

8B

RELIGION



A time for all things

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:

A time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,

A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him.

Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before; and God will call the past to account.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Point out the contrasts that exist in the normal routines of life.
2. Express the comfort that comes from knowing that God is in control, even in the extremes of life.
3. Give testimony of God's grace that sustained him or her through one of life's extreme periods.

Cheatin' in the pulpit



ILLUSTRATION/TRINA MONTGOMERY-ARDREY

By Malik Russell  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Rev. Alvin O. Jackson resumed his duties as pastor at National City Church this month after he admitted that he borrowed sermons from other ministers without attribution, an act that appears to have violated the Ten Commandments' admonition against stealing and bearing false witness.

Last year, a member of the 160-year-old church caught Jackson in acts of "pulpit plagiarism." The minister took a leave of absence.

Jackson told BlackAmericaWeb.com: "I'd done that in a number of instances and there was a member of the congregation who made that discovery. Most of us do that to one degree or the other. I probably used more than I should have without attribution."

Jackson called the church member who revealed his plagiarism, a "problem employee of the church" with a "vendetta" against him.

However, Bertram Melbourne, dean of Howard University Divinity School, said pulpit plagiarism should be attributed to one simple issue: laziness.

"I would say that the tendency, not just among the black church, but the tendency among some clergy," said Melbourne, "is to find an easy way out if you don't have to spend the

time (composing your own sermon)."

Regardless of what drove Jackson to plagiarize the sermons of other ministers, the issue is neither new nor solely a black one.

"It's always been something that has gone on in the church," said Professor Richard Lischer of Duke University. "People have always used the sermons and thoughts of others to support their own work. That's always been the case."

Lischer believes the act is more widespread due to the Internet, which he says "makes all these sermons available to everybody at the click of a finger."

After a short sabbatical, Jackson returned to NCC, a flagship church of the nearly 800,000-member strong Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The national office in Indiana did not respond to calls from BlackAmericaWeb.com, but Jackson said his leave was "a voluntary decision that I made," and not a reprimand from headquarters.

He said that his mistakes were more of a cultural issue than outright plagiarism. He added that many factors played a role in his actions, including the resistance to change by some of the long-term members of the institution that once counted Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and James A. Garfield as members.

"The nature of this work at National City is very challenging," said Jackson. "You're dealing with a 160-

year old congregation that's predominantly white, and we're trying to move into this direction of a multicultural congregation so there's just natural resistance.

"My failure was used as an opportunity to put breaks on some of the directions we were heading in.

"In the black church," he added, "we really don't really think about intellectual property rights all that much. It's God's word."

Lischer of Duke agreed that taking someone else's speech is dishonest, but he doubted that the pulpit served as the best place for providing citations.

"I do agree to some limited extent a spoken address is not as good a vehicle for footnotes," he said. "How do you give verbal footnotes? You can give a few. You can give indications that those ideas come from somebody else. But it's very awkward and very unconventional for the preacher or any orator to give all the sources of his or her speech."

Melbourne of Howard University said what's important is not winning over congregations, or stealing entire sermons without giving credit to the original speaker. The issues are integrity and the relationship between a minister and God.

"The problem is what makes something wrong is not the fact that somebody in my congregation or area finds out or knows," said Melbourne. "It's (about your) relationship with God.



Power of love has no text

The next time you're in the grocery or bookstore take a look at the magazines and the promises they make to readers.

You see magazines that say things like we have five ways to tell if he's cheating, 10 ways to tell if she really loves you or five things to do in bed to make him or her lose their mind.

Gazing at these magazines and reflecting on the information that is constantly passed around about relationships, I found something is missing. These magazines don't teach you about how to love unconditionally nor do they teach how to bounce back from a real heartache and love again.

Even people who claim to be followers of the Most High struggle with advice about how to love unconditionally. They can tell you what to take and what not to take from a person but they can rarely testify to the power of unconditional love.

I myself am guilty of that crime.

In the Bible the Lord call us to intimate relationships with him. In Hosea 2:16 the Lord says "In that day," declares the Lord "you will call me 'my husband;' you will no longer call me 'my master.'

