

It's About Time Psalm 90:1-12, Ephesians 5:15-20

Adapted from a sermon by Richard Nichols @ SErmonCentral.com

2016, the election year, is history--thankfully. And now in addition to writing 2017 on our checks we need to prepare for a whole new collection of hopes and fears. We have begun a new year, over 600 minutes of which have already passed. Time flies, or as my mother would often say: "you're wasting time." The days, weeks, and months do pass quickly.

I've always been fascinated by the concept of time. I enjoy movies that deal with travel through time such as "Back to the Future" and Charles Dicken's "A Christmas Carol." This new year there are no less than 4 TV shows also traveling time: Timeless, Time After Time, Legends of Tomorrow, and there's always good old Dr. Who.

I wonder what our world would look like if each one of us got just one chance to go back in time to change one thing we had always regretted doing. I think if that ever happened, the world would be a very messed up place--if we were still even in existence. Thankfully for us all, there is no going back, only going forward in time... taking each opportunity we get, such as today, to begin again; to start out new.

Interestingly, Back To the Future is back in the news, with Nike's invention of self-lacing shoes hitting the stores this Christmas (\$720). But what about the other things that Back to the Future predicted? We still don't have real hover boards...only the gyro types that continue to catch fire and break way too many limbs. No flying cars either, but there is a company designing one. However, wall spanning TVs and face to face phone conversations are now an everyday reality. Soon as I figure it out we can Skype, have live Chats, during Church, with Gracie Murphree in Honduras or Bradley and Jessica Long in Tadjhikistan. Who knows what new and amazing things will be available to us in the future?

I wonder how time will be measured in the future. I am told there will be no such thing as time--as we know it--in heaven; so what will that be like?

Time is an interesting concept. It's nothing we can see or touch, yet we know it passes, sometimes far too quickly. It is surprising to think that I have now shared this ministry with you ten--years this coming August. So we try to keep a better track of time by breaking it up into controllable segments. We follow calendars: solar, fiscal, academic, or sporting years--whatever is most important to us. We mark annual occasions to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries and the passing of one year and the beginning of another.

I wonder, what is the meaning of time for you?
How do you view each passing day?

This morning, let's spend some time thinking about three Biblical principles related to this phenomenon called "time." I believe that our better understanding of God's sense of time will greatly benefit how we enjoy this time in our lives.

First, it is clear from Scripture that God views time differently from the way you and I see it. The 90th Psalm speaks clearly and also poetically about our need to know God's timing. The Psalmist acknowledges God's different view of time saying: *For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past*. In other words, God sees things from an eternal perspective which is far broader than our limited "minute-by-minute" perception of time. So, being aware of God's longer sense of time challenges us to develop a larger view as well.

As a Christian, I need to look beyond my limited daily view, and also see my life from an eternal perspective. When I do this, I begin to see God's bigger picture for my life, for the Church, for the world. Having such a viewpoint can keep me from getting bogged down in some of the petty and insignificant details that I used to think were so important.

Being aware of God's eternal perspective, we can begin to focus on the things that really matter, that really count. Taking his cue from this Psalm the Apostle Peter went on to declare *that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day* (1 Peter 3:8). That knowledge of God's both intimate and expansive view of our time should have some definite implications for how we live our lives. Peter thought it should teach us faith and patience. The Psalmist goes on to say "*So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.*" In other words, we should be praying, **Lord, let me make my days count. Let me focus on those things that are most important from your perspective.**

Will I make the most of my time this coming year? Will I let my life count for God?

We've all heard of people who gave little attention to the passing of time until they came to terms with their own mortality. Perhaps it was the death of someone close to them, or the realization of their own near death which brought them around to thinking more seriously about the time they had left. Perhaps you watched one of the five or six different versions of A Christmas Carol last week. What convinced Ebenezer Scrooge that the future must be changed was the recognition of the consequences that his present life was leading him to. At first, he lamented, "***I'm too old to change***", but fortunately he finally concludes, ***there is still time to change, time to make amends***. And fortunately for you and me, there is also still time, to take a look at our

own life's journey. And time to pray: "***Teach, me Lord, to number my days.***" ***Help me, Lord, to see time as you see it. Give me that perspective of eternity by which to re-examine my priorities.*** A new year is a good time to think about that.

Beginning to look with **God's long-view of time** should help us to better value and prioritize our own use of time. Which relates well with a second principle from Scripture which is this: **Time is a precious commodity.**

All the days of our life are a gift to us from God, numbered and recorded by him even before we were ever born. **So it becomes a matter of our stewardship, our responsibility towards God, to make quality use of the time He has given us.** Think again on what we heard from Paul's letter to the Ephesians: *Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil* (Ephesians 5:15-16).

We know how easy it is to fill our lives with all kinds of trivial things, and in doing so we neglect our more important responsibilities: like having quiet time with God, like an intimate conversation between a husband and wife, or spending quality time with our children, or finding time to care for someone in need, or doing an act of love and service for Christ. **Stewardship is always a Christian issue. We often use the term when we talk about our finances, but it relates equally if not more importantly to our use of time.**

Let's be honest. Being honest with our time is a challenge we all face. It's just that some of us are better procrastinators than others. We know the things we need to do, but we put them off. Why do I find numerous excuses for not visiting a friend who lost a loved one? Why haven't I written that letter of appreciation or encouragement? Why do I permit so many interruptions of my prayer time with the Lord? We each could make our own list of questions. But you need to realize that the time you lose in putting things off can sabotage the rest of your time for years to come.

