Hello to all the Pine Ridge Family today.

I am returning to Ecclesiastes today, the third chapter. For those of you who were alive in 1965 you will remember that a version of the first 8 verses reached the top billboard spot in a song written by Pete Seeger and sung by The Byrds. Amazingly it is a word for word quote of the passage adding only a chorus of *Turn, Turn, Turn.* That also became the title of this piece. What I believe Pete Seeger had in mind was that we were to turn to a more serious attitude of the life we have. Not bad for a man who at the time referred to himself as an atheist.

As we go through this passage, we identify with a number of the verses quite easily. “A time to embrace, a time to shun embracing.” Then there is the verse, “a time to keep, a time to throw away.” Many of us have used this time to clean out those shelves, closets, and attics that have not seen the light of day in a while. We have an ever increasing pile of stuff just waiting for The Depot to open up again so we can “bless” others with our unwanted stuff.

We need to ask, what did this aging and still wise king want to convey to all of the world at the end of his life? Every area of life is covered here. The applications are from the nation state level to the most mundane of everyday life. They are so complete that they almost seem redundant and simple. They are concepts that everyone already knows. Solomon’s genius in this passage that starts with life and death is that it reaches us most deeply when each of these items becomes important to us. There is a time to weep and to laugh, to mourn, and to dance. Now we all would say, of course that is true. We say that until we are weeping and mourning and find others laughing and dancing. How can they be so oblivious to our tragedy?

 This is a verse only for the believer. We can even rejoice with others while we are in our pain because we trust God. We do not grieve as those who have no hope. God is with us in our pain – to bring us through it; to give us joy again. Other people’s joy will not bother us because our pain is never permanent. We too will laugh again.

And Solomon is using everyday events to demonstrate deep truths. There is a time to tear apart and a time to sew together. He is not talking about your mending. There is a time when that which was designed to be one whole needs to be violently separated. There is a time when a horrible breach needs to be painfully sewed back together. This is a demonstration of the mercy and grace of God and His church. We have the privilege to show forgiveness and mercy which God creates in us.

Solomon will continue looking at life from a vantage point that we understand as negative. But he does intersperse in his 12 chapter dialogue with some great positive conclusions:

*I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime; moreover, that everyone who eats and drinks, sees good in all his labor-it is the gift of God. (3:12-13)*

In all the issues he mentioned, he encourages us to enjoy life. These things will come and some will disrupt our lives for a time. Still we trust that God is in control of our lives, especially when we cannot clearly see His hand:

*I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that men should fear Him. (3:15)*

So in this season of our lives, we see that these things are common to all; they are all temporary; and we trust that God is in control of us.

In Christ, Pastor EA