

It's About Time

Psalm 90:1-12, Ephesians 5:15-20

Well, another year has come and gone. 2014 is history and we will have to start getting used to writing 2015 on our checks and documents. As 2014 came to a close there were all kinds of countdowns, from the dropping of the ball at Time Square to I don't know how many different countdowns of the top songs of the year. We were in one store this past week where they were playing all the hits from the 60s, 70s, and 80s, from A-Z. They were on the letter J when we were there, and I was quite surprised by one of the songs that made the cut: The one where the dogs are barking out Jingle Bells. You never know what will make a hit song.

And so we begin another year, a year that where over 4,000 minutes have already passed. Time flies, or as my mom would often say: Tempus fugit. The days, weeks, and months pass quickly. I've always been fascinated by the concept of time. I enjoy those movies that have to do with travel through time: Like Back to the Future, Over Christmas, A Christmas Carol, A movie a few years ago; The Time Traveler. I was watching a news segment on what things actually came about from Back to the Future. No hover boards, or flying cars. Wide screen and face to face conversations are a present day reality. I know we appreciate it every time we contact our kids in Honduras. Who knows what things will be available to us in the future? I wonder how time will be measured in the world to come. We say they will be no such thing as time as we know it in heaven, so what will that be like?

Time is an interesting concept. It's something we can't see, yet we know it passes. It's hard for us to believe that Joanna and I have been in ministry here for 6 months already. Time is something we break up into segments, we use it to find occasions to celebrate: birthdays, anniversaries, our church's 200th this year, and the passing of a year and the beginning of a New Year.

I wonder, what is the meaning of time for you? How do you view the passing of each day? This morning I want to spend a few moments of time to talk about a few Scriptural principles related to this phenomenon called "time". I believe they are important principles that the Bible teaches us about time and how it relates to our lives.

The first has to do with how we view time. It seems fairly clear from the Scriptures that God looks at time differently than the way you and I look at it. We could examine various references, but perhaps the one

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that speaks to this so clearly and also poetically is from the 90th Psalm. The Psalmist acknowledges God's view of time with these words: In the sight of the Lord, a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day." In other words, the view from eternity is different from our limited "minute-by-minute" understanding. God sees things from an eternal perspective, not just the moment to moment passing of time that we are conscious of. I believe this understanding challenges us to have a larger view of the way we look at time. That as a Christian, I need to look beyond my limited view, and also see my life from this eternal perspective. When I do this, I begin to look at God's bigger picture for my life, for the Church, for the world. Having such a viewpoint can keep me from getting bogged down in some of the petty and insignificant details that we think are so important. You see, from God's eternal perspective, we can begin to focus on the things that really matter, that really count. The Psalm writer in saying, A day is a thousand years, and a thousand years as day, saw that such a point of view had some definite implications for how we live our lives. This is what he goes on to say: "Teach, me Lord, to number my days...that I may gain a heart of wisdom." In other words, let me make my days count. Let me focus on those things that are most important. Will I make the most of my time, will I let my life count for God? We've all heard of persons who gave little attention to the meaning of time until they came to terms with their own mortality. Perhaps it was the death of someone close to them, or the realization that their own death was near. And the reality of the situation brought them to think more seriously about the time they had left. I mentioned that our family loves to watch Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol. Actually most of our family can quote many of its lines. What convinced Ebenezer Scrooge that the future must be changed was the recognition of the consequences that his present life was leading him to. At first, he lamented, "I'm too old to change", but fortunately he concludes, there was still time to change, to make amends. And fortunately for you and me, there is still time, to take a look at our own life's journey. There is time to pray: "Teach, me Lord, to number my days." Help me, Lord, to see time as you see it. Give me that perspective of eternity. That I will re-examine by priorities. A new year is a good time to think about that.

