



September 11, 2019

### ***A TIME TO EMBRACE AND A TIME TO REFRAIN***

*“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.  
... a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing.”*

- Ecclesiastes 3:1, 5

Ecclesiastes teaches that to “everything there is a season,” and gives examples of the different times in our lives, including the times to embrace or to refrain from embracing. This speaks to the choices about where to give our time and our attention—each a limited resource. It is good to embrace the practices, decisions, and relationships that help us to be healthy, growing in love and in spirit. But the practices and relationships that lead to diminishment and harm, of others or of ourselves? These are the times to refrain from embracing.

In short, there are times to say “yes” and there are times to say “no.” Wisdom is in knowing the difference.

But it is easier said than done. Human beings tend to be inconsistent decision makers. Speaking for myself, I find that I need regular ways to connect with what is valuable and what is not. It’s good for me that I really have to be at church every Sunday. This renewal of my focus helps me to be wiser in my decisions throughout the week.

The thing is, we’re all going to miss things we should embrace, and we’re going to keep holding on to what we should let go. We are not perfect. But I am convinced that God’s Spirit will guide us as we share this journey of faith. It is a spiritual practice to discern when to embrace and when to refrain. That is, it takes practice.

Here is my prayer on this September 11 anniversary.

*Holy One, we remember and honor the people who died in the attacks of this day. On that bright morning, we witnessed both the worst and the best of what our human family is capable of doing. May your Spirit strengthen the people of this world toward the good, that hatred and violence may be overcome by good. May your justice and peace grow in the world this day, and evermore. Amen.*

I'll see you in church.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt". The signature is stylized with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster  
Senior Minister