So if God calls us to intimate relationships with him he requires the same intimacy with our fellow man. Regardless to how close we are to our Creator we do things to jeopardize our relationship with Him. But like a faithful loving husband He takes us back and renews our relationship with Him.

In Hosea we learn of the unfaithfulness of God's people and the faithfulness of God. God used Hosea's life to show what he deals with everyday with us. And when I read it or hear ministers delivering sermons from its text I'm overcome with love.

But at times I wonder was Hosea the only person God called to be in a relationship with a person who is unfaithful? Just as the Israelites were unfaithful and sought other gods aren't modern day so-called followers of God just as bad?

I ask that question because due to the overwhelming information out there about relationships people are not teaching individuals how to love unconditionally or teaching people how to remain faithful to someone who is unfaithful.

If a man finds out his wife has committed adultery, most people would suggest a divorce because she doesn't love him. When a woman finds out her boyfriend has cheated most of her girlfriends will tell her "Leave him alone that he can't be

See UNCONDITIONAL/5B

Brooklyn Tabernacle takes diversity to the 'House'



The Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir This Is Your House Carol Cymbala, producer



The Brooklyn Tab is one of the best choirs in the country because of its musical and

ethnic diversity. This choir of mixed races and voices can sing anything and usually does during the course of one recording.

The choir's latest is the same kind of mix that has won it awards and adoration from millions of fans. This two-disc set is comprised of familiar, new and obscure songs that make a moving and uplifting collection.

Pick any of the 19 songs from these discs and you have a winner. There's nothing that's foot-stomping

gospel, but that's not what this choir's specialty. Long, lyrical songs that give the soloist a chance to sing and the choir to display its awesome harmony are the group's forte. "Because of Who You Are" swells with passion and the uncredited soloist sings gives it her all. Speaking of her all, Susan Quintyne makes "Saved" something special. It is a heartfelt testimony that sends chills.

The closest to gospel is "I'm Going With Jesus," on which

Robin Giles puts some church into this set. Alvin Slaughter and Cynthia Greene do justice to Andre Crouch's "We Are Not Ashamed." It's not as churchy as I like, but it's well done.

This CD's showpiece may be "We Are One," a duet by Charles Allen and Karen Melendez. It's majestic and triumphant. Melendez really leans into this song, soaring with conviction.

The testimonies included are moving, but it's the music that makes this record work.

The Brooklyn Tab has this down to a formula that works and hasn't gotten old. This is certainly worth a listen.

Ratings

- Classic; ☆☆☆☆☆
- Excellent; ☆☆☆☆☆
- Good ☆☆☆☆☆
- Fair ☆☆☆☆☆
- Why? ☆☆☆☆☆
- No stars - A

CHURCH NEWS

The Diocese of Charlotte office for the Catholic Campaign for Human Development is accepting grant applications for the 2004-funding year. CCHD makes small grants from \$500 to \$5,000 to organizations without regard to religious affiliation. Applications must

be postmarked by Feb. 14, 2004.

The CCHD Committee solicits programs and projects that:

1. Seek to affect the root causes of poverty in the target community;
2. Involve genuine participation of the people served in

the planning and decision making of the sponsoring organization

3. Indicate potential for institutional change, empowerment for the people and community involved, and the development of local leadership

4. Conform to Catholic

social teaching

For an application, contact Terri Jarina, Diocesan Director, CCHD, and Office of Justice and Peace, 1123 South Church St. at (704) 370-3234 or hit www.cssnc.org/justice-peace.

January 30

Live Ministries in collaboration with seven Charlotte area churches will present "I'm Mad" youth rally at 3117 Whiting Ave. at 7 p.m. The event is free and open to young adults ages 12-20.

January 30-31  
Yadkin Grove Baptist

Church Consecration and Connection Service "The Outpouring Of The Oil" will be held at 325 Leonard Road, Salisbury.

February 1  
Galilee Baptist Church at 2933 Shady Lane will hold Please see REVIVAL/5B