

Going Further

Sermon Series: "A heart of thankfulness"

Sermon #1 - Redeeming Time Luke 12:35-48

Warm Up

- List as many sayings about "time" as you can call to mind (e.g. "time heal all wounds").
 - How many come from the Bible?
 - How many are negative in outlook?
 - How many are unrealistic or untrue in your experience?

Looking at the key texts

The Apostle Paul used an interesting phrase in Ephesians 5:16 to direct Christians. He calls people to "redeem the time". To understand this concept, we must see what it means to "redeem" something. Redeem means to "buy back", "take possession of", "deliver from enslavement", or "to convert into something of value."

Paul writes: *"Act like people with good sense and not like fools. These are evil times, so make every minute count (redeem the time). Don't be like ignorant people. Instead, find out what the Lord wants you to do"* (Ephesians 5:15–17 Contemporary English Version).

In Luke 12:35-48 Jesus impressed the gravity and urgency of Christian responsibility in the time we have until his coming again.

Search Further >>>

There are 260 chapters in the New Testament, and Christ's return is mentioned no less than 318 times. Statistically, one verse in twenty-five mentions the Lord's return. Look at some of the following passages and note the firm promises and details regarding Jesus second coming:

- Luke 17:22-35
- John 14:3
- Acts 1:8-11
- 1 Thessalonians 4:11-18
- Revelation 22:20

Jesus used four metaphors in Luke 12:35-40 to urge his followers to take these things seriously:

1. The Worker- Christians must be prepared for service in the Kingdom

In Luke 12 verse 35 Jesus says: *"Be dressed ready for service...."*

- In Jesus' day to be dressed and ready for service was as the old translations say, "to gird up your loins". That is, to tuck your flowing outer robe under your belt or sash. This was done to prepare for travel, fighting (Eph. 6:14), or for work (1 Peter 1:13).

Discuss >>>

- What "work" should a Christian be doing for God?
- What "clothing" befits such work?
- Note the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 24:38-39. What are the implications of this passage for us today?

2. The House Servant- Christians must faithfully persevere in service

Continuing in Luke 12 Jesus says:

35 ...and keep your lamps burning,36 like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. 37 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. 38 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. (New International Version- compare Matthew 25:1-13)

Discuss >>>

- What does this passage suggest the reward is for those who persevere in faithfulness to the Lord?
- How might the lateness of the master's arrival in the story relate to our waiting for Jesus' return today?

3. The Victim of Burglary- Be watchful.

Continuing in Luke 12:

39 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

Discuss >>>

- Recall a time you came back to your house or car to find it broken into? What were your feelings and thoughts? How would such an event cause you to reconsider your life?
- Why is Jesus likening himself to the thief in this illustration?

4. The Wise Manager- There is a great responsibility for those in leadership

The final section of the passage in Luke 12 says:

41 Peter asked, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?" 42 The Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? 43 It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. 44 I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 45 But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. 46 The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. 47 "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. 48 But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. (New International Version)

Notes to assist the reader >>>

Peter's question , "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?" is answered by Jesus with a counter question in story form. He tells a story of a manager of servants who is himself a servant (vss. 42-45). The image seems to infer something about those who have responsibilities, like Church leaders. But Jesus didn't really answer Peter's question directly. The clue may be in vs. 48 where Jesus speaks of a sliding scale of responsibility and a sliding scale of consequences. Suffice it to say, Jesus is speaking to his followers first, then to all those who succeeded them in church leadership, and then to all servants of the Lord in varying responsibilities in the church. The harshest of Jesus' sayings in this passage may be directed to those who gave only the outward appearance of leadership and faithfulness but in fact led people astray from the truth of the Gospel (see Matthew 7:15-23).

So we all need to listen with great alertness if we call ourselves friends and servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are all challenged to question whether we are living alert to God's calling upon our lives; whether we are really using the time allotted to us with God's purposes at the forefront of our purposes. The motivation for us today is to redeem our time for God and be found ready and faithful when Jesus returns and brings to consummation all the promises of the Gospel.

Practical Application Exercises

(choose one or two of the following exercises)

1. **Compare** the quotes below from the 18th Century church leader, John Wesley, and the 21st Century business leader, Steve Jobs, below:

"See that ye walk circumspectly," says the Apostle (in Ephesians 5:16) ..., "not as fools, but as wise men, redeeming the time;" saving all the time you can for the best purposes; buying up every fleeting moment out of the hands of sin and Satan, out of the hands of sloth, ease, pleasure, worldly business; the more diligently, because the present "are evil days," days of the grossest ignorance, immorality, and profaneness. This seems to be the general meaning of the words. But I purpose, at present, to consider only one particular way of redeeming the time," namely, from sleep..... First, What is it to "redeem the time" from sleep? It is, in general, to take that measure of sleep every night which nature requires, and no more; that measure which is the most conducive to the health and vigour both of the body and mind."

