

Seasons of Love
Sunday October 18, 2009
Ecclesiastes 3:1 – 8

- ¹ *There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under heaven:*
- ² *a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,*
- ³ *a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,*
- ⁴ *a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,*
- ⁵ *a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain,*
- ⁶ *a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,*
- ⁷ *a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,*
- ⁸ *a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.*

Jonathan Larson writer and composer of *Rent* worked passionately on his project during the early 1990s. Larson's inspiration for *Rent's* content came from several different sources. Many of the characters and plot elements are drawn directly from Giacomo Puccini's opera *La bohème*, the world premiere of which was in 1896—100 years before *Rent's* premiere. *Rent*, however, is also a somewhat autobiographical work, as Larson incorporated many elements of his life into his show. Larson lived in New York for many years as a starving artist with an uncertain future. He sacrificed a life of stability for his art, and shared many of the same hopes and fears as his characters. Like his characters he endured poor living conditions; such examples as an illegal wood-burning stove, bathtub in

the middle of his kitchen, broken buzzer [his guests had to call from the pay phone across the street and he would throw down the keys, as in "Rent"] made their way into the play. Part of the motivation behind the storyline in which Maureen leaves Mark for a woman (Joanne) is based on the fact that Larson's own girlfriend left him for another woman.

The final dress rehearsal of *Rent* was held on January 24, 1996. The following day, prior to the show's opening night, Jonathan Larson fell victim to an undiagnosed aortic aneurism and died. In the years since its eventual opening, the show has been nominated for 10 Tony Awards and has won 4 of those nominations. The musical, turned film in 2005, has spoken to the hearts of many, echoing De La Torre's call for us to take notice of those who have been disenfranchised and marginalized by society. It doesn't matter if you identify as straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, questioning or intersexed, the overall theme of the *Rent* opening number, *Seasons of Love*, challenges each of us to answer the question, "How do we measure a year?" So what is your answer today? Do you measure a year in terms of the ordinary; in daylights and sunsets or in cups of coffee and by the trials of your life or do you look at the see a year as more than just a calendar of events?

Sarah once posed a question at one of our Tuesday Together meetings about the perception of time; her question being, "Is time linear or periodic?" A calendar year, observed in term of yesterday, today and tomorrow lends itself to a linear perception of time, while the realization that the sun rises and sets each day is more periodic. To measure a year, as the song suggest, in terms of the calendar or by our daily routines and expectations, limits our perception of the bigger picture. How about love; Measure in love; seasons of love? Whether periodic or linear, our perception of time forces us to continually hurry up and wait; we must rush to get to work to avoid traffic and wait till our scheduled shift time to clock in. For those who farm, it is necessary to wait until spring to prepare the

fields for planting only to have to wait until the fruits of their labor manifest before the crops can be harvested. We hurry to get to Wal-Mart to pick up a few items before going home for the day only to find ourselves waiting in line to have our items checked and to settle our bill.

Our scripture reading today from Ecclesiastes 3 reminds us that it is natural for us to wait; more importantly, it reminds us that there are some events over which we have no control and how we deal with this reality speaks volumes to our understanding and our relationship with God. "There is a time," the author of Ecclesiastes writes, "for everything and a season for every activity under heaven." It is not right that we should try to plant our harvest in the fall and expect to reap in the winter. It is not right that we should turn a blind eye to nation of people who have been set aside and forgotten when there is a call on God's people to remember the disenfranchised of not only those far away, but of those next door; our neighbors whom we have been commanded to love as ourselves. It is not right that we should allow those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS to continue to question their own self worth and mortality in the shadows of denied health care and the stigma fostered by an ignorant, unaware society.

Our Call to Worship today was replaced with what I like to call a "Call to Awareness." Why? Because we, as people of God who have ourselves experienced the harsh realities of prejudice and hatred through the misuse of God's word, have a responsibility to ensure that we do not inadvertently do the same harm to one of our own. As a community of faith, together we have said that we would sponsor AIDS Athens and AIDS Atlanta through our monetary gifts and our time, but have we done so because we truly care about these efforts or because they are efforts that we can assist without getting too close. Are we in a season of obligation or a Season of Love? Is it time to reap or the plant? I believe that, unlike the

need to wait for the appropriate season to prepare for harvest or to keep and throw away, there is always, in every season, the appropriateness to love.

So today, as we prepare to light our candles in memory and honor of those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS and to commune with one another by once again celebrating together the Lord's Supper, I encourage you to do so not out of obligation, but out of love.

[Continue with Candle Ceremony Followed by Communion]