

A New Season 1

Introduction

Ecc 3:1-8 (NKJV) To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: [2] A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted; [3] A time to kill, And a time to heal; A time to break down, And a time to build up; [4] A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance; [5] A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing; [6] A time to gain, And a time to lose; A time to keep, And a time to throw away; [7] A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak; [8] A time to love, And a time to hate; A time of war, And a time of peace.

We read through this as though it is obvious, we see it all around us in the natural seasons: Winter, spring, summer, autumn. And yet somehow as Christians we think we should be at the same level of fruitfulness and in the same place throughout our spiritual walk with Christ. This is not the case. We do go through spiritual seasons. It helps when we can identify what the season is, or what God is doing so that we can position ourselves appropriately and work with God.

The Lord started speaking to me last Sunday about a change in season for the church. It is a change in season in an individual capacity for many of us too. At the beginning of the year, He was speaking a lot about waiting on Him, persevering in difficulties and so forth. For many of us it has been for us a season of waiting, of persevering when there hasn't been a lot of fruit, a winter of sorts. But I believe the season is changing for Go Church and many of us. Isaiah 35 is a beautiful picture of this. Before I read this I know that for some the season may not be changing to spring.

Isa 35:1-10 (NKJV) The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; [2] It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, Even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, The excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, The excellency of our God. [3] Strengthen the weak hands, And make firm the feeble

knees. [4] Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, With the recompense of God; He will come and save you." [5] Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. [6] Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert. [7] The parched ground shall become a pool, And the thirsty land springs of water; In the habitation of jackals, where each lay, There shall be grass with reeds and rushes. [8] A highway shall be there, and a road, And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, But it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, Shall not go astray. [9] No lion shall be there, Nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it; It shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there, [10] And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Marc Buchanan in his book entitled: *Spiritual Rhythm: Being with Jesus Every Season of Your Soul* describes this transformation and change of season from winter to spring so beautifully.

This past year, my family and I spent several Sunday evenings watching the remarkable BBC documentary series Planet Earth. David Attenborough's measured and dignified voice narrates this sweeping story of forest and ocean, desert and tundra, whales and winged things, polar bears and tree frogs—the infinite intricate strangeness and beauty of this resilient yet fragile planet we inhabit. My favourite parts were the time-lapse sequences: a forest that moves from the bony starkness of winter to the pastel softness of spring to the verdant lushness of summer to the wild mosaic of autumn, all in a minute or less. There were many of them: cacti blooming in the austere landscape of Arizona, mountain meadows blushing with wildflowers before turning sere in the Yukon. But the time-lapse sequence I liked most was the Kalahari Desert. It starts in hot and dusty bareness. The few animals out in it are barely surviving. They're gaunt from hunger, half mad with thirst. A herd of elephants makes a desperate journey to find water. Their massive

footfalls send thick plumes of dust hundreds of feet sky high, trailing them for miles. The weak ones lay down and die. The rest walk, day after day, past the skeletons of trees and animals.

And then one day, a trickle of water, flowing from seasonal rains in the highlands of Angola, threads down to the desert floor. In time lapse, we watch a miracle unfold: the thread of water becomes a stream, and then a river; the river carves a bed, then spills it, sprawling over parched earth. Grass springs up beneath its kiss, then trees, seemingly dead, burst with bloom. Great reeds flourish. It becomes a lake, a vast glinting wetland surrounding an archipelago of lush ground. Everywhere and all at once, death turns to life. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow. The cameras take us back to what's happening in the Kalahari. It's become an aqua playground. Amphibious things teem along reedy shores. Baboons wade through lagoons like fastidious old women in their Sunday best trying to stone-step a creek. Spindly-legged birds with scissor like beaks wait still and watchful in the shallows, then, lightening quick, plunge their heads in the water and come up with fish (where did they come from?) bejewelling their mouths. But best of all are those elephants. They play in that water like otters. They dive and torpedo, splash and dance. They gallop along the bottom, and thrust their huge heads up, trumpeting water through their trunks in a fanfare of joy. The long desperate march through desolation could not be farther behind them, even though—implausibly—the place they now frolic, only weeks ago, was that very wasteland. I can't think of a more vivid picture of hope flooding where hope had died. Isn't that spring? The beauty of Isaiah 35 is that it captures both a reality and a hope. Isaiah prophesies an actual desert place springing forth in Edenic abundance. It's a reality: this, indeed, will happen, just as the Kalahari will bloom. But Isaiah also uses the desert-into-garden image to portray a hope fulfilled, a spiritual longing coming to fruition. In essence, he tells us what it feels like when God is on the move. God changes everything

and utterly, and with breath-taking swiftness. The impossible becomes the inevitable. Desert turns to garden. Where death reigned, life triumphs.

