



Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8 'Everything Has its Time'

¹ For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

² a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is
planted;
³ a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
⁴ a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
⁵ a time to throw away stones,
and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace,
and a time to refrain from embracing;
⁶ a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
⁷ a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
⁸ a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.



The seafront at Eastbourne, about half-way from the Pier to the Sovereign Centre, looking east towards Hastings.

Ecclesiastes was one of the last books to be included in the Hebrew Scriptures – it made it in by the skin of its teeth. Not until the Council of Jamnia in 90AD did it sneak in. It's considered to be in the genre of 'wisdom literature' in the Bible (along with Job, Proverbs, Song of Songs, and the Psalms). However, if there was such a thing as 'bleak literature' then it would be in a category all of its own. Over twelve chapters the writer is world-weary, cynical, and very possibly clinically depressed. Old age is hanging heavy on his shoulders and the writer seems tired and fed up. He looks at the world and sees good and bad, light and dark, health and sickness, and all in equal measure. The famous passage from Ecclesiastes 3 reflects this equanimity but other parts of the book do too; do read the final Chapter 12 too, also beautifully written, which reflects this tone.

I took the picture above at the end of August, struck by how grey, angry, and bleak half the horizon seemed, and yet the half was bright, blue, and alive. One scene, one world, one view, but opposites within the same picture. It seems a fitting backdrop to this curious book.

I'm comfortable with Ecclesiastes making it into our canon. For me, if the Bible were only singing and dancing, Psalms of praise and triumphs and victories, it wouldn't reflect the realities of life that I know. I need my scriptures to contain some light and shade, I need some worry and some fear in there; yes, some questioning and even anger at the way things can sometimes be. However, even Ecclesiastes, acknowledges that this is 'under heaven' (3:1); that life must always be lived in the knowledge, love and obedience to God. In our days, I can think of no better foundation.

Prayer: Sovereign God, you weep with those who weep, and mourn with those who mourn. You wait with, and upon those who weighed down, or alone, or in pain.

You delight at the joys of life, love, and laughter, and the colour splashed across your world. Grant us, no matter what life holds, a strong connection to you in all times and seasons. **Amen.**