

“There is an occasion for everything, and a time for every activity under heaven”
Ecclesiastes chapter 3 verse 1

Happy new year. As we begin 2021, I imagine that we all hope that it is going to be a bit less traumatic than 2020. All of us would like things to return to normal. Let's hope they do.

Most of us, if we were asked, would opt for a year of good things; a year in which we remained healthy and prospered. But the writer of the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes is somewhat more realistic. He knows that a life in which everything in the garden is rosy all the time is not a life lived to the full.

So this section of his exploration of the meaning of life deals with its contrasts. Everything has its time, he says, the good as well as the bad. People are born and people die, there is planting and uprooting, demolishing and building, weeping and laughing, mourning and dancing, casting away and gathering, embracing and keeping distance (as we know only too well), searching and counting as lost, keeping and throwing away (all you hoarders), tearing and mending, silence and speaking, loving and hating, war and peace.

All these things have their place in a life lived to the full. Jesus promised that those who followed him would have “life more abundant.” But I'm sure he didn't mean that it would be a life without troubles, either. I think that both Jesus and the writer of Ecclesiastes are saying similar things. Given the inevitability of all sorts of experiences in all our lives, then wisdom suggests that it makes sense to experience all of them to the full. When we know the security, protection of God in our lives, then we know that anything that we experience, good or bad, can work out for our benefit.

So my wish for you all in 2021 is for a year of tumultuous, life affirming, growth producing, faith building experiences of all kinds so that you will look back at this time next year and reflect on it as the year in which you learned and grew more than in any other.

Prayer.

Thank you, God, for this new year. We pray that it will be a year in which we see your power working in our lives and in the lives of those we love, regardless of what we may experience. We pray that our nation and our world will get to a better place, and that your name will be honoured and glorified. In Jesus' name, amen.

All these devotionals can be found on our website inghamitechurch.org on the 'Resources' page. Click on the link to go there.