

Isaiah chapter 46. If you are guest here this morning, you are stumbling into the fourth message on the book of Ecclesiastes. And if that doesn't make any sense because I just told you to turn to Isaiah, it will here in a little bit. Now, Ecclesiastes 3 was made famous by the rock, the Byrds. The Byrds took Ecclesiastes chapter 3 and for the rest of the Earth spinning, Ecclesiastes 3 will be well known because almost everyone recognizes it. In fact, every time the song tries to go out, there will be a movie like "Forrest Gump" that comes along, and then all of a sudden, we're all singing, "To everything, turn, turn, turn. There is a season, turn, turn, turn." So, they made this text that we're going to be in today a very famous text, but here's the thing. I think you have to have some lenses on to read Ecclesiastes 3 correctly. And if you don't have lenses on, then it kind of skews. If you don't understand the whole of Scripture, then it kind of skews how you see it, and you don't get the whole weight of what it's trying to communicate to us. And so, what we've got to work on before we can go to Ecclesiastes 3, is getting the right goggles on you, alright. And once we've got the right lenses on you, then we can go to Ecclesiastes 3 and read it.

So, that starts for us in Isaiah chapter 46. In Isaiah 46, God is going to introduce himself to us in a way that I think is very relevant to where we're going in Ecclesiastes. So, starting in verse 8, here's what He says, "Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors,..." Transgressors isn't a bad word here. It's not, "You shameful transgressors." It's just who we are; we transgress. Here we go, "...you transgressors, remember the former things of old;..." Now, what does He want us to remember? "...for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it." Now, God is separating Himself out from anything else in all of creation with this introduction. Here's what He's saying. He says, "I and I alone sit on top of all of time. And I see not only the past and the present, but I see everything. Everything is under My gaze. I make known the end (that means when this thing's all over) from the beginning. I'm the one who decides, I set into motion, I sit on top of all eternity, and I see it all at once." Now, that's a very different viewpoint than you and I have. I am 32 years old, I love history. Like I tend to study it, I watch the History Channel. I know that's not giving me cool points, but it's just who I am. I love history, alright. And so, I've got a little bit of a view. I've got 32 years of history, and then I've got what I've read in books, and then I've got the next several months for me. Like if you want to ask me what I'm doing tomorrow, I'll tell you, "Lord willing, this is what time my day starts. I have this meeting and this meeting. These are the blocks of time in which I'm going to study. I've got this and I've got this, and I think we're having this for dinner." And so, I can kind of forecast what tomorrow might look like, but in the end, I'm extremely limited. Now, God's trying to say, "You, at best, live 90-100 years, and I have always been. I see better than you, because when I see, I don't just see a moment, I see ALL of the moments, even the ones that have not happened."

And He's going to say, "My governing over this time frame is so extensive that birds hunt because I tell them to." So, you've got this colossus God who is hard to get our head around, who looks down at earth and sees not a moment, but sees all of the moments, who, in this gigantic spectrum, still governs to the bird that hunts. So, "The hawk flying around and hunting a mouse, he's doing that because I told him." And then He's going to say, "Unless you think you're not a part of that governance, a man moves from this country to this country because I called him." So, the bumper-sticker needs to change. It's not "I wasn't born here, but I got here as quick as I could." Because whether it was your job or whether it was your family or whether it was some outside circumstance that brought you here.

Scripture says, "No, I brought you here. You got here because of me."

"Well, my job transferred me."

"I did that."

"Well no, I got moved because they were shifting, we were starting this new division..."

"Yeah, I did that. I moved you here. I moved you."

So, this God sits on top of all that has been and all that ever will be. He's never surprised, He's never shocked, He's never afraid, He knows. He sits on top of everything and sees forever.

Now, flip over to Psalm 139. This is one of my favorite texts. In fact, if you've been here awhile, you'll know this one. Because, this colossal God who sees all, all that ever was, all that is and all that ever will be, also is very intimately knowledgeable about you. And so, what I think we like to do here, is we like to count up the size of God and think that it's this kind of wave of the wand that's like, "This is how things will be," and then He backs it off. In fact, I'm surprised at how many people I get to talk to that ascribe to this kind of Deist mindset that says there is a God and He's out there and He started these things, but now the ball's spinning and it's kind of in our hands. Well, I want you to see that God not only commands all that is and is knowledgeable about all of eternity, but then He's also pretty intimately aware of you. Psalm 139, starting in verse 13, a very famous passage, "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them." Now, do you kind of get the eternal perspective of God here? The Scriptures just said that the hands of God intricately wove you, not the ambiguous Christian we. Are you tracking with me there? Not the, "Let's slap it on a coffee mug and talk about it." It's you, He intricately wove you together in your mother's womb with the knowledge of all the days that were to come for you. Are you tracking with me? You've got to get in your head how eternal the scope is for God. So, He's weaving you together in your mother's womb and the Scriptures say He's doing it two fold: He's doing your substance, your frame and and He's doing your personality make-up. That's what the Scriptures are telling us here. I think the one I always use to joke on this is, as I was growing up, we found out when I got into school that I had been given what adults call "a voice that carries." And what that means is that for some reason, it's impossible for me to not be really loud. It doesn't matter...in fact, I'm walking in, talking on a cellphone into a restaurant I was afraid I was that guy, just last week. And a lady at a table goes, "He's so loud!" I was like, "Yes I am! It's from God, Psalm 139!" So, what the text is saying here is that God intricately wired me together in my mother's womb, putting my form together, He sees my days, knows the calling He has on my life, knows the salvation He'll extend to me, knows where He's going to take me, knows where He's going to move me and throws in some extra vocal folds. That's Psalm 139, that I am today not just some random accident of genetic collision, but purposefully, intricately thought out and designed for the purposes of God.

Now, let me take a stray and just say this. You have eventually got to stop wanting to be someone else. Paul said, "By the grace of God, I am who I am." Translation: "This is who God made me to be. Maybe I should stop trying to be that person, because this is who He's made me to be." Because this can get in and destroy and cause a lot of trouble no matter what you do. Yeah, you have eventually got to get to the place where you're alright with what God's done. He didn't mess up, like when he was weaving, and then the angel's like, "Hey God..." and He's like, "Huh?" and then hooked your nose, and He's like, "Oh me! Good luck with that. I'll be with you, but good luck with that." That's not what happened. You've got to

eventually be okay that God made you you, and that He thinks he did a great job. That God steps back and goes, "That's beautiful." Yeah, intricately woven together with all of our days known beforehand.

Okay, it gets even bigger, so go over to Acts 17. This is probably my favorite chapter in all of the Bible. Do I say that a lot? I think I probably do. But seriously this time, Acts 17 is one of my favorites. Josh Patterson, who's on staff here, he's the king of conversation. Like, he can have conversations with anybody for hours. Like, being stuck in a car with him is either really good or really bad, depending on where you want to be. If you want silence, it's bad; if you want to talk, it's great. Because he will think of these questions like, "Would you rather be stuck on a desert island or in the open sea? Would you rather be Michael Jordan or would you rather be Bono?" And it's that for like eight hours. It's enough to make me put the car on cruise and jump out. But one of the questions he always asks people is, "What time period would you like to live in?" And people have this really romantic idea of time periods. It's comical to me, you know. "I'd like to live in the old west." When somebody can just walk up to you and shoot you in the face and there's nothing you can do about it, no thank you. When they still think that leeches are the cure for everything. I like '06, alright. I like 2011, and we're not even there yet. But let me read you some and you'll understand what I'm talking about. Picking up in verse 24 of Acts 17, you've got this God who stands above all eternity. He knows past, present and future. He sees them all at once. He does not see fragmented like you and I do. He sees it all at once. He wires you to play into that time line, and then look at what else he does. Verse 24, "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything..." I'll tell you every time I can, beware of preaching that pretends that God needs you. Beware of any preaching that's like, "If you'll do this, God can accomplish this." God's never wanted to do something that He hasn't been able to get to. He's never been lacking in funds, never been lacking in people. Never, it's never happened. Why? Well, the next line is going to answer it for us, "... since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything." He's like, "Just in case I left something out, I'll just put everything else right here, all things." Verse 26, "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth," Now, people have a hard time with this because they go, "Okay, so Adam gave birth to a son...and then how do we get all the colors and all the languages? How did that occur if He just made one man?" I believe, and this is just what I believe, that if you'll study Genesis, there is this moment called "The Tower of Babel" where humanity gathers together after the flood and basically says, "God might flood this joint again, so let's use our ingenuity and build a tower to the sky. So if it ever floods again, we'll be okay." And they start to build this tower, and God's like, "Um, you've got to so much pride in your heart. Let Me do this. Let Me confuse your looks and your language. BAM." And in an instant, you've got colors and language. I always like to tell, since we're in such a white heavy area, if you're going right now, "Oh, that's where they came from," no, that's where YOU came from. Because the world didn't start out white. So, that's not where they came from, that's where you came from, just to be honest here this morning.

So, let's keep going, "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.'" So, you have this God, now get all this in your head because this is the lenses with which we have to read Ecclesiastes 3, you have this God who sits above and beyond all of eternity, He sees all that ever is at once, He does not see in segments, He does not see in pieces, He never makes decisions with unanswered questions. Another general rule for Scripture is, if God's asking a question, pay attention because He doesn't need to know stuff. And so, God then, over all of eternity, designs wires, intricately weaves you and, according to Scripture, allots the time in which you live. Which means, a billion-trillion years ago, God's going, "Chandler, 1974." Which means, in a lot of ways, this might heal some old wounds for you. You might have been a mistake, you know. Your parent's might have been like, "Oh no!" but God knew. I mean, God was like, "Oh yes!" This is saying He doesn't look down and is like, "Oh, how did Chandler get out? We weren't due to loose him until '86." No, I am, this is, you are, we are living in the allotted period for your life and mine. And not only that, but He's going

to take it a step further and says "Not only is the time period correct, but so is the place." This is why pace can kill you, because if you're always living somewhere else, you're not living where you are. And you'll miss where you are for where you hope to be. I mean, I know I've joked about this so many times but it just seems like lameness just follows some people around. Lameness might not be a place, it might be a person. Where you are is where you are, and God's going, "It was not an accident."

So, this is the God of Scripture. And listen I just pulled out some. We could go over and over again. Jesus is even going to say, "Hey, a bird doesn't fall out of the sky without Me knowing it." You've got Jesus on the boat, His disciples come and wake Him up because they're afraid they're going to die in the storm. Jesus stands up and goes, "Quit it!!!" and everything stops, the water, the wind, the rain, it all ceases and He goes back and lays back down. The disciples get on the other side of the boat, completely freaked out. I mean, this is an all powerful, all controlling, all knowing God. And this is who the Scriptures make Him out to be. And over and over again, you'll find things in Scripture that run so contrary to American culture, that a lot of guys who teach Scripture try to change their meaning to soften the blow. Psalm 115, "God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases." "Well, what he means there...." What he means there is He's in the heavens and He does whatever pleases Him. If you translate that directly from the Hebrew, it says, "God is in the heavens; He does whatever pleases Him." Yeah, this is the God of the Bible. Now, you can invent some other god outside of the Scriptures, but this is the one of the Scriptures. He stands above and beyond and within all of eternity, and His vision is not limited in any regard or any way. And He is more intimate with you and you make-up and with how you're wired and with what you can handle than you and I will ever be or anyone else around us will ever be.

So, we've got those lenses on. Now, flip over to Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes 3, starting in verse 1, "For everything..." Now, if you write in your Bible, you can underline "everything," circle it, asterisk, star, arrow, whatever, but it's an important word here. "For everything there is a season:" If you write in your Bible, underline, circle, star, asterisk, whatever "season." These are pretty huge points: 1) that everything 2) has a season. Let's keep reading. "...and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what 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 seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to tear, 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 for war, and a time for peace." Historically, when this list is sung about or mentioned, it is viewed as things that occur in life, things that happen in life. What this list really is, is not just a list of things that happen in life, but a list of things God sends. And this is hard for us. Think of this list as a list of ingredients that God mixes together to serve His purposes in your life, in your allotted time, in your set boundary. He'll mix the flour with the sugar. Now, we don't like this. I don't like it. Like, I would rather treat this list like a buffet. "I'll take some laughter, a little bit of dancing, not too much. Still Baptist here, alright." I mean, you could read the list. If you go through this and you kind of get to select, I mean you're going, "A time to be born. Yes please. A time to die. No thank you. A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted. I'll take the planting. A time to kill, and a time to heal. I personally like a little bit of both of those. A time to break down, and a time to build up. I'll take the building up. A time to weep, and a time to laugh. I'd like to laugh until I weep. I'd like that kind of combination. A time to mourn, and a time to dance. This crowd would probably be split 50/50 on that. A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together. I'd like to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing. I'll take the embrace. A time to seek, and a time to lose. I'll always seek over losing. A time to keep and a time to cast away. I'd rather keep. A time to tear, and a time to sew. I'd rather things be repaired than torn. A time to keep silent, no thank you. A time to speak, ah. A time to love and a time to hate. I prefer love. A time for war, and a time for peace. My preference is peace. But I don't get to choose my ingredients. I don't see well enough. See, if I could choose what I wanted, I would choose all of the good things and none of the bad things, none of the things that sting, none of the things that hurt, none of the things that bother me, none of the things that stretch me. I would take only the good.

The thing is tough, God loves me too much to let that happen. See, people who are never stretched, people who never hurt, people who never mourn, they usually turn out to be self-centered, spoiled rotten, vicious people, and God loves too much to let that happen. And so, He sends, He and He alone, who sees all of eternity, decides who gets what and when they get it. And I've never met anyone who likes to eat flour, but I know a lot of people who love cake. But you can't eat the cake without the flour.

Now, just like there's a time and a season for everything, there's also a purpose. And Solomon's not going to leave us hanging here. No, he's going to say, "There's a purpose behind all of it, the joy, the sorrow, the mourning, the laughter. There's a purpose, there's a deep abiding purpose. In fact, there's three of them." And he's just going to start naming them off for us. So, look back at verse 9, "What gain has the worker from his toil? I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with." Now, here we go. You're going to get three-fold reasons for joy, sorrow, the whole list in one sentence. We're going to stop after each one. "He has made everything beautiful in its time." So, it is God's plan with God's vision, with His ability to see, to make everything beautiful in its time. Which means every little step, every little sorrow, every little tear, every hurt, every joy, all goes into the bowl to bring about what is beautiful in the end. Now, you've got all these shadows of how this is true in humanity. I have not found a lesson in Scripture that does not tie to these shadows here on earth to give us an idea of how they work.

Like, I'll give you an example. This year, our pastoral staff has had six newborns. That's six children that will all be in the same grade. If we hold the staff together, they'll grow up and go through Marcus High School together, God help them. Not the kids, the high school. And so, we've been pretty excited, but here's the process of having babies. It begins with pleasure. And then, there's this ecstatic joy that occurs the moment the EPT test says, "Guess what?" Usually, there's ecstatic joy. And then, nausea. I mean, my girl was hugging that toilet so bad, I was going, "This cannot be right." So, we go from pleasure to extreme pleasure to feeling unbelievably lethargic and exhausted and sick for months. And then just the time that faded away, the back's hurting, the feet are hurting, we're up three or four times a night. And I did say "we're." We're going to the restroom, feet cramping up, legs cramping up, the whole deal, man. It is tough, tough, unbelievably, glad I'm a man, tough. Then, it gets worse. I'll give you the latest one. Two weeks ago, on a Sunday night, the Bleeckers head to the hospital. They get to the hospital, and they begin to give Faith some pain medicine to try to make her comfortable. She didn't sleep at all, just in a lot of pain the whole night long, they begin to put her on a drip at 8:00 in the morning. At 6:00 that night, she still hasn't had the baby. She has been pushing and hurting. And they come to find out that little Evan, he had turned his head, and his head was stuck and he wouldn't come out. And so, after more than 24 hours in the hospital, in labor, they finally go, "Okay, he's not coming out naturally." And they whisked her away to a room where they cut open her stomach and pull this baby out. It's this long, painful, bloody, beautiful moment. And you want to hear something really interesting? Do you know that a woman who is breast feeding secretes a hormone that makes her body and brain forget about the pain, which is why people have more than one kid. Seriously. If you would have asked my wife or any wife two days after the first one, "Uh uh." If it weren't for that hormone, everybody would have one kid, and we would hate that one kid. But God, the eternal God, the all knowing God is like, "We're going to need some hormones in there. Um, weave that in real quick." Otherwise, we will not be fruitful and multiply. Yeah, this is one of those shadows where what is unbelievably painful and unbelievably hard and lasts an unbelievably long time turns beautiful. And I wonder how beautiful the moment would be if it wasn't so hard fought. I don't know, I'm just wondering. He makes everything beautiful in it's time.

