



# Weekly Worship Resource for Gladsmuir and Longniddry

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## Today's reading

### **Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (“Everything Has Its Time”)**

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

a time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up 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 throw 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 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 for war, and a time for peace.

What gain have the workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. I know that whatever God does endures for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before him. That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already is; and God seeks out what has gone by. Amen. (NRSV)

## Today's hymns

- 1 *Who would true valour see* (CH:535)
- 2 *O laughing light, O first-born of creation* (CH135)
- 3 *Holy, holy, holy* (CH:111)
- 4 *At the name of Jesus* (CH:458)
- 5 *O Jesus, I have promised* (CH:644)

# In the Name of the Father and of

**F**or everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven. On one level this message from the book of Ecclesiastes is a simple one, showing us that all sorts of things happen in all manner of ways. But the ancient writer of this text is also pointing to something a little deeper and maybe a whole lot scarier.

We see from this passage that we are not in control. We have no control over the day we are born or who we are born to, no control over our gender at birth or the way we look when we are born, whether we arrive into a wealthy family or a poor family. As for our parents, they are only interested in what it means to them when we are born and how for them the world will never be the same again, their whole lives being charged with new significance.

The Greek word *chronos* means time – chronological time. This is the kind of time you can divide up into minutes and hours, months and years. But there is also another Greek word that is also to do with time: the word *kairos* which means time in a qualitative sense – time that cannot be measured at all, like a moment for decision or a point of opportunity. The poet who penned the book of Ecclesiastes used time in a *kairos* sense when he wrote of: “... a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to keep silence and a time to speak.”

This passage brings to mind an appointed time. Not only does God set standards in his Creation and among his people, he also appoints times. His timetable for this earth is amazing. After a hard winter ends, spring appears in all its glory. We get the urge to make ready our gardens while the farmer looks to the field for the possibility of raising a harvest. We watch a plant grow through the summer until it matures and then it is time to gather it in. As long as the earth exists, there will be a time of planting and a time of reaping.

Many of us have experienced the joy of holding a newborn baby: the overwhelming love that envelopes a parent or grandparent. Your love, your hopes and aspirations, your very future are all wrapped up in that tiny bundle. All your energies are poured out on this little miracle.

But true love does not always flow smooth or easy. Imagine a couple welcoming a long-awaited baby boy in their middle years. Sadly, the course of their lives did not run the way they had planned. Showering the growing child with love, education, fun – in fact, every possible thing he could ever need or want – was never enough. For the young adolescent it was all take and no give.

The young man rebelled; he fought against the rules causing so much pain. He built up barriers as his troubled parents desperately tried to reason with him, his eyes so full of hatred as he walked out of their lives in pursuit of an elusive dream. The time for words gone, they sadly let him go. Yet, though their lives were torn apart, they never stopped loving him. Their prayer: that at some future time they would find peace together.

God made everything good and beautiful, but it was humanity’s sin that caused a beautiful Creation to become ugly and bad. The sad fact is that each generation fails to learn all it could or should from the past, and so the very same mistakes are made by generation upon generation.

You may come to realise that you have no control over what the future might bring, though you can control your attitude toward your own circumstances. Doing the very best you can in the circumstances which are available to you may be a very wise way to live.

# the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .

In general terms, success or failure can come about because of the attitude of the person concerned, rather than the circumstances in which they find themselves.

Remember that young boy who walked out through the door of his family home to follow a dream on his own. Well, the years passed by and much water flowed under the bridge. The middle-aged, successful businessman, now with a family of his own, eventually came to see for himself that a big part of his life was missing. He knew within his heart that the time had come to heal, to build up, to love and seek peace. He reached out, and his parents in the ebbing of their lives embraced him.

Arriving at that *kairos* moment of decision and opportunity can present a person with a life-changing crossroads at which they find themselves free – of freed – to choose a new direction. Making the right choice at that right time can turn all sorts of circumstances right around, making old hurts melt away and new possibilities open up.

This is not just a happy ending. It is a fresh beginning which speaks of hope and joy, as love once withheld and lost is, at last, freely given and received once more.

As such, the world shifts in wonderful ways when a time for reconciliation is embraced.

The theologian Frederick Buechner writes:

*“When somebody you’ve wronged forgives you, you’re spared the dull and self-diminishing throb of a guilty conscience. When you forgive somebody who has wronged you, you’re spared the dismal corrosion of bitterness and wounded pride. For both parties, forgiveness means the freedom again to be at peace inside their own skins and to be glad in each other’s presence.”*

Amen.

*Break not the circle of enabling love  
where people grow, forgiven and forgiving;  
break not that circle – make it wider still,  
till it includes, embraces all the living.*

*Come, wonder at the love that comes to life,  
where words of freedom are with humour spoken  
and people keep no score of wrong and guilt,  
but will that human bonds remain unbroken.*

*Sing high! Give thanks for all who came and come  
to teach the world the craft of hopeful craving  
for peace and wholeness that will fill the earth;  
for faith that stirs us to creative living.*

*Join then the movement of the love that frees,  
till people of whatever race or nation  
will truly be themselves, stand on their feet,  
see eye to eye with laughter and elation.*

*Fred Kaan (CH206)*

# Praying for others

Dear Lord,

we remember all who must carry heavy burdens. We may not be able to remove their load but we ask that by walking beside them their burden feels a little less heavy.

We think of those weighed down with grief,  
whether they are overwhelmed with a fresh loss or  
struggling with the scars of an older one.

We ask your blessing on them that they may be consoled.

We bring before you everyone debilitated by ill health, anxious about what is to come,  
fearing being a burden on their families.

We ask your blessing on them that they may find healing.

We pray for all who struggle under the weight of guilt, who can see no way forward,  
who cannot forgive themselves. We ask your blessing on them that they may know  
your forgiveness and find peace.

We remember those who have been injured in mind, body or soul  
and who distrust the world. We ask your blessing on them that they may find comfort.

In Jesus name, guide us to walk alongside those burdened with the cares of life  
that we may be their blessing, and that they may be ours.

Amen.

## And finally . . .

*Robin Hill reflects on the voices which need to be listened to prior to COP26:*

With the world's leaders converging upon Glasgow this week to consider with real urgency the future of life on planet Earth, the Church of Scotland has issued four videos with the testimony of those who live in areas where global warming has already brought terrible consequences for so many. Here is the core of their message to the world:

**Kawite from Ethiopia:** For a decade rain has become more scarce and water levels have been in decline, with supplies being rationed to one jerry can per day from the communal well. People wait there for hours each day to have their share of a diminishing resource.

**Norman from Honduras:** Hurricanes traumatise people who are seeing climate change affecting their everyday lives. The world's decisions will impact on Central America.

**Pieter from Malawi:** Climate change is affecting Africa and its people disproportionately. The richest countries need to look at the bigger picture, realising that carbon emissions are caused by their consumption patterns while poorer countries feel the impact.

**Bishop Roy from Zambia:** In Zambia people are already dying as a consequence of global warming, with livelihoods under long term threat. World leaders must look at this and help.

The world will be looking towards Scotland during this high level diplomatic conference from 31st October to 12th November. As people of faith we need to pray for the voices of the world's poorest people to be heeded, with real commitment to change emerging from the shocking lessons which need to be learned.

Pray. ... Listen. ... Learn. ... Commit to change. ... Pray. ...