Buchanan, Mark. Spiritual Rhythm: Being with Jesus Every Season of Your Soul . Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

This is an incredible word picture of what a change in season can look like. I believe that as Go Church we are in such a season change.

Why is it important to understand seasons and what season we are in? Well it helps us to position ourselves correctly for what God wants to do.

I was watching one of our sons play an inter-schools soccer match a few years ago. As I was watching a particular play in the soccer match, I noticed my son who was a central striker, passing the ball out to the wing who was running ahead. Our son then slowed down as if he was giving up. I remember shouting to him that he should run and get into space, because I could see that the wing might want to cross the ball to back to him for him to score, but he would need to be in the right position for that to happen. He slowed to a walk. I could see the unbelief in his walk and the set of his shoulders. He didn't think it would happen. Of course, it didn't, and a goal wasn't scored because the wing needed support. The Holy Spirit whispered to my heart at that moment, "when you believe, it positions you aright for the next move". The fact is that if he had believed and run into space, he would have been positioned for the goal to be a possibility, but because he didn't believe, he wasn't positioned aright, and the goal was an impossibility.

I love how Father God speaks. He spoke so clearly to me and showed me the consequences of unbelief, whilst showing me that belief doesn't mean you have to live in an unrealistic world. Right positioning in our hearts causes right positioning of ourselves which opens the next move so to speak. And so, therefore understanding what God is doing in terms of seasons is so important.

Message

The passage we will be looking at today is Matthew chapter 14 from v 22. The account is also found in Mark 6 and John 6.

The context of the passage we will be drawing from is that Jesus has just fed the 5000. He tried to get away from the crowds to be by himself. One would assume he wanted to pray and be refreshed in the Presence of His Father. The crowds followed him. They pursued Him. The Bible says that He was moved with compassion for them and healed the sick and ministered to them. He also fed them, performing a miracle of multiplication: the 5 loaves and 2 fish fed over 5000 men, women and children. In this context he sent his disciples across the sea to Capernaum. He still wanted to spend time in prayer with His Father.

Mat 14:22-34 (NKJV) Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. [23] And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. [24] But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. [25] Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. [26] And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. [27] But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." [28] And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." [29] So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. [30] But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" [31] And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" [32] And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. [33] Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God." [34] When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret.

- The disciples rowed and rowed and rowed, from late afternoon to evening and through most of the night.

- A great wind arose, causing big waves on the sea and Mark tells us that Jesus saw them, from his place of prayer on the mountain, straining at the oars in the evening as the wind was against them. He saw them, yet they did not know that he was watching.
- The wind had now resulted in big waves and the waves were tossing them about.
- Matthew says Jesus came walking to them in the fourth watch of the night, in other words, the early hours of the morning.
- John indicates that they rowed about three to four miles before they saw Jesus walking towards them. It must have really been stormy to row most of the night and only travel three to four miles.
- A reasonable swimmer could swim four miles in two hours or so. To spend most of the night rowing and only travel three to four miles? It must have been rough.
- I am pretty sure Jesus was praying for them during the night. We are informed that he saw them straining at the oars whilst he was in prayer. But the situation was such that they had to struggle against the wind and the waves and had to keep rowing and trying to move forward for many, many hours without respite. That was the context that Jesus chose to show up in. God loves to show up and change things when they are almost impossible, when they are near death, when they look like they are beyond any hope at all.

There are some lessons regarding seasons that I want to draw from this passage today.

1. Choose to be a disciple

Mat 14:22 (NKJV) Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.

- Regardless of your season, choose to be a disciple, not one of the multitudes.
- Do you come to Jesus for what He can do for you and give you only? Like the multitudes in the picture?
- Many people come to Jesus in this manner.

- Or are you like the disciples? Whom Jesus gave specific instructions? He gave them instructions on where to go and what to do and they obeyed.

2. Keep rowing

- Keep rowing, in your season of relentless challenges.
- Keep doing what you know you should be doing. Do not lose heart whilst doing good, for in due season you shall reap!
- Jesus sent His disciples, yet they encountered great difficulties in making progress: Isn't that fascinating? Jesus sent them, yet it was difficult.
- Have you been sent by God? Has He given you a Word or some instructions?
- Has God given you a desire, a passion, something to birth? Something to start? Has He spoken clearly concerning something for your life?
- Have you encountered great resistance? Has progress been almost impossible?
- Does it feel like God has abandoned you? That He can't see or doesn't know where you are?

You are in good company!

Jesus sent them, yet they encountered difficulties, wind, and waves. Why do we think it will always be plain sailing when Jesus has sent us?

