

In Nomine Iesu

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ, dear fellow redeemed in Christ, especially you, Barb, Bonni, Brian, Merry, and all the family:

Charles read and reread many times the two passages from the Scriptures that you find in your worship folder this morning, Ecclesiastes 3 and Romans 6. Together let us look at those verses to see why that might have been. Ecclesiastes 3, at least the first eight verses, is a very familiar one to many Americans, not least because it was the basis for a number one hit song of 1965. What was unusual about the song is that its lyrics were taken literally and almost entirely – all but seven words – from the King James Version of the Bible. “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die ...”

Charles experienced all those times, all those purposes, in his long life. We are here today to because of the first line of those purposes: “A time to be born, and a time to die.”

But as we do please note that Charles was accustomed to reading and rereading more than just those first eight verses about the condition of man on this earth. He continued on to: “I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in his toil – this is God’s gift to man.” Now, you might say, that doesn’t sound like anything I expected, especially the words, “this is God’s gift to man.” It almost sounds like the well-known old phrase, “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die,” that is found throughout English literature for hundreds of years. Well, it may surprise you to learn that the origin of that phrase is also Ecclesiastes 3! Rightly understood, it is true.

Dear friends, there is a great life lesson to be learned here today. It is a lesson I am sure Charles understood well, in part because he came from a generation that still listened to the wisdom of God’s word that flowed into our heritage and culture, and then he made sure to hear the same wisdom every Sunday, when he came to church. There, of course, he heard it more purely and directly, as one drinks from a clear mountain stream at high elevation rather than from the river it becomes after picking up all the contaminants on its way to the sea. He understood the proper and right context of Ecclesiastes, in part because of Romans 6. Remember the words of the text. “There is nothing better for [people] than to be joyful and to do good **as long as they live**,” not forgetting there is “a time to be born, and a time to die.”

Charles enjoyed life. He knew it was a gift from God. He knew everything good in it comes from God. He knew also that one day he would die, and though death, this great evil and enemy of man, lay at the end, that his good and gracious Lord, who

had indeed suffered, died, and been buried Himself, had also risen from death, the Victor over death, and so transformed death into the entrance to life for all who are His by faith. “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” Christians walk in “newness of life.”

Yes, we all are living on borrowed time. For each of us there will be a “time to die.” But because we were buried with Christ in baptism, we are raised to life, new life now, where we can truly “be joyful and do good” - not to do good as if to merit something from God. No! It is entirely a gift given without any merit or worthiness in us. But we are raised also to the life which will not end when we die. For Christ, our Lord, has transformed death into the gate of eternal life. He did so by taking all our sins, even our joyless sins of resentment and entitlement and failing to do good, on Himself, and paid the full price of our atonement.

For that reason we are not sorrowful for Charles today. Sad for our loss of him. But sorrowful for him, no, we will go from here “joyful” and looking to “do good.” We will hold him in our memories. We will miss him terribly – especially you Barb and the kids and grandkids. But we will continue to drink from the same pure stream he did, look to the same comfort and certainty he did. We will grow still stronger in the truth that all of life is a gift from God, “who so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” And we will enjoy the forgiveness, life, and salvation we have in Christ as the greatest gift.

So, the next time you play golf – whatever golf might be in your life – enjoy it. Enjoy also and treasure your families, all are God’s gift to you. Sit down to eat and drink together, saying within yourself, “Oh give thank to the Lord for His is good. For His mercy endures forever. Give thanks to God the giver of all good gifts. Then remember His greatest gift, the Savior who loved you and gave Himself for you that you might have life, new life here and eternal life in heaven.

Dear friends, hydrate yourselves often. Drink. Drink deeply from the pure, clear waters that flow from the fountain of Israel, the Holy Scriptures. For there is Jesus. There is forgiveness, life, and salvation. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria