

If you have ever been to funerals, there's a chance that you will have heard this familiar reading 'There is a time for everything' – in these 8 verses the word, 'Time' is repeated 29 times. And so, it emphasises that God wants us to consider how we use our time wisely. The writer of Ecclesiastes, more than likely Solomon, had searched for everything under the sun and yet he realised that without God, life was utterly meaningless.

Today, in the setting of Remembrance, I am going to focus on verse 8 – 'a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace'

In God's perfect timing, everything has a purpose. When we submit our lives to him, we also acknowledge his timing for our lives. Do we know that timing in our everyday lives, or does it feel a bit mad? But when we make a commitment to follow him, we submit everything to him. And to help us today to consider remembrance, I'm going to group the elements of this verse together, so first we will look at love and peace, and then hate and war.

Let's first of all consider Love.

You know even if today we don't have a complete understanding of the depths of love that God has for each of us, even at a basic level we all can understand something of love. We know that love in its proper context is such a positive thing. Love demonstrates itself in my family tomorrow when Alison and I celebrate 24 years of marriage – it's a love that says, 'even though you're a pain at times Jonny, I love you'. Love demonstrates itself in someone putting their arm around a family member today who misses a loved one who has died during COVID. I love the way in which 1 John 4:7 puts it – 'Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love'. Folks, the nature of God is love.

So, if we claim that we want to be Christ like and know his love, then we must emulate the love that Jesus displayed and that means forgiveness – Jesus said 'Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing' – think about it - he was being beaten, spat at, ridiculed. That was his response. And by the time he has got to that point, he already has the crown of thorns on his head, he is already nailed to the cross, and he says, 'Father forgive them'. That's love. In Matthew 5:44 he says, 'love your enemies'. He doesn't say take revenge on your enemies; he says love them. In fact, Jesus makes it clear then in Matthew 6 that if you can't forgive someone then God our Father can't forgive you – those are tough words for us all. Jesus is consistent that love is the way of God. In fact, it was love that won us over in the first place. It's absolutely hypocritical to say that you have found God, that you've found his love, but you're not willing to love everyone. And I realise just how difficult that is folks, because it means the perpetrator, it means the terrorist is loved by God, and we are required to love them the way that God does. You see Agapé love says that we will not only forgive but God in his strength will help us to forget. Can you love when it's hard?

When you love someone, or have love for them, you want peace with them. And that's the next part of our reading today. There is a time for peace.

Peace is a by-product of love. You won't find peace unless you have love. Peace is defined as the freedom from disturbance; it is tranquillity; it's a period in which there is no war, or war has ended. So, if we love Jesus and keep his commandments that means your state remains

in a place of peace and tranquillity. That means you and Jesus are of one accord, not at war, you are free from disturbance. Didn't Jesus say that he was going to give us his peace, the peace that passes all understanding. If you've wondered then who could Jesus seek forgiveness for those that were attacking him on the cross, it was because he was fulfilling the will of his Father – he was at peace because he was aligned to his Father. And for us that's how we will always receive peace.

Folks, while politicians spend their entire lives working and negotiating deals on peace, here's how we are going to find true peace for our world. Here's how we are going to find peace for the issues we face in life. When we place our focus on loving the Lord with everything we have and keeping his commandments, that's when we will find true peace. Jesus was at peace, even though he was being attacked, because he was fulfilling his Father's will. Now some of us might think, especially when we are young and invincible, that we are not going to face trials in life, but that's not what the scripture says. Jesus says in John 16:33, 'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world'. So, if we can just hold on a while longer folks, we will realise that this world is not our own. And let's face it, we have had such a traumatic time as a nation with death through COVID, historically the 20th Century has had more wars than all of the centuries since Jesus cumulatively. This is a world of trials, but let's not get focused on that. Jesus was focused on God. We need to stay focused on the Father and his will. That's where your peace will come from.

When the Bible says there is a time for peace, remember that this world and Satan will try to offer you a form of peace, but it's fake. True peace can only flow from love. Satan isn't capable of love, so peace can only come from Christ, remember that. How often in this country have we heard the term peace mentioned, and then what comes from it? It's never a peace that truly satisfies everyone in our communities. There's always an insufficiency in that. Only Jesus can provide that peace for our country, for our world. And remember that it requires two willing parties to be at peace.

So, there's the two straightforward elements of our passage. But how do we deal with scripture telling us that there is a time to hate, which is our 3rd point.

Isn't hate the opposite of love? Let's be real today folks. We all have problems loving each other. In fact, we all have problems loving God. If we think we can say we love the Lord, then why do we sin? Love is always going to be hard. And whether we wish to admit it or not, hate and love are choices. That's why it's a command to love our neighbour, and our enemies. We all have a choice.

