

Redeeming the Time - Part 1

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Preacher: Clay Naylor

[0 : 00] Join me in your Bibles and turn to Ephesians chapter 5.! This Sunday and next Sunday we're going to talk about a topic that's just particularly dear to my heart.

! About redeeming the time. Making the best use of the time that we have on this earth. And so, as we've been talking about the last few weeks, this will not be necessarily a large exposition of a large Bible passage, which is what we usually do here.

If you're new, we're going to be starting the book of Romans pretty soon. You'll get a really good taste of what that means pretty quick. But this will be a topical sermon this week and next, just focusing in on a couple of verses and really trying to just wring out every bit of meaning we can from God's Word, using the Scripture to support what we say.

But Ephesians chapter 5, I just want us to look at a couple of verses and move on. But we'll see. Verse 15, chapter 5. Paul says, Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

[1 : 26] Let's join me in a quick word of prayer. Lord, we just lift up this time to you as an offering. We just ask that you would be pleased, that you would work through your Word, by the power of your Spirit, in the hearts of your people, and those who have come to know you and walk away today refreshed, challenged, convicted, a renewed desire to be obedient, and those who have never encountered you before, that this would be heavy on their minds.

So we ask that you would just work in this time. In Christ's name, amen. So as we've already done, we've already extended a really warm welcome back to our college students, but I just want to say it again as someone who loves you and cares a lot about this age and time of life that you are in.

We talked about how college years are a major crossroads for a lot of people. You are figuring out what you believe, why you believe it. You're thinking about the stuff that I've heard about the Bible and my faith.

Is it actually mine, or is it just what I heard from my parents? A lot of times, it's a pivotal time in college for a lot of professing Christians to either fall away and never come back, or a chance for them to grow deeper in their faith.

It's usually a really serious, pivotal time for that. But it's a special time. And as I said, even this church was formed around the nucleus of a lot of younger college students who had a desire, a deep passion for God and His Word, and for making disciples.

[3 : 06] And so, for myself, I strived really hard when I was in college. I wasted a lot of my high school years. But I really asked the Lord to help me make the best use of the time when I was in college.

It's then that I met Nathan, then that I met Wes, and a lot of the stuff that began to happen here at Christ's family. But in our text today, we're going to zoom in on a few phrases.

If we look closely, we see in verse 16 the word time. And we see that God has allowed each one of us time. So, the time we're talking about, though, is not a word that we're familiar with, *chronos*, which means like clock time.

It actually means *kairos*, which is a fixed season of time. A fixed season of time within that time, there's an opportunity to do something that once it's passed, you won't have it back again.

It's a unique, special time to accomplish something. A time for us to be faithful to God and do something to glorify Him before that door closes.

[4 : 19] Some people may refer to this as divine appointments, a prearranged, providential season of time. And God's word is full of these types of things.

It's *kairos*, time. For example, Isaiah 55, seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near.

So, a season of time for you to do that. But also, Psalm 69, O Lord, my prayer to you has come in an acceptable time, at the right time.

So, making the most use of the time and stewarding it well, the time that's given to us by God. There's a lot of different... I particularly want to talk to students today, but this is going to be an applicable message for every single person here.

But in particular, our younger students who are here today. Young men and women, I will say. So, what are some particular kairoses that we have?

[5 : 23] Your childhood is one. Your childhood years. Your young adult years. Your college years. Your single years. Mine was 34 years long.

There was marriage. That's a unique season of time where a lot of change happens. And then when you think, you've figured that out. Children come.

And that's another unique season. Unique is an interesting word to use. Unique season of time. Parenting. Working. Career. And then older retirement years.

But, nonetheless, we need to think about the kairos in the span of our entire life. The season that you find yourself in right now in the picture of the bigger picture of your life.

The small picture and the bigger picture. So, if you also look at verse 16, you see the phrase making the best use of the time. And that's actually one word that it just means to redeem.

[6 : 24] To buy up. To buy up and redeem or purchase for one's use. It's an image here of you going to back in this time like a marketplace.

And you see something that catches your eye. It's something that you really want. Something that's very valuable. And you go to the person selling it and they say, hey, like, today there's a deal on this thing.

