**There is a Time for Everything**

Have you ever wondered why things happen the way they do or even why it’s at a specific time? It seems that every day contains some event or emotion that is beyond our control and we are often overwhelmed. Are you relieved – if only for a moment – to know that there is a purpose and plan to the madness that we call life?

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8 teaches us just this lesson when it says,

“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,
3    a time to kill and a time to heal,
    a time to tear down and a time to build,
4    a time to weep and a time to laugh,
    a time to mourn and a time to dance,
5    a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
    a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
6    a time to search and a time to give up,
    a time to keep and a time to throw away,
7    a time to tear and a time to mend,
    a time to be silent and a time to speak,
8    a time to love and a time to hate,
    a time for war and a time for peace.”

Knowing all of this we should be prepared to endure whatever trials we face. We should be equipped to withstand the storms of life. Nevertheless we are human and we will stumble. Stumbling isn’t our failure – our failure comes from staying down.

When life is less than kind don’t despair. Endure. Just as the Bible tells us in Psalm 30:5, “…weeping may last for the night, but joy comes in the morning.” So accept all of the phase’s life has to offer because we cannot truly accept or understand joy without experiencing despair and sorrow. You can’t understand loss without first having the joy of a relationship; nor can you really mourn without first feeling love.

Our human nature always has us wanting to have only the beautiful, easy, comfortable, and joyous parts of life. Unfortunately that isn’t reality…much like the theme song from one of my favorite childhood television shows says, “You take the good, you take the bad, you take them both and there you have the facts of life”.

Remember that everything we go through has a purpose. Cry, scream, or stomp your feet knowing that before long you will be ready to laugh, smile and maybe even dance (perhaps not well), but you will dance. Accept all of the things that present themselves to you and take care of what you can and let go of what you can’t.

In the spirit of letting go of what you can’t control, I’m asking you all to write down a list of things that you want to give to God this year. These are the things that you can’t fix or control. I’m asking you to write them down, because we are always more honest with ourselves in the quiet of our hearts and minds than we are when we have to say it out loud. When you are finished with this list, fold it up and set it on fire. As many of you know we’ve done this each fall on our retreats as a way of cleaning our internal houses and making room for the things we can control and I believe that the beginning of the year is another great time to do this same thing. The reason to burn these lists is because it’s symbolic of giving God complete control of these situations. You can’t hold onto the things that you can’t put your hands on so to speak. I encourage our entire group to do this practice even if you can’t be in our meeting when we do it together. Let’s all start this year with a clean slate and Have a wonderful year – tears, fears, and joys alike.