

Redeeming the Time

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[0:00] He deserves all the glory, all the praise for every good thing we have in our life.! In the midst of struggles, in the midst of things we do wish were different, the fact that God's presence is still there with us, that we are not alone in that.

And not just God's presence, but in the midst of those challenges and difficulties, you know what else He gives us? Each other, doesn't He? A family.

Not just physical family, but a spiritual family to come together, to support us, to encourage us. And folks, I pray that we understand how valuable that is, how precious that is to have a church family around us.

I know as we go into the new year, and this isn't part of the sermon, but, you know, I was just thinking a lot about this past year. That's what you do at the end of the year, isn't it? You think kind of a lot about the past year that you've been through.

And you know, as I think about this last year, you think every year there's one thing that's true, and that is that in the midst of a year, we have highs and we have lows, don't we?

[1:30] We have things that we look back on that were just hard, and then we have things that we look back on that we really can celebrate. And you know, I think on this last year within my life and the life of the church, you know, we had several weddings and children being born, and that's a high, isn't it?

That's something to truly praise God for. And the Bible says that when we celebrate, it says rejoice with those that do rejoice. We should rejoice together. And I hope we do that as a family. But then I also think that there are some folks that had sicknesses and illnesses and challenge that we had some that went home to be with our Heavenly Father, and that's hard, isn't it?

Even though we know we can celebrate because they're going on to something greater, it's still hard for us. And there's tears that are shed as those changes come. And yet the Bible doesn't just say to rejoice with those who rejoice, but it also says to weep with those who weep.

That is part of our responsibility and our job as a family, to support each other, to understand that we're not alone going through life here on this earth, because there are so many people in this world that feel alone.

Do we understand that? So many people that feel alone. And you know what? We don't have to feel that way. When we're Christians, when we have Christ in our life, we first of all know that we're never alone because God's presence is always with us.

[2:52] But then He puts us in a family so that we know we're going through this not alone, but with family around us to support and encourage and to love us. And I hope that we take advantage and we don't take for granted the family that God has given us.

All right. That being said, take your Bibles. And I hope you brought your Bibles this morning. If you didn't, again, there's always a rack of Bibles in the foyer. Grab one. Keep it if you don't have one.

Give it away if you know somebody that needs one. But there's always Bibles out there. Follow along. Today we are in Romans. I know we've been in Romans for quite a few weeks now, but there is so much in Romans all the way through Christmas as we talked about hope and peace and joy and love.

Romans goes right along with that because Romans is about the gospel message. And you know what the gospel message is about? I mean, it's about Jesus, but it's about the fact that He brings us hope and peace and joy and love.

So today we're going to continue in Romans because it says some things that really, I think, are fitting as we go into a new year. So Romans chapter 13, and we're going to start in verse 11.

[3 : 58] And if you found that, if you're able, I'm going to ask if you would stand as we read God's Word together this morning. Romans 13, beginning in verse 11.

And this is what God's Word shares with us on this day. And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put you on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.

Let's pray together this morning. Lord God, once again, we come to you on this day and we thank you for your presence here. Lord, as we think about this year that you have given us, that you have brought us through, we think back to all the ways that you have shown us that you are a faithful God.

We look back to the ways that you have worked in our lives, to the strength that you've given us, to the way that you've provided for us, sustained us, blessed us. Lord, you are a good and faithful God.

[5 : 22] Of that, there is no doubt. That is never the question. The question is always, are we faithful? Are we doing the things that we need and should be doing in our lives? And Lord, this morning, I pray as we look at your Word that it challenges us to be more than who we are right now, to draw closer to you, to be better servants of you and for you.

So Lord, just speak to our hearts this morning. Teach us, help us to grow and change in the way that we need to, in the way that you desire. And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ and all God's people said.

All right, you can be seated this morning. You know, these verses, as we begin here in Romans, in verse 11, it says, and that, and the first little phrase that it uses here is such a common and important thing in our lives.

What are the next three words? Knowing the time. Think about just that little thought. How important is that in our lives, knowing the time?

Think of it on just an everyday kind of thing. How often do you check to see what time it is? How often?

[6 : 39] No, I'm really asking. I want an answer. I want you to think about it. How many times during the course of a day do you think you check to see what time it is? 25, I heard 100.

Depends on what you got going on. Would you all agree that it's at least several times? How many times have you asked someone else the question, what time is it?

How many times have you asked a stranger that question? You're out and about and you forgot your watch and you need to know what time it is. Maybe you're meeting someone or you have somewhere to be.

So you're like, excuse me, do you know the time? Do you have the time? You've done that before, right? I'm the only one that's ever done that? All right, Leonard has.

Thank you, Leonard. We think it's important to know what time it is. And it is. Because we understand in the course of our lives, there are things that we need to get done, aren't there?

[7 : 42] There are places that we need to be. We have our lives. We are allotted into time periods. I mean, right now, we are in a time of our Sunday morning church service.

And now I'm going to watch if any of you start looking at the clock or your watch is on your arm. But you know, I generally start preaching about a quarter after.

When do I generally stop? About a quarter till. I know you're thinking, no, hopefully before that. But this is our time that we allot for our Sunday morning service, isn't it?

That is our lives. We have a certain amount of time allotted for things. And it says, knowing the time. One of the reasons we are so time-oriented is because we understand time is limited, isn't it?

There is nothing that we can do to create more time, is there? Now, we try to make things more efficient, to create more time. We try to come up with new inventions so that we have more time.

[8 : 45] But that's not really creating time, is it? There is nothing that we can do to create more time. How many times have you said in your life, I wish there were more hours in the day? Yeah.

Because there's more things we want to get done. And really, at the end of many days, we're so tired, we're glad there are not more hours in the day. Because we would just fill them up. But that is because we understand our time is limited.

And that is why it is so important to know the time. We only have so much of it. And in the span of our lives, we need to understand the same thing. We only have so much time.

I was just thinking about that as I lit the candles this morning. You know, we've been lighting these candles every week. And actually, I've replaced a couple of them because they've gotten kind of short. And I don't want to start a fire up here.

But what happens to those candles is they burn. They get smaller. They get shorter.

[9 : 43] They fade away. Eventually, what happens to each one of those candles is if it's left burning. It goes out. There is only so much time that that candle will burn.

As long as that flame is burning, that time is getting shorter and shorter and shorter. And we understand that. We can watch it go down. And it may seem, if you just sit here and watch it, is it a noticeable thing?

And yet, in the course of maybe the hour we'll be in here, do you think it's noticeable if you look at it ahead of time and then at the end? It seems to go slow. And yet, you know what? It burns down pretty quickly.

And that is so very much like our lives. You know, we go through each day and sometimes the days seem long and yet we understand that time goes by so very quickly.

And the Bible talks a lot about time. And here it says, knowing the time that we need to understand. We need to take advantage of the time that God has given us.

[10 : 44] We need to understand that our lives are limited. And I know we don't like thinking about that. We don't like thinking about the fact that we only have so much time in our lives. Do you like thinking about that thought?

The thought of getting older. Do you like thinking about that thought? This is a real cheery message for New Year, isn't it? But really, do you like thinking about the fact that you're getting older? It's inevitable.

You are. So am I. What does that mean? It means every day you've got a little less time, don't you? My grandfather, he always said, I don't know why young people move around so fast.

They've got lots of time. It's us old people should be moving fast because we don't have much time left. We don't like thinking the thought, but as the days go by, as the years go by, our time gets shorter and shorter.

And what it's saying here is recognize that. Know the time. Understand our lives. And look at what it says. Knowing the time that now is the high time.

[11:46] It is high time to awake out of sleep. So there is something that we are supposed to know that now it is high time.

What does that mean, high time? Something you need to do now. It means don't wait. It's high time. It's past time. You should be doing this.

It's high time to do what? Go to work. To wake up. Are you awake today? You all woke up this morning, right? Is it always easy to wake up?

Especially over Christmas, New Year's, kind of that break in there. Our youngest daughter stayed with us, she and her husband, the last couple of days. And I think she's better at it now.

A little better. When she was in high school, obviously she had to be to school on time, right? She was the hardest person to wake up.

[12:46] She could set an alarm and crank that thing all the way up. Our room is at the opposite end of the house. Her alarm would wake me up in the morning. And I'm laying in bed and the alarm would keep going off and keep going off and keep going off.

And I'm laying in bed thinking, how is she not awake? And I would get out of bed and walk down to that end of the room and open the door. And it'd either be buzzing really loud or music would be playing.

And guess what she was doing? Sleeping. I'm like, how is that even possible? And you could grab her by the arm and shake her a little bit. And she kind of rolled over.

Leah, are you awake? Yeah, I'm awake. You'd leave the room. Ten minutes later, guess what? She hasn't moved. She's still asleep. She was the most...

And she knows this is true. She wouldn't care if I told her. She was the most difficult person to wake up. Are we ever like that? I mean, this is talking spiritually, right? Are we ever like that spiritually?

[13:47] Difficult to wake up. And by waking up, I mean really opening our eyes to what's important in life. Opening our eyes to the things God wants us to open our eyes up to.

Because we get so wrapped up in the things of this earth and the things of this world that I think God has sometimes a hard time shaking us and getting our attention. But He says here, it is high time to awake out of sleep.

In other words, God is saying, wake up to every one of us. Wake up out of sleep. Why? Because what does it say after this? For now, right now, our salvation is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

What does that mean? Christ's return? Or our going to heaven at the end of our life is closer now than it was yesterday, isn't it?

We like to think that we have plenty of time. We are at our core, whether you believe it or not spiritually, we are often procrastinators. And I'm a big procrastinator in life.

[14:58] My wife will tell you that. My mom will confirm that. Right, Mom? I am. I would wait until the last minute on school projects and on all kinds of things. Oh, I've got time.

Well, it was an assignment on Friday and it's due Monday, so are you going to work on it on Friday? No, there's always better things to do Friday night. Are you going to work on it on Saturday?

No, who wants to work on it on the weekend? It's Saturday. Would you work on it on Sunday? Well, Sunday morning's church. What about Sunday afternoon? No, that's time to rest, so you don't want to work on it on Sunday afternoon.

What about Sunday night? Well, no, I'm tired from the weekend. So then Monday morning rolls around and you find yourself working on your homework on the bus on the way to school.

Often we're like that spiritually. God says, wake up. That your time is limited.

[15:56] That even as believers, that we only have so much time before Christ returns or our lives end. We only have so much time to get the things done that God wants us to get done.

But we are so good at saying, I'll do it later. I'll do it tomorrow. I know that there's a co-worker that doesn't know Jesus Christ that I should share with him, but the time really hasn't been right yet.

Maybe tomorrow. Maybe next week. Maybe after he gets through this thing in his life, then I'll share with him or her. And we put it off. Maybe it's a family member that we know we should share with, but you know, the time's never just right and we put it off and we put it off and we put it off.

Is anyone else in here good at doing that other than me? Folks, it's the easiest thing to do, to procrastinate. But God is saying, understand that our time is limited and every day we're a day closer to our time being done.

Wake up. Look at verse 12. The night is far spent and the day is at hand. What's it saying there? Your time's almost up.

[17:10] That's what it's saying. That is why it is so important that you wake up. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. And I love that he uses darkness and light because that's really what we just celebrated at Christmas, isn't it?

The Gospel of John in the first chapter, it talks about Christ coming and being the light of this world, but it says the world comprehended it not. It didn't understand it. The world was in darkness and often wants to stay in darkness.

We as Christians need to be people of the light. We need to walk in the light. We need to walk in Jesus. And we need to make sure that we're doing that right now. Folks, this is so important for us to understand.

And this is not the only place in the Bible that it talks about this. I want you to look in Ephesians. Turn back to Ephesians. Just a few more chapters back in your Bible. Corinthians, Galatians, and then Ephesians.

Chapter 5. I'll give you a minute to find it. Because this understanding that our time is limited and we have things we better be about, God's Word tells us this over and over.

[18:15] Ephesians chapter 5, beginning in verse 8. Beginning in verse 8, Ephesians 5. Listen to what it says.

For you were sometimes darkness, but now are you light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth, proving what is acceptable to the Lord.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light. For whatsoever does make manifest is light. Wherefore, He says, and does this sound familiar? Awake you that sleep and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light.

Does that sound familiar? What is it telling us to do? Wake up! Awake you that sleep and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light. See then that you walk circumspectly and not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil.

[19 : 31] Wherefore, be you not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit. So it's saying the same thing.

It's saying, wake up! And that message, folks, is for all of us. First of all, if you've never accepted Jesus Christ, it's saying you need to wake up and understand you need Jesus because you don't know how long God is going to give you here on this earth.

There will come a time when it is too late. Your time is up. You need to accept Jesus Christ now. The Bible says today is the day of salvation. Don't wait. And again, are people good at procrastinating when it comes to accepting the Lord?

I can do it tomorrow. I can do it next week. I can take care of it when I'm old. Well, that's great, but guess what? Not everybody gets that chance, do they? Christ could come back when?

Anytime. Your life could end when? And again, cheery thought, I know, but your life could end when? Anytime. Don't put it off.

[20 : 38] Don't procrastinate. But this isn't just for people that aren't believers. This is also talking to Christians, to people that have already accepted the Lord. It's also saying, wake up.

What is the message for Christians? Wake up. Why? You already have Christ in your heart, so what is it we're supposed to wake up to do? To witness, to share, to serve the Lord.

You know, there's a phrase in here that I think we need to understand. The beginning of verse 16. It says, redeeming the time. What do you think it means to redeem the time?

What's that? Make the most of your time. Anyone else? Use it wisely. To use the time that you've been given wisely.

So what does it mean to use it wisely? How do we use it wisely? What's the opposite of using it wisely? Maybe I should ask that. Wasting it. Wasting it. None of us ever waste time, do we?

[21 : 44] If you've wasted any time this week, raise your hand. Keep them up. If you haven't, I really want to talk with you because I am really impressed.

How is it that we waste time? What do we do to waste time? What's that? Get sidetracked, do other stuff.

Take a nap. Take a nap. No, that's valuable use of our time. What else? How else do we waste time? Really, think about this. What's that? Entertainment and devices. Entertainment and devices.

So TV, phone. Does that mean a TV and phone? Does it mean it's wrong to sit down and watch a movie? No. Does it mean it's wrong to be on your phone? No. So what does that mean?

So what's it mean? Prioritize. Make sure you've taken care of the important things first. How else do we waste time?

[22:46] Really, think about that. How else do we waste time? Complaining. Complaining. Complaining. busyness you know so many things there's nothing wrong with them unless we go overboard and we spend all our time on things that don't matter that's wasting our time and there are a lot of things in life that we really get all wrapped up in that in the end don't matter aren't there they can be even things we think of as good things but in the end they're not things that really matter what God is saying is spend your life on those things that matter on those things that truly make a difference don't let yourself get so wrapped up in these things that just that waste your time that at the end of the day you get there and you think what what did I do today what did I accomplish and most importantly here's the question not what did I accomplish because you may be able to come up with a whole list of things but think about this what did I accomplish for the Lord today how about that list how does your list look like on things you accomplished for the Lord each day because that's really what it's talking about when it says redeeming the time because look at what it says after that in verse 17 wherefore be you not unwise but understanding understanding what the will of the Lord is so being wise is understanding what God's will is on focusing on what God wants us to get done what we can do for him so at the end of the day at the end of the year what have you done for the Lord is the question what have you done for the kingdom of God is that something that matters yes and yet to be honest I think so often our list of what we've accomplished for the kingdom of the Lord at the end of the year at the end of the day might be a pretty slim list at times and yet is it not really the most important list so this morning this isn't a complicated sermon it's not even a lengthy sermon but I want you to think in your life are you redeeming the time that God has given you are you making valuable use of it at the end of the day what is your list look like for what you've done for the Lord that day at the end of the year what is your list look like if I were to ask I know we already went through thinking back to this past year what God has done for you blessings God has given you and it's important to understand those right but the other question and I'm not going to make you answer this out loud but I want you to consider it today what have you done for him how have you served him in this last year have you made good use of the time that he has given you and understand there's a lot of ways we serve the Lord we serve the Lord by being a good spouse we serve the Lord by being a good child or a good parent those are ways we serve God by being a good employee by being honest by being sincere by reaching out to others by caring with for others by sharing God's love with others by sharing the gospel message with others there are a lot of ways we can serve the Lord but make sure at the end of the day your list isn't empty if you get to the end of the day and you ask yourself the question what have I done for the Lord today and you can't come up with an answer you have not spent that day wisely

I don't mean to be harsh but you haven't if I get to the end of the day and I can't come up with a thing way that I've served the Lord that day then I haven't spent that day wisely either this year you know that's the thing every day that God gives us is an opportunity it's an opportunity to redeem ourselves it's a second chance God gives us to get it right this coming year determine in your heart to do things each day to serve the Lord to make valuable use of the time that God has given you because again we don't know how long that time is you know every every year the last Sunday of the year I always can't help but but think in my mind I look out across the congregation and I understand that next year at this time the congregation will look different than it does right now because change will come some may move some may pass away but you guess what it will change so our job is to focus on what God has put before us right now to serve God in any way we can today in this day that God has given us in this year that God has given us however long he gives us to serve him let that those three words be on your mind in this coming year redeeming the time and make sure that's what you're doing for the Lord let's pray together

Lord God we thank you once again for your presence here and Lord I pray that you would challenge each one of us Lord if there are any here that have never accepted Jesus Christ I pray that this is the day that this is the time that they determine in their heart that they're not going to put it off any longer that they're going to make that decision to invite Jesus Christ into their heart to ask him to forgive their sins so that they start out with a fresh slate that they know that their relationship with God has been restored and they have a new life in front of them I pray Lord that if there's any here that don't know Jesus Christ they would make that decision right now today Lord for those that have already made that decision I pray Lord that you would just help that thought to be in our mind are we redeeming the time in the way that you want us to are we making good use of the time that you've given us because it is a gift from you are we using it the way that we should are we serving you with the time that you have given us Lord for each one of us I'm certain we can say we can do better and I pray that we would determine in our hearts to do better to serve you Lord in a way that would be pleasing to you we live in a world that so very much needs to hear the message of Jesus Christ so very much needs to hear about the love that Christ has for them to hear about the way that they can have a relationship with their creator restored

I pray Lord that we would understand that it is part of our responsibility to share that message with them so Lord this morning help each one of us to determine in our hearts to make good use of this time that you have given us we thank you so very much for this year that you've given us but Lord as we head into a new one help us to focus on serving you and it's in the name of Jesus Christ we pray and all God's people said amen this morning as we close the alders open there is no better way to begin the new year than on your knees talking to your creator if you have a need this morning maybe you've never accepted Jesus Christ don't wait come and invite him into your heart this morning maybe you've done that many many years ago but you understand you're not really making good use of the time that God has given you come and pray about it maybe you just want to pray that God helps you use the time more wisely than you have been the alders open whatever you need the alders open this morning you know as you sing that song this morning it's talking about what's before us not what's behind us and you know what God has put a year before us right now and I pray that you determine in your heart to use this coming year for him so let's bow our heads as we pray together as a family and as God leads us into this new year

Lord God we thank you again for your presence in this place and we just thank you for being the faithful loving God that you are and Lord I thank you for all the gifts all the blessings that you bring into our lives but Lord I also pray that we would consider what we're doing for you that we would understand that you have given us a purpose here on this earth and that is to make use of this time that you've given us to use it for you to use it to build your kingdom to use it to share your light with the world around us that is still in darkness so Lord help us to do that faithfully you will always give us the strength that we need and the wisdom we need Lord to accomplish your purposes and we thank you for that as well bless each one Lord as we walk into the new year with you and it's in the name of Jesus Christ that we pray and all God's people said amen God bless you and have a wonderful new year God bless you and have a wonderful new year God bless you and have a wonderful new year Thank you.