

Time Management  
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Ephesians 5:15-20

Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, 16 making the most of the time, because the days are evil. 17 So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

18 Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, 20 giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## GROUNDHOG DAY

One of my favorite movies is Groundhog Day.  
Bill Murray plays an ill-tempered, self-centered weatherman named Phil.

And Phil has been assigned the task of covering Groundhog Day in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania.

He hates the task and treats the people in that little town and his co-workers with sarcastic disdain. He can't wait to leave. But, a massive snow-storm prevents the crew from making it back home, and Phil has to spend yet another night in the town he despises.

When he wakes up the next morning, he notices that they are playing the same songs on the radio.

Phil assumes the disc jockeys are playing a tape and suggests that they should wake up.

But, as Phil leaves his room he realizes something weird is going on.

It is Groundhog Day all over again.

Phil is caught in some kind of time warp.  
The same day repeats itself over and over and over again.

If there is a hell, this is it for Phil.

In one scene the distraught weatherman is in a bowling alley with two guys who seem to be slackers. And in a drunken stupor Phil begins to tell these guys his problems.

He says, "Can you imagine what it would be like to see the same people and do the same thing every day ... over and over and over again? Can you imagine how terrible that would be?"

The two guys who had also been drinking too much suddenly sober up. And they look at each other with a sad look of recognition.

Phil had just described their life.  
Life for them truly was just one thing after another.

Therein lies the genius of the movie.

It's not just a comedy.  
It's also a parable about what life is like when we do not appreciate the gift of time.  
Each day is much like the last, and our world becomes dull and lifeless.

## MAKING THE MOST OF TIME

Maybe this is what the Psalmist was talking about when he said that we should "number our days" so that we may get a "heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:12)

We should pay attention to our life.  
Each day is different, but we lull ourselves into thinking that each day is the same.  
Time is a gift that God has given us, but we often misuse that gift.

In our lesson for today, Paul wrote,  
"Be careful how you live ... making the most of the time."

This passage always reminds me of a sign that my teacher put under the clock when I was in elementary school.

“Time passes. Will you?”

Instead of paying attention to the task at hand many of us were longing for the bell to ring.

## MISSING THE MOMENT

Go to any restaurant and look at the couples out on a date.  
Are they looking longingly into each others eyes as they talk about things that are important?

Quite often these days that’s not what they’re doing.  
Instead, they’re looking at their phones telling others about where they are and what they’re doing.

Who knows?  
That date might be the most important time of their life.

They might be on a date with “the one.”  
But, they also might miss it because they were not making the most of their time together.

We need to pay attention to the importance of each moment.

Our lives are not just one thing after another.  
According to God’s word our lives have meaning and purpose.

## KAIROS

In biblical Greek there are two words for time.  
One word, “chronos” refers to time as we measure it, seconds, minutes, hours, days and so forth.

But, the word for time in verse 16 is not “chronos.”  
It is “kairos.”

Kairos is a time of special opportunity.  
It is “holy time.”

It is “God’s time”.

In order for the Ephesians to make the most of this special time they would need to acknowledge it. They would need to appreciate the importance of the time they had been given.

In this way they would not be swept up in the rush of the world. Instead they would be filled with the wind of the Spirit.

I think this is what Paul means when he says that the Ephesians should make the most of the time because the “days are evil.”

Paul is contrasting the time wasting ways of the world with the time honoring ways of the community of faith. It is another way of contrasting the coming kingdom of God versus the present day kingdoms of the world that are fading away.

The book of Ephesians tells us that a new world is coming. God is in the process of redeeming creation.

In the first chapter of the letter to the Ephesians we read that God has a “plan for the fulness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” (Ephesians 1:10)

In light of this hope, Christians are called to model a different way of living when it comes to our use of time. The phrase translated “making the most of time” in verse 16 means literally “redeeming the time.”

In God’s hands time is not an enemy but a means of salvation.

The days may be evil.

It may seem like life is just one bad thing after another.

But, we know better.

Our faith gives us the long view, and that gives us hope.

That makes each moment in time special and important because all time is God’s time.

## UNDERSTANDING THE WILL OF GOD

How can we redeem the time that God has given us?

Paul suggests we live wisely by understanding the will of the Lord. In other words, we try to understand God's purpose for our lives in this particular time and place.

We might ask,

"Why have I been placed in this situation?"

What can I do to put my painful and discouraging moments into the context of the larger story of salvation?"

The philosopher wrote that the "unexamined life is not worth living." Life that does not have meaning and purpose leads to despair.

I think that's why Paul places the command to avoid drinking too much in the next verse. This is not just a temperance speech.

It is an analysis of why we might drink too much.

If our days are not filled with meaning and purpose, we self-medicate. We check out because our life is just too painful to live.

