

Now is the Time

Opening Prayer

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Looking Forward and Backwards

How many of you read the newspaper or listen to the news on the tube?

Notice how at the end of the year there is always a retrospective on the news of the previous year?

Then we get the analysts involved and predictions are made for the coming year and beyond. Some are good, some are wrong, but in our culture we are always planning our next steps. We have become very busy. In fact, if you stop to look around you, people will almost always seem to be in a hurry. Have you ever been at a lunch and right after you eat your lunch partner says: "I gotta go", or "I'm outtie" or perhaps "I gotta blow this taco stand" and others...

Example: In my former career, I was a business analyst. I lived my life thinking and planning, that's what I got paid for. Not a bad gig to get paid to think and plan, but my mind was always going over historical data or projecting where the business would be in the future. Only once I spent several days going over the past and predicting the future, would I actually plan a small group of days for others to carry out. I spent my time planning someone else's now and never lived it myself.

Now there are good and bad things about looking back. If we look at history and learn from the mistakes of others or ourselves, that's fine. Perhaps we look toward the future in expectation of what God will do in his church. What about when we look back without a desire to learn or remember moments of joy. These are good uses of memory and the past.

Suppose however, that we look back with regret or condemnation we continually recriminate about a sin we committed a hurt we suffered or a loss. Perhaps our past experiences cause us to look to the future with anxiety or intense regret. These are tools of the enemy and traps we put ourselves into to prevent us from moving forward. I am reminded of Lots wife who when told not to look back did not listen and became a pillar of salt. (Gen 19:26)

We need to "Carpe Diem" Latin for: seize the day. In our busy culture, do we want to live in regret, in fear or unbelief, or do we want to live each day as unto the Lord? Christ came to give us life and life more abundantly. Clearly he does not want us to waste it in regret and condemnation of the past or in dread of the future. Paul tells us in:

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Ephesians 5:15-17

New International Version (NIV)

¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

When I was young, I would dream of the day when I would get my driver’s license How many times I thought about how great it would be when I finished high school. Even further back; I remember that I could hardly wait to get into high school. I felt that I would never meet the person that I would spend the rest of my life with. I remember starting in business and how often I looked forward to my next promotion?

This is the same guy who later looked back at rides in his parent’s car when he didn’t have to pay for gas and insurance? This is the same guy who later looked back and missed the friendships and freedom that was had in high school. How many miss the dating they had with each other before they were married? (ps. I have learned that doing this is a very good idea...) How many look back at their previous Job and remember how much less pressure they had?

Now the big question... How much time have we lost on either looking to the future or longing for what has been? Are we so busy with looking forward and back we forget to live in the now?

Enjoy your life, enjoy where you are; enjoy God now. Be content where you are at.

Paul said in Philippians 4:11:

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Philippians 4:11-13

New International Version (NIV)

¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

We Have Limited Time:

Paul has also told us our life on this Earth is limited and we need to make the most of every opportunity, do we want to be living in the past, in the future or living for Christ today? When we are dwelling on the past or living in the future, we are not in the now. We need to take hold of the now.

In Psalms 39:4 we read:

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Psalm 39:4

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⁴“Show me, LORD, my life’s end
and the number of my days;
let me know how fleeting my life is.

In Psalms 90:10:

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Psalm 90:10

New International Version (NIV)

¹⁰Our days may come to seventy years,
or eighty, if our strength endures;
yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow,
for they quickly pass, and we fly away.

And in Psalms 90:12

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Psalm 90:12

New International Version (NIV)

¹²Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Making the most of all your opportunities

Let’s be really honest here. How many of us know how many more days we have left? We don’t know exactly when the Lord will return. We don’t know if we will become sick and go to be with the Lord. Tomorrow you may hear: “Mind that bus!” and you will say “what bus” and splat! Regardless of how much time we have left, I think Paul’s message is clear. “We have limited time on this Earth”. None of us have a guarantee of how long we will live as we do now. Check out James 4:14-17:

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James 4:14-17

New International Version (NIV)

¹⁴ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or

that.” ¹⁶As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.

Remember Ephesians 5:16 wherein we were told to “make the most of every opportunity”. Verse 17 of James 4 tells us that if we know the good we ought to do and we don’t do it, it is sin.

Paul tells us to make the most of our opportunities. James tells us that wasting time is a sin. Jesus said that Satan is a thief and a robber. Let’s look at John 10:10

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John 10:10

New International Version (NIV)

¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

One of the most precious things that the enemy can try to rob from us is our time. It’s not always living in the past or the future that can rob our time... but good things as well. Consider Luke 10:40-42:

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Luke 10:40-42

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⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

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⁴¹ “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one.^[a] Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Here Martha is doing good work preparing food, but listening to the saviour was better. Even healthy and wholesome activities can make demands on our time. Martha wasn’t sinning. Her priorities were just messed up.

I don’t know about you, but I get busy. I take Rayya to Occupational Therapy, Speech Language Pathology, Preschool, Strong start and other do necessary tasks: I cook, clean, visit, counsel, work on projects, shovel my driveway, have date night with the wife and so on. If you consider these activities

they are all valid and in the now. I do that much right, but despite all the good work and intentions, I can still get caught up, feel overloaded and miss time to soak in the presence of the Lord, read or pray.

If we don't live a balance and ensure we spend time on our eternal relationship with the Lord, we can fail to make the most of our opportunities to do the most important thing. After all that busy-ness, how many of us, knowing we should connect with the Lord, sit down and turn on the tube?

Poor Martha, she got so caught up cooking and forgot that Jesus the Saviour was in her living room! He is right next to you too. Are you making the most of your opportunities?

There is a new year coming and an opportunity for a fresh start. Do you understand what the Lords will is for you in the coming year?

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Jeremiah 29:11-14

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

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I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

Understanding the Lords will for you in the coming Year

If you don't want to know, I have – the same – scripture we started with for you:

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Ephesians 5:17

New International Version (NIV)

¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

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Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Let's think about this for a moment:

Does God want us to be living in the past condemning ourselves and fretting at the expense of the present? Clearly Not

Does God want us to be living in unbelief, discouragement or anxiety about what is to come? No Again

Does God want us so booked up that we don't have time left for our relationship with him? Nope

Does God only deserve the left overs of our time? Yet again No

When we get into these states, we cannot focus on spiritual thoughts because our time is consumed by things that the enemy would use to destroy our movement forward in Christ. He wants to paralyze us in the now, to prevent us from fulfilling his great commission. He wants us to go out and make disciples. He wants us to love one another (John 15:12) and most of all he want a relationship with you that is in the forefront of your now.

Does God want us to be living in the now? Yup he does – for him!

We have established that God wants us in the Now and he wants our focus. What causes us a problem in our lives; if we have gotten far enough and have learned to live in the now? Our Priorities...

We need to ask ourselves: "What are the most important things in my life?"

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A Godly perspective might include:

- Spending time in Relationship with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit
- Spending time in Prayer
- Spending time Reading the Bible
- Spending time with your children
- Spending time on Date Night with your wife or husband
- Spending time talking to non-believers about Jesus
- Spending time in fellowship with other believers

As we go into the new-year:

- Let this be a year of positive confession and full Godly affirmation
- Let us go forward into the new-year in Faith and Victory
- Let us define a new approach and set our goals and priorities in accordance with God's word
- Let us hold fast to the eternal things in God
- Let us invest our time in our families, other believers and the lost

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Romans 13:11-12

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¹¹ And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

In the new-year, let us all live in the now, putting Jesus and his will in the forefront of our lives. I will borrow the words of Joshua when he said: "... As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"

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Closing Prayer