

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
April 11, 2010 Easter 2 Ecclesiastes 3:1,2a



There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven;
a time to be born and a time to die...

This is God's Word!

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the Lamb of God:
The East River in New York is not very nice. It has a vicious current. The water is not exactly clean. This time of year the temperature is about 40 °! A little girl – just 2 years old – was walking beside the East River last Saturday--with her mom and dad when she fell in! She fell about twenty feet! That's pretty much like from the peak of the Church into the water – and under she went! Her mom screamed and her dad jumped in after her! You would expect a dad to do that. Dads who love their little girl more than life itself. You would expect a dad to jump in – and he did – coming quickly to the surface – with his little girl held tight against his chest. It's certainly more remarkable – the moment the dad jumped in – so did another man! A man who didn't pause or hesitate just a moment – to put his cell phone on the pier – to get out his wallet – or to slip off his watch. This complete stranger went right into the water too. He helped to hold the father up – so that the father could keep his little girl's head above water. There was a woman there – who called 911 and they say in like two and a half minutes – that quickly – professional rescue guys were there. But already by then – the little girl and her dad had been pulled out of the frigid water. And the guy who helped hold up the dad – the Frenchman – they think – who had jumped into the water to help was gone! He didn't wait around to be thanked – to have his picture taken – to be hailed as a hero. He was simply gone! So it happens – again and again – earthly life is saved. The ultimate miracle – of course – is eternal life – rescued/saved by the Lamb of God – the crucified and risen Christ. That's why we are here – the week after Easter. We are here because by the grace of God we know and believe:

Our Times Are In Jesus' Nail Marked Hands!

- 1. Our time to be born**
- 2. Our time to die...**

This Sunday after Easter – we are here again in God's House – to thank and praise the risen Christ. We are considering what we call a *free text* – a part of God's Word that is not part of the pericope – the system of readings for each Sunday. We are having a free text – because this weekend – especially in the second service Sunday – we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Alpha Pregnancy Counseling Center. We are thanking Jesus for all the people with Jesus' forgiving love in their heart – who have shared law and gospel – especially when it comes to abortion – but also – whenever life is at issue! And so Thursday night – and early service Sunday we are very simply thinking about law and gospel and life! The verse we are concentrating on – is part of *Ecclesiastes* – one of the 5 books of Hebrew poetry in the Old Testament. Remember Hebrew poetry isn't about rhyme like English poetry – **roses are red violets are purple – sugar is sweet and so's maple syrple!** It's words that repeat a thought – words that are opposites/contrasting – or it's like going up steps – higher and higher and higher and higher. So it is with the familiar words of *Ecclesiastes* – the preacher – the teacher – chapter three. **There's a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven; a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to tear down and a time to build; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance.** You can hear the poetry! The truths in these simple words are profound. They talk about the universal truths that impact the life of everyone – rich or poor – highly educated or illiterate – healthy or infirm – young or old. This *Life*

Sunday we want to concentrate on the opening verse. **There's a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven; a time to be born and a time to die.**

A time to be born and a time to die. People are very breakable! It started raining in Rio de Janeiro. It started raining in shantytown—where people live in homes made of those sheets of metal—that are real wavy—you know what I mean? Their homes are made of those roof sheets of metal—galvanized metal—so they are not supposed to rust. Their homes are made of scrap pieces of lumber—some treated so the bugs won't eat them—some treated so they won't rot so easily. Shantytown homes are made of huge pieces of cardboard—like from boxes where you get washing machines and refrigerators—which is ironic—because they don't have washing machines or refrigerators. They do have barbed wire—barbed wire strung around the square feet that they claim for their family. Well, it started to rain the other day in Rio—I mean really rain. It literally poured—not just 3 or 4 or 5 inches—but 11 inches of rain in less than 24 hours. It rained so much—so fast that it literally washed away whole hillsides—and all the ramshackle homes that were stuck on the hillside. Red and brown soil washed down the hills—along with the homes and the people—burying people at the bottom of the hills. More than 100 died and another 65 are missing! How horrible would that be? The fact is—people die all the time! The thing to do is be ready to die. Today—Jesus might call us home—today! If we *really believe that*--if we really lived like today could be our last day—it would have to have an effect on our priorities! So many of the things we obsess about—don't really matter! Did you read the *Meditations* for this week? Did you read about the neighbor—who takes obsessive care of his car? Washing it and waxing it and polishing it—vacuuming it and cleaning it—and sweeping up the leaves that blow up against it? The neighbor that lives right by the Church—but doesn't come into the Church—to hear law and Gospel! We need to be concerned about the people we love—who need to hear the Gospel and to come to Lord's Supper and to read their Bible and to study the Scriptures—encouraging each other for Jesus' sake!

