

SERMON

**A Time to Kill and A Time to Heal** (Ecclesiastes 3:3)

**“a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,”**  
(Ecclesiastes 3:3 NIV)

And this evening we are looking at that first clause

**“a time to kill and a time to heal,...,”** (Ecclesiastes 3:3 NIV)

A time to kill, surely not! Surely there is never a right time to kill. There might be a case for it in certain circumstances

*Show Trailer for “They Shoot Horses, Don’t They.”*

That is a film about what went on the Depression in America when a dance marathon. The competitors had to dance for 55 minutes out of every hour and the contest carried on until only one couple was left. To speed up the rate of people dropping out, they would hold, from time to time, running races. The people are treated very badly and in the final scene the heroine says to the hero as they are both dog tired and aching all over their bodies, and having had no real sleep for a long time

**“They Shoot Horses, don’t they?”**

Of course the inference was that if a horse was in the same state as they were, then it would have been shot. So it may be OK to kill animals, for food, to put them out of their misery, or even if they are causing damage or danger to humans.

But what about humans beings? Surely it is never right to kill them. The commandments says

**“Thou shalt not kill.”** (Exodus 20:13 KJV)

This what the King James Version says. However the NIV says

**“You shall not murder.”** (Exodus 20:13 NIV)

And there is a lot of difference between murder and kill. For the same word Young in his concordance says this about the word in the Ten Commandments that has been translated kill and murder. In the King James Version the word, which is Hebrew is *ratsach* gets translated the 47 times it is used as

- |                  |    |                   |   |
|------------------|----|-------------------|---|
| • slayer .....   | 17 | • manslayer ..... | 2 |
| • murderer ..... | 14 | • killing .....   | 1 |
| • kill .....     | 5  | • slayeth .....   | 1 |
| • murder .....   | 3  | • death .....     | 1 |
| • slain .....    | 3  |                   |   |

He then goes on to say of the word that it means

- 1) to murder, slay, kill
  - a) (Qal) to murder, slay
    - i) premeditated
    - ii) accidental
    - iii) as avenger
    - iv) slayer (intentional) (participle)

- b) (Niphal) to be slain
- c) (Piel)
  - i) to murder, assassinate
  - ii) murderer, assassin (participle) (subst)
- d) (Pual) to be killed

So the word 'kill' may or may not mean the word 'murder'. For the word kill used in Ecclesiastes 3:3 where we read

**“a time to kill and a time to heal,...”** (Ecclesiastes 3:3 NIV)

The word is *harag* and is translated, again in the King James Version, some 167 times in the following ways

- |                     |     |                |    |
|---------------------|-----|----------------|----|
| • slay .....        | 103 | • made .....   | 1  |
| • kill .....        | 24  | • put .....    | 1  |
| • murderer .....    | 2   | • slain .....  | 31 |
| • destroyed .....   | 1   | • slayer ..... | 1  |
| • murder .....      | 1   | • surely ..... | 1  |
| • out of hand ..... | 1   |                |    |

And then goes on to say

- 1) to kill, slay, murder, destroy, murderer, slayer, out of hand
  - a) (Qal)
    - i) to kill, slay
    - ii) to destroy, ruin
  - b) (Niphal) to be killed
  - c) (Pual) to be killed, be slain

There are times when the people of Israel are told to kill another human being. Turn with me to Exodus 21, where we will begin from verse 12, page 79, beginning at verse 12

**““Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death. However, if he does not do it intentionally, but God lets it happen, he is to flee to a place I will designate. But if a man schemes and kills another man deliberately, take him away from my altar and put him to death. "Anyone who attacks his father or his mother must be put to death. "Anyone who kidnaps another and either sells him or still has him when he is caught must be put to death. "Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death. "If men quarrel and one hits the other with a stone or with his fist and he does not die but is confined to bed, the one who struck the blow will not be held responsible if the other gets up and walks around outside with his staff; however, he must pay the injured man for the loss of his time and see that he is completely healed. "If a man beats his male or female slave with a rod and the slave dies as a direct result, he must be punished, but he is not to be punished if the slave gets up after a day or two, since the slave is his property.”**  
(Exodus 21:12-21 NIV)

So some crimes are punishable by death. Of course in this country the death penalty was abolished for most crimes in 1969. Then in 1998 the law was past that outlawed capital punishment for murder except "in times of war or imminent threat of war" in this country.

