

1/26/03 SERMON, 1/29/07

1

1/26/03 SERMON: "The Time is Short!"
(TEXTS: I Corinthians 7:29-31)

Not too long ago we celebrated Christmas. We ~~spent~~^{spend} weeks preparing for Christmas, don't we? Putting up decorations; buying presents; baking candy or cookies; writing Christmas cards; preparing for the arrival of family and friends.

But then, before we know it, the time is over. Christmas is done and we're back to business as usual. No wonder people often get depressed after Christmas. We spend so much time getting ready and we look forward with eager anticipation -- but then all of a sudden, ~~the time is over.~~ ^{It's over! The time is short}

Another similar experience takes place when engaged couples plan their wedding. Many couples spend several months planning ^{the wedding} and expend a huge amount of time and energy trying to get all the details in order. ~~But~~ when the wedding day finally arrives it seems to be all over in a flash. The time is short.

Yet one more example is life itself. Those of you who are parents can relate to this. One day your baby is born and you hold him or her in your arms. But then before you know it that infant is an adult and is leaving home. Where did the time go? The time is short.

^{they} In the same way, if you visit with elderly people -- people in ~~the~~ 70's, 80's or 90's -- most of them will confess how quickly the years have gone buy. It seems just like yesterday that they were children playing in their homes, and now they are at the end of their days. Where did the time go? The time is short.

How many here remember a song written several years ago entitled "Time in a bottle"? Let me share just a few of the lyrics: "IF I COULD PUT TIME IN A BOTTLE, THE FIRST THING THAT I'D LIKE TO DO IS SAVE EVERY DAY 'TIL ETERNITY PASSES AWAY JUST TO SPEND THEM WITH YOU. BUT THERE NEVER SEEMS TO BE ENOUGH TIME TO DO THE THINGS YOU WANT TO DO ONCE YOU FIND THEM."

Those lyrics hit home, don't they? ^z ^{see} The truth is that we CAN'T put time in a bottle. "THERE NEVER SEEMS TO BE ENOUGH TIME TO DO THE THINGS YOU WANT TO DO ONCE YOU FIND THEM." The time is short.

The Holy Spirit is trying to help us understand this fact today. That's why He moved the Apostle Paul to write these words:

1Cor. 7:29 What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none;

1Cor. 7:30 those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep;

1Cor. 7:31 those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.

Now, what was Paul trying to tell those Christians in Corinth? ~~What~~ is He trying to teach us today? These words seem to be filled with pessimism and hopelessness. But actually, these words are meant to give us great comfort and hope. Let's examine ~~our epistle reading for today~~ and hear what God has to say to us.

First, let me tell you what these words do NOT mean. When Paul says "FROM NOW ON THOSE WHO HAVE WIVES SHOULD LIVE AS IF THEY HAD NONE" he is not thereby encouraging us men to ignore our wives and forget about our marriage vows. ~~NO!~~

Instead, Paul is reminding them and us that the things of this world -- the people we love; the things we own; the experiences that we have -- these things will not always be with us because this world is passing away.

~~But~~ ^{we rebel against God!} Why is this world passing away? Sin. It all started with Adam and Eve and it continues with us. ^{We} rebel against God and try to take control of our lives. But ~~we~~ ^{we} NOT in control! This world is passing away and we can't do anything about it. Our only hope is to rely on the only One who IS in control -- our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

God is the one who created this world and He also sent His only Son to save this sinful world. Jesus came to save us from the consequences of our many sins -- including the wicked times we live as though we're in control of our lives.

When Paul says "The time is short" and "This world is passing away" He is reminding us that the things of this world do not last and this world will end one day when Christ returns in glory.

sinful

So... "THOSE WHO HAVE WIVES SHOULD LIVE AS THOUGH THEY HAVE NONE." In other words, don't take your loved one's for granted. They may not be here tomorrow. So, love them today. Confess your sins to each other and forgive each other. Today!

Don't waste one second of the precious time God has given you living in sin and hatred. Cherish your wife, husband, children, parents, brothers, sisters, friends...they might not be here tomorrow. The time is short. This world is passing away.

If you're happy at this moment, don't think it will last forever. In this world sadness may come into your life ~~tomorrow~~ *any moment*. If you just purchased something -- a new car; a new home; a new toy; some new clothes -- don't think you will keep them forever. The things of this world wear out and sometimes are stolen. So don't become engrossed with the things of this world because they won't last forever. You may lose it all tomorrow.

Why did Paul need to say this to those Christians in Corinth? Well, some of them were living their lives as though they were in control. They were taking God's precious gifts for granted and they were wasting God's gift of time on sinful living that hurt themselves and others around them.

But We make the same sinful mistake. We use our daytimers and long term calendars as though we were in control of time. We want things to work out a certain way in our lives, but so often unexpected trials enter our lives and remind us that we are not in control at all.

In addition, even though we know the will of God for our lives, we often choose to waste God's time making sinful choices that will bring us a few moments of worldly pleasure. We forget that the time we use for sin may be our last moment on this earth. We're not in control! The time is short. This world is passing away. How dare we live as though the time we have is ours to do with as we please.

This was the sinful attitude that moved Adam and Eve to reject God. This same sinful nature lives in us. We see this evil nature express itself whenever we live as though we were in control.

So, God humbles us by reminding us that we're NOT in control. The time is short. We may lose our loved ones tomorrow. We may die tomorrow. The world may end tomorrow. We need a Savior!

And we have a Savior! Our loving God is in control and He has taking the time to rescue us from the pain and loss caused by our sin against Him.

Jesus came into this world to save sinners -- that's you and me. And He did this because He loves us. Remember that song "Time in a bottle"? That song is a love song, written by a man who wanted to spend eternity with the woman he loved.

Even more, Jesus wants to spend eternity with the people He loves -- He wants to spend eternity with you. That's why He came to save you from your sin. That's why He came to put "time in a bottle", so to speak. He wants to save every day of eternity to spend it with you.

And contrary to the lyrics of the song, the days of eternity will never pass away. Those who repent and trust in Christ will spend forever with the God who loves them. Time will never end in God's Kingdom. The New Creation will never pass away.

We sinners who are are humbled by guilt and crushed by the pain and loss of this life, we sinners need comfort and hope. And God gives it to us in Jesus, who died for our sin and ~~secured~~ *conquered* death to give us life.

In fact, in our epistle reading Paul gives us some of this comfort. He said that those who mourn should live as though they do not. Paul doesn't mean that we don't have reasons to be sad or shed tears in this life.

Instead, he means that we should not despair. The time is short. The pain and loss of this life won't last for eternity. The mourning of this life is temporary. The joy and peace we have in Jesus will last forever! Listen to what Paul writes in 2nd Corinthians ch. 4:

2Cor. 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

2Cor. 4:17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

2Cor. 4:18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

5

So, the time is short. This present sinful world is passing away. We won't be living on this planet of paranoia and pain forever. Your sins are forgiven. God loves you. You will spend eternity in His New Creation one day.

Until that great and glorious day, we make the most of every moment that God gives us in this life. Remember what Paul wrote in ~~our first reading from~~ Ephesians ch. 5:

Eph. 5:15 Be very careful, then, how you live —not as unwise but as wise,

Eph. 5:16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

Eph. 5:17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

Now we understand what Paul meant when he said: "THE TIME IS SHORT. FROM NOW THOSE WHO HAVE WIVES SHOULD LIVE AS THOUGH THEY HAD NONE." In other words, make the most of every opportunity! Understand what the Lord's will is. Don't take your loved ones for granted. Love them today. Cherish them today. Forgive them today.

Also, remember that you're not in control. The things you own and things you buy, they may/not be here tomorrow. Happiness can turn to sadness in a moment. So, don't trust in yourself or the things of this world. Trust in Christ and His promises. Then you will have peace because you will know that your mourning will not last forever.

Finally, don't waste God's time doing things that you know are wrong. Instead, confess your sins every day and know that God forgives you. Then ask Him to give you the strength and desire to live out His good and gracious will in this world. If you're not sure what His will for you is, then find out by studying His Word. Scripture reveals God's good plan for our lives -- what we are to believe and how we are to live.

In closing, please remember that the time is short. This life ~~was now live~~ full of sin, pain and death -- it won't last forever. This world in its present form is passing away. But Jesus is with us always and His Word endures forever. So, trust in Jesus every day and make the most of every opportunity. Amen!