

“There is a time for ... what?” (Rev 21:1-6)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.”

A few minutes ago we heard the words of someone who is believed to be the wisest person who have ever lived. The King Solomon. This is what he said. “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up.”

If you were asked, and I am asking you – what about now, what about today? If we had to describe our today’s situation, what would you say? “There is a time for ... for what?” Think about it! How would you complete this sentence?

Sure, there could be different endings. What comes to your mind? There is a time to grow and there is a time to shrink. There is a time to open new churches and there is a time to close old ones.

There is a time when we have a lot of energy and strength and there is a time when we are left with ... with whatever we are left. There is a time to prosper and time to survive.

I can imagine that some of this sentiment can be around today, in our situation here in Barossa Valley. But, you see, I would say that the way we complete this sentence depends on how we see ourselves and this world.

We can look at reality from human perspective, or from God’s perspective. And I am afraid that too often we are too scared to look at ourselves and at the world around us from God’s perspective.

We may be too tied in our daily problems. We may be too pessimistic. What good could possibly happen... We may not trust the power of God’s Word. We may be disillusioned with our church, or with people.

We may struggle to believe that what the Bible reveals to us can be true, for some of it sounds too majestic, too wonderful to be true, and we can’t perceive much of it with our senses.

Remember, brothers and sisters in Christ, we are not a human organization. Sure, we are human beings, wonderfully made and infinitely precious to our Heavenly Father, but the organization to which we belong to is not from this world.

We are the Church. You are the Church. And the true Church, God's chosen people are not from this world. You are a new creation, you are the body of Jesus Christ, the Lord and God, you are God's Kingdom, you are heirs of God the Father and co-heirs with Jesus.

You are the people with the Holy Spirit. This is who you truly are. Therefore, we need to complete this sentence in a way fitting to God's people. What if we completed this sentence this way?

"There is a time to recognize who we are, God's beloved and chosen people, and to overflow with joy."

"There is a time when the Holy Spirit begins to move, shakes what existed before and brings forward a new thing."

"There is a time to see that we don't belong to ourselves, but to Jesus, and to live for Him."

"There is a time to let the light of the Gospel shine so that the people who dwell in darkness could see its wonderful light."

What if this time is now? Yes, some may object that we are elderly congregation, we don't have that much energy left, we can't do much. Before we say that, let's think - which perspective do we take, God's or human?

Ask yourselves, how does God build His church? How does God expand His ever-lasting Kingdom? Does He do it in our power? Where did Jesus celebrate His greatest victory?

That's right, on the cross. God said to Paul the apostle: "My power is made perfect in weakness." (2Co 12:9) And Paul himself said that "when I am weak, then I am strong." (2Co 12:10).

Brothers and sisters, we are elderly congregation, and we are weak. And maybe this is a time to be weak, so that God's power could be make perfect. When we are strong, we think that we'll accomplish great thing.

But ask yourself, how does God build His Kingdom? By His Word and His Spirit. That's right. It is in the strengths of the Word and the Spirit that the Church is built and endures.

So, is the Word of God and the Spirit or God stronger when spoken by younger people? Or, is it stronger when spoken by older people? When? Neither. The power of the Word and the power of the Spirit do not depend on us.

We are simply God's messengers. We come to the Father's house to hear God speaking to us, to receive His treasures, His Spirit, His love, hope, joy, so that we can go and share them. The Gospel has its life-changing power regardless of who shares it and how well it is done.

Probably we can't run around and can't move mountains. That's fine. But we all can listen, and we all can pray, and we all can share what we have heard. And if we can't trust our strength anymore, then it is easier to trust the strengths of our dear Lord Jesus.

By the way, we are weak only from human perspective. But when God looks at you, He sees His beloved children, He sees in you this wonderful new creation of the Holy Spirit, He sees what He will create from you.

He sees people who carry the treasures of the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit in themselves. This power once called all things into existence. The same power will renew and restore all things at the end of this age.

Now, it's given to you. To use it... But... our old self could still complain, – why should we do anything at all? Why can't we just quietly finish our race? And, in a way, we could say, sure, we can. That is an option.

You have already received God's grace, it won't be taken from you. God will fulfill all His promises. But there was something in our today's reading from the book of Revelation that demands a different response.

John the apostle spoke about our ultimate hope, about these new heavens and new earth. I'll read you this message once more.

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Do you want to know about your future? This is it. A new heaven and a new earth. The holy city from God. Dwelling in God's presence, seeing Him face to face. There will be no more crying, nor pain, nor death.

This is your future. New resurrected bodies. Life with your Lord Jesus in everlasting blessedness and joy. This is God's gift to you. To each of you. Do you deserve it? Of course, not! No one does.

We have failed our Lord countless times and we'll fail Him countless times. And, still, loving God came down looking for you and called you to Himself. He did it using other people, just like you.

What if they just had sat quietly keeping the Gospel to themselves? What if you had never heard that God forgives you all your sins, because Jesus Christ has taken your place, and in exchange He gives you His place in God's Kingdom.

God sent His messengers to you. And they went. And that's why you are here, that's why you can experience all the blessings of gracious God. Every week He forgives you your sins.

Every week He speaks to you His love in the sermon, He feeds you with His forgiveness and eternal life. He gives you His Holy Spirit. You have all this because someone, just like you, told you about Jesus.

God builds His Kingdom and saves people when we tell them about Jesus. When this reality truly sinks in, when we realize what power and hope is entrusted to us, it is like a fire burning within you and you can't but let it out.

For this message of joy and hope is greater than we. We can't contain it, it flows over and we need to share it. We can't just sit quietly. We can't but tell others what our God has done through Jesus.

We can't but tell what He has prepared for all who want to be with Him, a new heaven and a new earth. This is, why we can't help but talk about Jesus, even if we stumble to find the right words to express what our hearts feel.

Today, when we think how to complete this sentence ... I believe we could say that this is a time to be weak, this is a time to listen to our Lord Jesus, a time to pray and to share the Gospel with those who still dwell in darkness.

This is a time to bring them hope, and forgiveness and eternal life, for we ourselves once received it from others. At the end of the day, this is, why our Father has gathered us here.

And the peace of God that surpasses all our understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Jesus Christ.

Amen.