

ECCLISIASTES 3:9-15

What gain have workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of the past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live. Moreover it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. I know that whatever God does endures forever. Nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done this so that all should stand in awe before him. That which is, already has been. That which is to be, already has been. That which is to be, already is. And God seeks out what has gone by.

JOHN 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.

BEGENDINGS

Ecclesiastes 3:9-15

John 1:1-5

Have you ever laid awake at night wondering where God was before creation? I have! If nothing existed before the Big Bang thirteen billion years ago, where was God before that? Was God pre-existent? Try as I might, when I ask myself the question of where God was before the beginning, my mind simply cannot even return to the beginning let alone prior to that. Before the Beginning was there nothing? And if there was nothing, then how did God come into being? Can you imagine where you were before you were born? Neither can I. And how about what you will experience when your life ends? Ever try imagining eternity? I don't have any luck with any of these.

John is not answering any of these questions for us. But what he does tell us is that all things came into being through God and that what came into being was life itself. The implication of this is that nothing has life without God. Must that not mean, then, that God spiritually occupies the center of our lives? If *all things came into being through him*, doesn't it stand to reason that even though we have been granted free will and are individual beings in our own right that God is living our life right along with us?

Perhaps one of the greatest illusions we live with is that our life belongs to us. It isn't that it is not our life or that we do not have a choice about how we live that life, but ultimately our life did not come *from* us, but rather *for* us. In other words, our lives do not ultimately belong to us, but to God.

Listen again to Solomon's observations: *What gain have workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of the past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live. Moreover it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil.*

Herein lies the excitement of living. It might actually help us to enjoy this life more if we chose to understand it less from a linear point of view—from birth to death—and more from a circular point of view.

Beginnings and endings occur simultaneously. There is no beginning and no ending to a circle, no matter where you find yourself in that circle. What is behind you is in front of you and what is in front of you is behind you.

Every beginning is an ending and every ending is also a beginning.

Beginnings and endings are inseparable. That is why you can call them Beggings. You breathe in, you breathe out. Your muscles contract, your muscles relax and so forth, the sun rises, the sun sets. It is the way of the universe. It is built into our DNA. There is meaning only in the actual moment itself. Again from Solomon: *That which is, already has been. That which is to be, already has been. That which is to be, already is.* As it has been said, in each instant you are the youngest you will ever be and you are also the oldest you have ever been.

So what are the applications our lives and for our present situation as a congregation? First, let us note how difficult it is to stay in the moment. It seems as if no matter what we are doing, we are already in the process of either planning what we are going to do next or reflecting on what we just finished and how we feel about it. We are very distractible. But you cannot experience joy unless you are fully present in the moment. And God wants us to be joyful: *I know there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live.* And aren't we most happy when we are so completely in the moment that we lose all track of time? One of the things I loved about officiating sports was that it forced me to be fully focused on the action—especially in basketball and volleyball because everything happened so fast.

Second, while we may be grieving for the ending of our church as we know it, there is a bigger picture. Endings always—Always!—are accompanied by a Beginning. No one has any choice but to move on, again and again and again. Can you resist gravity? Can you stop the dawn from coming? A new congregation will be formed. It brings changes for everyone. Our faith is being challenged to trust in the process of Begendings. Be open. Stay in the moment and be joyful!

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