

First Presbyterian Church  
Cheyenne, Wyoming  
August 16, 2009  
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Worship Theme: Using Time Wisely,  
1 Kings 2:10–12; 3:3–14, Ephesians 5:15–20, John 6:51–58

Thank you for sharing some of your valuable time to hear this interpretation of the Word. Time is invaluable to us. We talk about time all the time. We talk about not having enough time. We often ask, “What time is it?” I found a joke about this aspect of time on the internet I thought you might appreciate. “While proudly showing off his new apartment to friends, a college student led the way into the den. ‘What is the big brass gong and hammer for?’ one of his friends asked. ‘That is the talking clock’, the man replied. ‘How's it work?’ the friend asked. ‘Watch’, the man said, then proceeded to give the gong an ear shattering pound with the hammer. Suddenly someone screamed from the other side of the wall ‘KNOCK IT OFF, YOU IDIOT! It's two AM in the morning!’” That is one way to find out what time it is.

What exactly is time? It is hard to define. One resource describes time as the measuring of how long it takes for one thing to move in relationship to another, like the movement of the sun or the moon across the sky. I am not sure this clearly defines time, but it might help.

Even if time is hard to define, it is useful to us. Albert Einstein, who developed the theory of relativity about time and space wrote, “The only reason for time is so that everything doesn't happen at once.” I like that idea. Interestingly enough, there is a scripture in Ecclesiastes that says the same thing about time. It is attributed to King Solomon, the son of King David, who is a central character in today's Old Testament Lesson. When I was younger I did not like this passage, but as I age, it makes a great deal of sense about time. If you wish to follow along please turn in your Bible to Ecclesiastes 3, pg 575 in the pew Bibles.

1 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: 2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; 3 a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; 4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; 5 a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; 6 a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; 7 a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; 8 a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace. 9 What gain have the workers from their toil? 10 I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. 11 He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. 12 I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; 13 moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. 14 I know that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that

all should stand in awe before him. 15 That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already is; and God seeks out what has gone by.” New Revised Standard Bible.

Not only are these verses about the importance and usefulness of time, but they also reflect a great deal of wisdom about time. King Solomon demonstrated this same wisdom in his time spent conversing with God as we heard in the passage from I Kings. First of all, Solomon set aside the time to speak with God, and even more wisely, took time to listen to God. What about us? How much time do we give to prayer, to a two way conversation with God? Personally, I do not think I set aside enough important and useful time for prayer. In this conversation with God, however, Solomon made wise use of his time as he carefully listened to God’s most gracious offer, “Ask what I should give you.”

Let us take some time at this point to imagine God giving us the same offer. What would we ask for? Would we ask for more time to think about it? Would we ask for something frivolous or would we ask God to meet a real need? Solomon, as a new king wisely asked for more wisdom, a real need, “Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this, your great people?” God was very pleased and gave Solomon an understanding mind and much more to help him govern God’s chosen people. If we take time to think about this passage, and have taken time to read other Bible passages on prayer, we will realize that every time we pray to God, God gives us the same opportunity to ask God wisely for what we truly need. In Matthew 6, Jesus taught. 7 “When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” In Matthew 7, Jesus tells us “Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? 10 Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him.” There are many more passages like this, but I hope you see the point. Let us use our time wisely to have a two-way conversation with the God who really cares for us.

The Apostle Paul gave similar advice to the Ephesians concerning time and their relationship to God. “Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time.... Now, Paul advised this “because the days were evil.” Many things that violated the ways of God were happening in the first century AD, and the same could be said for the times in which we live. Paul also thought that Jesus would return soon, so he thought the people did not have much time left in their lives on earth to get right with God. Jesus still has not returned, but he may at any moment. What will he find us doing when he does? And as to how much time we have left to use wisely, it is good to note the life expectancy of white male Americans is 74 years and for white females it is 80. This means at the age of 62, I might have a mere 12 years left in my life. Gulp! By these life expectancy standards, some of you in the congregation are living on borrowed or grace time, for which I am most thankful. I pray

God gives you many more years. Harvey MacKay, the motivational speaker gives us some insight on the value of the time we have left. “Time is free, but it's priceless. You can't own it, but you can use it. You can't keep it, but you can spend it. Once you've lost it you can never get it back.” Let us take time to listen to Paul and use the time we have left wisely, especially in our relationship to God.

Another insight on our wise or unwise use of time is wonderfully expressed by a British Professor of Politics named Dr. Alice Bloch. “We say we waste time, but that is impossible. We waste ourselves.” Paul told the early Christians do not waste your time on drunkenness or debauchery or in other words, don't waste away your life on foolishness. Maybe all we have heard today directs us to the fact that God's gift of time to us is really the gift of our lives. Maybe what Paul was saying is “make the most of your life.” Maybe Solomon's insights on time and his request for wisdom were making the same point. Let us not waste our lives, but let us be wise in how we live.

How shall we use our time—live our lives wisely? Jesus had an answer to these questions in the passage from John. “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.” In other words, the wise use of our time, of our lives is to have the deepest possible personal relationship to Jesus Christ. Paul had this type of relationship with Jesus Christ and expanded on the wise use of it by telling us to spend the time, the lives we have being filled with the Holy Spirit; praising and giving thanks to God; and whatever we do, doing everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is wise for us to give our lives, our time to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and follow him in how he used his time or life here on earth.

If we have been wise with our time, we will know where God, Jesus and Paul prescribe wise living in the Bible. We would also be wise to remember that we cannot live this life without being filled and led by the Holy Spirit. But just to remind us or wake us up like the college student did his neighbor with the big brass gong and hammer here are a few of the teachings from Moses, Jesus, and Paul that can help us be wise in the use of our time.

First from God through Moses: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol... You shall not bow down to them or worship them. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God,... Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. 12 Honor your father and your mother, ... You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet. Exodus 20.

7 If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor. 8 You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. Deuteronomy 15

From God through Jesus: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39

And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets . Matthew 22.

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. Matthew 5

From God through Paul: 12 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3.

Oh, there are hundreds more verses I could share. These I have shared with you, you probably know already. Yet, they give us a good start on how to use our time wisely. When shall we begin? In answer to this question, I think Martin Luther King, Jr. hit the nail on the head when he said, "The time is always right to do what is right." That time is now.