

Redeem the Time

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to begin by singing to God's praise from Psalm 90. Psalm 90, at the beginning of the psalm.

We're going to sing verses 1 to 7. Lord, thou hast been now dwelling place in generations on, before thou ever hadst brought forth the mountains, great or small, ere ever thou hadst formed the earth and all the world abroad, even thou from everlasting art to everlasting God.

Thou dost unto destruction man that is mortal turn, and unto them thou say'st again, ye sons of men return, because a thousand years appear no more before thy sight than yesterday when it is past, or than I watched by night.

As with an overflowing flood thou carryest them away, they like a sleeper, like the grass that grows at morn are they.

At morn it flourishes and grows, cut down and even doth fade, for by thine anger we consume, thy wrath makes us afraid.

[1 : 2 0] We can sing these verses to God's praise. Psalm 90, Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in generations all. Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in generations all, before thou ever hast brought forth the mountains, great or small.

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in generations all, and ever thou hast been our dwelling place in generations all, and ever thou hast formed the earth and all the world abroad, thou hast been our dwelling place in generations all, in thou from everlasting art to everlasting gold, thou dost unto destruction, man that is mortal turn, and unto them thou hast been our dwelling place in generations all, ye sons of men, return,

Because a thousand years of year No more before thy sight Than yesterday when it is time O'er that thou watched by night As with an overflowing flood Thou carries them away They lie asleep up like the grass

That grows at morn early At morn it flourishes and grows God thou not in the faith For by thy anger we're consumed Thy wrath makes us afraid Let us join together in prayer O Lord our God As we have met together in your name We give thanks for the opportunity to do

What we are created to do You have created us for your own glory You have created us with the ability to worship To serve To walk before you the God who is the creator God And we acknowledge that we are far from being able to fulfill That mandate that was set before our first parents We acknowledge our sinfulness Because sin has entered into our experience And as a result of sin We are not able to do what we ought to do And even what we ought to do When we do it We do it in a way that is lacking sincerity Or lacking the fullness of what it ought to contain

[6 : 27] We confess that and seek forgiveness For many sins We have met here on the first Sabbath of the year The first day of the year And we acknowledge that this is a milestone for each of us in our own way We mark the year's beginning with an eye to what has passed And an eye to what the future may contain We may have an understanding of what has gone And we have limited knowledge of what lies before us But we give thanks that you are the God who knows all things Even what has been You have observed it without exception To anything that appears before the eye of the all-knowing God

Nothing is excluded from your knowledge That is a perfect knowledge A knowledge that takes in what is hidden from others But not from you Similarly When we scan to the far horizon of our ability Even in discerning the future We know that there are limitations placed upon what our expectations may make us think That will be in our providence For it takes very little to overturn our expectations As a nation we have experienced that in the recent past How illness and disease and other things have encroached upon our expectations And eroded them

And brought our thinking into a more proper understanding of how uncertain our days are We bless you and thank you for your patience with us Even the things that we should learn That have been left unlearned by us That you would forgive us for that We marvel at your servant The song of Moses that we have been singing How it speaks of the floods Carrying away all within its sphere of influence How we see that even in our own generation In the last few days Parts of our nation have experienced physical floods

That carried all before it Even properties and possessions Was carried away by the power of these waters And we wonder how Moses in his own day A day that lies far In the far distant past Could have seen What we see today Because the properties perhaps were not as As sophisticated Or so plenteous And yet he saw in his own eye These things And he compared The passage of time To the effect of the floods How learned the man of God was And we acknowledge The knowledge that he had Is a knowledge that we would Be wise to Encapsulate into our own thinking

And to process it And to dwell upon it So that we would realise That the brevity of our humanity Is before our mind's eye The brevity of our longevity However long lived we are And some may have Expectation to live to ripe old age While others If they think of their own Physical well-being Or the toll that illness Has played upon their lives They might not have such Such a powerful expectancy For living out their days Into old age These things are out of our hands And we confess it O Lord And ask that Whatever we would do With our time That it would be Advantageous to us That we would take To heed Your word

[11 : 37] As it speaks to us And even in our reflections Today We would ask That what we Seek to Speak of Would Be dwelt upon By every one of us We pray for your Blessing upon those present For the homes and households That they represent We pray that you would Bless those unable To be with us We know that There are those who Extrae With excitement What Pleasures The snow And the ice Brings But the fact is That there are many And they are They are Limited Because of these things They are housebound They are They are unable to To go out And enjoy What they would Normally Be able to enjoy And the least of these Is the pleasure That they derive From being able To come To your house So those who Have their Affections Set upon

The things of God We pray that you would Do for them What no other can So visit them In mercy Remember They sink Those who are Housebound Because of illness Hospitalised Being cared for By others Whether it is In care homes Or the hospice We pray for all Who have such need And ask that it Will be sanctified To them So that the God Of all grace Would be In the hands That visit them And that Bring care To them We remember The bereaved Those who are Sorrowful At this time Of here Especially We know that The voice of death Is heard At the moment That life Ceases And that Those who are Eyewitness To that And who are Bound up In the bundle Of life With the one Who has been Removed from the

Scene of time Their grief Was fresh And their grief Was exceedingly Painful But as we go on Even Death that has Taken place A long time ago May be freshly Brought to mind By reason of The time And the season That we are in At the present So we pray For your hand To be upon Such And that you Would remind Them That even Though these Grievs Are part Of their Experience That they Are not to Be ashamed Of them Or fearful For what They may Introduce Into their Heart At this Time And they May instead Delight in The God Who has Given them These Grievs By reason Of the Longings Of soul That they Have Concerning The ones That were Bound up With them In their Lives

We pray That you Would bless Them All Wherever They are Found Throughout The world Remember The world In which We do live A world That still Knows The sadness And the Horror Of war Ongoing In parts Of the World And most Keenly Felt Biased The Horrors Of The Devastation Wrought By the Russian Military Against The Ukraine We pray Lord That you Would remember The people Who are Affected By Those who Are Daily Fearful For their Lives When the Missiles Rain down Upon them And they Are forced To shelter And they're They're Limited Resources Where they Lack water And food And heat They are Constantly Reminded of Their own Failing Be with Them we Pray Speak Into their Sorrows

Make them Mindful of The God Who is a God of Peace May you Deflect The Arm of The Evil One That he May Know That he Will give Answers To God Whoever else Will bring Them to Account So hear Our prayers On behalf Of others Those Unable to Pray for Themselves Those Unwise Enough to Know to Do so Make us A powerful Weapon In the Armory Of the Kingdom Of Christ That we Would be As one Calling Down The heavens To be Rent Ascent Of your Spirit To visit Us in Mercy That souls Would cry Out to God And that They would Know and Decide What it Is To have Jesus Christ Only Living And Through God The Saviour Of Sinners As their God And Saviour Bless us

[16 : 40] We pray And all We leave In your Tender Care Watch over Us In Jesus Name Amen We shall Sing To God's Phrase Now From Psalm 103 Psalm 103 At Verse 8 Down to Verse 15 The Lord Our God Is Mercy Full And He Is Gracious Long Suffering And Slow To Wrath And Mercy Plenteous He Will Not Chide Continually Nor Keep His Anger Still With Us He Death Not As We Sinned Nor Did Requite Our Ill For As The Heaven In Its High The Earth Surmount Far So Great To Those That Do Him Fear His Tender Mercies Are As Far As East Is Distant From The West So Far Hath He From Us Removed In His

Love All Our Iniquity Such Pity As Our Father Hath Unto His Children Dear Like Like Like Like Like Pity Shows The Lord To Such As Worship Him In Fear For He Remembers We Are Death And He Our Frame Well Knows Frail Man His Days Are Like The Grass As Flower In Field He Grows For Over It The Wind Has Passed And It Away Is Gone And Of The Place Where Once It Was It Shall No More Be Known But Unto Them That Do Him Fear God's Mercy Never Ends And To Their Children's Children Still His Righteousness Extends And So We Are Going To Sing Verses 8 To 15 Psalm 103 The Lord Our God Is Merciful And He Is Gracious The Lord Our God

