

REDEEMING THE TIME (Making the Most of it!)

- I. If I were to tell you that your bank account would have a deposit credited to it each morning with \$86,400, but, that anything that you didn't use or spend that day would be lost. What would you do? Draw out every cent of course! Well, you do have such a bank, and it's name is "time." Every morning it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it wipes out, as lost, whatever you have failed to invest or use. If you fail to use the day's deposits the loss is yours.

- II. As you might be able to tell, our sermon subject is "It's About Time." This will be the first of a sermon series that will help us examine our lives in light of what the Bible says about time and our use of it.
 - a. God has been dealing with me about my use of time for the past month or so, and so what I will be sharing with you over these next few weeks will be some of what I have been struggling with.
 - i. I figure that if I struggle with something that other people do. And I have found that if I am open about my struggles, other folks will find what they need to live through their struggles with determination and dignity.
 - b. It seems that over the past month or so, everywhere I turn I find something written about time. The first thing that God used to get my attention was a book review in the Plain Dealer one Sunday morning.
 - i. A secular book was written and a consulting business started as a result of a fellow who had to serve 3 years in prison for selling stock in his own company without SEC approval. While he was in prison, he came to the realization that the jail could have three years of his life or he could take those three years and make the most of them. His journey of using every minute well became the basis for his book and his consulting business when he got out of prison.
 - ii. I wondered what it would be like to be locked away (Like Martha Stewart) from all that I find familiar and routine.
 1. I also joked with someone later that week about what would happen if we all had to spend a week with an Amish family? How would we spend our time?
 2. The answer of course...is a lot differently that we do now.
 3. This is the question that I hope you will ask yourself today and during this sermon series.
 4. How can my time be spent better by having an eternal perspective?

- III. The bible is filled with references to time. (184 in the NT alone) Let me share a few of them with you.
 - a. *"In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1)*
 - i. This says that God and Jesus were before the beginning of time. They have always existed. He was there at the beginning of all created things. God Himself is eternal, without beginning or end.
 - b. *"God has set eternity in the hearts of men." (Eccl. 3:11)*
 - i. There is within man a desire to know the eternal things.
 1. God has written eternity in our hearts.
 2. The bible tells us that we all have a beginning but we will all live forever... somewhere.
 3. **We will either spend the balance of eternity with God or apart from him.**
 4. But our souls have been made to live forever.
 - c. *This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.* (Psalm 118:24)
 - i. God made the day. This day is the only day that counts.
 - ii. Stop looking back over your shoulder (it would be pretty dumb to drive looking in the rear view mirror instead of out the front windshield wouldn't it?) and stop looking at tomorrow.

iii. Don't miss what today holds for you!

- d. Psalm 90:10 *The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength, they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away.* Verse 12: *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply (or that we may gain) our hearts unto wisdom.*
- i. If you were 63 years old, you can reasonably expect to live to be 70. That's just 7 more years.
 - ii. That means you only have 2,555 days left.
 - iii. And if you should make it to 80 years of age, would you not thank Him for each day and tell Him if He wants you to live one more day that's fine!
 - iv. But that isn't all that long if you really think about it.
 - v. Especially when you stop to think at least, at how quickly the last ten years of your life went by.
 - vi. Now I know some of you young people will never get old. I realize that. When I was young I thought that too.
 - vii. When you're 20, old age is 30 and when you're 30, old age is 40. Old age is simply 10 years older than you are.

II. This leads us to the passage that is our core passage for this morning's sermon. Open your bibles to Ephesians 5:14-18.

- a. *"Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you." 15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 **making the most of your time (kairon), because the days are evil.** 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit"*
- b. I would like to analyze this passage for you looking at the original Greek words that were written by Paul. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek, which is the most precise language ever used by mankind. Translators always struggle over what the best translation is for words, sentences and concepts and the need for readers to be able to read a passage with some kind of flow to it. So I have gone to the Greek text for this passage and want to share a few insights with you.
- i. V. 14: *"Awake sleeper, and arise from the dead and Christ will shine upon you."*
 1. The word for Awaken means to stir up, rouse from sleep and collect your faculties.
 2. The word for Sleeper is "katheudo" -**means to sleep, to yield to sloth, or be indifferent to one's salvation.**
 - a. There are 2 parallel passages, 1 Th. 5:6-7 and Romans 13:11 that deal with this same subject.
 - b. 1 Th. 5:6-7 says, *"So then let us not sleep as others do but let us be alert and sober."*
 - c. Romans 13:11 *"Do this, knowing the time, (kairon-appointed day, the pivotal point in history) that it is already the hour (hora – specific point in time) for you to awaken from sleep (katheudo- from your indifference to matters of spiritual importance); for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed"*
 - d. Why would we be indifferent to our salvation? What could possibly lead us to be so apathetic?
 - i. Could it be that we aren't paying attention to the times in which we live?
 - ii. Or could it be that we are so caught up in the care's of this life that we become numb to the things of God?
 3. Why do we use an alarm clock?

