

Now Is The Time

Overview and Review:

-Time – won't stop for anyone.

Time doesn't belong to us...last week we learned how we were to 'redeem' it, that is, to "buy it back" because we have given it away.

-Our challenge with time have to do with the fact that it is only a measurement of how we live our lives.

-Some of us seem to get more than others, but that isn't the point. It is what we do during the time we are allotted.

-How can some people make a huge difference in the world and others burn away their existence in self-centered, self-absorbed living? What is the difference between them? I believe that much of it has to do with their reason for living. Your highest purpose in life determines how you live your life. If you are your highest reason, then don't expect much out of this life and certainly less in the next. But the more you give away the more you get, according to Jesus. When you live for Christ then your life takes on a new dimension.

1. Now is the time

A. I wonder how many of us struggle with procrastination?

- i. Some of us have never seen a task that wouldn't be better off waiting until tomorrow to be done.
- ii. Think about how hard it is to do something we don't want to do or don't like to do, so we put it on the back shelf of our to do list and wait till "later" which somehow always seems to be some other time far ahead in the future.

B. I found the Top Five Things People Put Off Until the Last Minute

- i. *1. House chores/yard work: 47*
- ii. *2. Holiday gift shopping: 43*
- iii. *3. Making doctor/dentist appointments: 35*
- iv. *4. Calling relatives: 31*
- v. *5. Changing oil in the car: 29*

C. In case you haven't figured it out, our subject this morning is our second in a series I am doing about the subject of "Time."

- i. This morning's message is entitled, "Now is the Time."
- ii. Our biggest barrier to the "Now" is something called "procrastination."
- iii. Definition: Procrastination means to put off doing something, especially out of habitual carelessness or laziness, or to postpone or delay needlessly.
- iv. Throughout history, mankind has struggled with this issue, it is not a problem associated with just our technological age, but has been around since mankind was first created.
- v. The bible is filled with proverbs telling us not to put off till later what can and should be done today.
 1. Proverbs 20:4 says, "*A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing.*"

2. Procrastination –

A. I looked for some famous procrastinators

- i. St. Augustine, one of the great Christians in history, before his complete surrender to God had lived a pretty wild life with the ladies. Being a church-goer, he would pray, "Oh God, make me chaste...but not just yet."

1. The story of St. Augustine highlights the role that temptation has in procrastination.
2. When we procrastinate, we usually forgo pursuing a more important goal in favor of a more immediately pleasurable alternative.
3. In the long run, we would have better off if we had resisted the temptation.
4. For us, it is usually deals with the mundane.
 - a. We choose to watch tv instead of clean the garage.

B. Reasons for Procrastination:

i. **Double-Mindedness (Ja 1:8)**

1. James 1:8 says, "*They can't make up their minds. They waver back and forth in everything they do.*" (Living Bible)
2. When we are unsure about what to do, we put off decisions.
3. Sometimes it is easier to do nothing than to make up our minds.
4. When one fellow came to Jesus and asked to be his follower, Mt. 8:21 "*Another of the disciples said to Him, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father."* 22 *But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead"*
5. Jesus is telling us to make up our mind.
 - a. We cannot sit on the fence.
 - b. We cannot live with our feet in two worlds.
6. I think that the reason that many Christians don't follow Christ wholeheartedly is that they simply haven't made up their minds about what is really important.
 - a. "*I'll come to prayer meeting someday.*"
 - b. "*Small groups are good, but I got other stuff to do.*"
 - c. They procrastinate about the things of God, putting them on the back burner because they, according to James 1:8 have "two minds."
 - i. The Greek word is the root for this is di-psycho, very similar to our modern word for schizophrenic, which is a person who has multiple personalities.
 - ii. One mind says, "I have too much to do, I have plans, I have my own needs to attend to." And the other mind says, "I am a Christian."
 - iii. So their lives are filled with conflict between the two opposing mindsets.
 - d. If you recognize that double-mindedness is at the root of your procrastination concerning the things of God, there is a simple cure.
 - i. Colossians 3:2-3 "*Set your mind on things above. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God*"
 - ii. The passage says "*you have died...*"
 1. In other words, you no longer own your time or your life. You belong to God.
 2. Learn to act like it by filling your minds with the things of God.
 3. Commit to filling your mind with the things of God through bible reading, listening to Christian music and teachings

ii. **Denial**

1. We all live in a state of denial to some degree, whether it is just not wanting to face up to the fact that there is something wrong with us, or whether we have faults that we just cannot admit.

2. I have known folks, especially men who have had a pain in their body and have tried to ignore it, hoping it will just “go away.”
 - a. Denial is not a river in Egypt and procrastination never cured anything.
3. You can try to ignore the symptoms of a problem, you can try to deny there is a problem, but the result is the same.
4. The problem is still there and will remain there until you do something about it. By avoiding it and procrastinating, we leave things just as they are, and they only get worse.
 - a. You know the definition of insanity don't you?
 - b. Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.
5. Why not try something different? Why not take action?

iii. **Perfectionism (Ecc 11:4)**

1. Ecclesiastes 11:4 says, *"If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done."*
2. Mike Breaux says, "Some of the greatest procrastinators are closet perfectionists. They figure if I can't do it perfectly then I just won't bother."
3. Many of us are waiting for the perfect opportunity to tackle our problems, but the truth is - the perfect time is right now.
 - a. When I finally get some money in the bank we will have kids.
 - b. When I finally have a good job we'll take a vacation.
 - c. When the kids are grown we will take time for ourselves.
 - d. When I find the perfect mate then I will get married.
 - e. When I find the perfect church, then I will join it.
 - i. Got news for you...if you find the perfect church, don't join it, you will ruin it!
4. In 1915 Ty Cobb set up an amazing baseball record of stealing 96 bases. Seven years later Max Carey set the second-best record with 51 stolen bases.
 - a. Was Cobb twice as good as Carey?
 - b. Consider this: Cobb made 134 attempts. Carey made 53.
 - c. Carey's average was much better. He never tried to steal unless he was very sure he could make it.
 - d. Cobb however made 81 more tries and was rewarded with 44 more stolen bases.
 - e. Waiting for a perfect time will leave you short!
5. As a pastor, I often hear folks respond to invitations to come to visit our church with the statement, “when I get my life straightened out I'll come to church.”
 - a. I heard the story of a pastor who knew such a family. The wife was faithful and devoted, loved her family, loved the Lord and loved the church; but the husband was full of excuses. Whenever the pastor would talk to him about giving God a chance with his life, about saying yes to the Lord, about being an example of faith and service to his children, he would always respond, "As soon as I get straightened out, I'm coming Reverend." No matter what the occasion, his standard reply was, "I'll come as soon as I get straightened out." In time the man died, and as the pastor stood to preach his funeral, he looked down at the coffin and said, "At least he kept his word – he came when he got straightened out!"
6. God cleans his fish after He catches them. If you are waiting for your life to be perfect before you come to Christ, you will never come.

- a. God wants you just the way you are.
- b. He will walk with you one day at a time and will work on you from the inside out.
- c. It won't be your work that cleans you up. It will be God's work.
- d. Won't you stop putting off coming to Christ?

iv. **Yielding to Laziness (Prov. 13:4)**

- 1. Another reason we procrastinate is laziness.
- 2. Here's the cold, hard truth: some of us are just lazy.
- 3. It takes hard work, time and discipline to change and if we are honest many of us don't want to put forth the effort.
 - a. To control that addiction means you have to go to support group.
 - b. To improve your relationship means you have to go to counseling and tackle some tough issues.
 - c. To grow spiritually means hearing the word in worship and doing the word after worship.
 - d. To lose weight means watching my diet and spending time at the gym.
 - e. To improve my grades means long hours at the library and studying.
 - f. To conquer that debt means to live on a disciplined budget.
- 4. Proverbs 13:4 says, "*Lazy people want much but get little, while the diligent are prospering.*"
- 5. So we can say we want to "do this or that" as many of us will in a few weeks when we make our standard New Years Resolution...but the difference between those who succeed and those who don't will be a four letter word. Work.
 - a. Are you willing to pay the price to accomplish what you SAY is important to you?

v. **Fear:**

- 1. Proverbs 26:13 says, "*The (procrastinator) lazy person is full of excuses, saying, 'I can't go outside because there might be a lion on the road!'*"
- 2. We procrastinate because of fear.
- 3. We play the 'what if' game.
 - a. 'What if I try to quit drugs and I relapse.
 - b. 'What if I try to get out of debt and it doesn't work.
 - c. 'What if I become a Christian and my friends reject me.
 - d. **Fear feeds procrastination.**
 - e. Fear causes us to try to predict all the obstacles ahead of us, then we become overwhelmed and afraid to try anything new.
 - f. We imagine all the problems and become frozen in our present predicament and therefore do nothing!
- 4. Have you ever let fear paralyze you?
 - a. Let me tell you about how **faith is the antidote to fear.**
 - b. Jennifer and I had been married about a year when we realized that in order to pursue my call to ministry it would mean that we would have to move from Houston to Ft. Worth to go to Seminary.
 - i. I had a great job as a foreman for a fortune 500 company, with an incredible retirement plan, outstanding health benefits, and we lived near relatives and family.

