

### **Dance – Celebrate what God has done!**

Friends, I don't know if you watch much late night TV or not, but it seems that The Tonight Show is doing pretty well with the new host Jimmy Fallon.

Just recently they hosted the actor Kevin Bacon as a guest on their show, and while Kevin was waiting backstage for his cue to go on set, The Tonight Show made the surprise announcement that they had banned any kind of dancing on their show.

The next thing you know, Kevin starts dancing in protest, rallying the crew backstage to support him, and they all make their way to the studio and make a grand entrance dancing their way on to the set.

Of course it was all staged, the Tonight Show had written it into the script as a tribute to Kevin Bacon to celebrate thirty years since his breakout role in the 1984 movie "Footloose."

In that movie Bacon played a rebellious teenager who moves to a small town in the country where dancing and rock-n-roll have been banned after the minister's son was killed in a car accident on the way home from the Senior Prom.

Even though it happened years ago, the residents of the town still live in the shadow of that accident, showing little joy or happiness as they go about their daily lives.

But Bacon's character refuses to live this way and he defies the ban on dancing and rock music. He becomes something of an inspiration to the youth because they are drawn to his enthusiasm and energy. And so they rally together and challenge the town council by holding a Sr. Prom outside the town line.

In the end, the town council and the minister realize they need to let go of what happened with the accident, move on and embrace life once again - and allow the town to do so as well...

So they lift the ban on rock music and dancing and if I remember the movie correctly it ends with everyone dancing to celebrate this.

And this story illustrates that there is a time to mourn, and there is a time to dance.

In fact it says in Ecclesiastes 3:1-9, *“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens...*

*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 from embracing,  
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*

So friends, the question is - do you know what time it is? Do you know what activity is appropriate for the season we are in? (Unfortunately its still shoveling snow!)

Friends what we learn from this passage in Ecclesiastes is that God has designed life in such a way that it requires us to have the ability to know when it is time to do one thing and not another – and there is a “rightness and appropriateness” to that.

For instance – when it is time to mourn, it’s not appropriate to dance. But when the time of mourning has passed then it’s not right to continue a ban on dancing.

Because life needs dancing to bring joy and joy needs to be expressed in dancing.

And when there is a special occasion that we are celebrating dance gives us that ability to physically express the joy and happiness of whatever that occasion may be.

And this ability to determine when it is time for one thing and not another is what the bible calls wisdom!

So, being a wise person involves knowing when it is time to dance - and then dancing... because not to do so would be unwise.

In fact dance is also great analogy to help us understand what it's like to live by the kind wisdom that comes from knowing when it is time for one thing and not another.

You could say that someone who has great skill in this ability knows how to dance the dance of life.

Because dancing is a combination of different movements. It's not the same movement repeated over and over again, To

dance you need to know when to do one movement and not another and when it is time to switch.

So a good dancer knows precisely when it is time to turn left, when it is time to turn right, when they should dip, when they should jump and when they should stop.

And a good dancer makes executing these movements look easy, graceful, effortless...

And there are certain people who seem to live life in this way as well right?

They just seem to move through the events of the day responding appropriately to whatever comes their way, saying the right thing at the right time, skillfully handling challenges and obstacles and difficult people, and making it look so easy and graceful.

They are skilled at doing the dance of life!

Contrast that with someone who can't dance, or worse... someone who can't but thinks they can. There's always a few of them who show up to audition for America's Got Talent or SYTYCD.

And if you've ever seen one of these auditions you see someone who is awkward, clumsy, their timing is off, their arms are flailing about, and their movements lack purpose and confidence - it's uncomfortable to watch.

And unfortunately there are people who seem to move through life like this as well.

They seem to have no sense of timing or appropriateness in how to respond to circumstances and the people around them.

They are always bumping up against obstacles, bumping against the walls, stepping on toes, stumbling from one disaster to another - because they lack the wisdom to know how to dance the dance of life.

Are you getting what I'm talking about here friends?

Dance is a helpful metaphor to understand what it means to live by biblical wisdom.

Now this kind of biblical wisdom that we find in Ecclesiastes is very down to earth and practical - that's pretty easy to see.

But what you might not realize is that it is also very spiritual.

Because as it is recognizing whatever time and season it may be in and what's appropriate for that - it also recognizes that in those times and seasons there will be moments when the Holy Spirit shows up, and it knows what the appropriate response is when that happens as well.

So that makes it very spiritual.

And that also means being wise is about knowing how to respond when we recognize God working in our day to day lives.

There are times when we will recognize God at work – and the appropriate response is to mourn... and there are other times when the appropriate response to God's work - will be to dance.

So friends – how wise are you? Do you know when it is time to mourn and time to dance? Do you do it?

Unfortunately the people of Jesus's day didn't know how to respond appropriately to Him or to John the Baptist.

Listen to Jesus' complaint in Matt 11:16-19, where he says: *"To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: "We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn."*

*For John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'*  
*But wisdom is proved right by her deeds."*

Friends - we don't want to make the same mistake.

We should not dance when it's time to mourn, and we shouldn't mourn when it is time to dance – not only because it is unwise, and we will miss out on what God is doing...

But because friends we don't want to grieve the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:30 says *"do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."* And the following verse instructs us to *"get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice"* the kinds of things that we need to repent and mourn over...

But we can also grieve the Spirit by refusing His invitation to celebrate, to dance...

The Spirit wants to dwell in us so that we *"speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and Spiritual songs"* and to *"sing and make music from our hearts to the Lord."* (Eph 5:18) and

He wants to lead us in our lives. *“Since we live by the Spirit let us keep in step with the Spirit”* (Gal 5:25)

To mourn instead of following the lead of the Spirit when He wants to dance and celebrate with us is not only unwise – it’s wrong! As Jesus says *“wisdom is proved right by her deeds.”*

There is a time for mourning and a time for dancing... and friends, this morning is a time for dancing!

Why?

First and foremost because we are celebrating Jesus Christ!

The church is the bride of Christ, the body of Christ and we dance to celebrate our Lord and savior – and his love for us.

Second, because we are celebrating all the good things God is doing in our lives.

For all the blessings He gives us, for our friends and family, our health, our homes – all the prosperity that demonstrates the reality of how He has blessed us in Christ.

And how He has blessed our church - this past year was the first year that I’m aware of when the congregation met and exceeded the giving targets in support of the ministry budget!

And we are seeing prayers being answered, and people experience the healing power and the sustaining power of God as they have faced illness, surgery and ongoing health challenges.

And we’re celebrating because there have been new births! I don’t just mean that babies have born or are on the way, but there are new Christians at Valleyview!

People who have just recently come to put their faith in Jesus – we have a few of them here this morning!

Jesus says that *“there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”* (Luke 15:10) and I know of at least three people here who have recently come to Christ!

Not only that but we have at least 6 people who have come to me and said they need to receive baptism... because they are growing in their faith and they want that sign they belong to God in Christ.

And we have others people who have come to me, after our last series about Belonging to Christ and His Church, and they’ve said “we need to take that next step and become members here!”

So friends, God is doing lots of great work in our hearts and lives and growing his church here at Valleyview in both quantity and quality!

So we ought to celebrate, this is the time to dance...

And friends, there is something else that God wants you to know this morning, especially if you are reluctant to dance.

He wants you to know that if you let the Holy Spirit move you to move – He is going to bring healing to you through that, spiritual, emotional, even physical healing...

You see friends – part of the reason that we can have trouble dancing the dance of life, and we find ourselves bumping into walls, stepping on toes and hurting ourselves and others is because we’re not really freed to move and dance.

Something is preventing us from respond appropriately to what the occasion calls for and from being able to do so skillfully.

It’s kind of like trying to dance if you had chains on your hands and feet or if you had some sort of injury- that would be really difficult right? And if you were paralyzed it would be all together impossible.

You see, the reality is that we are all – to some degree or another - weighed down by the burden of the things that we have done wrong.

We may have been wounded emotionally or spiritually and that's never healed properly.

Or we are simply paralyzed by shame and the fear of what other people will think of us.

And this makes it really difficult and sometimes impossible for us to keep in step with the Spirit and do the dance of life skillfully and gracefully.

But the good news friends, is that God wants to do something about that this morning.

That's why we're doing this experiment in Blue Worship.

That's why we're trying to be more intentional about allowing the Spirit lead us in the dance of worship.

And this morning that means letting the Spirit lead us to actually dance in worship.

So friends, as we respond to the Holy Spirit's prompting to move and dance physically – we are giving him permission to work in us spiritually and emotionally, because it's all connected.

The physical symbolism of moving our hands and feet and our body by dancing here this morning can be the means by which the Spirit sets us free spiritually from the guilt of sin that keeps us chained up.

It can be how He starts to heal that emotional wound which cripples us, and how He will release us from the paralyzing shame or fear, or whatever else keeps us from dancing through life gracefully, skillfully, and freely.

Now I know dancing might feel a bit awkward, strange, uncomfortable – especially in front of other people who up till now respect us...



But friends, if you hold back from what the Spirit is doing this morning because it's more comfortable and less awkward to just stand there – then realize are saying that you'd rather be bound up, chained down and immobilized... and that all the good things God is doing in our church – are just.. meh~

And you don't really want that friends – I know you really want the freedom and joy that Jesus died to give you!  
I know you want to celebrate the amazing work that God is doing in our midst.

So all you have to do is let the Spirit move you as we sing and praise Jesus!

Just clap your hands, tap your feet, move them from side to side, or put your arm around your friend and sway back and forth...

So just do the dance... and celebrate what Christ has done among us and what He is going to do in you this morning through His Spirit.

Friends *“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens... there is a time to mourn – and there is a time... to dance!”*

Let's dance!

Amen.