- a. So that we can awaken at a specific hour, in time to do the task we have ahead, whether it is to go to work, church or a meeting, or simply to avoid sleeping the day away.
- b. The Roman's passage tells us that "*Now is the hour for you to awaken from sleep. Salvation is near to us than when we believed.*" (and will be with each passing day).
- 4. Are we sleeping...?
 - a. Indifferent to matters of the spirit, careless about things eternal?
 - b. Lethargic in our service to the Lord, apathetic about our spiritual well-being?
 - c. If so, then "It's Time To Wake Up!"...
 - d. **The time to change and grow will be soon be gone!**

ii. *15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,*

- 1. Beware how you live your life on a moment by moment basis.
- 2. Not as unwise men but as wise.
 - a. The Greek word for wise is Sophia, and for unwise, the Greeks would add a negative particle before it, the letter "a" to indicate a negative state.

c. Now Verse 16 really should catch our attention, as it is the continuation of this phrase:

i. *Redeeming your time (kairon), because the days are evil.*

- 1. To grasp the meaning of this short verse, you and I need to understand what the bible means when it talks about "redeeming" something.
 - a. Holman Bible Dictionary says that "*Redemption language grows out of the custom of buying back something which formerly belonged to the purchaser but for some reason had passed into the ownership of another. The original owner could regain ownership by paying a redemption price for it.*"
 - b. **Redeeming something means that you pay a price to get something back that you had once owned but forfeited.**
 - c. The word "redeem" is also used to describe what Jesus did for you and I by dying on the Cross on our behalf..."he redeemed us from the curse of the law." He bought us.
- 2. Now we are told to do this with our time. To buy it back. **To redeem our time means to make use of it in a way that reflects its true and irreplaceable value.**
- 3. The verse also tells us why we are to do this.
 - a. "Because the days are evil" or Ponerous: literally full of peril, ethically evil and diseased. They are full of danger for us.
 - b. As a result, we are to place a very high value on the time we have because there is so much peril to ourselves and the souls of men and women.

ii. How can take this kind of advantage of time?

- 1. In much the same way we take advantage of a sale.
- 2. We decide what we want and then we watch the newspaper flyers carefully.
- 3. If we want to buy a product, we will generally survey the market and then decide which particular brand and model we want to buy.
- 4. Then we keep a careful watch until the sale of our choice occurs.

iii. *Have a child or teen helper with this.*

- 1. Take a vase and point out the 3 or 4 rocks (family, work, prayer, exercise) and the basket of pebbles (reading paper, hobbies, etc) and the pitcher of sand (television, X-Box, GameCube, napping, daydreaming). Have the youth fill it with the sand then the pebbles. Finally, add the rocks. They won't fit!

2. Now empty them back out and put the rocks in first. Now they all fit because you gave the biggest, most important things priority.
- iv. Steven Covey wrote a best-selling book about 15 years ago called “7 Habits of Highly Effective People.” Jennifer and I attended a seminar offered at our church on the 7 habits. The third habit, “Putting first things first” dealt with this issue that we are grappling with today.
 1. To put “first things first,” we must find out what controls our time and we decide what is really important to us.
 2. Is it our relationship with God, family, job, socializing, recreation, or entertainments?
 3. In what order of priority would we put these and other interests?
 4. This is very important because the "small" activities drain most of our time away almost unnoticed., just like the sand will displace the rocks if it is put in the vase first.
- v. For what purposes are we to use our time?
 1. Do you remember the two things that last forever? I have spoken of them several times in the past.
 2. The Word of God
 3. The Souls of Men.
 - a. Because the souls of men and women will live forever, our priority must remain that they might find God.
- d. Verse 17 – *“So then, do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is.”*
 - i. This is like Paul writing a “therefore”...when ever you see a therefore in your bible, ask what it is there for. The same goes for a “so then.” It is linking several important points together.
 - ii. Again, the Greek is important here:
 1. The word for foolish is the addition of the negative particle “a” to the word “phron” which refers to the mind or the faculty of judgment.
 2. We are told as a result of our awareness of the times we live in that we aren’t to act rashly or without using our brain, but rather we are to understand God’s will for our lives.
 3. And God’s will is stated in the next verse.
- e. Verse 18 – *“Do not be drunk (methusko, intoxicated) with wine for that is dissipation (a-sotia) but be filled with the Spirit.”*
 - i. I believe that this verse tells us one way in which we are to redeem our time.
 1. We are told that intoxication is dissipation.
 2. Here is your word for the day.
 3. If you get nothing else from all this lesson on Greek, I hope you get this one now.
 - a. The word for dissipation is **a-sotia**, a conjunction of the negative particle and the greek word Sozo. Now that might not make you sit up in your seat, but it ought to.
 - b. Sozo is the word for salvation.
 - c. **Sozo which we commonly translate to save, actually means to make whole or to make complete.**
 - i. It is the word the bible uses over and over again to describe the state of the person who places his or her trust in Jesus Christ for their eternal future and for the forgiveness of their sins.

- ii. It means that they have passed from death to life, that their brokenness has been made whole, that they are being made complete where once they were incomplete because they were separated from God
 - iii. Sadly for many of us, we think that salvation is about getting our ticket punched for heaven.
 - iv. We don't realize that it is about being made whole, right here and right now.
 - d. And Paul adds the negative particle "a" to this to describe what happens to someone who gets drunk.
 - i. Which makes it mean that one who is drunk is one who is diluting and undoing the work of God in their life.
 - ii. They are damaging what God is trying to do in their life.
 - iii. Have you ever tried to have a conversation with someone who is three sheets to the wind?
 - 1. Their mind doesn't work right, they lack clarity and alertness.
 - 2. They cannot drive responsibly, they certainly cannot function as God intended them to.
 - e. Now this sermon is not about alcohol consumption.
 - i. You aren't going to hear me condemn anyone for their use of wine or beer.
 - ii. It is the Holy Spirit's job to show you if you are abusing your freedom in Christ.
- ii. This passage is about using your time and energy and effort to be so filled with the Spirit of God that you are filled continuously and completely.
 - 1. *"Keep on getting filled by the Holy Spirit"* would be a more accurate translation of this last verse.
 - a. Spiritual growth is always the result of a process that takes place over a period of time.
 - b. God desires that you use your life for Him, but under His control.
 - c. Yield to His Spirit and obey the subtle promptings he gives you.
 - 2. That brings another point up that I better bring attention to.
 - a. It is hard enough to hear God in my life with the busy-ness and daily activity that life puts in my path.
 - b. Imagine having a couple of beers or a few shots of Black Jack; and then try to hear God.
 - i. Folks, it isn't going to happen.
 - ii. And that is what this passage is saying.
 - iii. You don't find a list of rules about alcohol consumption in the bible but you do find this passage that says that **God's very best for our lives is to be able to Hear Him and walk under His power and control.**
 - iv. Anything that prevents us from doing that is not God's best for us and will impede God's purposes in our lives.
 - 3. *"Keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit"* is an imperative, it is a command.
 - a. It is the primary qualification for church leadership.
 - b. *"Fullness" refers to the character of the Lord Jesus Christ developed and manifested over a lifetime of spiritual growth in a believer's life..*

- c. Have a heart tuned into God, a heart that is pliable and that is surrendered to your own will, that is broken sufficiently that God has control of your life, and eyes fixed upon Jesus.
- d. When these elements are in place you will find yourself not only hearing God but walking in His power.
- e. Stephen while he was being persecuted before being stoned, is said to have been "Full of the Spirit."
 - i. You are either full of self or full of the Spirit.
 - ii. If you are full of self, then the Cross is not at work in your life and you are living strictly for yourself.
 - iii. But if you are full of the Spirit, then your life is full of God's power and work to use you to make a difference in other folks lives and in this world.
- 4. You are given a chance to make a choice today.
- 5. A choice on how you want to live and how the few short years of your life will be spent.
- 6. You can choose to spend those years on yourself or on something that will last forever.
- iii. Do the math.
 - 1. Decide whether you want God to use you or whether you want to go back to sleep...to indifference to spiritual things and to things eternal.

