

JOY in the JOURNEY X



“I’ve Got it Under Control!” - Ecclesiastes 3:1-14

Sermon Idea: *On our journey, we often make a futile attempt to clench control of life, but the joy of life is only possible by embracing the wisdom of God’s sense of time.*

Intro: We’re used to driving on winter roads around WNY. You don’t gun it to go up Centerville Rd. or Park drive in fresh snow. Slow and steady works better. Even on Interstate 86 it’s wise to be cautious in the cold when the sign says, “**Bridge Ices Before Road!**” What advice does God have for our journey even in the challenging Wisdom book, Ecclesiastes?. Let’s find out....

Read and discuss: Ecclesiastes chapter 3:1-14

1. Dig deep into the fourteen contrasts in time in vv. 2-8. Discuss those that ring most true in your current or past circumstances. Do some seem parallel? Which are most difficult?
2. Share experience from life where God has slowed you down or redirected your plans for your good.
3. Are verses 12-14 fatalistic and depressing or are there nuggets of reassuring truth in learning how to navigate your journey?
4. *(Optional – going deeper)* Explore other passages related to 3:12 that form a common refrain in Ecclesiastes. Shallow hedonism, fatalism, or a godly view of life? (See 2:24; 3:12; 3:22; 5:18-19; 7:14; 8:15; 11:19)
5. Compare those times we can and can’t impact what God controls? Does this offer comfort or distress to you? (Cf. Romans 8:28)
6. How do we best find guidance when there are decisions to be made about things in life?
7. Do you have any examples of someone who has been an inspiration to you who’ve made the most out of hard circumstance?
8. Two bold statements about God: “He has set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end” (v. 11), and “I know that everything that God does will endure forever...God does it so that men will revere him.” (v.14, cf. Ecc. 12:13-14.) How do you respond to this window on God’s role in our lives?
9. The last eight months have certainly been a time of disruption and slowing down. What have been your biggest struggles? Share the likely positive impacts as well?
10. How close is Jesus in our lives? Should we rely more keenly on the comforting and guiding presence of the Holy Spirit? (See John 16:12-15)
11. Spend some time and pray for one another going through happy or hard times.

Jesus said, *“A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* John 16:31-33