

## MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TIME Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, Luke 9:57-62 [MW20-29] Sermon preached by Rev Wayne Thornton at Kaiwaka and Wellsford, Sunday 02 August 2020

In Charles Schulz's "Peanuts" comic strip, a little girl says,  
"Grandma is mad at me. She said it's inexcusable to be six weeks late with a 'thank you' note. I didn't think six weeks was that long to a grandmother."

For decades, anyone living within five or six miles of the hat factory in Denver, Pennsylvania, set their clocks and watches by the sirens the factory set off five days a week. At 5:30 a. m., the wake-up siren would begin the day followed by the starting, lunchtime, and quitting sirens at the designated times. When the siren system was eventually disbanded, the timekeeper was asked about his job: "What did you use to determine the exact time?" With a twinkle in his eye, the man reached in his pocket and pulled out a child's Mickey Mouse watch.

Robert Frost once wrote:

*Time and tide wait for no man, but time always stands still for a woman of thirty.*

Everybody - everybody but everybody

- has the same number of hours in a day, the same numbers of days in a week from the Managing Director of Fonterra to the youngest baby in a cot everybody has the same amount of time in a week
- when you think about it, time is a great leveller isn't it?  
no matter who you are or what you have, you can't buy more time
- Queen Elizabeth 1 is reputed to have said on her death bed  
"All my possessions for a moment of time"  
but unfortunately time cannot be bought - not even one extra minute

Everything else about our life may vary or else we have some measure of control over

- the money we earn, the friends we have, the jobs we do  
health, hair colour, where we live
- but everyone, everyone, has the same number of hours in a day:  
24 - no more, no less  
time is a gift, time is precious: time is a precious gift
- it is more than highly appropriate to take some time to consider this  
to appreciate this

I came across this in an overseas magazine:

sign in a NZ department store clock display: "There's no present like the time"

Ecclesiastes 3:1 says:

*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven*

Time it seems is like money

- time is at its best when "budgeted", used wisely  
after all, we talk about "spending time", don't we?

It is all too true that

- if you don't budget, money tends to fritter away  
if you don't plan, time tends to fritter away, on the other hand ...
- when you do budget it's amazing how much 'extra' money you suddenly find  
likewise when you plan it's amazing how much time is suddenly available

Time may be like money in some senses

- yet it is perhaps even more precious, for while you can use your time to get money you cannot use your money to get time!

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen (1895-1979) said:

*Every moment comes to you pregnant with a divine purpose; time being so precious that God deals it out only second by second. Once it leaves your hands and your power to do with it as you please, it plunges into eternity, to remain forever what you made it.*

What you spend your time on

- again just like money - indicates what is really important to you  
what you spend your time on indicates very clearly your true priorities and values  
what they REALLY are, not what you SAY they are

For example, if you say that Bible reading is really important

- but find you haven't got time  
and yet spend time watching TV, walking, gardening  
it means that Bible reading has a lower priority than TV, walking, gardening
- sometimes you hear people say things like - 'sorry I didn't have time to ...'  
or - 'I ran out of time'
- how can you possibly run out of time?  
you know exactly how much time there is
- it's about choices - if it's important somehow you find the time

*Paul Thongas was a young and rising member of the US Senate. Learning he had cancer made him re-evaluate the time he had been spending with his wife and children, compared with the time he spent at work. After spending a rare evening at home with them, he realized that with the schedule he was keeping, the next night like this would probably be several years in the future. After this sobering realization he made this observation: "Nobody on his deathbed ever said 'I wish I had spent more time on my job.'"*

In our gospel reading we can imagine people feeling they really would like to go with Jesus

- to be one of his followers, but they haven't got time just now  
if you could just hang on a minute because I have to go and bury my father
- look I haven't got time at the moment  
there are a few things I have to finish off at home, then I'll be right with you
- I don't know about you but to me those words sound all too familiar  
and plausible and reasonable  
in fact I'm sure they've slipped out of my mouth from time to time

That's just it isn't it, it sounds reasonable

- "fair enough" we might say in Kiwi-speak  
bury your loved one, fix things back home, and then you'll be right ...  
... only you won't be says Jesus, because all your priorities are out of whack
- because you haven't figured out who deserves first call on your time

These things are not necessarily selfish - they are not illegal, immoral or fattening

