

Hogans Heroes

Comedy / action show about a German prison camp during WW2. It was a comedy because while Col Klink and his soldiers thought they were running a prison camp.. But the reality was that Hogan and his men had turned it into an operations base to further the advances of Allied forces.

Hogan would secretly receive communication from headquarters about something that needed to be done then (invariably) Hogan would come up with a plan..

His plan then became the plot of the show and he used everyone (including the unwitting Germans) to carry out his plan

What I hope you will see, and begin to believe this morning... Especially if you feel like your life is a lot like a Prison camp... Is that **God Has a Plan**...

His plan is a lengthy one..... and it involves EVERYBODY....and EVERY element of life...

The regularity and ebb and flow of “normal” events are all superintended by a God....and are part of a much larger plan....for Him to culminate ALL of history....

in the return of His Son... to make all things **NEW**....

Even though... Solomon did not yet have the fullness of **THAT** revelation....

He did know..... (as he wrote these words (Chapt. 3 of Ecclesiastes) that ...

God Has a Plan

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-14

I know different people PREFER different things.....

I prefer **REGULARITY**..... that’s a way of saying I am averse to CHANGE....

Right after April and I were married, we lived in what I consider the ideal climate (Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.) Due to the sea breeze most summer days were cloudy and in the upper 80’s... and the winter was mostly sunny in the 60’s and 70’s....

We would talk to people who would say things like “I miss the change of seasons”

We would be like WHAT? If it ain’t broke why fix it??

But **CHANGE** is a part of God’s good design of creation.....

Only GOD remains the same.... everything else **changes**.....

The first 8 verses of this chapter are a **POEM**....

It is a poem of **opposites**..... stating the bookends of every type of experience....within which a lot of change takes place.....

The poem is written in such a way as to wrap up ALL of life... into a comprehensive bundle.....

It is designed to depict the **REGULARITY** of CHANGE in life experience.....

The ebb and flow....of things we could consider both good and bad.... and how at various times.... we experience both ends of the spectrum....

being framed by the reality that we all are born..... and we all die.

If GOD is not at the center of your world view.....

You will not **like** looking at life in these terms.....

One reason.... you will not like it.... is that the words demonstrate that the most critical elements of life.... are completely beyond your control.....

Instead... these words teach us that GOD alone... is the orchestrator of life.....

And He has appointed specific TIMES for events to occur..... ALL according to His plan...

Ecclesiastes 3:1

" For **everything** there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:"

The two Hebrew words here for time mean essentially the same thing.....

Time – a specific appointed day... hour....(even minute)...

Season – is likewise specific... but the event (like war) lasts for a **period** of time...

Solomon is saying ...

God Has a Plan

1. It Unfolds in Real Time

Often in our experience of praying... or waiting on God.... we come away with the feeling that He really must not understand or care about **TIME**.....

- Have you experienced that?

Maybe you are in a period of suffering right now.....

Asking when will this end?....

Maybe you are facing a difficulty in the near future.....

You are looking on what seems to be coming over the horizon with fear and anxiety....

God wants to comfort you today through the reality of His Sovereign control over even the BAD things in life....

You may be in a season where everything is going right! Praise God life is **good**....

Do that... thank Him and rejoice.... just know... that OTHER (less desirable) seasons and times are appointed by Him... for the fulfillment of His plan....

For EVERYTHING... there is a season....a TIME for EVERY matter under heaven...

The times of their occurrence is **REAL** time... no delays with God.... He is always perfectly on time..

It may **seem** HAPHAZARD..... accidental..... like a stroke of bad luck.....

God says I am ordering my world..... TRUST in Me and in my TIMING....

The first couplet..... describes things over which the creation has ZERO control....

Ecclesiastes 3:2

"a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;"

In purely **humanistic** terms.... the **bookends** of your existence are your **birth**... and your **death**.

Apart from faith.....life is like an arcade game where the clock is ticking (with no time outs)...

No matter how hard you try..... Jesus says..... you can not add even **one hour** to the span of your life.....

God has appointed a time for you to be born.... and a time for you to die.....

Psalm 139:16

"Your eyes saw my unformed substance; **in your book were written, every one of**

them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them."

My dad... turns 82 next week. For his birthday I have been trying to create something of a family tree.....

Been researching our forefathers online.....

That gives you a great perspective..... that while our lives sometimes **seem** like they are flying by..... at other times.... they seem like eternity.....

Looking at the birth and death statistics of those who have come before you.... remind us that those BOOKENDS are definite.....

Psalm 90:10

"The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away."

We are actors in **God's** drama.... and not the authors of our own destiny....

For EVERYTHING there is a season..... the more you realize that.... and enjoy the goodness of God within it.... the freer you will be from unnecessary ANXIETY.....

Like people, (Solomon goes on to describe)...

....**plants** have a life cycle.... over which they have no control....

A **springtime** of planting.... and **a fall** of harvesting.....

Think about things in your life..... Relationships, businesses..... even churches....

All have a life cycle..... they have periods of fruitfulness.... then.. in God's timing..... they are plucked up....

New ones are planted....

This is the **RYTHEM** of life..... it is the way God has chosen to unfold His plan in real time.

- Keep in mind as you read this poem..... these are **NOT** commands..... this is not a **PRESCRIPTION** for how you should live....
- This is a **DESCRIPTION** of how life is.....**observations** of things that happen in a world....where the good gifts of God are enjoyed in the midst of the pain and tragedy of sin....

Ecclesiastes 3:3-4

"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;"

War.... and capital punishment were commanded by God in OT Israel.....

As much as God hates the shed of innocent blood.....as much as He forbids taking the law into your own hands....

He has given civil authority to governments..... so that they bear the sword for the suppression of evil in the earth.....

Just as a man is sometimes under obligation to **end** a life (under those terms)...God likewise provides seasons of healing.....

True Friendship involves sometimes tearing down the strongholds in which keep our friends in **error**..... other times.... we find opportunities to **affirm** evidences of grace in their lives (to BUILD them up)....

If we can BELIEVE that God has **ordained** these patterns.... we will be able to fully participate in the unfolding of His plan in real time.....

To TRUST Him to work through them for good.....

We will be able to WEEP with those who weep and REJOICE (laugh) with those who are in a season of blessing....

Yet... what we are finding more and more in our society..... perhaps it is true of some of you.....

Because you are NOT trusting God with the difficult areas of life.....

Instead of **entering into** the seasons..... you **RESIST** them.....

You want life on YOUR terms.....

So...If you lose a loved one..... because you think the best way to live is only to think positive thoughts.....

You miss out on the necessary period of **GRIEVING** over that loss.....

Check out most young people at funerals in our day..... they are not mourning..... they are trying to act as if nothing has happened..... because that is COOL....

No,.... its stupid.... and it is selfish.

If you believe in Jesus.....then God is your comfort.... you can legitimately **mourn**.... you can grieve for a season..... it is part of being a human being...

Jesus **wept** when His friend Lazarus had died..... b/c Death is supposed to be SAD....

Then.... because Jesus has conquered death.... rising again.....you can **DANCE!!**

That is what David did:

Psalm 30:10-11

"Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me! O LORD, be my helper!" You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,"

RECOGNIZING that God has ordained these "times", these seasons is critical to you being able to TRUST in Him both when things are going well and when times are HARD.

Ecclesiastes 3:5-6

"a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;"

Again, remember that Solomon is seeking to encompass every activity of life under the **umbrella** of God's timing....

Some interpret the Hebrew word "stones" as **gems**.... indicating a time to save... to store up wealth.... others to give it away....to disburse it...

Likewise....there is a time for **looking for** something you have lost..... and also a time to realize... let's move on.... and stop wasting time looking for what is apparently gone.

Ecclesiastes 3:7

"a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

It may be **NEWS** to some of you..... that there are proper SEASONS for speaking.... and likewise times when you should say **NOTHING!**

Proverbs 15:23

"To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word **in season**, how good it is!"

Proverbs 25:11

"A word **fitly** spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.

We learned from Job's friends... that sometimes just to sit in silence is the **most** appropriate response to a certain time in someone's life.....

Yet... we can be sensitive to the Holy Spirit in knowing when to SPEAK a Word into someone else's life....

Think about that in the way you talk.....

We don't want to just use our mouths as **steam vents**.....

We don't want a long list of **careless** words... to give an account of on judgment day....

But recognizing that we are part of God's unfolding drama..... His plan..... we can ask Him for wisdom of knowing when to speak and when not to.....

Ecclesiastes 3:8

"a time to **love**, and a time to **hate**;
a time for war, and a time for peace."

In trying to relate to people in a fallen world.... We need God's help to know when to love them in their sin.... and when to hate even the garment polluted by their sin.....

It is impossible to love good.....and **not** hate evil....

God gives us the discernment to love what He loves... and hate what He hates...each in its proper time..

Perhaps you know.... that WWI was billed as the war to end all wars....

That... because of how modern and educated the world was becoming..... (they believed) that **war** would soon be a thing of the past.....

But under the curse of sin..... we will **always** have war..... interrupted by brief periods of peace.....

Until the Prince of Peace returns making all things new!.....

God's Plan.... (right now – as it was in Solomon's day) Unfolds in Real Time....

It unfolds in your individual life.....

But more importantly, it is unfolding in the corporate life of the human race.....

As we have been saying throughout this series..... apart you holding GOD at the center of your reality (by faith).... life is going to be **frustrating**and that is by design....

No one has ever tried any harder than Solomon to make all these elements to add up to something that seemed like GAIN....

Ecclesiastes 3:9-10

" What gain has the worker from his toil? I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with."

Few of us would care to have the title "**manipulator**" or control freak attached to our name.....

But apart from the regenerating grace of God in Christ..... **that is** what (by nature) we are....

We approach life seeking how we can turn every circumstance to our advantage.....

The "worker" Solomon describes here is (Iain Provan says) is best understood as an "**actor** / doer" on the stage in God's drama....

Solomon is echoing the same refrain of his frustration that REWARDS (gain) can not be successfully kneaded out of this lump of dough God has given to us....

