

Proper 5 B  
June 10, 2018  
St. Mark 3:20-35  
2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1  
St. George's Episcopal Church  
Fr. Chris

## Time

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”

Whether you are power walking, jogging or cycling, the temptation to simply drop out early before you finish the course is a strong one, and easy to rationalize. It is also a temptation in life, to simply throw in the towel, abandon the challenge of our work or our goals, and quit the race. Let's be honest: the temptation is always out there. Monday morning, who wants to go back to work, even if you love your work? It is so tempting to stretch the weekend into another day and preserve the wonderful personal time that allows you to take back control of your life.

I have been surprised of late, though I should not have been, how we all age: accepting the truth of Paul's words about how 'our outer nature is wasting away.' I think of myself, as I am sure you do, as “young” –as young as 20-30 years ago, but my body and its growing limitations remind me something else is going on, something is afoot here that I otherwise resist accepting.

Lately I have been bumping into people I worked with also about 20-30 years ago and I am amazed by how much they have aged, forgetting I have done the same! (just recently I returned to my former church in Hartford to do a funeral service, and several people walked up to me and commented they had not recognized me, the unspoken comment lying in the air between us, “because you have aged so much.”) Silly, vain me. I am surprised seeing my co-workers some 30 years later, (those who are still around and alive) because I was for many years the “young priest” who was ordained at the ripe old age of 24. Many of my friends and priestly ministerial acquaintances were at least 14-15 years my senior and they are now entering their 80's. Some are in much better shape than others. I need to work on that myself.

I spoke with my friend Wil Austin, a priest who is the pastor of one of the area Episcopal Churches, and who has had a very successful ministry as a second career in his life. I was shocked when he reminded me that he is 80 years old. He told me he is retiring after 14 years as pastor of St. Stephen's in Bloomfield.

Now Wil is one of my friends who does not look or act his age. He easily looks ten or more years younger than he is. But he said he is slowing down and wants to spend more time with his family. If I reach 80, I hope I can be as vigorous as he is!

Our spiritual self is ageless. It is eternally young. It only grows in wisdom and grace and peace as time passes. And as the time passes, hopefully our capacity for love grows and does not waste

away unused. Much of this is unseen, invisible, unlike the piles of our material treasures and the visage we present to the world, which is slowly, often not visibly, fading and passing away.

I don't want to get stuck in the status quo, but I must admit, I wish I could stop the big clock of life and enjoy the present moment longer. Have you ever felt that way? Don't you just wish there was a button you could press and freeze time? I think they had an episode of the Twilight Zone years ago, where the protagonist could do just that. He goes into a bank vault and is able to rob the bank with impunity, in the midst of which he drops the stopwatch and breaks it, leaving time frozen in that instant forever, and he is stuck, frozen in time, all alone, running around the time-frozen people who could not interact with him. It became a fate worse than death!

Time waits for no one. It is an overused cliché to say that life passes us by quickly. Some days it feels like one of those express trains in Europe traveling in excess of a hundred miles an hour! On other days, it seems as though time is moving too slowly, especially while you are waiting in the queue.

Just when it seems as though we are at the top of our game, we must lay down our pens, our laptops, or our tools and move on. Yes, life does go by quickly, and you don't need me to tell you that. But as it goes by, it seems to travel slowly—as though the present moment will continue on forever. But this is only temporary, an illusion, often self-fueled by our own desires to hold on to and preserve the present moment.

So what is permanent? What can we hold onto and count on? Now we start down a trail of asking the right questions in the face of time. How we spend our time makes all the difference and as we age and travel down the road of life, we begin to realize how precious a gift time is—to us and also when we share it with others. Time is all we truly have in this mortal life, and in the glory days of youth, it feels as though we have an infinite supply of it.

How should I be spending my time? Given the finite amount of time I have left, what are my priorities for spending it? What do you suppose God wants me to do with my time? I think the answers to those questions are simple and obvious. The scriptures lay it all out for us.

I know I get scared about time. I desperately want to hold onto the present at some moments...and maybe more than a few moments, because I can get stuck in the present like that fellow with the stopwatch on The Twilight Zone. My fears about the loss of time lead me to protect myself, as silly as that sounds, to build a stronger house and surround myself with things that portend my survival. This fear is behind the growing popularity of the "Prepper" and "Survivalist" movements. These folks even build bunkers deep in the ground to protect them from the impending apocalypse, but what about the great Eschaton? (That is, will it work to protect them at the end of time when Christ returns? Will their bunker become their tomb?)

But when I get caught up in this, shall I call it my foolishness, I always find life bids me to let go and move on. Then I am left with a pile of unused material things, which will not stave off the march of time. Would that I used my resources more wisely to improve the lives of those around me that I love!

The house we are building in this life is not made with human hands. It is a mansion built of bricks of love and kindness, housing a precious treasure inside, of time well spent as you walk the journey of this life.

“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.”

What time is it? (as St. Paul often asks) AMEN