

**Sermon**  
**1 February 2015**  
**West Kirk of Calder & Polbeth Harwood**

**By: Rev Dr Jonanda Groenewald**

**Text: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

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Jak Trueman. A name you might have heard on the STV news or seen in the paper recently. A name belonging to a boy you might know.

Because Jak Trueman is a local. A 15 year old pupil who attends West Calder High School. Or to bring it a little closer to home – the young man who played the tuba at my induction.

That's who Jak Trueman is – one of us.

But for how long?\*

Last August Jak – a healthy boy, keen musician and enthusiastic football player – was diagnosed with a very rare form of cancer – gammadelta T-cell lymphoma. Once they figured out what was wrong with him, they started treatment right away, and although he initially responded well to the treatment and was scheduled to receive a bone-marrow transplant last week, last Friday tests revealed that the cancer has spread to his organs and bones and that there was nothing more the doctors could do for him.

So Jak went home to spend as much quality time as possible with his family and the people he loves.

But he's decided to make every last minute count! He's doing things that he's always dreamt about doing, and he's raising funds for lymphoma and leukaemia research, so other people can be spared the pain he's been through.

I think Jak is a truly amazing young man. An inspiration to us all. He's only 15 years old, but he's figured out what many of us haven't even started to grasp – namely that time is precious, and that being negative and feeling sorry for yourself is nothing but a waste of the little time you've got...



Time is the most precious resource we've got. For the whole of February, here at the church we are going to spend our time looking at ways we can be good stewards of the time God gave us.

And all week I have been wondering how I could approach this topic in church today, but to no avail, because my head and my heart were just too full with Jak's story. I couldn't think of anything else – I had to restrict myself from sending Jak's mum ten texts a day to hear how he was doing, and every time a message came in on my phone I jumped, thinking that that could be Jak's mum with the worst news.

But then I realised that there probably wasn't a *better* way of talking about the importance of spending our time right, than referring to Jak.

Because if there is one thing his story teaches us, it is that life is short. And nobody, absolutely nobody, knows how much time they will have to spend on this earth.

In our Scripture lesson we've heard that for everything there is a season: "A time to be born and a time to die." In an instant – in one short sentence, the author of Ecclesiastes has expressed how fragile life is. "There is a time to be born and a time to die."

God made all of us, just like he made the earth with its 4 seasons. We now find ourselves in the middle of the cold and icy winter, a season most people are not very fond of, but a season that makes us appreciate spring and summer very much!

If it wasn't for the cold and the frost in the winter, we wouldn't have been able to see all the beautiful daffodils in the spring. Although we can't see it, lots of things are happening under the ground during the winter, but it takes time before we see the results in the spring.

And life is very much like that. All through our lives we experience different times. Times we like and times we don't. Times we look forward too and times we dread.

But just like nature needs winter for spring to come, so sometimes when we feel sad or alone or are struggling with something, something else we don't see straight away is happening to us. Something that will in time make our own lives, or maybe the lives of the people around us, more beautiful.

Things are changing in and around our lives all the time, but there is one thing that never changes, and that is the love God has for us.

Just like the sun is the centre of our universe, God should be the centre of our lives. The earth orbits around the sun. This causes the seasons to change. And although we never know *exactly* when the next season is going to start, and whether it is going to be a long or a short one, a very cold winter or a very hot summer, we know it's definitely coming. After winter, spring *always* comes.

God has given us life. He has given us time. There are times in our lives we're not able to control, like a time to be born and a time to die. A time to mourn and a time to dance. But in regards to all the times in-between, we can pretty much decide ourselves how we are going to spend it.

It's up to us whether we want to spend our time planting or uprooting, killing or healing, tearing down or building, loving or hating...

The thing is just, once a day is over, it's over. Minute by minute, our lives are passing by. We can't turn the clock back, we can't live a day over again. So once a day is gone, it's gone. And therefore it will be a shame to waste even a single minute of the time we've got, because, like I said at the beginning of the service – nobody knows when the clock is going to stop ticking for them.

Now, to some people this might be a frightening idea, but it shouldn't be. Because if you focus on the one thing that will always be constant in your life – the fact that God loves you and will always be there for you, in the summer and in the winter of your life, you will be fine.

You still might not be able to make sense of why things are happening to you, or why in *your* life winter seems to have come too early or are lasting too long, but at least you'll *know* that God is there, and absolutely nothing can change that.

In a sense our lives are controlled by time. We live our lives by the clock. We measure "life" in hours and days and years. Which results in us thinking that if somebody dies in their 90s, they've had a good life, because they've had *many years* on earth.

But what if we rather measure life in *things* (and not in minutes)? Things like meaningfulness, relationships, the ability to change life for others? Do you not think then, that even if you die when you are 15 years old, you might have had a good and meaningful life?

We *can't* choose when we are born and when we are going to die, however hard that may be. But we *can* choose how we are going to live. How we are going to spend in the time in-between.

So let's, by the grace of God, follow Jak's example, and make every single minute count.

Amen

*\*Jak Trueman sadly passed away the day after this sermon was delivered.*