III. Good closing illustration:

- a. It had been some time since Jack had seen the old man. College, career and life itself got in the way in fact Jack moved clean across the country in pursuit of his dreams. There in the rush of his busy life Jack had little time to think about the past and often no time to spend with his own wife and son. He was working on his future and nothing could stop him. But over the phone his mother said: "Jack, Mr. Belser died last night, the funeral is Wednesday." Memories splashed through Jack's mind like an old newsreel as he sat quietly remembering his childhood days. His mother said: "Son, did you hear me, I said. ..." "Yes Mom, I'm sorry, I heard you, but its been so long since I thought of him, I'm sorry but I honestly thought he died years ago." "Well he did not forget you, every time I saw him, he'd ask how you were doing; he'd reminisce about the many days you'd spent over the side of his fence as he put it." "I love that old house he lived in." Jack said. "I'll tell you something else Jack. Whenever your father died, Mr. Belser stepped in to make sure you had a man's influence in your life." "Why yes Mom, he's the one that taught me carpentry, taught me everything. I wouldn't be in the business I'm in today if it were not for Mr. Belser. I'll be there for the funeral."
- b. So the next day he caught an early flight out to his hometown and Mr. Belser's funeral was very small and uneventful. He had no children of his own and most of his relatives had passed away. The night before he had to return home, Jack and his mom stopped by to see the old house next door one more time. Standing in the doorway Jack paused for a moment, it was like crossing over into another dimension; a leap through space and time for him. The house was exactly as he remembered, every step held memories, every picture, every piece of furniture and then suddenly Jack stopped and he said: "It's gone." His mother said: "What's gone?" "The box." "What box?" "Well there was a small gold box that Mr. Belser kept on top of his desk and he kept it locked. I must have asked that old man a thousand times what was inside and all he'd ever tell me was the thing that I value the most." Well, it was gone, everything about the house was exactly how Jack remembered it except for the box. He figured someone from the Belser family must have taken it. "Now I'll never know what was the most valuable thing to him."
- c. Well Jack finally had to go back home. Two weeks after he'd arrived back home, he received a package in the mail. The small box was old, it looked like it had been mailed a hundred years

ago. The handwriting was difficult to read but the return address caught his attention. It said: Mr. Harold Belser. Jack opened the package and there inside was the gold box. There was an envelope taped to it and Jack shook his hands and he read the note and it said: "Upon my death, please forward this box and its contents to Jack Bennett. It's the one thing I've valued most in my life." The small key was taped to the letter, his heart was racing as tears filled his eyes, Jack carefully unlocked the box. There inside he found a beautiful gold pocket watch and running his fingers slowly over the fine edged casing, he unlatched the cover and inside he found these words engraved: "Jack, thanks for your time, Harold Belser." The thing he valued the most was my time? Jack held the watch for a few minutes and he called his office and he cleared his appointments for the next two days. "Why?" His assistant Janet said. "Why are you doing this?" "I need to spend some time with my wife and son, oh by the way Janet, thank you for your time."

- IV. Will you make a difference by spending the most valuable commodity you have with someone?
- a. Will you let your life be used by God to make a difference in other's lives?
 - b. Will you give up control and let God take control?
 - c. Make that choice today. Redeem your time. Its valuable and every moment you waste cannot be taken back. Once gone it is gone forever.
 - d. Let's Pray.

God, you alone are the creator of time. You give us a few short years on this earth and you call us to keep our end in mind as we live. Lord, it is so easy to live for ourselves. It is so easy to spend time on the trivial and the useless and the meaningless...and to ignore the valuable and the eternal. Lord, show us today where we have lost sight of our priorities and focus us on those things that are important. Lead us to the Cross where Jesus died for us, to save us and to make us whole. Lead us to Your Spirit's fullness in our lives. In Jesus Name. Amen.

Please stand.

This is your ministry time. Jennifer and I will be here to pray with you if you need it, the rails are available to spend time alone with God. You might want to sit down right where you are and pray, as an act of surrender to God. You might even want to go up to someone and tell them how valuable they are to you. This time is for you to obey God's prompting. Whatever He tells you to do, please do it. While we sing...