

# The Best Use of the Time

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Proper 15/12afterPent

Pastor Josh Frazee

Ephesians 5:6-21

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## *How do we give God praise?*

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Time. We hear the word so often, and use it in so many ways. Have you ever stopped and considered just how many ways we use the word? Believe it or not, I actually had an entire course at college devoted to the word and its many uses. Pause, and think with me about its many functions.

One way is in our wording. We have past tense, present tense, future tense, perfect, and probably others I'm not remembering at the moment. With past tense we talk about something which has already occurred. Present tense describes what is currently taking place. Future tense tells what will happen, or, at least, what we believe, hope, or plan to have happen—which can and often does get changed. Perfect describes a past event which has been completed.

Time has had more to do with our existence since the fall because we now face death because of the fall of our parents Adam and Eve. We hold on to the years, months, days, and even minutes out of the fear of God's wrath and the separation that also came with the fall—separation of not only person from persons, but also body from soul.

God even helped us to set out days from days in the book of Exodus. When He established the covenant of the Passover with Moses, the "Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 'This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you.'" How was time divided prior to this? Was it divided? One might consider that Adam and Eve were called to tend the Garden of Eden, so most likely they had to keep track of it somehow, but this passage from Exodus is the first passage I've located denoting day from day and year from year.

Since we do live bound in time, day to day and year to year, and as we live for a particular period of time, our Epistle text calls the days evil, and encourages us to make the best use of it. We turn, then, to our text to see what God has to tell us this morning about living in time.

ASK  
Verse

"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light."

At the outset, Paul recalls words which fell between last week's reading and this week's: "sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place...For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."

Doing those things which are sexually immoral, then, are not making the best of time. But note that Paul doesn't just stop there; he even includes coveting, filthiness, foolish talk, and crude joking. Spending your time coveting only makes you desire the object of your thoughts all that much more. Dwelling on it in itself is sinfully wrong, but can also lead to considering and possibly employing equally sinful ways of taking or getting that object. The time considering and getting the materials needed to take that object is also wasted time—

sinful, time. The same is true for foolish talk and crude joking. Even thinking of foolish things or crude jokes is just as bad as telling them; and the more time spent thinking them up is also time gravely wasted.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, do not throw away the time you have been given. Your time is a “present” from God, and that is why we call it the present, or at least so I’ve heard. That idea is not from the Scriptures. The idea that you are right where you need to be and at the time you need to be, however, is in the Scriptures. Take a look at Paul’s letter to the Romans chapter six, verse twenty-two: “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.” “Now,” “now that you have been set free”—today, this morning, you are living in the forgiveness granted to you by our Lord Jesus the Christ. So “Walk as children of the light.” How? Hear the words of Paul to those in Ephesus.

SEEK

Verse

“(T)ry to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret...Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.”

How much time, dear friends in Christ, do you spend each day considering the will of the Lord in your life? Eight hours? Four? Two? One? A half? Ten minutes? How do you expect to live in wisdom if you do not know what true wisdom is? Have you never heard that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge”? That was in (one of) the Old Testament reading(s) for this morning from Proverbs. I hope, then, that I am speaking to those who are wise in the Lord, those who will not abuse the Word of the Lord like scoffers, but the wise who will be thankful for instruction. But I know that this Word of God will not go unheard; it is not a waste of my time. You have been reborn in Christ Jesus and you have received the seal of His Holy Spirit making you wise unto salvation.

In giving you His Holy Spirit, God has given you the ability to not only discern His will, but to do it. Jesus told His disciples that the will of God is to believe in the one whom He has sent. Through the work of the Holy Spirit—who is even active in you at this very moment as you hear God’s Word being preached to you in this place and at this time—you do believe in Jesus, the one whom God sent. You do believe that Jesus came to this planet to die for your sins and the sins of the world when the very fullness of time had come. And now you are here, alive at the time and in the place God has placed you, with the talents God has given you, to do His will, believing in and trusting on His Son, Jesus Christ, for your salvation.

KNOCK

Verse

Therefore do not walk as those in darkness, but as those in the light, the light of Christ. “(B)e filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

As the Holy Spirit keeps you in your faith, He also directs your heart as a conductor leads an orchestra. You see, there’s another use of time I haven’t mentioned up until now: in music. Now I know some of you have said to me that you’re no musician or vocalist, but that doesn’t matter in terms of making music to the Lord in your heart. God’s Spirit has given your heart all that it needs to make music that is pleasing to God as you trust in His Son.

In this way you will speak psalms and hymns to one another, building each other up with God's Word. You will use your talents to the glory of the Lord, and in service to your neighbor. And yes, even playing instruments is involved in this. In doing our Greek study of this passage, (we) found out that in the Greek, the phrase "making melody" in verse nineteen is actually better translated as "plucking the strings of an instrument." Sounds a lot like Psalm 150 doesn't it? Making music to the Lord with lyres and stringed instruments—but even Psalm 150 doesn't leave it to just stringed instruments but includes cymbals and trumpets and tambourines!

Again, you don't need a musical conductor or the earthly gift of musical talent to do this—although you most certainly may use the gifts if you have them—all that you need is the Holy Spirit, who is in you, working in you to have you do the will of your Heavenly Father, trusting in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ unto salvation. In Jesus' Name, Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord—praise the Lord! Amen!