Is Merciful And He Is Gracious Long Suffering And Slow To Run In Mercy Plentious He Will Not Shine Continually Nor Keep His Anger Still With Us He Dealt Not As We Sinned Nor Did

We Quite No Hell For As The Heaven In His High The Earth Surmount Erb So Great To Those That Do In Fear His Tender Mer Is Our As Far As He Is Distant From The West So Far At He From

Us Rem relies Other His love, O Lord, in equity.

[20 : 57] Such pity as the Father hath unto his children dear.

Like pity shows the Lord to such as worship in fear.

For he remembers we are dust, and he our brain well knows.

Reel on his days are like the grass.

As blood in beauty grows. I'm going to read from the New Testament script.

[22 : 18] Josh Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. And we're reading from chapter 5. And we'll read from the beginning down to verse 21.

Ephesians chapter 5. Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not be once named among you as becometh saints. Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks.

For this ye know, that no hoodmonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Let no man deceive you with vain words. For because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

[23 : 46] Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye 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 unto 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 reprov'd are made manifest by the light.

For whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil.

[24 : 55] Wherefore be ye 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, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

And so on, may the Lord at his blessing through this reading of his word and to his name be praise. We're going to sing now section of Psalm 119.

Psalm 119 at verse 57. We'll sing the whole of the section, verses 57 to 64.

Psalm 119. Thou my sure portion art alone, which I did choose, O Lord. I have resolved and said that I would keep thy holy word.

With my whole heart I did entreat thy face and favour free. According to thy gracious word be merciful to me.

[26 : 29] I thought upon my former ways and did my life well try. And to thy testimonies pure my feet then turned I. I did not stay nor linger long as those that slothful are.

But hastily thy laws to keep myself I did prepare. Bands of old men me robbed. Yet I thy precepts did not slight.

I'll rise at midnight thee to praise even for thy judgments right. I am companion to all those who fear and thee obey. O Lord, thy mercy fills the earth.

Teach me thy laws. I pray. Thou my sure portion art alone, which I did choose, O Lord. Thou my sure portion art alone, which I did choose, O Lord.

I have resolved and said that I would keep thy holy word.

[27 : 54] With my whole heart I did entreat. Thy face unflaven free.

According to thy gracious word, be merciful to me.

I thought upon my former ways.

And did my life well try. Unto thy testimonies pure my feet then turned I.

I did not stay nor linger long as those that slothful are.

[29 : 24] But hastily thy laws to keep myself I did prepare.

Bands of old men me robbed. Bands of old men me robbed. Bands of old men me robbed.
Yet I thy precepts did not slight.

I'll rise at midnight. I'll rise at midnight. Be to praise him for thy judgment's right.

I am companion to all those who fear and thee obey.

O Lord, thy mercy fills the earth.

[30 : 49] Teach me thy laws, I pray. Can we turn to the passage of scripture that we were reading together?

Paul's epistle to the Ephesians chapter 5. Then we can read at verse 14. Ephesians chapter 5.

Verse 14. Wherefore he saith, awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And so on. Particularly the words of verse 16.

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. As you would expect the Apostle Paul when he writes his letter to the church.

[32 : 14] He is predominantly wanting to speak to those who belong to the church. Those who are Christians.

Those who are members of the body of Christ. And because that is the case, he wants them to understand certain things about themselves.

He wants them to appreciate what they can believe to be true. By reason of what Christ has done in their lives. They are born again of the Spirit of God.

They are those who are endowed with new life from above. Different to the life that they enjoyed before then.

That new life, as new creatures, means that they live differently in the world. They are also to bear in mind, and I think that's probably the most important truth for our generation.

[33 : 27] That they are not alone. That they coexist with other fellow believers, part of the body of Christ.

I think there's, I don't try enough saying it, I think there's an incessant pressure brought to bear upon all our lives to think of our individuality.

To think of all that we are as individuals. To the exclusion of others. So that what matters to me most is what matters to me most.

Forget the rest. What is important to me is what counts. Now that kind of thinking is alien thinking in the Church of Christ.

It's not proper. It's not appropriate. And Paul means them amongst other things to understand that. With fellow believers, they are bound together, not just to live together as fellow believers, but they are bound together under the same rule of life.

[34 : 44] God's word is what's important to them. God's word is what directs their footsteps. We've all been taught, many of us anyway.

I hesitate to say we've all been taught. Many of the older ones would have at some point been taught from the Shorter Catechism. And the Shorter Catechism, in its very first few, reminds you of your relationship to God, your relationship to others, relationship to his word.

The scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man. The scriptures principally teach.

And that is the rule of life. That is where we go to, to determine what is right and what is wrong. What path should we follow and what path should we abort as soon as possible when we recognize that we're on it.

John Storff, at one point, he was, well he was in his own day renowned, a preacher, teacher, writer, and conference speaker.

[36 : 05] And in one of the occasions that he was preaching at the Keswick conference, he was writing on the epistle that is before us here. And according to Storff, when he outlines his letter, he says, Paul moves from what God has done for the believer to what the believer must do for God and must be before God.

And if you read carefully through the epistle, you'll find that there's an outline that is perfectly true. He moves from doctrine to ethics, the moral code and the values by which they are to live their lives is set before them by Paul.

Another well known creature from a different generation, Bishop Riley, speaking about one of the parables of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He says, you have in that parable the most important of truths. And that truth is, occupy until I come.

Occupy until I come. Occupy until I come. Where we can understand that the Lord, the Master, is the one to whom we are bound to live our lives and answerable to him at the last.

[37 : 45] And when we understand that he will return and that he will come again and that he will ask of us when he comes, how have you spent your days?

How have you spent your years? How have you used your opportunities in my service? That is the point at which we will be required to answer.

Now the words of our text must at least bear the burden of such a meaning.

I want us to focus our attention on these words. Reminding ourselves as if we needed reminding. Well, this is the first day of the year. This is the first Lord's Day of the year.

And just by reason of the fact that it's the first day of the year and that the first day is the Lord's Day is itself a reminder to us of the place that we should give to the Lord's Day.

[38 : 54] Not just every seven years or whenever that occurs. But I want us to fix our attention on the words of the text. First of all, reminding ourselves of the activity that undergirds what is the specific activity alluded to.

There is a sort of activity that we engage in before we engage in the activity that is at the heart of what he says. He is saying to us, redeem the time.

But before we can actually redeem the time, there is something that comes before that, before our redemption of the time can be meaningful.

The second thing, the actual directive itself, it is a directive, redeem the time, is explained.

And what it expects of the believer is something that the believer can anticipate when he reads these words. And what should be a driver to the believer's actions.

[40 : 10] Just a few simple thoughts, I hope, on these various headings. If you remember, in verse 15, Paul says, See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools.

There are similar words in Colossians 4 and verse 5, where we find Paul saying, Walk in wisdom to them that are without redeeming the time.

Walk in wisdom to those who are outside. As Christians, they are endowed with God-given wisdom.

Wisdom which is to be demonstrated in how they behave and how they walk before others, as much as they walk before God.

And we need to understand that Paul is not describing to us intelligence or academic prowess.

[41 : 21] What he is describing is something that every believer has access to. The wisdom that is from God.

Every believer, without exception, it doesn't matter. You know, you might compare yourselves to others and you'll say, Well, that man or that woman is clever.

You know, they've got a lot of learning. They've got a lot of advantages over me. I'm just a common gardener of ordinary Joe Soap.

You can't use that excuse when you're thinking about the endowments that God gives to believers. And, namely, he is talking about the wisdom that God himself is able to bestow upon us.

You remember the Apostle James. James said to us in his epistle, chapter 3, The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

[42 : 41] Now, going into what he lists there, he is describing something that has one source, and that source is God.