A time expert was speaking to a group of business students and, to drive home a point, he pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouthed Mason jar and set it on a table in front of him. Then he produced about a dozen **fist-sized rocks** and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the jar.

When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "**Is this jar full?**" Everyone in the class said, "Yes." Then he said, "Really?" He reached under the table and pulled out a **bucket of gravel**. Dumping some gravel in, he shook the jar causing the pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks until the jar was again filled to the top.

Once more he asked, "Is the jar full?" By this time the class was onto him. "Probably not," one of them answered. "Good!" he replied. And he reached under the table and brought out a **bucket of sand**; dumping the sand in into all the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, "Is this jar full?"

"No!" the class shouted. Once again he said, "Good!" Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then he looked up at the class and asked, "**What is the point of this illustration?**"

One student raised his hand and said, "*The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard, you can always fit some more things into it!*"

"No," the speaker replied, "that's not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is: **If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all.**"

What are the big rocks in your life?

- A project that you want to accomplish?
- Time with your loved ones?
- Your faith, your education, your finances?
- A cause?
- Teaching or mentoring others?

Remember, time is precious, so you need to put the big rocks in first or you'll never get them in at all. What are the really important things in your life that you need to be getting on with?

If we could only get credit for our good intentions. We make all kinds of resolutions for the New Year...why not this time resolve to take those steps that will make a difference in the lives of others. Begin every day with this prayer: ***God, this day is a gift from you. Show me how to use this gift.***

Coach Bear Bryant of Alabama Crimson Tide fame, was not known to be very religious. But if you go to his museum, you will find this little bit of wisdom that he kept folded in his wallet and would often bring out to share with his players and others.

This is the beginning of a new day. God has given me this day to use as I will. I can waste it or use it for good. What I do today is very important because I am exchanging a day of my life for it. When tomorrow comes, this day will be gone forever, leaving something in its place I have traded for it. I want it to be gain,

not loss—good, not evil—success, not failure—in order that I shall not regret the price I paid for it." <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/Prayer-Football-Men-The-Prayer-of-Paul-Bear-Bryant>

What better prayer to pray daily in this New Year: ***God, this day is a gift from you. Show me how to use this gift.***

The third principle related to our godly sense of time is that **time is not only in the precise, measured minutes that we call time, but it also defines special seasons which are the appropriate time for doing what is important.**

There are two Greek words for time. One is *chronos*, the other is *kairos*. ***Chronos*** refers to measures of time, what we usually track: the passing of minutes, days, years. ***Kairos*** refers to a period of time, a season, and whatever it is that we should be doing in this time. *Kairos* is what we (should) experience while on vacation, or hunting, or fishing, or visiting with old friends over the holidays. *Kairos* time is usually identified with the time that I have to use right now. And the secret to *kairos* time is in our ability to see and be doing what needs to be done—right now.

Jesus unfolded God's plan of salvation for us in *kairos* time. Walking thoughtfully through each day knowing what needed to be done with each day right up until his fateful appointment with the Cross. When his unbelieving brother's urged him to prematurely show himself to the world he replied, "*My kairos, my time has not yet come.*" It's within this sense of *kairos* time that he taught us to pray "*give us this day our daily bread*" and to *take no thought for tomorrow but seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness* (Matthew 6:11, 33-34).

Yesterday is gone: history

Tomorrow is always mystery

But today is a gift to be used, that's why they call it the present.

One of the Bible stories that speak powerfully to our having this concept of *kairos*, is about the Jewish queen Esther. She had learned of an evil man's plot to kill all her kindred, all the Jews. But she is afraid of coming before her husband, the king, with her request, for she knows if she enters his court and he does not raise the scepter, she will be killed. Then Mordecai, Esther's cousin, sends her this note: "*Do not think that because you are in the king's house, you alone of all the Jews will escape. Who knows but that you have come to this royal position for such a time as this?*"

So Esther has the people fast and pray for her. And as she prepares to go before the king, she repeats these words: "*If I perish, I perish.*" She knew she had an important role to play in this special *kairos* time of God. The words of her cousin echoed in her soul. "I have been brought to this royal position **for such a time as this.**"

There are also special kairos times in our lives as well, when God opens the door of opportunity for us to bear witness, or for a mission, or a ministry. When you see the opportunity to share a word of faith, to offer your hand in love...then you are in kairos time. Will you use it as God's time? As the Holy Spirit says, '*Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts*' (Hebrews 3:7).

This year, 2017, is a New Year. How will you spend your time?
Will you seek to make your days count for God, count for eternity?
Will you look for those opportunities to make a difference?

There is a little known person in Scripture whose name was **Enoch**. Most of us know the name of his son: **Methuselah**. The Bible records that Methuselah lived 969 years (a good factoid for Bible trivia games...the oldest man in the Bible: Methuselah). But the Bible records just one very significant fact about Enoch's use of his time: "*Enoch walked with God 300 years...Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him.*" (Genesis 5:22-24).

Very little to know a person by, but of great significance: "**He walked with God.**" That's so much more important than Methuselah's chronos time of 969 years. Enoch lived his life walking with God.

So this is our New Year. What might someone one day write about our lives?
Will it reflect our wise use of time, that we saw life from God's eternal point of view, and so numbered our days, seeking to gain that heart of wisdom, looking for those kairos moments when God will use us for accomplishing something great or small for His purposes?

It's a new year! May we spend this year walking with God!
May the time of our lives count for all eternity!