But the Bible says we can execute for certain crimes.

- Was this because it was a more barbaric society?
- Was it because they could not really imprison people when in the desert and settling in Israel, so it is easier to execute the people?

- Do we not execute people now because of fear of killing the wrong person?

A time to kill!

Turn with me to 1 Samuel 7, page 277, beginning at verse 7

**“When the Philistines heard that Israel had assembled at Mizpah, the rulers of the Philistines came up to attack them. And when the Israelites heard of it, they were afraid because of the Philistines. They said to Samuel, "Do not stop crying out to the LORD our God for us, that he may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines." Then Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it up as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. He cried out to the LORD on Israel’s behalf, and the LORD answered him. While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. But that day the LORD thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Car. Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far has the LORD helped us." So the Philistines were subdued and did not invade Israelite territory again. Throughout Samuel’s lifetime, the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines.”** (1 Samuel 7:7-13 NIV)

Part of the reading we had last Sunday morning. In war, to defend ourselves we are allowed to kill. I have always wondered about this with people who are totally against violence. I can remember speaking to a man who was totally against violence and said that he would never go to war. So the groups of us who were with him asked about defending himself against an attack. He said that he would not. So we asked, “What if a person was coming for your wife with a knife, what would you do?” He answered that he would throw himself in front of the person attacking his wife, so he was between her and the attacked, but still would not use violence to defend her or himself.

So war is acceptable, but remember that even war has rules. When we looked at Amos the beginning of the book where nations are condemned for their three sins... even for four, some were condemned because they had committed war atrocities and had gone too far.

So what about something like Joshua 6:20, page 220

**“When the trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so every man charged straight in, and they took the city. They devoted the city to the LORD and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.”** (Joshua 6:20-21 NIV)

The total destruction to God seems harsh to us and why did God ask for this to happen? The real answer is we do not totally know. Maybe it was to purify the land, but does that still condone wholesale genocide? Scholar debate long and hard over this issue, but we still do not really know the answer to the question of why God allowed and at times ordered it to happen. Remember this was not just people, but animals, goods, everything because we are told

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So there may be time to kill, when it is right and we have not touched on mercy killings and such like this evening, but let us turn to a time to heal – something far more positive.

There is of course the **physical healing** – that which we read Jesus doing when he was here. Can you think of some of the healings he performed?

So what about us? We can heal through different means. It can be through prayer, through medical intervention, through both. We are not forced to go down one path. However at times it is as if we grade things medically and the most serious we pray about, but that which we know doctors and nurses will take of, we allow them too. Maybe this is moving with the times and also remembering that God allows us to have medical breakthroughs along with all the other scientific advancements and these are for us to use, not abuse and not ignore.

There is also **figurative healing**. Turn with me to Hosea 6:1, page 903

**“Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.”** (Hosea 6:1-2 NIV)

For some they have suffered and so they are healed not physically, but figuratively. The people went into exile and then were restored, they were healed but using the word in the figurative sense.

But perhaps the most important healing is that of **spiritual healing**, of bringing a person from death into life. As we help others to become disciples, we help to heal them. We live, sadly in a broken world where so many people are down, are depressed, do not really know where to go next.

I have met so many who are like this recently and I am so saddened by it. They have no hope, no goals, no nothing. In the MA I am doing at the moment it is all goals. Do you have goals in your life? What are your aims? These are supposed to be the answer to everything. You have to remember that the MA I am taking is American and the Americans are far more into this than we are in this country.

But even knowing and working towards one's goals is not sufficient. We need to have the right goals – those of following Christ and being with him. Only God and knowing him can bring true healing – healing through his blood as we will be remembering when we have communion together.

We prefer to heal and we have the greatest healing gift of all – that is the death and resurrection of Jesus to tell others about.