

**First Presbyterian Church
Southampton, New York
“End of one Season, Beginning of Another”**

Ecclesiastes 3:1 – 8

September 4, 2016

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven...”

“A season for every activity under heaven...” wow, if I didn’t know better, I’d say that “the Preacher,” or Qoheleth, the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes, was talking about Memorial Day to Labor Day in the Hamptons; *the* “season,” where it certainly seems like “every activity under heaven” is going on all at the same time!

Of course, that’s not what the Preacher meant, when he wrote his famous words about there being a time and a season for everything. No, his point was that, during the course of our life on this earth, we will experience many things; we’ll go through many valleys, and we’ll scale many mountaintops; we’ll have highs, and lows, and lots of level ground in between.

Life consists of living and dying, he says; it’s made up of weeping and laughing; of mourning and dancing; of building and, as we know so well in the Hamptons, tearing down in order to build something else! According to the Preacher, life is sometimes joyous, life is sometimes sad, and life is always full of wonder, and change, and opportunity, and challenges to be faced and surmounted. And all of it is carried out under the watchful eye, and within the providential care, of our gracious and loving Heavenly Father.

That’s what the author was getting at in our text... but I still like that idea of actual seasons; specific periods of time within which certain things happen, and various traditions are enjoyed, and different kinds of weather prevail. I mean, we’ve got the four seasons, right? And in less than three weeks we’ll be leaving summer behind... and moving on into the cooler days and beautiful colors of fall. And after that winter... which we don’t even want to think about right now!

And there’s sports seasons, too. Baseball season is winding down, and football season is winding up, and before you know it we’ll be dealing with ice hockey and basketball seasons as well. Our young people are getting into their tennis and field hockey and lacrosse and soccer and cross-country seasons. And on and on it goes. It’s election season... for another couple of months. It’s hurricane season... as we’ve been reminded all week. And before you know it, it’ll be Christmas season... with all the hustle and bustle and busyness that goes along with it.

So, the writer of Ecclesiastes really had it right: there are many seasons in our lives... and many activities with which those seasons are filled. But the only seasons that I want for us to think about this morning, is the season that’ll be ending the day after tomorrow... and the season that’ll be starting, when we meet here next Sunday for worship.

And, of course, I’m talking about the **ending** of our Hamptons “summer season...” and the **starting** of our First Presbyterian “church season,” which will carry us right on through to next June. And, since I’ve got to keep the sermon really short today, I simply want to make *one* point: and that’s just to remind us that, even though the seasons are changing... and even though we’re moving from the more laid-back, free-flowing, beach days of summer to the more structured, time-

crunched, work and school days of autumn... the God who walked with us every moment from Memorial Day until right now; is the same God who will walk with us every moment from Labor Day until next summer rolls around.

The seasons may change; our fortunes may change; our circumstances may change; our lives may change... for the better, or for the worse; but through it all, our Lord does *not* change. He remains, as the writer to the Hebrews tells us, “the same yesterday and today and forever.”

And because of that great truth, we can dare to live our lives with courage, and with conviction, and with hope... no matter the time of year, and no matter the circumstances before us. The unbreakable faithfulness of God toward us is the rock-solid foundation on which we take our stand as Christian disciples. And when Almighty God is our foundation, there's no power on earth that will ever be able to undo us.

At the end of the day, that's the basic point that the writer of Ecclesiastes was trying to get across to us in our lesson this morning; and it's the hope that I want us to carry with us, as we make our way from the season that's in the process of ending... into the season that's about to begin. As we enter a new church year next Sunday, let's do it with high hopes and great expectations that our Lord is going to make some wonderful things happen here. Let's do it with the clear understanding that we are never greater as a church family, than we are when we trust that God knows what He's doing, and that He's leading us in the direction that He wants us to go.

We know that life is going to be very busy once we get back into our regular “fall routine;” that's inevitable, and a lot of our busyness is appropriate and necessary. But, as inevitable as it may be, we can still make up our minds ahead of time to not allow that busyness to overwhelm our efforts to be good disciples.

No matter how much stuff we have going on in our lives in the months ahead, we can still practice essential Christian disciples like forgiveness, kindness, generosity, and humility. We can care about justice; and showing grace and respect to strangers, and people who are marginalized and outcast... just as Jesus always did; we can love others as Jesus has loved us... and by our example be a living testimony to the truth and hope of the gospel.

There's a lot that we can do, in the church season ahead, to stay connected to the love, and grace, and peace which only God can give. May doing so be our daily goal... amid all the ups and downs, and challenges and responsibilities, which will fill our lives in the coming months.

And may we do it all... in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen!