

Why God is not like us and why that's a good thing!

Session 3 – He's got all of the time in the world

Key verses: Psalm 90:2-4, 102:24-28; Isaiah 40:28, 44:6-8, 46:10; 2 Corinthians 3:16-18; 2 Peter 3:8; Revelation 1:8, 1:17.

Talk notes:

Application:

- 1) Are you more of a relaxed time spender or a jealous time hoarder?
(N.B. one is not worse than the other; both can be equally idolatrous and some of us are a bit of both! For example, you may be someone who feels you never have enough time, but the reason is perfectionism. Perfectionists 'play God' by trying to act as if they have unlimited time for certain things. But because we are all finite, perfectionists can only sustain this habit by 'poaching' time from other important things in life, like time for rest or time for family. They 'rob Peter to pay Paul.' It is often our nearest and dearest who suffer as a result. Is this you?)

- 2) Since God is outside of time, but knows and directs everything inside of time, he knows exactly how many years of life he will give you. He also knows everything that he has planned for you in each of your days (Psalm 139:16). Better still, Jesus says in Matthew 11:28-30 that he is a gentle master whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light. So we can trust that, in each day or week, he only calls us to do what he will give us time and strength for. That includes physical rest (Ex 19:8-11)! It also includes rest for our souls, by leaving our labours to spend time with Jesus in his word and prayer (Matt 11:29).
 - i) Can you think of ways that you are asking more of yourself than Jesus does?
(One way to tell is if your to-do list regularly exceeds what you actually achieve! You might fail to complete your to-do list because of laziness, procrastination or perfectionism, but often that is not the reason. Equally likely, it is because we overestimate our own capacity and forget how limited God has made us.)

 - ii) God doesn't begrudge your limitations. Psalm 103:13-14 says he has compassion on us in our limitations, because he knows we are but dust! So we don't need to feel guilty about them – being finite is not in itself a sin! How can you spend more time each day giving thanks for the things God *does* enable you to do, instead of feeling grumpy or beating yourself up for what you didn't get round to?

- 3) Our eternal God knows what you need from day to day and is able to supply it exactly when you need it – not a moment too soon or too late. Jesus encourages us to trust this in Matthew 6:25-34 (so does Psalm 127:2). In light of these things, where do you most need to ‘let tomorrow worry about itself’ rather than trying to take control of it today?

- 4) God’s sovereign care for us, from outside of time and space, enables us to adopt new priorities inside of time and space: to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness (Matt 6:33). What would it look like for you to do this more – even if that’s just doing the things you already do in a different manner?

For further reflection:

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-14, which helps us understand some outworking’s of God’s eternity and our time-bound limits. These are some of King Solomon’s meditations on human existence. Life in this world can be good and enjoyable, but the meaning of our lives and of our changing times eludes us. Like trying to grasp the wind, meaning is there, but we cannot pin it down. Only God knows his purposes and the meaning of our existence fully and he does not reveal all of it to us (see also Deuteronomy 29:29)!

Now use these questions for reflection:

- 1) Vv.1-8 tell us that there is a proper time for everything in creation. Not all of these things are good, but they have their proper place in a fallen world which is under God’s judgment. Our eternal God orders all of time perfectly, from beginning to end, so that nothing can be added or taken away (v.14). How does this encourage humility when you don’t understand God’s timing in your own life and the world around you?

- 2) V.11 says that he has made everything beautiful in *its* time. We can distort this verse by expecting everything to be beautiful in *our* time. Where do you need to learn patience with things that aren’t beautiful in your life and the world around you?

- 3) Sometimes we can be prone to a sinful nostalgia, where we don’t simply grieve the loss of treasured things in the past, like our youth or a loved one, but we resent God for taking them away. Sometimes we can be prone to idolising the future, pinning all our hopes on some change in circumstances, like marriage or retirement. We long for them as a way to escape painful and difficult things in the present, rather than looking to God for contentment now. But God makes everything beautiful in its own time and changes the seasons so that we cannot understand everything he has done from beginning to end. This means that the past was not necessarily any better than the present (hence the warning in Ecc 7:10) – we are just selective in the bits we remember! Similarly, we have no way of knowing whether the future will be better either (apart from the New Creation! See Revelation 21-22). As a result, Ecclesiastes encourages us to enjoy the *present* as best we can – to eat and drink and find what satisfaction we can in our labours (3:13). What things in your life are beautiful *now*? What could you spend more time appreciating and thanking God for *now*?