as we please and so it is okay if we trash it. That is not a biblical view of the environment. If you leave out ruler-ship, then you get the view that man is on the same level as the rest of creation. This is not a biblical view of who we are either. God is for ALL His creation – since before the beginning of time

HYMN 317 Before the world began

Before the world began One Word was there; grounded in God he was, rooted in care;
By him all things were made, in him was love displayed, through him God spoke and said, *I am for you.*

Life found in him its source, death found its end; light found in him its course, darkness its friend;
For neither death nor doubt nor darkness can put out the glow of God, the shout: *I am for you.*

The Word was in the world which from him came; unrecognised he was, unknown by name;
One with all humankind, with the unloved aligned, convincing sight and mind: *I am for you.*

All who received the Word by God were blessed; sisters and brothers they of earth's fond guest.
So did the Word of Grace Proclaim in time and space and with a human face, *I am for you.*

REFLECTION Part 3 Our role now and into in the future

What is our role now and on into the future? We read Revelation 21 a few weeks ago as we came to the end of the Bible Reading Challenge. Let me read you a few verses again

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth disappeared, and the sea vanished. ³ I heard a loud voice speaking from the throne: "Now God's home is with people! He will live with them, and they shall be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. ⁴ He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things have disappeared." ⁵ Then the one who sits on the throne said, "And now I make all things new!"

Journeys – we all make them. On Christmas Day I invited folk to think of the journey Mary took to Bethlehem – exhausted, in pain, not knowing how things would go. Joseph's journey back to his home town – surely he would have expected a family welcome but none was apparent. The shepherds and the wise men too, the least to the greatest of society encouraged by God to journey to meet Jesus, Immanuel, God with us. We didn't think about how those journeys to Bethlehem changed all their lives. Having met with God Himself in a baby each went on to live their lives in a new way, with a new purpose and a new hope of better things to come.

As we stand at the beginning of the New Year each of us will face journeys into the unknown, as individuals and as churches. As we place our hand into the hand of the One who stilled the water, we can be assured that keeping close to Him will allow us to journey on in hope. Yes there will be bumps along the way, wrong turnings taken, great delight when the way seems easy. The new heaven and the new earth are coming and we are called by God to play our part in that great journey of hope, new birth and new direction which God has instigated since before time began. Let us go forwards reminding ourselves and each other of God's Presence with us day by day.

Over the coming weeks we as congregations and Kirk Sessions of Ashkirk Ettrick & Yarrow and Selkirk. will be invited to think through how we reach out to our communities with God's love, how we share the Good News of God's love for all through our words and our actions. That is an instruction from the General Assembly and one which we need to allow God to show us where He is at work and how we as His church can be with Him to help. We are His hands, His feet, His eyes, ears, mouth in today's world. Over the coming weeks we will be using the 5 Marks of Mission as the theme for our services to help us grapple with these questions. Where is God working and how He wants us to help Him. Your thoughts are vital. Can I invite you to invite God to show you what He is saying to you and then be willing to

share it with us as we work together to bring His kingdom life here on earth in our particular communities. Amen

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Mark Corbett (Selkirk)

Lord, you have made everything beautiful in its time, everything you do lasts for forever, and nothing can be added to it or taken from it. You have set eternity in our hearts and we thank you for the promise of eternal life in Jesus Christ

You teach us that there is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the Sun. Grant us by your Spirit the wisdom to know when it is a time to plant, and when to uproot, when it is a time to tear down and to build, to keep and to throw away, may we know when it is a time to weep and mourn and when it is time to laugh and dance.

We pray that your guidance and wisdom will lead us in this new year, that your voice will encourage us to live in your ways and that your Spirit will enliven us as we grow, learn and walk together.

In the midst of our celebrations, we hold before you those who suffer alone this day, those who ache with pain and hunger, those who tremble with fear or anxiety, those who feel empty and unfulfilled, and those who feel unloved and unwanted.

We pray for all those who are without faith, hope or love.

We pray for those who are sick, desperate or bereaved and for those who care for them and seek to bring them relief from their suffering. Give them strength and courage to carry on and hope, for the future.

We pray especially for all those known to us, who are in special need of our prayers and we remember them now in a moment of silence.....

May people of faith learn to live in harmony and mutual respect, recognising our similarities and celebrating our differences.

May this be the year when we keep our resolutions, to be faithful in our Christian lives, to let our love shine forth and to live less for ourselves and more for others.

We pray for all in authority, that this may be the year when they achieve wisdom, mercy and respect for all humanity. We pray for all who suffer indignity, deprivation, starvation, fear or loss of freedom at the hands of others.

We pray that this be the year when people who live with wars may find peace and those who suffer oppression may find freedom.

May lessons be learned by all of us from the mistakes and misfortunes of the past year.

Lord, thank you for your presence, thank you for your care over us. We ask for your Spirit to fill us, to draw us close to yourself and to work your purpose through us. Renew our spirits, fill us with your peace and joy.

Thank you that you alone are our refuge and safety and you fill us with hope. We come to you today, choosing to walk in your presence. Help us to humbly put our hands into your hand, to trust you and to seek your will for our lives during the coming year. In the midst of life's uncertainties, in the days ahead, assure us of the certainty of your unchanging love.

In Jesus's name, we pray Amen

HYMN Great is Thy faithfulness

Great is Thy Faithfulness O God my Father

There is no shadow of turning with Thee

Thou changest not Thy compassions they fail not

As Thou has been Thou for ever wilt be

Great is Thy faithfulness, Great is Thy faithfulness

Morning by morning new mercies I see

All I have needed Thy hand has provided

Great is Thy faithfulness Lord unto me

Summer and winter and spring-time and harvest

Sun, moon and stars in their courses above

Join with all nature in manifold witness

To Thy great faithfulness mercy and love *Great is Thy faithfulness . . .*

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth

Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide

Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow

Blessings all mine with ten thousand beside *Great is Thy faithfulness . . .*

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BENEDICTION

The God of grace and glory who called you into His eternal glory in Christ Jesus support and strengthen you as you work for Him. Go knowing the everlasting Presence of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit bringing you hope, stability and courage for the year ahead. Amen