And Paul is speaking about wisdom that is sourced in God. And he is saying to those who are in possession of that wisdom that is from God, this is what is expected of you.

See that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Those who possess this wisdom, those who do not possess it, are not circumspect in the way they behave, or what they do, or what they say.

But because you are given access to wisdom that is from God, you are able to behave accordingly. Now, sometimes we forget that, and sometimes we forget and neglect where that wisdom is brought to our attention, most forcefully and most cogently and with most clarity.

It is in the word of God himself. True wisdom comes from God, and as such it is distinct from what this word possesses.

[44 : 10] And it is what stimulates and encourages us, and encourages us, and encourages us, and circumspect walk. Possessing a knowledge of why and how things are to be done, as God would have us do them.

And that really is the explanation for why things are to be done. Why does God expect us to redeem the time?

Because God himself has given to us the knowledge that would make the time something that is precious, that is worth purchasing.

Or, you know, that's the meaning of the word redemption. Paying for it. Paying for it. Paying for it. Giving it the most exclusive attention because of its preciousness.

God alone is the only wise God. And his ways may not always be our ways, but they are always the right way. And every time we come across God doing things in our life that we do not approve of, or that we do not enjoy, or that we do not find favorable to our own plans and intentions.

[45 : 42] A lot has to happen before we can be reconciled with what God means for our good. And God alone can do that.

And God alone can do that. Not me, not anybody else. However well-meaning we may be. When we find that God is doing something in our life that we are not comfortable with, or something that is going on in our providence that we are opposed to, there is never an occasion where that can be remedied except with his intervention.

But as is stated by so many, what is worth doing is worth doing well. And God always does things well.

The beginning of beginnings in the creation of man. God sat back as it were. You know some people are, they want to bring God down to our level and make us comfortable with who God is.

And they give you a picture at the end of the six days of creation as if it were God sitting in an easy chair, reclining there and saying, I've done it all and I've done it well.

[47 : 03] Well that's not really an image that's consistent with the scripture. But you can understand why they would want to say that.

But what God is saying to you and to me is that what God has given to you to do, make sure you do it and make sure you do it to the best of your ability.

And I suppose the truth be told that we fall down at both hurdles. Not only do we not do what we're supposed to do, when we do, we're not really doing as well as we could or should.

We mentioned John Stott. And John Stott said, everything worth doing requires care. We all take trouble over the things which seems to us to matter.

Our job, our education, our home, our families and so on. As Christians we must take trouble over our Christian life.

[48 : 14] We must treat it as the serious thing it is. And there's a pleasure question for you. Are you as careful to do the things that God would have you do with regard to him and his church and your own personal spiritual life as you are careful for all other things?

How much attention do we give to it? And that's really, I suppose, in effect the burden of these words redeem the time.

Now some translations, they simplify what is meant by these words. Make the best use of your time.

Aware yourself of every opportunity. I would hope that every one of us appreciates how precious time is.

And I suppose at this time of year inevitably there is this sort of mental, mental milestone that stands out before our eyes.

[49 : 37] A new year is a reminder to us of the march of time. And if we believe the word of God and that it teaches us that we have nothing more precious to use than time for the benefit of our soul.

Then the two things come together. When we think of, well, if you're a Christian today and you know God to be your God and you know Christ to be your Lord and you carry out a test on your own life.

How you have lived in the last year. I mean you could reduce it to the last month, the last week, the last hour if you want.

But for the sake of brevity or just because of the occasion you think about this year that you've lived for God as a believer in God.

How much of that life that you have lived for God is exclusively His.

- [50 : 57] How much of that life, how much of devoted attention have I given to Him over and against every other pressing issue that lives, that marks out the life that I live in this world.
- I don't suppose that we can answer that favorably, any one of us, whoever we are. I was reading this morning, it was a minister from 17th century, 18th century.
- He was a minister in the congregation and at the beginning of the year he wrote in his diary something that was, he was blaming himself for his worship time, personal worship time.
- He said it was, you know, his heart was hard and the worship was wrong and he was offended by the offense that he was given to God.
- And he blamed that on what he had been spending an hour or two hours before that on. And I was saying, well, that was, you know, if he was genuinely expressing the truth.
- [52 : 27] And how many of us can actually say that we ring-fence our time given to God so scrupulously that we don't allow what we've been doing or what we've been saying or what we've been watching on television, whatever film it is, whatever film it is, whatever game we've been playing, whatever thing that has taken up our attention, a book that we've been reading or whatever.
- And going from that straight into an act of worship. Have you ever thought how much, how much it encroaches even on our spiritual life?
- Those things were not so different. So different to how we view things today. And maybe these, these men of God of our past generation have a lot to teach us.
- Or maybe they wouldn't exist in this kind of world that we're in. But we have to ask a question and it applies to the life that we're living here and now.
- Not a hundred years ago, two hundred years ago. The life that we live here and now. Have we catered for our souls the way we could?
- [53 : 47] Not just the way we should, but the way we could. Have we given attention to the things that nourish our souls and the things that cause our souls to decay, if that's the right word.
- Calls our souls to shrink rather than feel the benefit of what we have been doing.
- Many look at this word and they ask the question. How happy are you with the choices that you have made?
- That they are the right choices. That they are the proper choices. That they are the choices that will be beneficial to you.
- Given that your time is limited. Given that the opportunity that is yours to live your life for the Lord is limited.
- [54 : 55] And if we don't think like that, then these words, redeem the time, mean nothing. Surely our choices must be good and not bad.
- Surely our choices must reflect what feeds into the choices that we make.
- Do we reflect on what is in our past? And ask ourselves the question.
- Well, these things in our past, in our recent past, in our Christian past. Could have been avoided. Could have been better than they have been.
- Well, they're not questions that should be ignored or passed by. Why? Because we're not comfortable with them. If we want a comfortable, easy going life, then by all means shun the word of God.
- [56 : 10] By all means ignore what God's word is saying to you. But all you're doing is delaying the inevitable. God will bring his eye to bear upon your heart and upon your mind and upon your life as a whole.

And say, well, look, this is not the way it could be. It should be. If we rise to the future and we say, well, it will always get better.

It's always got the potential to improve, is it not the case? But the assumption there is that there will always be a future.

How much of an opportunity are you giving yourself to get things right? To get things done that you had left undone?

To walk a straighter line than you had walked in the past? It's the parable of how Lord not teach us.

[57 : 18] And he has many parables. And it's amazing how many teachings are contained in his parables. And he understands human nature better than anyone first can understand human nature.

And there was this man, he says, who had every right to behave as he did. He said, I will build, I will pull down my barns and build greater barns.

I will say to my soul, soul that has much goods laid up for many years. You say to this man, yes, you're quite right.

And the man concludes, take your ease. Eat, drink and be merry. Because the many years that were ahead of him.

He could leisurely approach these years and do whatever it is he wanted to do. But Jesus says that assumption that he made that there were many years was a wrong assumption.

[58 : 21] The man was a fool. He did not have many years. That night he said, your soul will be required.

The word of God reminds us repeatedly of one fact. And I dare say that however much we may say in our heart of hearts, we do not think that 2023 will be our last.

We don't think. We say yes, it could be. And I am not a prophet. I do not know how many of us here will see out the end of this year that has just begun.

I have no right to say it for myself or any other person. Of course I will say it could be my last. And prudence would say that.

But do we really mean what we say when we say that? The word of God reminds us. Just Moses that we sang at the beginning.

[59 : 34] He states, teach us to number our days, he says. So that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. It takes you back to the beginning again.

We must apply our hearts unto wisdom and therefore that wisdom that asks us to redeem the time. Still more solemn if we have determined to spend these days on ourselves and not for God.

The most productive of God's servants sees the importance of redeeming the time. Every hour was precious and every soul was precious.

And I suppose I feel shame when I read of these renowned pastors of the Gospel. How much they were impressed with the knowledge that time was short.

And that every soul was precious in God's sight. So that every opportunity that came their way they used it to bring the burden of eternity home to those that they met with.

[61 : 00] There are some things we do that we may be permitted to undo. And is that not good? If we get something wrong, sometimes we can put right that wrong.

But with time, you can't go back. You can't go back. Even this hour that we've spent together this morning.

You've spent it in God's house with God's people listening to God's word. And I don't think you could have done better.

However much you derive from being here or hearing what God's word says. I know that you've heard God's word. And I know that I've tried to the best of my ability to apply that word to your heart and mind.

I also know that there are many people. And this hour has been spent doing something else. Maybe just sleeping it off. Now they can't redeem that hour.

[62 : 13] They can't say, well, I wanted to be in church this morning. I intended to be in church this morning. I would have liked to be in church this morning.

But that would change what actually happened. The spent hours cannot be unspent.

And there are some people in every congregation, including this one, who have promised God their time. They have promised God their life.

And today, it has to be said, they are less inclined to give even the fag end of their life to that God.

That once they were so zealous in promising faithfully that they would give their life to. That happens. You can't put that.

[63 : 16] You can't put the clock back. But there is something everyone here who is out of Christ can do. And that is, in the here and now, in this instance, nod your head towards Christ.

Bow your head before him. Bring your heart into his presence and remind him of his promises. That he may lay claim to your soul. Redeem the time.

The days are evil. Well, they are all evil if they are not Christ's, if they are not God's. Who knows what this year may bring?

Who knows? God knows. God knows. But may it bring joy to some. May it bring delight to some as they experience what God in Christ has promised for his own.

Sometimes I know we are in the risk of making the Christian life to be so woefully dark and foreboding.

[64 : 30] It is not like that. It is just the world that the Christian has to live in that makes it like that. And if we try and make it anything other than it is, then we are on the risk of making a nonsense of what the world in which the Christian has been taken out of is truly like.

And if we try and make it. But let me tell you, you cannot, any sooner than now, make your peace with God through Christ.

Any second longer than that is a second that you cannot claim back for God. May God encourage you to bring yourself into his presence, seeking his message that your life may not be forfeited at the last.

Let us pray. Lord, our days are going past like a weaver's shuttle. We see your word being fulfilled in our lives.

And we see it when we even this morning reflected upon friends and loved ones that are no longer with us.

[65 : 50] people we spend time with and enjoyed spending our time with. That they are here with us no more. But we believe that of some of them that their days are spent in an endless experience of joy unspeakable before the throne of God.

We give thanks for that glorious prospect that lies ahead of all your people. Cleanse from sin we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

We shall sing in conclusion Psalm 121. Psalm 121. Psalm 121.

I to the hills who lift mine eyes. From whence doth come mine aid? My safety cometh from the Lord who heaven and earth hath made. Thy foot in naught let slide, nor will he slumber that he keeps.

Behold he that keeps his style, he slumbers not, nor sleeps. The Lord thee keeps, the Lord thy shade on thy right hand doth stay. The moon by night thee shall not smite, nor yet the sun by day.

[67 : 05] The Lord shall keep thy soul. He shall preserve thee from all in. Henceforth thy going out unto him God keep. Forever will. Psalm 121.

To God's praise. I to the hills will lift mine eyes. From west of come my aid.

My safety cometh from the Lord who heaven and earth hath made.

Thy foot in naught let slide, nor will he slumber that he keeps.

Behold me that keeps Israel. He slumbers not, nor sleeps.

[68 : 36] The Lord thee keep. The Lord thee keeps. The Lord thy shade on thy right hand doth stay.

The moon by night thee shall not smite, nor yet the sun by day.

The Lord shall keep thy soul. He shall preserve thee from all ill.

And for thy going out and in.

God keep forever will. Amen. Amen. In the name of grace, mercy and peace, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, rest and abide with you all, now and always.

[69 : 58] Amen. Thank you.