**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**Rolla, Missouri**

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**Hard Realities About Time**

Sometimes we sing the song,

“Swiftly we’re turning life’s daily pages,

Swiftly the hours are changing to years;

How are we using God’s golden moments?

Shall we reap glory? Shall we reap tears?”

This song is so true, “swiftly we’re turning life’s daily pages.” The years come and go so fast. We wonder, “where does the time go?” It gets away from us so quickly. Because time is swiftly passing, it is vital then that we heed Paul’s instructions in Ephesians 5:15-16, where he says, *“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”* To “redeem the time” means to “buy up the opportunities.” As a bargain hunter buys up the wonderful bargains at a flea market, we are to make the most of every opportunity that comes our way. The moments we have are precious, few and fleeting. It is our task to seize them and use them wisely. But if we are to do that there are some realities about time that we must recognize and respect. That’s what I want to talk about this morning.

Today on our program and I want us to look at four hard realities about time.

Reality number one - our time is limited and uncertain.

Probably most of us are not very careful about our use of tap water. We take long showers or fill up the tub. We let water run in the sink when we turn away. The reason we are not more careful is because our thinking is, the supply is virtually unlimited. We’re never worried about running out. But what if someone set a gallon of water in front of us and said: “that’s all you get for the day.” I suspect that we would be much more careful; we would really think about how we used that water, wouldn’t we?

One of the mistakes we make with our time is to behave as though we have an unlimited supply that can be wasted on our whims. The truth is, our supply is more like that water in the jug, than the water out of the tap. We only get so much to use, and we never know just exactly how much that is. Some may get a 50 gallon barrel (live to be a hundred); but others get just a little bit, perhaps not even making it out of their growing up years. One of the members of our congregation died. She was 101 years old. But I have also preached funerals for those who were in their teens or twenties. What’s the point? The point is, time is not something we have in abundance; it is a precious commodity that needs to be handled with great care and thought. James says in James 4:14, *“For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.”*

Reality number two – we have more to do than time to do it.

How many of us start out our day with a list of things that need to be done, but then we reach the end of the day and find there’s still more than a few things that we haven’t got to yet? I suspect that is the way things are with most folks. Even people who are retired often complain that they are busier now than they were when they were working.

There are two things I want to say about this reality. First, we need to be careful about what’s falling to the bottom of our list every day and ultimately getting bumped. Often it is pressing things that shout their way to the top of our list, and the truly important things are quietly pushed to the bottom and don’t get done. What kinds of things wind up on the bottom of our list? If it’s things like Bible study and prayer, time to do the Bible reading with my children…that’s not good! We understand that there is nothing more important than seeking God and His will for our lives. Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, *“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”* Yes, food, clothing and shelter are important, but not as important as the kingdom of God and His righteousness. If I place earthly chores above the spiritual growth of me and my children, there will be a price to be paid in grief down the road.

Second, we must not be deluded by the myth of future free time. Sometimes we allow ourselves to deal with what is pressing and neglect what is important because we tell ourselves that, ONE DAY, we will have more time. ONE DAY: when I finish my education; or when I establish my career; or when my children get a little older; or when I finish this project at work; or when my kids are out of the house; or when I retire…, then I’ll have more free time to do the things that are really important. This is like Felix who, after hearing the gospel, sent Paul away promising to call him again when he had a convenient time (Acts 24:25). There is no record in scripture that he ever found the time. Let’s not be fooled by the myth of future free time. We never reach a point in our lives where we have all this time on our hands to do the things that are really important. The truth is, if I can’t make time for those things now, my problem is not with time. The problem is those things are not important enough to me. We will make time for the things that matter most to us.

Now, the next reality springs from this one. Because our list is full we can’t add anything to our list without knocking something off. This is one of those hard, life realities that we simply cannot afford to ignore. Because there are only so many hours in the day, and because we are working with lists that are already full, when I start saying “yes” and committing my time to different activities, then at the very same time that means I’m saying “no” to something else. When I start adding to my list, what am I knocking off?

Now, go back to the gallon jug of water you’ve been given to use for one day. You could take the gallon and use it all to wash some dishes. This would not be a bad way to use it. However, if saying, “yes” to the dishes meant you were saying “no” to having any drinking water for that day, you might want to reconsider. The same is true when it comes to our use of time. There is nothing wrong with working overtime and making a few extra dollars. There’s nothing wrong in going out with friends, or working on a hobby. But it becomes a problem when my time begins to be used up by those things, and some important things begin to get knocked off my list. That overtime may become a problem when it means I’m constantly knocking church services off the list. That time I spend hanging out with friends may become a problem when it means I’m constantly knocking off my list events that are important to my wife and children. That hobby may become a problem when it means my Bible lays shut on the dresser in the bedroom or I can’t remember the last time I paused and prayed to God. It is not simply an issue of what I am choosing to do with my time. It is equally important to consider what I am sacrificing in the process. The bottom line is this: there are some things that are more important than others and deserve our time more than others. Remember what Jesus says we must seek first. It is God’s expectation that I make wise decisions about how I choose to spend this precious commodity we call time. I need to be sure that I spend it on the right things

This brings us to our last reality. We are responsible to use our time wisely.

God has given us work to do, and He has give us time in which to do it. He expects us to make wise decisions about the use of our time so that we do the work He has called upon to do. Jesus understood this. Jesus said in John 9:4, *“I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.”* Notice, God, the Father had given Jesus work to do, but Jesus understood He had a limited time here on earth in which to do this work. Therefore, He saw the urgency in making good decisions about the use of His time. And God expects us to do the same. The Psalmists said in Psalm 90:12, *“So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.”* “Teach us to number our days,” in other words, teach us to recognize the brevity of life. Teach us to place proper value on our time. In so doing we will use our time wisely and get a heart of wisdom.

This was Paul’s point in Ephesians 5:16 – *“redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”* Redeeming the time means we are to use our time well. He says, “because the days are evil.” These are the days in which evil abound. The point is, in order to keep the evil of the day from taking control of our lives, we need to redeem the time - use it well.

And so, God expects us to be wise in the use of time. We have a God-given responsibility to recognize that 1) we all have work to do in His service, 2) our time is limited in doing this work, 3) many things press for our attention, 4) sacrifices have to be made if we are going to use our time well, 5) some things are more important than others, 6) we must make wise choices.

Look with me again at the song we mentioned at the beginning of the program.

“Swiftly we’re turning life’s daily pages,

Swiftly the hours are changing to years;

How are we using God’s golden moments?

Shall we reap glory? Shall we reap tears?”

Notice that writer asks us to consider how we are using our time (God’s golden moments) because, in the end, our eternity will be determined, in part, by the choices we make. And that’s right. 2 Corinthian 5:10 says, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”* In the judgment we will give an account of what we have done in this body. Paul says in Romans 2:6 that God *“will render to each one according to his deeds.”* Our deeds are determined by the choices we make in how we use our time. And so, we will be held accountable before God for how we have used our time.

May we commit ourselves to investing our time wisely. Far more important than the investments we choose to make in the stock market is how we choose to invest our time. How are you going to invest God’s golden moments in the coming year?

Our time is gone for today. We thank you for listening

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