This viewpoint is related to a second principle from Scripture regarding time. Time is a precious commodity. Our lives are a gift from God, so we want to make good use of our time. It becomes a

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matter of our stewardship, making quality use of the time God has given us. I repeat the words the apostle Paul we heard read from Ephesians. "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil." We know it's possible to fill our lives with all kinds of trivial things, and in doing so neglect the more important things: Like having quiet time before God, like an intimate conversation between a husband and wife, like spending quality time with our children, or finding time to care for someone in need, or carrying out an act of love and service for Christ. Stewardship is always a Christian issue. We often use the term when we talk about our giving, but it also relates to the use of our time.

Let's be honest. This is a challenge we all face. It's just that some of us are better procrastinators than others. We know the things we need to do, but we put them off. Why do I find numerous excuses for visiting a friend who lost a loved one? What haven't I written that letter of appreciation or encouragement? Why do I permit so many interruptions for my time of prayer with the Lord? We each could make our own list of questions. But the time lost in putting things off can sabotage years of service and love in a lifetime. If we could only get credit for our good intentions. We make all kinds of resolutions for the new year...why not use this time to resolve to take those steps that will make a difference in the lives of others. God, every day is gift from you. Show me how to use that gift.

I love this prayer I came across called "Thank you for Today, Lord". I shared it in this month's Messenger. "This is the beginning of a new day. God has given me this day to use as I will. I can waste it or use it for good. What I do today is very important because I am exchanging a day of my life for it. When tomorrow comes, this day will be gone forever, leaving something in its place I have traded for it. I want it to be gain, not a loss; good, not evil, success, not failure, in order that I shall not forget the price I paid for it." How appropriate a prayer for a new year. God, help us to make the most of our time.

The third principle from the Scriptures in relation to the view of time is this: time is not only the precise, measured minutes that we call time, but it is also the special seasons, you might call it God's favorable time for the Lord to work in our lives. There are two Greek words for time. One is *chronos*, the other is *kairos*. *Chronos* refers to the specific measure of time, what we usually think of as time, the passing of minutes, days, years. *Kairos* speaks of a point of time that has a special

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place in the execution of God's plan of salvation. It's like when Jesus said to his unbelieving brothers: "My kairos, my time has not yet come." One of the great stories of the Bible that speak so powerfully of this concept is the story of the Jewish queen Esther who fears for the safety of her people. She is afraid of appearing before her husband, the king with her request, for she knows if she enters his court and he does not raise the scepter, she will be killed. Then Mordecai, Esther's cousin, sends this reply to Esther: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house, you alone of all the Jews will escape." Who knows but that you have come to this royal position for such a time as this? Esther has the people fast and pray for her. As she prepares to go for the king, she goes with these words: "If I perish, I perish." For she knew she was being used for this special Kairos time of God. The words of her cousin echoed in her soul. I have been brought to this royal position for such a time as this.

There are those special times, those Kairos moments in our lives, when God opens the door of opportunity, for witness, for mission, for ministry. What a powerful example of that was shared last Sunday by Pastor Hey Young, when the door was opened to visit the Iraqi refugees. To be travelling with the very guide whose son was overseeing the care of those refugees, so that the group could visit them and let them know of our prayers and love. That was a kairos moment.

2015, a New Year. How will we spend our days? Will we make those days count for God, count for eternity. Will we look for those opportunities to make a difference?

There is another person in Scripture that we know very little about. His name was Enoch. Most of us remember the name of his son, more than this man. His son's name was Methuselah. Methuselah is the man recorded to have lived 969 years. Also good to know for Bible trivia games...the oldest man in the Bible: Methuselah. But very little is known about his father, Enoch. But what it does say is very significant. "Enoch walked with God 300 years. He walked with God, and then he was no more, for God took him away". Little is said, but what is said is of great significance: "He walked with God." That's so much more important than the chronos time of 969 years of Methuselah. Enoch was translated into the eternal because he lived a life walking with God.

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A New Year, what will be written about our lives? Will it reflect our wise use of time? Will we see life from that eternal point of view, numbering our days, seeking to gain that heart of wisdom, looking for those kairos moments when God will use us for accomplish his purposes. It's a new year! Let the time of our lives count for all eternity!