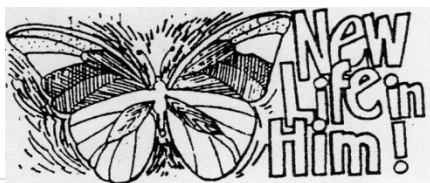
There is **a time to be born and a time to die!** Life and eternal life are all about blood. A year ago—Valentine's Day—a man named Bob—who was 69 years old—and in incredibly good health—so good that in his spare time he trapped alligators—*literally*—collapsed—writhing in pain. He had a torn aorta—the primary way blood goes into your heart. You would think you couldn't survive a trauma like that—and you would be wrong. The paramedics were just 3 blocks away. That was all part of God's plan, too. Bleeding profusely—that has got to be an understatement—Bob's operation lasted 12 hours. He needed 69 units of blood—which is one unit for every year of his life—it's 9 times all the blood in your body! Unbelievable! But that's what happened. Well—by the grace of God—Bob survived and one year after the event--Bob met and thanked the 59 strangers that donated the 69 units of blood. Bob told them that there was quite literally a part of all of them running through his veins. How would you thank those people? How could you thank them? How can we thank Jesus—who didn't just donate blood—but gave up his life—died—to save us? We can thank him by living lives dedicated to him! We can thank him by reading our Bible! We can thank him by worshipping him—praising him—sharing him—singing to him. We can thank him by dedicating all we have and all that we are to him all the time!

There is a time to be born and a time to die. Between the time we are born and the time we die—is our time of grace—our time to come to faith—to grow in faith and to share our faith. When we die—that time has ended. Once you die—it's too late to come to faith! That's why sharing our faith now—is so urgent! Just a few days ago—a van stopped in the middle of our street—Windsor Circle. Young people got out of the van—all very neatly and modestly dressed got out—in pairs. They were wearing name tags. They were carrying Bibles and little paperback magazines—*Watchtower!*—it said in big print on the cover. They spread out—stopping at every door—on a beautiful Saturday morning. If you told them they don't believe that Jesus is God's Son—they would say—Oh, but we do believe that Jesus is the Son of God—and that he died on the cross. We do believe that! But they don't believe those words mean what we think they mean. All you have to say is—you don't believe in the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit! You don't believe that Jesus is equal with the Father and the Spirit—from eternity—do you? And they will say *no*—we do *not* believe in the Trinity. And then it is your bittersweet opportunity to tell them the One True God—*is* Triune—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That

Jesus is the eternal Son of God Father—who came to wash away our sins. That when you die you go to heaven—to be with God. You don't become a *god*—you are *children* of God—heirs of eternal life for Jesus' sake!

There is a time to be born and a time to die. I must be getting old—I've started to read the obituaries more and more. I read the *Boston Globe Obituaries* the other day. I hadn't done that for a long time. A man named John died. He was a spy—a real life CIA operative in Karachi. He was a spy who quit—to do what? Something exciting and dangerous? No! He designed gardens. He decided where to put the pansies and the lilies of the valley and the mums and the roses. The man who wrote all the Sherlock Holmes stories once said—if you ever doubted the goodness of God—all you needed to do was look at the flowers that God made. The world would get by without flowers—but how much poorer the world would be without flowers. **Consider the lilies of the field—they do not sew or spin—and yet I tell you not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the hill that is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven—how much more will he clothe you—oh, you of little faith. So don't worry saying what are we going to eat or what are we going to drink or what are we going to wear. That's what unbelievers worry about. And your Heavenly Father knows you need them.** A man named Richard died—just one year older than I am. They say Richard touched the lives of many and shared the company of a *thousand friends*! That would be a wonderful thing—if people could say that about us—for Jesus' sake. Richard was a teacher. He was a math teacher and an assistant principal. That's not easy. People will say they hate math—flat out—they hate math. That's not because there is something inherently wrong with math. It may speak more to the fact that sometimes math teachers aren't very compassionate people. Assistant principal isn't a job that usually earns you a thousand friends either—unless—again you are a compassionate person. They say Richard had the reverse of the *Dorian Gray* effect. Instead of growing more and more ugly on the outside—because of the evil on the inside—the outside only became more and more handsome—as the love for Jesus in his heart was reflected in his acts of kindness, love and forgiveness. Richard the teacher died in a car accident—suddenly and unexpectedly he died. When you read about accidents—about sudden and unexpected death—about earthquakes in Indonesia—it will make us aware once again. People are very breakable. The smallest accident can cost us our life. We need to redeem the time—rededicate our self to use our time of grace—as short as it might be—to share Jesus' forgiving love. No one knows how soon Jesus might call us!

There is a time to be born and a time to die. If you watch the news you can't help but notice there was an explosion—a terrible explosion in the coal mine in West Virginia. I think it's pretty hard to appreciate what it's like to work in a coal mine—if you've never actually been in one. It's dark—incredibly dark—when the walls and the floor and the ceiling of the mine are all as black as coal. There is dust—coal dust everywhere. The problem is—it's explosive—highly explosive—especially when it's in the air. There is the problem of methane gas—also highly explosive. And the problem with methane gas is—you can't smell it. Hence the whole business about bringing in canaries—those little yellow birds—down into the mines. When the canary clunks over—his tiny little lungs unable to breathe—people need to get out of their quickly—lest we keel over, too! There are—now—down in the mine shafts these containers—these places of refuge. If there is an explosion—or a cave in—the miners can scramble into these containers—and survive for maybe 4 days—with oxygen and food and water—as they wait—helplessly—to be rescued from above. Not a bad picture of us—don't you think? We are trapped by our sins—our failures—our painful hurtful mistakes. We are helpless to save ourselves. There is rescue in the crucified and risen Christ and in him alone. No one else can save us! There were miners last week—trapped by flooding in a coal mine in China. In the end—by the grace of God—miners were rescued. The newspapers called it a miracle. It was a miracle. Our rescue from sin for Jesus' sake is the ultimate redemption—the ultimate miracle—souls saved for eternity. Our life—our times—are safe in Jesus' nail marked hands. Amen!



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