- they may be loving, caring acts - good uses of time  
Jesus though says: what is most important to spend your time on?  
Jesus confronts people with the reality of how they stand
- confronts people with their choices  
it's no good trying to hide behind saying "there's no time"  
there is time - it's a matter of choice and commitment

It's an interesting and intriguing and ultimately sobering exercise

- to actually monitor what you do with your time, I know because I've done it try recording how each hour of the day was spent for a week, or a month even
- it is very revealing

For example - if someone said that being a good parent was really important

- how much time did they spend at that?  
or if someone said being a good tennis player was important  
how much time went into that?
- what was given more time, what was given less  
what was the most time spent on  
how much time was spent on work, individual leisure

There was an ad sponsored by *The Warehouse* a few years ago which said:  
"The most important thing you can spend on your children is ... time"

Time - money can't make up for it

- in so many areas of life time is actually more important than money  
and sometimes it seems people give money in order to avoid giving themselves
- we are only on this earth for such a short time really  
we need to use our time wisely - make it count
- Pope John XXIII (1881-1963) said:  
*"Do not walk through time without leaving worthy evidence of your passage."*

Of course a lot of these issues are dealt with very well in managerial courses

- time management books and the like  
however as Christians we have a unique perspective: time is a gift
- a precious gift from God

Devotional writer William Law goes so far as to say:

Where did we come up with this concept of 'Spare time', anyway? Is there any time for which we aren't accountable to God? Is there any time during which God doesn't care what you are doing? No Christian has ever had spare time. You may have spare time from labour or necessity, you may stop working and refresh yourself, but no Christian ever had time off from living like a Christian.

Some Christians tithe their money

- here's an interesting thought: What about tithing time???
- giving 10 percent of your time to God  
how might that work out?
- it might include such things as praying and reading the Bible,  
being at church, joining a home group, caring for an elderly or sick neighbour
- helping with children's ministry, baking, visiting,  
assisting one of the many social agencies  
taking part in one of the various ministries in the church family
- around 16-17 hours a week

An interesting aside is: what do you do for more than 16-17 hours a week?

- watching the News and Coronation Street adds up to 9,  
throw in golf, netball and Super Rugby ...

Here's one statistical breakdown:

A study revealed that an average 70 year old man has spent 24 years sleeping, 14 years working, 8 years in amusements, 6 years at the dinner table, 5 years in transportation, 4 years in conversation, 3 years in education, and 2 years in studying and reading. His other 4 years were spent in miscellaneous pursuits. Of those 4 years he spent 45 minutes in church on Sundays and 5 minutes were devoted to prayer each Sunday. This adds up to a not at all impressive total of 5 months that he gave to God over the 70 years of his life.

Even if this man had been a faithful churchgoer who attended Sunday school and 3 one-hour services per week, he would have spent only 1 year and 9 months in church! If you have a question about the arithmetic, sit down and figure out how you have been using your time. How large a portion of it is for the things related to God?

Then there is that Puritan work ethic

- working is good ... sitting around doing nothing is bad  
we should be busy doing good works
- and if we're not busy, then we're not being faithful followers  
the best use of our time, is to fill it up!

I kind of think that in this respect the Lord God gives us a good model

- gives us the right rhythm for life, six to one: six days working, one day resting  
six days for worldly things, one day for Godly things
- we are given in Ecclesiastes chapter 3 a holistic picture  
a time for being and a time for doing  
with both the being and the doing being part of God's purpose
- and note there is *a* time - not time, but *a* time for everything on earth  
a reminder that everything on earth, including time  
is part of God's purpose and under God's hand

A reminder that we can trust God in all this

- telling us very clearly that there is time for every single important thing  
if we use the gift of time as the Creator and Giver of time intends:  
time is God's gift to us - how we use our time is our gift to God
- time, like money, is an important part of stewardship  
one day we will be called to account for how we used our time

Jesus says it's about priorities and what we value

- about not making excuses  
about making time for what you consider important and acting on it
- Jesus says to be ready to respond and give of your time ... when God calls  
anyone who starts off with me and then keeps looking at their watch  
"is no use in God's service..."

*Take time to work - it is the price of success*

*Take time to think - it is the source of power.*

*Take time to play - it is the secret of youth*

*Take time to read - it is the foundation of knowledge.*

*Take time to laugh - it is the music of the soul.*

*Take time to be courteous - it is the work of a gentleman.*

*Take time to pray - it is the Christian's vital breath.*