In the movie Groundhog Day, Phil repeats the same day over and over again, and it begins to drive him crazy. So, he repeatedly tries to commit suicide.

But, in his crazy time warp world it doesn't work.

The next morning he wakes up alive.

Yes, it's Groundhog Day all over again.

And this moment of despair becomes a turning point.

Phil begins to pay attention to his life even though each day is the same.

He gets to know the people in Punxsutawney and begins to feel compassion for them.

Since he knows what will happen each day, Phil begins to save the residents from minor emergencies.

He learns to play the piano.  
He grieves over the death of an old man.

He even falls in love.

Phil is transformed.  
He is no longer the self-centered person he used to be.

And then, one day it is no longer Groundhog Day.  
His transformation makes a new day possible.

### FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

The Christian life is also about transformation.  
Instead of being filled with wine we are filled with the Spirit.

And we worship God in response to the change that is wrought in our lives.

There is often an emptiness in our life that needs to be filled with something.

And sometimes we try to fill that emptiness with compulsive, addictive behavior.

We try to escape the pain and fear of our life by drinking too much or eating too much or you name it. We fill our lives with something so that we don't have to pay attention to the moment.

It may work for a while, but soon the demons of self-doubt will return with a vengeance.

According to Paul, we should replace our addictive behavior with God's presence.

Instead of being filled with wine we should be filled with the Spirit.

And the process of being filled with the Spirit is aided by song.

Paul wrote that we should be filled with the Spirit "as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts..."

Scripture is filled with many songs.  
Almost all of the Psalms were hymns.  
In fact some of the Psalms even seem to have instructions for liturgical dance!

Can you imagine us dancing down the isles as we take up our offering?

That might be a bit too much for us staid Presbyterians, but we must not miss the main point.

All of us can make music to the Lord in our hearts.  
I know that some people can't carry a tune, but that doesn't mean you can't sing to the Lord in your heart.

When we are filled with the Spirit, it can be intoxicating.

I'm reminded of the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost.  
Do you remember what some in the crowd said about those disciples who first received the Spirit of God?

They said they were drunk, that they were full of new wine.

Peter countered that argument by saying that it was only 9 AM and the bars weren't open yet!

But, why did the crowd think that those first disciples were intoxicated?

Maybe there's something about being filled with God's Spirit that is akin to intoxication.

Maybe there's a joy that bubbles up in the lives of those who are filled with God's Spirit.

An early Christian writer, Erasmus even referred to this being filled with the Spirit as "a pleasant kind of drunkenness."

In college I had some friends who had been addicted to drugs but became Christians and in the process kicked their dependence. They enrolled in the Christian college that I attended and were studying to be ministers.

They could not quit talking about how God had changed their life. They would say things like, "I'm high on Jesus now instead of drugs."

And it was true.  
They no longer took life for granted.  
Their life had purpose and focus.  
They were totally changed.

They were filled with a joy and peace that was evident.

I think Paul is suggesting something like that in our passage for today.

The Ephesians needed to be filled with the Spirit.  
The Spirit of God in Christ would animate their life and fill them with joy, a joy that would last longer than any bottle of wine.

## GRATITUDE

And this filling of the Spirit would lead to a life of gratitude.

Paul writes that the Ephesians should spend their time "giving thanks to God the Father ... for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Sometimes you think that Paul gets carried away with his promises.

I think a life filled with gratitude is important.  
But, how can we give thanks at all times and for everything? That seems impossible.

But, notice the qualifier in this last verse.

We give thanks "to God the Father... in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In other words, in good times and in bad we give thanks for the salvation of God that is ours in Christ Jesus.

## A NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE

Salvation has a way of changing how we look at our life.



A preacher told of a friend who had a terrible heart valve defect. He was told that he would surely die without a very risky operation.

The man sought out a great surgeon and submitted himself to the operation, and the operation was a success.

A few years later the preacher and his formerly ill friend were in a very difficult situation. The malfeasance of some coworkers made it necessary for them to do a lot of extra work and sometimes work late at night.

The preacher said that he noticed his friend didn't seem to be in as much misery as he was so he asked why.

And the friend replied, "Well, when you have nearly died and have your life given back to you... well, you tend to be grateful."

Sometimes we forget how we got here.

We forget why we come to worship on Sundays.  
We're not here because we're the best and the brightest.  
We're not here because we're the nicest people in town.

We're here because we who were dead in sin have been given our life back to us.

We're here because we have been saved by grace through faith.

It's God's gift and not our achievement.

We don't have one reason to boast except for the grace of God in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

And so we are grateful.  
We worship.

And we have hope for tomorrow because it is God's tomorrow.

We see a new day coming because we know all time is God's time.

AMEN.