There is a time for everything. There’s a time for everything that is done on earth. There is a time to be born. And there’s a time to die. There is a time to plant. And there’s a time to pull up what is planted. There is a time to kill. And there’s a time to heal. There is a time to tear down. And there’s a time to build up. There is a time to weep. And there’s a time to laugh. There is a time to be sad. And there’s a time to dance. There is a time to scatter stones. And there’s a time to gather them. There is a time to embrace. And there’s a time not to embrace. There is a time to search. And there’s a time to stop searching. There is a time to keep. And there’s a time to throw away. There is a time to tear. And there’s a time to mend. There is a time to be silent. And there’s a time to speak. There is a time to love. And there’s a time to hate. There is a time for war. And there’s a time for peace.

Many years ago, I received the gift of a “crazy quilt.” The quilters among us will know what that is and they should feel free to correct my description of it. As best I can tell, a crazy quilt doesn’t have a recognizable pattern like we see on our beautiful prayer quilts. It’s made up of a hodgepodge of pieces of fabric—different sizes, different shapes, different colors. Sometimes crazy quilts were made from pieces of fabric from significant or especially meaningful occasions in someone’s life—a bridal dress, a baptismal gown, a special outfit…brought together to represent and remember a life, a life full of love and laughter, ups and downs, special occasions and ordinary days.

Over these past few weeks, I’ve come to think of our Scripture passage from Ecclesiastes as a crazy quilt. It’s made up of all the bits and pieces of life as we experience it over time. Rarely do we see a discernible pattern, at least not while we’re still in the thick of it. Rarely do seasons flow neatly from one to another. Rarely does one season conclude so that another may commence. Whatever it is, it’s all still there, isn’t it, even as we move in and out of different seasons, different emotions, different experiences.

Just last week, we were talking about a time to weep and a time to heal. Today I want to lift up a time to laugh! Now it’s not that all that weeping is behind us or over. It’s not that all the healing and rebuilding has been done! In the complex process that is life, even in the midst of it all come moments to laugh. I think these moments of laughter keep us sane and grounded and always ready for something new to spring forth. They remind us to stay focused on what is beautiful and holy and always possible. God gives us a season to laugh which comes as a gift of life. Laughter restores our hearts.

Sometimes it’s the hard stuff that grabs our attention. If day to day life is rather dull, or outright hard, or when the news is grim, we narrow our gaze to all that and take joy for granted. Henry Ward Beecher put it this way: “there are joys which long to be ours. God sends ten thousand truths, which come about us like birds seeking inlet; but we are shut up to them, and so they bring us nothing, but s it and sing awhile upon the roof, and then fly away.”

But joy is the spirit of God in time, Joan Chittister says, the only taste of eternity that is freely given. It is the laughter of God singing through the course of our days.

Remember that, in the beginning, our God created everything and saw that it was good. From the beginning, God took delight in all of creation and in us. The breath of the spirit, in everything, in us, is joy. And so, of course, God gifts us with a season to laugh—to remember, to let go, to breathe deep, to lift our heads high and let our spirits soar. It’s like the old Shaker folk song puts it: “tis the gift to be simple, the gift to be free, the gift to come down where we ought to be. And when we find ourselves in the place just right, ‘twill be in the valley of love and delight. Dance, then, wherever you may be. I am the Lord of the Dance, said he. And I’ll lead you all wherever you may be, and I’ll lead you all in the dance, said he.”

A season to dance, to laugh.

As we gather in our hearts at the Lord’s Table this morning to be refreshed and renewed by the Sacrament of Holy Communion, I invite you to see in the face of our host a Savior whose eyes and heart are smiling. A Savior who made people smile with new hope whenever he preached and taught and healed. A Savior who sometimes invites us, his disciples now as then, into the craziest things—to
fish where there are no fish biting, to share a little food and feed five thousand folks, to walk on water. A Savior who welcomed children, saying to “such as these belongs the Kingdom of God.” Children—who always find ways to make us laugh. He invites us to laugh! He wants us to laugh! He’s laughing, too.

And so, to us now, today, he’s saying again: Come. All of you. Do this to remember me.

Hear the deeper melody through God’s crazy quilt of seasons. That word of life, song of joy. Taken as a whole, quilted together, see life’s totality and variety as a mosaic of fragments, pieces, experiences, endings and beginnings. God’s creating Spirit guides us in this dance, leads us as we gather the fragments from all the seasons and form them into a crazy quilt of holy unity. In and through it all, the Spirit of Life gives us courage to live in the moment, in this season, even as we say ‘Yes’ to God’s gift of purpose and ever-new possibility.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

Notes: