A Time to Embrace; A Time to Refrain from Embracing

We all understand the unpredictability of time. Proverbs 27.1 tells us good days and bad days are coming. Throughout 2019, we've been endeavoring to learn or prepare how to cope with whatever tomorrow brings. Ecclesiastes 3.1-15 teaches us that God is in control and he has constructed our world in a way that ultimately will cause us to look to Him in awe, wonder, and amazement.

I. Understanding Ecclesiastes 3.1-15

A. There are two ways to handle Ecclesiastes 3.1-15:
   1. One: examine the poem itself and focus on human activity. The wise person is the one who knows the right time. See Proverbs 10.5; 15.23; 25.11.
   2. Two: interpret the poem by including 3.9-15. Here, the primary focus is on God. Humans cannot change what God sets in motion.

B. 3.1 - For everything there is a **season**, and a **time** for every matter under heaven.
   1. “Season” is a fixed time or a predetermined purpose.
   2. “Time:” Think time as opportunity, not of time as duration.
   3. Three key verses in the section:
      a) 3.1
      b) 3.11 - He has made everything **beautiful** for its time.
      c) 3.14b - God has done it, so that people **fear** before Him.

II. Understanding Ecclesiastes 3.5

A. Several explanations:
   1. Throwing stones into the grave at a burial.
   2. Scattering of the stones of an old building and the collecting of stones for a new structure.
   3. Using stones as counters for good exchanged.
   4. A metaphor for sexual intercourse.

B. 3.3-5 seem to be broadly connected, dealing with war and conflict.
   1. 5a - war imagery within an agrarian culture Rocks thrown/gathered from fields.
   2. 5b - during war we refrain from embracing; peace, we embrace them again. To “embrace” simply describes affection.

III. Appropriate Things to Embrace

A. God’s spiritual love. Luke 7.36-38, 50; 12.7 - Have we embraced our salvation?
B. Family. Your marriage is a blessing and a gift from God. Ephesians 5.25 - husbands, **love** your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.
C. Brotherhood. 1 Peter 2.17b - love the **brotherhood**. Will we love sacrificially? John 15.12
D. Our neighbors. Matthew 22.39 - the natural outflow from our love to God.
E. Our enemies. See Matthew 5.44; 23.34.

IV. Things Not Appropriate to Embrace

A. 1 John 2.15 - the **world**.
B. 1 John 2.16 - lust of the flesh. See Romans 13.8-10; 1 Thessalonians 4.3-8.
C. 1 John 2.16 - lust of the **eyes**. See also Matthew 5.28.
D. 1 John 2.16 - **pride** of life

V. We can choose our way or God’s. Will you humble yourself before Him?