And can I be honest with you? Too often we find ourselves on the human side of time, with no ability to see or comprehend how this thing can be beautiful. I got my own. I can list two or three things right now that here I am, ten years removed from some of them and I have no clue how it could possibly be beautiful, ever. And God's going, "What? You're too close. You can't step back far enough to see. And so, you're going to have to trust Me. I am not the thief that has come to kill and steal. I've come to bring life. You're going to have to trust Me because it's impossible for you to

step back far enough. You're too close to the jagged glass of the window to step back and see the beauty of the picture. You're on the wrong side of the loom to see how pretty the carpet is. You're going to have to trust Me. I am making everything beautiful in its time."

And then, look at what He says next, "He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart." These things, the joys and the sorrows and you name it, what they do is they bounce off of this groove in the deep part of our soul and make us realize that we're a part of something bigger than we can fathom or get our heads around. Because in the end, you can't control joy and sorrow. You can't fabricate it. You can to some extent. Like, you can build some parameters that help life work a little bit better, and you can stay away from some things that really crush life, but in the end can any man control joy and sorrow? It's like the sea. I mean, you can build whatever you want as defenses, but we still haven't figured out how to harness its power. No, eternity has been placed into our hearts, and joy and sorrow, mourning and laughter stir it and make it vibrate and remind us that we're a part of something larger than us. It's like this internal compass that helps us find true north. And it was put into our hearts by God.

And then this last little bit, no one likes this bit, I hate this bit. But it's here so, "He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end." Now, if you have a child, my 3_ year old is in the "why?" stage right now. I am developing a theory that I'm going to write on, and that's that no parent, no matter how patient can make it past the fourth "why." So, your kid will be like, "why?" and you'll explain. And they'll, "but why?" and you'll explain. And they'll go, "why?" And at the last "why," you become your parents, "Because I said so, and that's the way it is." And all you swore you would never be, you become in that moment. No man, no matter how patient, can make it past the fourth "why." Now, with my personality and makeup, I have never outgrown the "why" stage. I always want to fit something into a neat system. I need it to work in such a way that it makes sense to me, and Jesus here, is snickering at the idea. "You will never know it all because mystery is a prerequisite of faith, and without faith, it is impossible to please Me. Mystery will always be." It's like the soul needs it. It's like, for whatever reason, we can't function without there being question marks, as badly as we want our question marks to be periods.

Okay so, here's the question then: What do we do with all of this then? I mean, the question is, you've got this eternal, huge God that sits above all eternity, past present and future, He knows it all, and He has this set of ingredients up there that He's mixing together, specifically for you, in you, to you, in your allotted time, in your allotted place for His name, His renown and your joy in Him. So, what do we do? Well, the text is going to tell us. Look at verse 12, "I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil--this is God's gift to man. I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him." This isn't bad fear, this is good fear. This is the kind of fear that brings life. Remember several months ago, when I was like, "Hey, we instill some fear in my daughter so she won't get killed." Like, we make her afraid of the street. She doesn't lay in bed at night and she's afraid of the street, but if she gets near the street, if she gets near what could kill her, she starts to be afraid. This is the kind of fear that it's talking about here. Verse 15, "That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God seeks what has been driven away."

