

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

“This is the age
Of the half-read page.
And the quick hash
And the mad dash.
The bright night
With the nerves tight
The plane hop
With the brief stop.
The lamp tan
In short span.
The Big Shot
In a good spot
And the brain strain
The heart pain.
And the cat naps
Till the spring snaps --
And the fun's done!”¹

I was enjoying a lunch out with Annie
recently and when we were waiting for the

¹ Reprinted from The Saturday Evening Post, 1949, The Curtis Publishing Co., *Courage - You Can Stand Strong in the Face of Fear*, Jon Johnston, 1990, SP Publications, p. 143.

waiter to arrive with the food I noticed another couple sitting opposite each other at a table and instead of engaging in conversation or staring into each other's eyes they were both fiddling about with their mobile phones. When I looked back at the end of our meal the other couple had finished their meal too, and guess what, they were both engrossed in their mobile phones.

Busy, very busy doing nothing!

I read the following poem recently:

“My precious boy with the golden hair
Came up one day beside my chair
And fell upon his bended knee
And said, “Oh, Mommy, please play with
me!”

I said, "Not now, go on and play;
I've got so much to do today."
He smiled through tears in eyes so blue
When I said, "We'll play when I get through."
But the chores lasted all through the day
And I never did find time to play.
When supper was over and dishes done,
I was much too tired for my little son.
I tucked him in and kissed his cheek
And watched my angel fall asleep.
As I tossed and turned upon my bed,
Those words kept ringing in my head,
"Not now, son, go on and play,
I've got so much to do today."
I fell asleep and in a minute's span,
My little boy is a full-grown man.
No toys are there to clutter the floor;
No dirty fingerprints on the door;
No snacks to fix; no tears to dry;
The rooms just echo my lonely sigh.
And now I've got the time to play;
But my precious boy is gone away.
I awoke myself with a pitiful scream
And realised it was just a dream
For across the room in his little bed,
Lay my curly-haired boy, the sleepy-head.

My work will wait 'til another day
For now I must find some time to play.”²

Both poems and our busy mobile texters reflect lives that are out of balance. If we are living out of balance we are doing harm to ourselves. Recently I was lent a copy of the poems of Rev. John Wellwood, former minister of this Parish from 1883 to 1919. He was a sensitive man who worked extremely hard for his parishioners. He was responsible for petitioning Presbytery in the 1880s to build a church in the new town of Lossiemouth and his efforts came to fruition in 1901 when the church dedicated to St.

² Neal, Dianna

Gerardine was opened. However his latter years were very difficult because he had to bear the loss of two sons in the Great War which drove him to despair and back into frenetic work for others. Such was the stress of all of this that his body gave out. Rudyard Kipling, who in a similar manner, bore the loss of a beloved son, wrote, “if you can fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run”³. He lived a good deal longer than John Wellwood but he never was able to find again the balance in life that he craved.

³ <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46473/if-->

The great words of Ecclesiastes 3 bear witness to God's view of time and our lives. Someone once said; "Time is nature's way of keeping everything from happening at once." So we mustn't attempt to defy it by trying to do everything at once! In fact, doing must never be allowed to dominate our being. We are human beings, not human doings! I wonder if you have ever felt pressure when meeting someone at the end of a day who asks you; "Well, what have you been doing today?" And your mind goes blank as you try to justify your existence to another. It's crazy, isn't it?

William Still, one of the Church of Scotland's most notable clergymen of the twentieth century who spent nearly all his ministry at Gilcomston South in Aberdeen, wrote a little pamphlet for ministers about the importance of work and rest and play. All of them to be enjoyed in balance. If one begins to dominate the others then you go out of shape and become ineffective. A time for this and a time for that a time for all of the experiences that God has for you in your unique life, however long or however short. But regardless of what comes our way God has placed his measure of time within us,

but it is a much greater measure than any of us can bear. It says in our Ecclesiastes passage; “He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”⁴ That eternity has the power to crush us and destroy us if we do not have the wisdom to return it to God’s trust. That eternity causes us to fret and worry if we do not have the wisdom to return it to God’s trust. It needs to be there so that we are never under the misunderstanding that we are independent beings, accountable to no-one but ourselves.

⁴ Ecclesiastes 3:11 NIV

But if we don't know what to do with that weight of eternity the burden will not go away.

For several years a woman had been having trouble getting to sleep at night because she feared burglars. One night her husband heard a noise in the house, so he went downstairs to investigate. When he got there, he did find a burglar. "Good evening," said the man of the house. "I am pleased to see you. Come upstairs and meet my wife. She has been waiting 10 years to meet you."

Do you suffer from anxiety, from worry? If you do then you are out of balance.

An average person's anxiety is focused on :

40% of things that will never happen

30% of things about the past that can't be changed

12% of things about criticism by others, mostly untrue

10% of things about health, which gets worse with stress

8% of things about real problems that will be faced. Only the 8% need truly concern us, so why are we worrying about the 92%?

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to
break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time
to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, and a time to
gather stones together; a time to embrace,
and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to
keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to
keep silence, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of
war, and a time of peace.

Amen.