

A Time For Everything
Ecclesiastes Ch 3 v 2a and v4

We are not always good at talking about death. Would you agree with that statement? And yet, it is something that we all know is inevitable. Cynics say 'Three things in life are inevitable; birth, death and paying taxes!' We have often heard said 'There is never a good time to die' and 'However expected death is, you are never prepared for it'. I think these statements are true even if we have a strong belief in an afterlife and are not frightened by death.

These days if someone dies in their 40's, 50's, or 60's we feel it is tragic but God obviously didn't feel like that as we read that Jesus was only in his 30's when he left this earth; a young man, still in his prime. God must have felt that it was time. Jesus had lived amongst people. He had talked to groups of learned men in the temple, he had spent time in friends' homes and he had addressed enormous crowds. He had blessed, healed and cared for people in a way that had not been done before. He had spoken out and sown the seeds of Christianity with his first disciples and it was time. Maybe it was time to disrupt the Roman rule of authority and the Jewish lifestyle of following hundreds of rules just for the sake of it – who knows!

As we move through the events of Palm Sunday, Holy Week and eventually welcome the happiness of Easter Morning, we move from sorrow to joy and from mourning to dancing as we read in verse 4 of this chapter. We follow the puzzlement and bewilderment, the hurt and despair of Jesus' disciples and the amazement and delight of the days that ensued. Sorrow to joy in eight days!

In verse 15 we read 'Whatever happens or can happen has already happened before. God makes the same thing happen again and again'. I'm sure that is true. Nobody today goes through life without experiencing sorrow and pain of some kind and I know that without that, the wonderful feelings of joy and elation cannot truly be enjoyed. We all experience sorrow at the loss of a loved one but, hopefully we move on, at our own speed and our in own way, so that, eventually we can remember the good times and the good things that have passed. The disciples worked that one out and thus the Christian Church was born.

Imagine being one of those women who first visited the empty tomb. Or perhaps you were Mary speaking to an unknown person thinking him to be the gardener. Sorrow turned to joy without doubt! The time for mourning is over. Let the dancing begin!

There is plenty to talk about at this time of Easter so don't let us hold back. That young man who lived and died is as worth talking about now as he was two thousand years ago. God's timing is as correct now as it was then, so let us be like those women who ran and told others.

For Discussion

1. Discuss what you think it would have been like being one of Jesus' disciples in the week leading up to Easter.
2. Death is always hard to cope with. Share your experiences with your group if you feel able. If not just think and pray about it on your own.