So, let's see what else Solomon says about hate. Let's go to Proverbs 8:13. It's a book he also wrote. Here's what he says, 'To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behaviour and perverse speech'. God hates evil and things that are contrary to his nature. When you let Satan trick you into following his path, then you end up at odds with God, and at war with God, and therefore at peace with Satan. So according to Scripture, if we are followers of the Lord, then we should be at war with evil. The very thought of God not being in control of every situation should make us feel that we need to walk in an opposite direction. If you are so in love with God, you should oppose a godless situation and ask God this, 'God how can you be glorified, how can I bring light into this situation, how can I bring your presence into an evil scenario?'. Remember God hates things that are

contrary to his good nature, and we should hate the things that are contrary to the nature of God.

So, what else did Solomon say in Proverbs. Let's look at Proverbs 6:16-19,

'There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him:

- ¹⁷ haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
hands that shed innocent blood,
- ¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked schemes,
feet that are quick to rush into evil,
- ¹⁹ a false witness who pours out lies
and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.

These are the things that God hates, and other things he considers detestable. And so, if God detests these things, then we his followers should hate these things also. That's what the writer I believe is getting at.

And so, we can now examine the last on our list – war.

You can't go into battle unless you are prepared. The mission objective folks for every one of us that in this room claims to follow Jesus is this; to win souls for Jesus and to put Satan in his place. And how we are going to achieve this is through spiritual warfare. 2 Corinthians 10:3 says 'For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does'. Today as we think about the lives that we remember who sacrificed so much for our freedom, consider that to truly win any war we have to recognise that our problem is with Satan. Why do and why have wars occurred in this world? Because Satan is at large. It's a spiritual battle that rages. 1 Peter 5:8 'Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour'.

In the same way as the natural by-product of love is peace, the natural by-product of hate is war. When you are at war with something it flows from the hate that you have for that thing. So, we are justified to be at war against anything that would oppose the will of God.

So, there you go, 'a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace'

But if we hate the things that God hates and we understand that we are to love the people doing those things because God is a God of love, then where does that leave us on Remembrance Sunday?

It leaves us in a spiritual battle for the souls of those that don't follow God's direction in their lives. That should drive you to action folks – that could be in your workplace tomorrow. It could be within your own family. So is it possible to hate something and be at peace with it? If you are at peace with an aspect of your life that you know is sinful, then you are not going to go to war with it. Satan is our enemy and if you hate everything that Satan stands for, that should drive you to war – spiritual war for your family, spiritual war for your church, spiritual war for your children. Folks for those today that truly follow the Lord, today, Remembrance Sunday, is a day where we have got to stand against Satan and all his evil ways. In terms of war, you can't be a Christian and be a spiritual passivist – if we love

the Lord with all our heart, all our soul and all our mind, then we are at war with Satan his enemy.

What does that look like? Well, it's about prayer and fasting folks. How much do you love the person that doesn't know the Lord, that you are willing to take time aside every day to pray and fast for them? Would you be willing to forego a meal each day and set that time aside to pray for the person that they may come to know the love of the Lord in their life? Remember Ephesians 6:12, 'For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms'. Folks, our fight must never be with each other, our fight should never be within the church; our fight is with Satan.

So, here's our mission – since we hate sin, we are going to war against everything that Satan stands for, so that we might have peace with our Father in heaven. So, what does that look like – as a church we've got to be even more committed to the things of the Lord. We're only playing if we just gather everything up for a Sunday – we've got to commit to daily prayer, to the study of the scriptures, turning the TV off or putting the device down so that we have proper time with the Lord. It's time to devote yourself to God. The Church is under attack, and God is calling us to fight against all the schemes of Satan which he uses every day through your phones and internet, through the media, through your financial security and possessions. It's time to push back from that. For some of you, today may be the day where you turn to Jesus, I mean really turn to Jesus; where you realise that the peace you have been living has been artificial or superficial, where the hate that has been building up inside of you has no relief of healing. Today folks, know that Jesus wants to give you his love and his peace. Come and talk to me at this week and I'd be happy to lead you to the Lord.

Those that are followers of Christ today, know this - Satan is defeated. Scripture says that. But while we are going through the troubles in this world, as followers of Christ we need to go to war to point others to his love and peace. On this Remembrance Sunday as we consider the many who gave their lives for our freedom, today remember and give thanks also for the saints that have gone before us who gave up their time and energy to pray and point us to Jesus. Today hate what is evil in our world, go to war against the devil's schemes, love everyone as Christ as loved you, and be at peace knowing that you are doing the Father's will. Amen.