- ii. Such a move would require us, with a 7 month old baby to quit this great job with great benefits and move to a place we had never been before.
- iii. We visited and tried to find a place to live and tried to find a job. No luck. But we moved anyway. It was very scary.
- iv. We had to stay in a hotel for 3 days while we tried to find a place to live.
- v. I went for several weeks without a job.
- vi. Do you know why we went in spite of the fear?
 - 1. Because God had told us to go. And we knew that He would not tell us to do something that He wouldn't provide for us in.
 - 2. God provided in amazing ways over those years in Ft. Worth just as He has over our entire lives.
 - 3. Faith was how we overcame our fear.
 - 4. We could have decided to wait until we had a job, a place to live, we could have decided to figure it all out before we went.
 - 5. But had we done that...we likely would have never gone.
- c. How about you? What fears are holding you back from taking action? The antidote to paralysis is to hear God clearly on an issue. Seek Him in prayer and fasting. Listen for His voice. When you hear Him you will find the faith to walk.

C. Results of Procrastination

- i. Turns a problem in to a crisis
 - 1. Ecclesiastes 10:18 says, "A lazy man lets the roof leak, and soon the rafters begin to rot.")
 - 2. I recall a sign at a printers that said, "your failure to plan is not my emergency"
 - 3. If you don't deal with a problem, it will ALWAYS get worse.
 - 4. I have known couples who have come to me saying, "our marriage is over" we cannot reconcile.
 - a. I want to say to them, "why didn't you come in here 2 years ago when you were still talking?"
 - b. But they hope the problem will just go away. They hope that it will get better on its own.
 - c. And what started as a communication problem becomes a marital crisis.
 - 5. Is there anything in your life that is a problem that you have been ignoring? Deal with it today before it becomes a crisis.
 - a. It is one thing to have a leaky roof, it is another to have the roof collapse.
- ii. Procrastination becomes habitual and make our lives become ineffectual.
 - 1. Rick Warren writes, "Procrastination is a universal problem. Most of us know what we need to do, we just put it off. The problem with procrastination is that it becomes a way of life. The more you do it the better you become at it."
 - 2. Don't say I will stop procrastinating...tomorrow.
 - 3. Recognize the patterns of procrastination and begin to deal with them one at a time. You didn't get into the habit overnight, you won't get out of it in a day either.
 - a. Start with the spiritual ones and bring them to God. Ask Him for help.
 - b. Ask your brothers and sisters in Christ for help.
- iii. It destroys opportunities

1. It is said that opportunity only knocks once.
 2. Procrastination will cause you to miss the opportunities that only come once. I had a professor in Seminary who taught evangelism and shared very transparently of how he distinctly heard God tell him to talk to someone he had met recently about Jesus. He resisted, saying, "Maybe tomorrow, maybe another time." The person died the next day and the opportunity was lost forever. He never forgot that experience and it was foundational to the way he lived his life from then on.
 3. Would you want to have such an opportunity wasted?
 4. Christians have such an advantage in that we get to hear the voice of God, the nudge of the Holy Spirit in our lives to do something.
 - a. But every time we resist, we are really practicing procrastination.
 - b. And we miss an opportunity that will never exist again.
 - c. We miss a chance to experience God and His amazing power and grace.
- iv. **It hurts people who depend upon you.**
1. We make decisions to wait until tomorrow, sometimes without even thinking about how that decision will affect someone else.
 2. A child was asked her biggest complaint about her father. She said, "Dads have too many 'tomorrows.'" You know, "I'll play with you tomorrow, I'll talk to you tomorrow." She was right. Dad, be there now for your children, building quality and quantity benchmarks of trust. Don't wait until tomorrow—or you'll end up wasting too many today's.

D. Ask yourself, "What is the price of procrastination in this case and am I willing to pay it?"

1. Mike goes on to say, "*When you stop to think about it, there is no such thing as a future decision. You face only present decisions that will affect what will happen in the future. Procrastinators wait for just the right moment to decide. If you wait for the perfect moment, you become a security seeker who is running in place, going through the motions, and getting deeper in a rut*"

E. Remedies to Procrastination:

- i. **Focus on the gain not the pain** (Gal 6:9)
 1. "*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time (kairos) we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*"
 2. *Ro 8:18 - For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us*
 3. Look at the reward and not the cost. The pain will always look bigger than that gain when you see it from afar.
 4. I know that when I get all the things on my list done (and there are things I don't want to do), I feel free!
- ii. **Invite Christ to empower you** (Phil 4:13)
 1. "*I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.*"
 2. This is using the faith that God has given you.
 3. Stop using your own strength.
 - a. It will never be enough to overcome the barriers to experiencing God's best.
- iii. **Get started now.** (Prov 27:1)
 1. "*Do not boast about tomorrow for you do not know what a day may bring*"

2. I have found it helpful to make a list and prioritize the things that need to be done. I try to do the things I least like to do first, because once I get through them, the rest is like dessert
3. **There are some things that simply cannot be put off until the end.**

3. *Father, I want to act on the priorities that you have given me, and I thank you that in Jesus Christ I have all of the resources of heaven to fully live in the gift of today. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen*