

Living For Giving: It's About Time

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[0 : 0 0] Will you pray with me this morning? Loving God, Father, Son, and Spirit, like the Israelites in Babylonian exile, we are tired.

And though we're not in a strange land, the times we live in are so, so strange. So many times we've thought this pandemic was ending, but we've been wrong.

And Lord, that makes this even more difficult. We think we've finished the marathon we've been running, and then we find out that we have to keep running.

Lord, in some ways we're angry or lonely or confused, certainly tired and impatient. And Lord, we give all of this to you.

Father, teach us as you taught the Israelites that you are not confined merely to familiar places and rituals, to a church sanctuary and a gathering in place for worship.

[1 : 0 0] While those things are important, Lord, you're not excluded when they are restricted. Teach us once again as you taught them that you are Creator, the Living One, whom we may worship wherever we are.

Lord, we've had to face our lack of control over so much of our lives, and that's made some of us suspicious and even cynical. Lord, restore our trust and hope in you, we pray.

As we face our own frustrations and loss of control, we ask you to forgive us and to guide us. We pray for our sisters and brothers around the world who've had very little control over their lives for so long, and yet they are faithful, hopeful, loving, and joyful.

Lord, may we learn from them. In these times when we've lost so many of the external and familiar activities and settings that have propped up our faith, may we trust your faithfulness and your promises more now than ever before.

Lord, just as you refined Israel in exile, use this time to continue to refine us so that we may be pure in heart, merciful, and hungry for your justice.

[2 : 3 0] Give your people creativity and hearts that are receptive to the guidance of your Spirit. Help your people to find new ways to grow and to bring your love for you and neighborhood to our homes, our congregations, our towns, our cities, our countryside, in our nation, and beyond.

May we recognize again, Lord, our mission in this time and in this place. And finally, loving Creator, we pray for all those sisters and brothers who are seeking and serving you around the world.

Lord, keep them safe and guard them in places where there is limited access to vaccines or medical care. Creator, God of life, whether in life or death, joy or sorrow, discouragement or hope, you reign.

Father, Son, and Spirit, to you be the glory and majesty, praise and thanksgiving, now and forever.

And in the gentle and strong name of Jesus, we pray these things. Amen. Amen.

Welcome here for this Sunday, January 16th. And this morning, we're continuing in our series titled Living Forgiving, For Giving.

[3 : 56] Living Forgiving is good. Forgiving people is always a good thing. Perspectives on Christian Stewardship. So each week, we have been, and we'll continue to be looking at a different aspect of the idea of stewardship.

And last week, we began with a fairly short and sweet introduction. So as we continue unpacking the concept of stewardship, we began last week by looking at some of the preconceptions or the misconceptions that we may have about the concept.

And I hope last week's sermon kind of set the stage for you a little bit and even made you start to have a different perspective than the one that you previously had on this idea of stewardship.

And last week, I shared a quote from author Randy Alcorn with you. And I want us to hear that again this morning. A steward manages assets for the owner's benefit.

The steward carries no sense of entitlement to the assets he or she manages. It's their job to find out what the owner wants done with their assets and then carry out the owner's will.

[5 : 07] Whenever we think like owners, it's a red flag. We should be thinking like stewards, like investment managers, always looking for the best way to invest what the owner has given to us.

So I think that's a powerful perspective. And it may be one, as I suggested, that requires us to rethink how we've previously thought about what is ours.

As Christians, many of us are familiar with a great hymn called I Surrender All. It was published in 1896.

Long time. It's been one of my favorite hymns for most of my life. And I heard it when I was very, very young. It's a beautiful song of submission and commitment.

And the declaration of that song is not, I surrender some. Surrendering all we are and all we have to Jesus, submitting to his control and lordship over our lives, that's the real goal and challenge for us.

[6 : 23] And I'd suggest that sometimes our human pride can make it really, really difficult to let go. Can make it difficult for us to submit everything we have, everything that we are, to Jesus.

Recognizing that it really never was ours to begin with. Are we really surrendering all to Jesus? That's something important that I think we all need to always be considering.

So now that we have a foundation for that biblical concept of stewardship from the sermon last week, we're going to begin to dig deeper into the main resources that God has given us that we're called to manage according to his will and for his glory, not ours.

And over the next few weeks, we're going to explore this concept of stewardship in various areas of our lives. And I hope, my hope for you, is that you develop a new perspective on it.

That what you've perceived to be yours is actually not yours, but God's. And our sermon this morning is titled, It's About Time. And lots of you know, I love stats.

[7 : 37] I love information. So stats about a hockey team losing 12 games in a row, not a good stat. I went to bed last night feeling dejected, discouraged.

A friend of mine who lives in Calgary is a big Oilers fan. He said, I'm this close to start burning jerseys. And I said, well, it's your \$200 a jersey.

Don't come crying to me when you change your mind later. So I want to share some stats with you this morning that give us context around time. The average human spends roughly 79 years or 28,835 days on Earth.

Each of us have the same 168 hours per week to spend as we see fit. There are an average of 692,040 hours in a lifetime.

We're in the 39th right now. I'm using it up on you. The average person spends about 26 years sleeping. You believe that? Teenagers, I think it's much higher.

[8 : 49] 9,490 days of sleeping. 227,760 hours. I'd like just eight in a row sometimes.

But surprisingly, we also spend roughly seven years trying to get to sleep. Can you believe that? So all told, we spend roughly 33 years or 12,045 days in bed.

It's a long time. We spend 13 years of time on average at work over the course of a career, over the course of our lifetime. 8.3 years in front of the TV.

It's a long time. 3 years on social media, depending on who you are. 4.5 years eating. An average of just over 3 years on vacation in total.

Maybe you wouldn't mind taking that as one continuous block. 3 years. I'm up for 3 years, see ya. Especially these days, right? We need a three-year vacation right now.

[10 : 02] 1.3 years of exercising. Seems low, especially compared to 8 and change watching TV. To hopefully give students a sense of relief, in reality, we only spend 334 days in school from elementary to high school.

Although I know for many students it can feel like an eternity, or librarians or teachers or those people who give so much of their lives and their skills with kids.

After all the essentials like working and eating and being entertained, we're left with all the extras. The things that we do every day without even thinking about them.

And I've talked about waiting before. The very first series I preached when I came to Braemar was on waiting. We spend 235 days of our lives waiting in lines.

On the plus side, and I heard some people doing this, 115 days laughing. That's pretty fun. And worth noting here, now this doesn't apply to everyone necessarily, but women, this is the stat I read, women spend an average of 136 days getting ready.

[11 : 19] 44 things. While men take 46. Like a third-ish. And ladies, we appreciate it.

We really do. And guys, step up your game a little. Right? Trim your nose hair. Brush your teeth.

It's the least we can do. So as I've been reflecting on the concept of time, I've come to the realization that as human beings, we have a pretty complicated relationship with time.

And so many of our expressions, our everyday expressions in the English language, seem to be anchored in the concept of time. Have you noticed that? We can be somewhat dismissive about our time, or the time of others, the value of their time.

We talk about killing time, wasting time, downtime. I just need a little downtime. Having time to spare. You know what? No problem.

[12 : 22] I have time to spare. But at other times, we seem to recognize the fleeting nature of it. And we have a sense of being on the clock. See, there's another time expression right there.

Running out of time, being short on time. We feel like we don't have enough time to do something. We say things like, if only I had more time, I could have done a better job, or I could have invested more in this relationship.

Expressions like, time flies when you're having fun. You ever heard somebody say, and I say this more and more the older I get, it seems like only yesterday that dot dot dot.

And in other ways, when we become exasperated, we say things like, I do not have time for this. Waiting in lines would be an example. I don't have time for this. Or we hear people say, this is such a waste of time.

So do you recognize yourself in any of these perspectives, in any of these expressions? Well, I have something to tell you. If you do, that makes you, guess what?

[13 : 35] Human. So this morning, we're looking at three different facts about time. And we're going to gain a perspective on what the Bible says about them.

We're going to look at the idea that time can be measured. We're going to look at the idea that time has value. And we're going to look, thirdly, at the idea that time can be invested.

So as we've already recognized a bit this morning, time can be measured, right? We've talked about it in detail with the stats. And even if you don't specifically stop to focus on it, the passing of time doesn't go unnoticed.

I can't remember if I shared this here or not, but Michelle and I were reflecting on the fact when we were down visiting our folks at Christmastime, I said to her, yikes. And she said, what? And I said, I walked past my own reflection when we were somewhere.

And I went, when did that happen? And she said, oh, come on, you're not that heavy. No, she didn't say that. But she said, what are you talking about? And I said, at some point I got old.

[14 : 45] Because in my head, I don't see this. I have a different concept of my age given who I am on the inside. But time can be measured in mirrors and memories.

It can be measured in regrets. It can be measured in remembrances. And as humans, I think we can, at times, see time as somewhat vague and immeasurable.

Right? We can't really quantify it in a lot of ways. So there are two Greek concepts that are presented in the New Testament. that relate to time.

They are kairos and kronos. Kairos, which is seen as the appointed time in the purpose of God.

It's a very official kind of perspective. It's considered to be the time when God acts. So kairos is very godly time. Kairos is used 86 times in the New Testament.

[15 : 51] And it refers to an opportune time or a moment, a specific moment, or a season, a time when God is acting.

So while each of us may... Sorry, I'll go back. So in contrast, kronos is different. Kronos is where we get the English word chronograph.

So a stopwatch or even just a watch are examples of a chronograph. And kronos is used 54 times in the New Testament.

It refers to a specific amount of time, a quantity of time, such as a day, an hour. That's kronos. So while each of us may differ in the total amount of time God has given us, the ultimate number of years, months, weeks, days, hours, minutes, seconds from our birth until our death, the value of the time that God has given each of us is no different.

And we also need to recognize something else that's important. None of us know exactly how much time we have available. How much time we have left.

[17 : 12] you know, if you think of it as a bank account or you think of it as an hourglass, you think of your allotted time as starting as the full sand on the top of an hourglass, it's running down.

It's running out. It is a finite resource. But I want you to think about it from this perspective for a moment.

God has given you, and I mean you individually, precisely the amount of time you need to accomplish the unique purpose for which he put you on this planet.

Let that sink in for a moment. You have exactly the amount of time that you need for you to accomplish God's plan for you. And that's not a selfish perspective.

It's a biblical one. Because remember, God has a purpose for your life. And you've been given the correct amount of time.

[18 : 20] God doesn't guess. You've been given the correct amount of time for you to accomplish what you're here for. I think that's pretty neat. Scripture directs us over and over to use the time we've been given wisely.

In other words, to manage the time that we've been given wisely. The Bible says in Ephesians, and the verses will be on the screen, the Bible says in Ephesians 5 verses 15 to 17, Paul says, be very careful then how you live.

Not as unwise, but as wise, hear this, making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil.

I found that so interesting the way Paul uses that. He's not suggesting here that time in itself is evil, but he's suggesting that the human tendency is to become distracted and selfish.

The world we live in is largely geared towards satisfying and gratifying human desires and urges. And there are so many distractions out there, and I'm sure you can all give examples in your own lives, distractions that can take away from God's plan for our lives, that can cause us to spend time unwisely, to waste it.

[19 : 48] And it takes discipline and active engagement to focus on being Christ-like and actively engaging in God's plan for our lives.

It can be so easy to become passive, and I don't think the pandemic has helped us with that. I have lots of friends and family members and acquaintances who've just checked out.

they're just waiting for something, waiting for it to be over, waiting for us to go back to normal.

Well, guess what? What if this is normal? I mean, things will change, for sure, but while you're waiting for something that may never come back again, your time is being spent.

So if you've already begun to think, so, Pastor Kent, are you telling me it's sinful then to take a day off? Stay with me, we'll get there.

[20 : 52] So as we read in the Bible in Psalm 90, verse 12, Moses recognized that time could be measured as well. When he prayed, teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Moses recognized that time had value. Moses asked God to help us learn a valuable lesson here, that our days, our time, is literally numbered and can be measured.

The second concept I wanted to give you this morning is that time has value. And this stems directly from the perspective that time is what from God?

a gift. It is without a doubt the most precious personal non-renewable resource that you have.

And you can challenge me on that. But time has value. And in acknowledging that, we need to spend it, we need to invest it, we need to manage it wisely.

[22 : 04] recognizing that our time is limited and it's been given to us by God for a specific purpose, we can recognize that time then must have value, right?

Certainly to God. The Bible says in James 4, verse 14, why, you don't even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life?

You're a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. James is not intending here to make us feel insignificant with his words. He's intending to emphasize the important nature of our existence and that it is temporary on this earth.

And in light of that, how valuable then is the time that we've been given here? The Apostle Paul so powerfully anchored the concept of human time with an eternal perspective.

Paul says in Romans 13, verse 11, 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.

[23 : 22] When you recognize Jesus in your life, when you received him, when you submitted to him as your Lord, whether that happened yesterday, or in my case, 40-some years ago, that time is in the past.

The time when we recognize Christ and chose to follow him has passed. And so knowing that Jesus could return at any moment, wouldn't that be a neat surprise?

Knowing that he could return in any moment and in so many ways, our allotment of time would then immediately come to an end. Can that change your perspective on the time that you've been given, the time that you have available?

In light of eternity, even a long life by mortal standards is just a flicker. So we need to remember that our time is short and we need to spend it and invest it wisely.

So in recognizing this morning then that time can be measured, that time has value, let's consider now that time can be invested.

[24 : 41] As I reflected on the many resources we've been given by God, I really came to realize how little attention we tend to give our time. Our hours, our days, our weeks, our months, our years, become cluttered with things.

Our calendars become packed with stuff and activities, some of which can be good, but not always the best. Perhaps it's due to the fact that unlike our money, which can buy us stuff, it has direct transactional value, our time somehow seems less tangible.

Perhaps then, from our human perspective, less valuable somehow? Because from a very simple perspective, you can earn more money.

You can generate more income. You can get another job. You can stop spending. You can sell stuff on Facebook Marketplace. You can generate more income.

But aside from consciously reclaiming the time that you've been given and resolving yourself to make it count, invest it more wisely, friends, you get what you get.

[25 : 58] The clock is literally ticking. So with that in mind, I believe it's important for us to seriously consider how we're spending our time. It's not in any way to make you feel guilty about reading a book for fun or wasting 60 minutes watching a pointless hockey game, listening to music or watching TV or movies or just taking some me time, right?

Just unplugging because that can be healthy. That can be something that you need. You need balance in your life. But knowing that any time we spend is gone, any time we use is gone for good, we should take the opportunity to consider investing our time wisely whenever and however we can.

So what does that look like? How do we consciously invest something that we may tend to take for granted? That's a real mind shift, isn't it? So maybe you're a list person like I am.

I'm a big list person. But however you prioritize the things in your life, seek to prioritize your perspective on time. seek to assign it more value.

Be more intentional about the idea of spending it, because you are spending it. If we don't regularly assess the way we spend our 168 hours per week, our schedules can be cluttered with things that may be good, but again, not the best.

[27 : 42] What's the most common word that you hear when someone, when you ask someone, how are you doing? Quite often you hear the word busy. Someone said fine, which is also true.

How are you? Fine. It's not true, is it? I always say that to people, especially that I know well. They say fine, and I say that's a pat answer, don't lie to me. So if you're not fine, I want to know.

But people say busy. Doing what? That's a good thing. If your default answer is busy, doing what? Ask yourself that question.

As you reflect on your average week, how much time do you spend with God? You say you're a follower of Jesus, you say you're a follower of God, how much time do you spend with him, just in conversation, in prayer, in reading his word?

How much time do you spend in or invest in the relationships that if someone asked you, you'd say are the most important to you? I would give almost anything for one more conversation with my dad or my mom, and you can say I'll get that, and I will one day, but it'll be different.

[29 : 00] I would like one more now. Maybe you're someone who sees value in spending time at your church, and we appreciate that when people do that.

We greatly appreciate the people who serve and volunteer in so many ways at our church, your church, from leadership and elders and deacons to washing dishes when we did that, caring for our building, caring for kids, cooking meals when we did that, or just being there for people and not putting a time limit on it.

throughout my life, many times I've reflected on the fact when I've attended a church, which has been most of my life, these are the people that we will be spending eternity with.

How much time do we spend together now? I mean, granted, it's a pandemic, but you know what I'm saying? Are we investing in the relationships that have eternal value, or investing in sharing the gospel with someone that would have eternal significance?

How much time does it take to do that? Investing our time in things like that, we can create real value, create real difference, and real significance for other people.

[30 : 26] people. As your pastor, I see God leading us in new areas of opportunity as a church, and I had been thinking this way before COVID, and it's still in there.

So COVID has paused a lot of things, but ultimately, there's going to be new areas of opportunity that come for us to invest our time together as a body of Christ, to make a difference in our community and the lives of people that we interact with.

So there's an opportunity, there's going to be lots of opportunities to invest our time here, invest our time in our church, through our church, to impact the lives of other people for Christ.

But the bottom line is time spent, time invested wisely, is time that is invested, likely, in eternity.

time. I hope this morning that you've come to recognize that time can be measured, time has value, and time can be invested.

[31 : 33] time that you've come to time. My friends, the time you have available is a precious resource that God has given you personally. And as stewards of this non-renewable resource of time, we need to be wise in how we invest that resource on behalf of the owner, almighty God, the owner who has given it to us to manage.

Friends, ask God to reveal to you personally as the steward of the time that he has given you. Ask him to reveal his will for what he wants you to do with that time, how he wants you to invest it.

Be intentional about assessing your time in the ways you're spending and using it for the kingdom. God bless you.