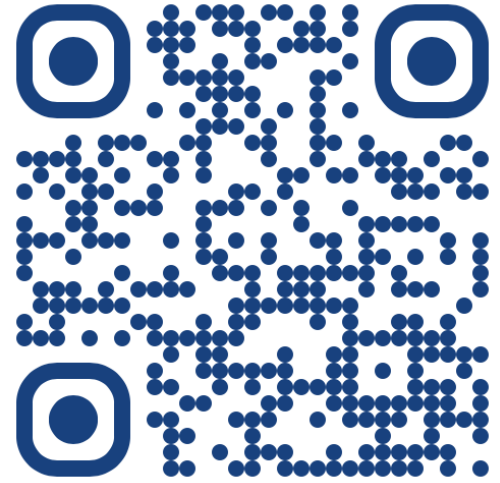# Eternity in the Human Heart
Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

Two great story types
Comedy: <u>ends</u> high
Tragedy: <u>ends</u> low

Psalm 39:4-7

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

1-9:
> Merism: Beginning and ending includes everything in between
> Cycles of activity, but no progress
> > Chapter 1: in the natural world
> > Chapter 3: in human experience
> "Everything is frustratingly out of our control"

10-11:
> An awareness of time without the power to understand it or control it is a heavy burden from God
> God has set eterninity in the human heart, but no one can figure it out
> > We know…
> > > *there is a bigger picture than here and now*
> > > *and we are connected to it*
> > > *and there are appropriate times for things*
> > Dogs & cats & the other animals…
> > > *don't regret the past & don't worry about the future*
> > The past & future often dominate our present
> > > *We can't fix the past*
> > > *We can't be sure what is right in the present*
> > > *We can't know the future*
> > So we struggle…
> The story of humanity
> > Humans are made in the image of God
> > > *Made for eternity*
> > > *In the Garden of Eden: Tree of Life = peace (Shalom) with eternity*
> > Sin/rebellion spoiled the good design
> > > *Humanity expelled from the Garden of Eden*
> > > *No more access to the Tree of Life*
> > New Heaven & New Earth through Jesus: Abundant, monthly crops from Tree of Life for all who live there

12-13:
> Without eternity (the Tree of Life)…
> > Resignation, not enthusiasm
> > Better to ignore time and seek happiness in the moment
> > Yet God controls that too

14-15:
> We can't change God's design
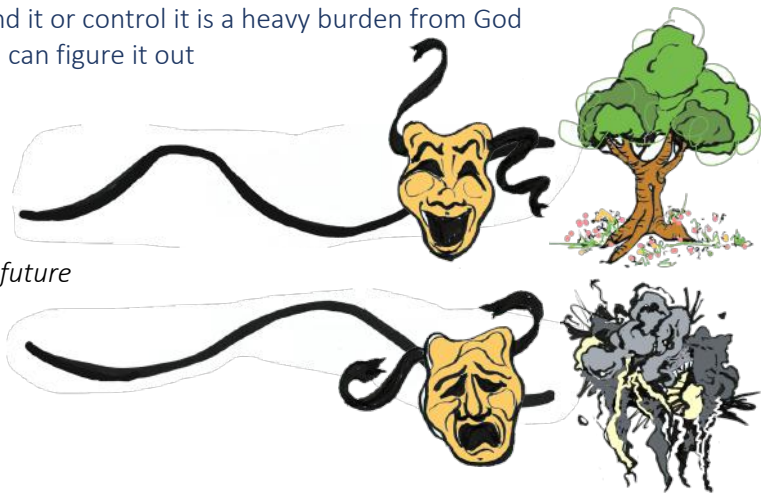> What to do? Find our place in God

Access to Eternity through Jesus
> "This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."
> *2 Timothy 1:9-10*

Big Idea
**Joyful, meaningful, full human life
is only found in relationship with God through Jesus**

We know there is a story line
But we can only see a tiny portion
"God gave us a desire for something that is well beyond our reach"
God can see it all and control it all
He invites us to 'fear' Him: *admit our smallness and our need for Him*

Applications

Admit our time problem

We want eternity, but can't reach it
We can't determine the times
- Birth ← → Death
- Is it time for grace or severity?

Yet we keep trying! [as if we could]
- Rehearsing the past
- Fearing the future
- Worrying what is appropriate for today

Or we just give up and live for today
We need help!

Find eternity in God

"Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." *John 17:3*
Jesus "has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." *2 Timothy 1:10*
He can work the **past** together for good
He holds the **future** in His hands
- "…all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." *Psalm 139:16*

He knows what is appropriate for **today**
And He works it all together for our good!
- "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." *Romans 8:38-39*

When we are troubled by time…

Remember:

Jesus said: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End." *Revelation 22:13*
God can see and manage all time
- He is with us in the present
- He can work the past for good
- He has already worked out the future in His love

Reflection Questions for later today or this week…

1. How do you experience the burden God has put in humanity related to time?

2. What does it look like for you to admit your time problem?

3. How does a relationship with God through Jesus resolve the burden of time for you? In what ways might we slip back into trying to solve it on our own, and behaving as if there is no hope?

Conversation Starter

If you were to describe the story of humanity, what would that story be? What is your part in it?