Go back to verse 12, because I'm going to tell you what all this means. Verse 12, "I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil--this is God's gift to man." So, what do we do? What do we do with all this information? Here it is: enjoy life. When you've got money, when you've got food, when you've got health, when your kids are listening and being obedient, when there's laughter, when it's a time to build up, enjoy, drink deeply, life. And enjoy life when there's no food and there's no money and health is waning and death is present and children are not being obedient and everything

feels so heavy and so exhausting. Enjoy life. Here's what Jesus is trying to say, and I don't know if you're hearing it this morning. Each one of you, He's so intimately involved in your design and where He put you and when He placed you. Through Solomon in Ecclesiastes 3, Jesus is trying to go, "Listen, I've got it. You can let it go. I've got it. Enjoy the fact that everything that's happening right now has gone through My hands. Enjoy the fact that even what is tearful and hard is a part of My love for you. Let it go. What can you do? What can you do?" That's His question. If you look back at the text, that's what He starts asking at the end. He's like, "What has been is what will always be." I mean, this is eternal stuff. This is God stuff. You're not close enough to see. Even if you could decide, you'd more than likely decide wrong, because your vision is limited. Let go and trust Him. He's saying, "I've got it. Yeah, I know, I know, it stings. I've got it. I know it hurts. I've got it. I'm not abandoning you here, I'm shaping you. I've got it. I know trust Me, I knew your kids before you did. I've got it. Keep praying. Keep coming to Me, but I've got it. Okay, your marriage, I've got it. I know it's hard. Trust Me, keep coming to Me. I've got it."

This is the message of Ecclesiastes 3. There is a time and season for everything, and those times and seasons set not by the winds of change, but by God almighty. And so, He says, "You know what you should do? You should eat and drink and enjoy, because your fate is in the hands of the eternal God who sees beyond the piece of glass and gets the whole stained glass window. Who sees not the side of the loom with the knots and the loose strings, but the other side that's woven so perfectly together. "I've got it. I've got it."

Okay, so maybe you've come in this morning and this is fiercely personal to you. And listen, I know some of you have stories that I would have no answer for. A lot of that is just going to have to be chalked up to mystery. I know that God is not a part of sin and He is not evil and there are things that He is not the active agent in, for sure. And then, some of this gets confusing because we've been lead to believe that because we're Christians, we won't suffer the consequences of sin, but that's just not the truth. I mean, you reap what you sow. And some of you aren't experiencing the wrath of God, you're experiencing the consequences of your sinful decisions. And that's the tough part here, but some of it's just the ingredients of God almighty to mold and shape and fill. And maybe you're holding on to something really tight, maybe you're trying to control something. If times are good, don't look to bad times. Don't look for them around the corner. They'll be here when they're here. Don't look for them. If you're in bad times, try not to look forward to some future good time. Instead, try to learn rest and joy, even the depth of feeling that He's letting you experience in sorrow. So, maybe you need to lay some things down. Maybe you've been holding on a little too tight. Maybe enjoyment of life has been absolutely impossible for you because you are so controlling over life. Maybe it's possible to let some things go right now. Maybe you need to ask the Lord to take some of these things from you.

"Father, I thank You for this place, and I thank You that my life has not been left to chance. I praise You, Father, that I am and the men and women in this room are a result of a series of joys and sorrows and pains and health and betrayals. And we stand here not abandoned by You but shaped by You. And so, I thank You for what You send, both the weeping and the mourning and the laughing and the dancing. So I pray that You would increase our trust and our hope and that we might be able to slowly, with Your help, let go of some of the weight. It can be so exhausting when we try to manage it. I thank You for Your eternal perspective, that what has been will be, that You already see the end. And in the end, there's just beauty. So, give us grace and help while ugly remains. And will You bring the fullness of beauty quickly? It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."