"The problem facing the human actor, is that there is **another Actor... whose actions are the decisive ones.**" Iain Provan

What a **RIP OFF**, right? This is God's Worldand God's Story..... **not** ours!

Even if we THINK we are in control.... it is a delusion.....

We are merely being **occupied** with the tasks God has given to us as **His** plan (not ours) unfolds....

To keep on rebelling against and trying to overturn.....**that** realityis only going to NET you.... more emptiness....

The solution is clear.....

God Has a Plan

2. So Trust in His Sovereign Goodness

Dictators attempt to have absolute control over their people..... but because they are on a power trip, because they are out for selfish gain.... ..and not for the good of the people... they should never be trusted....

the God of Scripture... however.... demonstrates **His** goodness....So that you **CAN** trust Him.....

He does this in two ways.... Initially in creation.....

Genesis 1:31

"And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was **very good**. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day."

VERY GOOD here translates a Hebrew phrase meaning "it looked real good"...

In other words... as God beheld an earth that was likely in full bloom like **ours** is right now.....not only was it **ascetically PLEASING** to His eyes.... but all the ecosystems also fit beautifully together.....and MAN.... his **crown jewel** of creation was living in fellowship with God.....making it one harmonious display of His glory and goodness!.....

NOW.... in Solomon's day and in ours..... God has gone a step further in continuing to ORDER even the evil and UGLY results of our fall.....of our rebellion against our Creator..... into something beautiful...

Ecclesiastes 3:11a

"He has made everything **beautiful** in its time.

This is a God centered interpretation ... and understanding of the apparent **futility** and meaninglessness of the poem in v. 1-8

Whereas we can not see it in the trenches..... while we are slugging it out here on the surface....

We CAN believe God's Word.... which tells us that EVERYTHING (every event every good thing... and even the evil) is being made into an APPROPRIATE (fitting) part of His good plan....

- The Question that remains.... is are **YOU** going to **enjoy** that goodness?

Because if **fail** to be reconciled to God....

If you refuse to Repent of trying to BE your **own** god....(trying to run your own life apart from the rule of your Creator)...

And if you fail to turn **TO** Christ.... as the Savior sent to rescue you from your rebellion....

by dying in your place on the cross..... and being raised on the 3rd day....so that you can be counted as RIGHTEOUS before God....

Then the WAY that you will fit into God's plan..... is by being punished foreverunder His wrath in hell.....

Jeremiah 17:5-6

"Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD. He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land."

On the OTHER hand.... if you are responding to the CALL of God in Christ Jesus to take up your cross (to put to death the deeds of the body through faith in the Son)....

To come and **FOLLOW Him** as He leads you into the works He has ordained for you from before the foundation of the world.....

Then He gives you **THIS** promise that you **WILL** enjoy the **BEAUTY** of His plan.... not only now.... in small ways.... but forever with Him in paradise:

Romans 8:28

"And we know that for those who love God **all** things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

God has designed human beings... (created in His image) to **LONG** to understand life....

We have in our heart an **ACHE** to find meaning.....

God has created **in** us.... a vacuum.....an emptiness.... that can never be filled with the stuff of v. 1-8.....

Ecclesiastes 3:11b

Also, he has put **eternity** into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end."

God has given man a sense that there is MORE to life than just the daily grind.....

Yet.... because God's Plan is designed to **FOCUS** on the redemption of Jesus Christ....

He has put this ache in your heart..... in such a way... that in and of yourself.... you can not figure out what He is up to.....

Apart from you **RECEIVING** by faith... the Word of God implanted

You will never be able to **not fathom** His purpose and plan....

apart from laying down your pride.... your self-sufficiency....

And falling at His feet in faith and childlike **TRUST** in His Person...

FAITH in Christ.... is the LINK between gaining His perspective on the goodness of His plan....

There is NO ALTERNATIVE way.... because **GOD** has acted....and no one can do anything about it....

Skip down to:

Ecclesiastes 3:14-15

"I perceived that whatever **God does** endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. **God has done it**, so that people fear before him. That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God seeks what has been driven away."

To make sense out of ALL the events of your life..... you are not only going to have to be connected to God... through faith in Christ....

Reorienting your perspective on life.... around His glory instead of your own.....

But you are also going to have to understand that while you dwell in time.... God does not....

Trapp – For God, all things are **eternally present**....

He sees everything all at once... (past, present and future).... – that is what v. 15 means...

TIME is God's Time..... because for Him it is all one whole.... and He has chosen to reveal to us....

How we can ENJOY the goodness of an ETERNITY with Him.....

Beginning on the Day we are all waiting for....

The Day when He **sums ALL things up** in Christ....and we get to see (finally) the FULLNESS of **God's good plan**....

put on display in full glory....

Everything will make sense **then!!**

Remember the old hymn – we'll understand it better bye and bye?

But.... We can know God's peace in the mean time..... we can ENJOY His good gifts in the mean time....

If we will but trust (right now) that He has a **GOOD** plan.....that He is working.... even in and through us..... by faith in His risen Son.

Bow Your Heads.....

I know some of you are in very difficult seasons.....

Others are going through times of prosperity.....

The call for us who follow Christ..... is the same in both circumstances.....

It is to BLESS His Name....