John Wesley

"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma - which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of other's opinions drown out your own inner voice. Most importantly, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary."

Steve Jobs (co founder of Apple)

Discuss >>>

- What central authority sets the priorities for each of these men?
- What "authorities" influence your use of time? Internal? External?
- What place does the Bible and the prompting of the Holy Spirit and the priorities of other church members in your group have in your decision making priorities about the use of your time?

2. **Diagnose your use of time** using the following tool borrowed from author Steve Covey (from "First Things First", *Stephen R. Covey & A. Roger Merrill, Simon & Schuster, 1994 U.S.A.*)

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crises • Pressing problems • Deadline-driven projects, meetings, preparations 	II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation • Prevention • Values clarification • Planning • Relationship building • True re-creation • Empowerment
Not Important	III <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interruptions, some phone calls • Some mail, some reports • Some meetings • Many proximate, pressing matters • Many popular activities 	IV <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trivia, busywork • Junk mail • Some phone calls • Time wasters • "Escape" activities

- Given that the examples above are written for people in a business, what others might you adapt to the quadrants relating to your current life activities?
- Take the time to estimate the percentage of your time last month that was devoted to items or events suited to each quadrant above.
- What priorities of the Gospel and of your local church might be missing from quadrant II time in your current life?
- Is there any quadrant IV time in your life that could be redeemed for God?

3. **Diagnose your “big rock” priorities as a disciple of Jesus** using the following tool borrowed from author Steve Covey (from “First Things First”, *Stephen R. Covey & A. Roger Merrill, Simon & Schuster, 1994 U.S.A.*)

This illustration uses a jar as our defined and allotted time in life, and rocks, stones, grains of sand and drops of water as the various items that consume our time. The droplets and grains (represent quadrant III and IV activities which tend to take up most of our precious time before we even begin to plan. In such cases, the big rocks (important, but not necessarily urgent) cannot fit into our plans because we have no time left (see Fig. 1 below). Covey suggests that we must dare to place the “big rocks” in the jar (in our schedule and plan for life) before all other things have any place at all. Interestingly, the other, lower priority things can shuffle into the jar around our bigger priorities when we plan this way (Fig. 2).

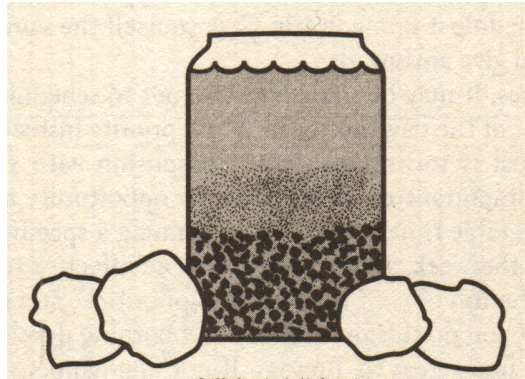


Fig. 1

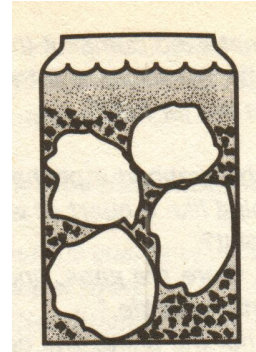


Fig. 2

- What are the “big rock” priorities Jesus might be calling you to work on that have been squeezed out of your previous schedules?
- How might you go about placing these “big rocks” into your plans for next week, next month or next year?

4. **Consider your opportunities** in life. In Luke chapter 12:56 Jesus was critical of the religious leaders listening to him, telling them that they did not know how to interpret the “present time”. He used the Greek word *kairos*, which refers to opportunity rather than chronology (e.g. see Luke 12:42 “in due season” or “at the proper time”). In Mark 1:15 Jesus says, “The time has come,” ... “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” In this verse he uses *kairos* rather than *chronos*, emphasizing the importance of the opportunity, rather than merely the arrival of a particular moment in time. In contrast to the idea of time as merely quantitative, *kairos* relates to quality. The implication of Jesus’ teaching is that one must be wise in understanding the moment, or period of time in question, and wise in how one lives in such a moment. How would you describe the current “time” you live in at present, and what does it demand of Christians like you?

Final Word

You’ve heard the saying, “**manage it or it will manage you.**” That philosophy can apply to anything from children, to money, to job, and even, or maybe especially, to time. Two things are crucial to managing our time— **setting goals and planning.**

Time management is basically a matter of setting goals for where you want to go and what you want to do, and then developing a plan for reaching those goals. “If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll likely wind up someplace else.” Without knowing your major goal(s), you fumble around doing things that never amount to much.

As Christians, our goals **must be in line with God’s goals for us.** He will empower us to accomplish whatever He calls us to do. However, when we ignore God’s priorities, we treat God’s saving grace with contempt and appear to be ignorant of God’s promises. Let’s take the challenge of the Scriptures along with the power and strength and guidance of God’s Holy Spirit as we dare to “redeem the time”.

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