At times there are seasons where we are literally in the in-between time. In between the time when God gave us the word or desire or vision, and its birthing or fulfilment. The in-between time in which God works so deeply in our hearts. We see this in the life of many Bible characters (Joseph, David, and so forth), and experience this ourselves. These are seasons where God wants to reveal our hearts, work character in us, prepare us and the circumstances around us for his purposes.

3. Remember God does see you

*Mk 4:47-48 (NKJV) [47] Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. [48] **Then He saw them straining at rowing,** for the wind was against them*

- It's important for us to know that God does see us.
- God sees, God knows, God understands:

Isa 40:27-31 (NKJV) Why do you say, O Jacob, And speak, O Israel: "My way is hidden from the LORD, And my just claim is passed over by my God"? [28] Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. [29] He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. [30] Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, [31] But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

- Recount C2T experience.

Psa 139:11-12 (AMP) If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me and the night shall be [the only] light about me, [12] Even the darkness hides nothing from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You.

4. At the right time God will show up.

Mat 14:25-34 (NKJV) [25] Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea.

Jesus did show up. When he showed up the disciples hadn't drowned, hadn't died, and His purposes hadn't been thwarted by the storm! He did show up!

I have heard many well-meaning Christians exclaiming after something tragic or unexplained happens, "Well, it must have been God's will." Or, "Whatever is meant to happen, will happen." Or, "God allowed it to happen, so it will just work out for the good".

We are instructed in the book of Hosea that we, God's people, perish for a lack of knowledge. It doesn't say we perish because we have no knowledge, it says we perish due to a lack of knowledge. Ignorance is not bliss. We can't comfort ourselves with sayings, just because they are popular and make us feel better about situations at an emotional level. We can't assume that what others say is true just

because many people say the same thing. We need to go to the Word of God to find out truth. Truth is not a personal preference or a feeling. Truth is absolute. Truth by its nature is exclusive. Two opposing things cannot both be true. Truth is given by the Author of truth. Truth is found in the person of Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

An oft quoted portion of scripture is from the book of Romans:

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Rom 8:28, NKJV)

We love to quote that. And it is true. However, without being aware of the context within which that verse is found, we can be misled to believe that God will just work things out without any involvement from us. Here is the context within which we find that verse:

"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Rom 8:26-28, NKJV)

God can work everything for good when we have prayed it so! Verse 28 comes after verse 26-27.

If we want God to show up and show up on time, let's pray it so! Let's ask him. Are you waiting for God to show up? Are you crying out in prayer for Hi to do so? He will answer and show up on time!

5. When God shows up be ready!

- When God shows up, expect the unexpected.
- When God shows up, things may change.
- When God shows up, seasons may change!
- It may not look like what you expect it to look like.
- It may be unlike anything you have ever seen or experienced before
- You may not have gone this way before, or done it before.

- Do not be afraid.

Mat 14:25-27 (NKJV) [25] Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. [26] And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. [27] But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."

- It didn't look like anything they had seen or expected – they were afraid.

[28] And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." [29] So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.

- Peter recognised the opportunity.
- Right now, there are opportunities opening.
- There is a season change happening right now. Things are shifting. It is time to position ourselves differently. "Lord if it is you command me to step out...". Certain natural laws were suspended in that moment that Peter stepped out in faith. The way things had always been, was shifted in that moment.
- I mentioned this in the offering message last Sunday. The Lord spoke clearly to me that it is a season for those with entrepreneurial ideas to step out. It is a season for multiple streams of income to be created for people and kingdom financiers. Those with ideas of things they have wanted to plant or birth or start or run with, now is the time to do it.
- May the Lord help us to see these opportunities by faith.
- May He help us to step out in faith.
- May He give us creative ideas.

6. When God shows up, seasons change!

When Jesus climbed in the boat, John tells us that immediately they were at their destination. There was a season change. Something shifted. The wind ceased. There was an acceleration. Something changed.

Joh 6:21 (NKJV) [21] Then they willingly received Him (Jesus) into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going.

Sometimes we look at people when they experience a “suddenly”. I doubt any of them actually experienced a suddenly without the all night of rowing.

With God, the destination is not the only goal. There will always be purpose in the in between time. If the goal was to get to the destination as quick as possible, God would facilitate that in our lives and also the lives of the disciples in this account. God has a goal in the journey. In fact, Mark inform us [48] *Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and **would have passed them by.***

When we feel anxious about circumstance and situations, it doesn't mean that God is concerned by them. He knows He has got you. He knows the end from the beginning! Like I have said, He sees and knows where you are, and knows how to get you where you need to be when you need to be there!

This is a season to hunger after God, to invite Him into our boats. Don't let him pass you by. Don't let the opportunities pass you by.

Conclusion

1. Choose to be a disciple
2. Keep rowing
3. Remember God does see you
4. At the right time God will show up.
5. When God shows up, be ready!
6. When God shows up, seasons change!