

With thanksgiving for the life of
Howard Edward Eggert
September 27, 1926 + January 29, 2022
(Eccles 3:1-8; 1Cor13:4-8a; Psalm23)

“For everything there is a season.”

I won't try or even claim to be able to begin to expound the “everything” or all the seasons for Howie—first, since I didn't know him; but also, second, because in his 95 years, he knew much more of the everything and many more seasons than I could begin to understand!

Still, I want to reflect a bit on Howie's life in the frame of the Bible readings. “For everything there is a season. A time to be born,” those long 95 years ago in a very different world. “A time to die.” And much inbetween.

“A time for war,” the reading ended. For Howie, the time of World War 2 and after, which must have had background traumas or difficulties or even horrors that he mostly kept closed up inside of himself, but those times also with memories he shared in his typical humor—probably he always fit more the frame of “a time of peace.” Maybe that's also embodied in the healing peaceful place of the northwoods cabin, which continues to serve and be cherished by this family.

“A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted:” metaphorically, maybe we can interpret that as being planted in Thiensville and considering that home (as well as other homes since), and the plucking up then interpret as travels all over the country and world.

“A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing:” I'm not sure if that exactly is the wording—I was thinking about a time to be married, and a time without marriage, and the shape of Howie's life through that pairing with Edna, and the second life he lived after she died, and how life didn't stop, but found a grand new way to be, a way that was still all him, I'm told.

“A time to weep, and a time to laugh,” the reading said. This one may remind us that, even though these are stated as binary pairs, that doesn't mean they're an even 50/50 split. I'm sure Howie had times of deep sadness and grief, but he

certainly sounds like the vast balance of his 95 years was in the time to laugh, in joy, that he was one who always found the good in things, and was described to me by Tom and Cindy as “gregarious, happy, optimistic;” with bowling, cards, golf, and other fun groups; hosting happy hours; delighting in food from old days of grilling and cooking on to characteristic not complaining when Capitol Lakes was shut down for COVID by still finding the good by praising the food.

And, again, Ecclesiastes said there is “a time to love and a time to hate.” But we needed to go on to hear from 1st Corinthians, because Howie was much more a man of love—love that could be felt: patient, kind, enduring, rejoicing. A love that could make you feel special, as JoAnne said.

So there's much about Ecclesiastes that was embodied in the seasons of Howie's life. And part of the beauty of that reading is that probably each of us can hear ourselves in it.

And the love of 1st Corinthians may seem more particular to Howie, as Doug noted.

In a moment, we'll have the chance to hear and for you to share more of those particular stories.

But now I have the privilege of being here also to say something else. The summary is not just a life from the time to be born until the time to die; life is not just the balance of tears and laughter, of war and peace, of times together and times apart. Life is not just the span of how much and how well you love, though we are able to quantify that very well and highly for Howie.

We also have the privilege of gathering now in the promise, the promise that held Howard Edward at least since it was spoken to him in his baptism, claiming him as forever beloved, a promise of unconditional love, through successes and failures, through saintliness and sinfulness, through all the times and seasons, a promise that doesn't conclude now at the end of life, but is only beginning to enter its eternal fullness.

The God who was there to hear his Morning Cry will be there with just one more surprise, one we can only imagine, of what it is to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

With that promise, for Howie and for you, even when this feels like “a time to mourn,” we may know this simultaneously as “a time to dance.”