You can get this at a good price. But you have to purchase it today. If you leave, someone else may buy it or the price is going to go up. Like, now is the opportune time for you to do this.

Like, you have to make a decision. You can't put it off. You can't procrastinate. It's kind of a now or never type thing. And so, it must be seized on.

That transaction with the seller needs to be secured. And that's supposed to be an image of this world that we live in. Redeem and make the best use of the kairos, the season of time allotted to you in the span of eternity.

[7 : 27] because it will come and go like the wind and you won't see it again. So, zooming in on our text, kind of a brief overview.

The book of Ephesians is written by Paul to the church at Ephesus, which is in modern day Turkey close to the Mediterranean. You actually can go and see it today. It's an incredible place. But in the first three chapters, Paul spends a lot of time focusing on our salvation.

Talking about how it is that Christ has redeemed His people. The work of salvation. All the beautiful things that has been accomplished through the work of Christ and by the grace of God.

That's typically the first three chapters of Ephesians. Who we are in Christ. Our identity. And then, the following chapters, four through six, are basically how do we live out this new identity in Christ. In all these different contexts. In the family. In relationships. In the church. Around the world. How do we live out our identity that is in Christ. So, but I love how I did that.

[8 : 37] I love that we learn who we are and what God has done for us and then how to actually live that out. And that's where these two verses fall. Like how do we live out who we are in Christ.

But a couple observations of this text we can make some clear connections. you've been given and me a kairos. A allotted season of time by God.

And we can choose either to redeem it and make the most of it or we can waste it and squander it and not get it back again. It's just the truth.

It's just how it is. Wasting the time means walking carelessly in foolishness with this present life and view. So, there's a brief outline.

Life is short. Eternity is long. Redeem the time. That's the three points. Life is short. Eternity is long. Redeem the time.

[9 : 38] Point number one, life is short. Students, we've talked about this already, but beware that in a lot of universities they will seek to indoctrinate you to adopt a secular humanist worldview where God is not the center of everything but you are at the center of everything.

Your success, your happiness, your feelings, your desires and your rights is a fallen system that they'll tell you strive to accomplish just all you can for your sake.

That life is not about God. There'll be many voices out there that are anti-God telling you this present life is all there is. Like, this is it.

So, eat it up. Enjoy it. Do whatever you need to do that's necessary just to enjoy this life because there's nothing that comes after this. And education, they will say, is your means of achieving success in this world.

But, as our man Jim Elliott said many, many years ago, wisdom comes from God and not from PhDs. So, look to God for how he ought to live this life.

[10:55] But, we are given a sales pitch, particularly young men and women that are in school. But, we are given this every day. In Western society, it's kind of a propaganda type message that goes something like this.

Work hard in school, get a degree, right, which will lead to a good job, which will lead to a good income, which will lead to security, then which will lead to buying a bunch of stuff, accumulation, possessions, things, big houses, toys, etc.

That's kind of the goal. Then, get married or don't get married. Maybe have kids or not, as long as those kids don't intrude on your enjoyment of this life.

That's kind of the message that we have now. And then, right, later, further, eventually finish working, so you've had all you want, retire, buy a couple houses, buy some more toys, and then sit back and enjoy the latter years of your life until your dying day.

But yet, you will have eternity haunting you later. Is this all there was to it? And so, some people, even in this very room that I know are retired or using that retirement well.

[12:18] So this is not an attack on any of that. It's not the goal at all. Just to reference a dear brother of mine, his name is Stan, Stan Kelly, he worked for the county here in Lumpkin.

We have some mutual friends that are overseas doing mission work. I work out with him at the gym in town. But, he just retired and he looked at me the other day and just said, man, there are so many people my age that are just set on being comfortable in retirement and just living out their days in ease.

And I recognize that my good health is a gift from the Lord to go and make disciples and I don't want to waste my retirement. I want to use it for the Lord and for eternity.

And so, he's been going to some unreached peoples in South Asia over the last couple years. Just a beautiful picture of a guy who's using that time, redeeming that kairos of his life.

And so, so life is short, but we have a deception of invincibility. Again, younger people, like, physically, many of you are in the prime of your life.

[13:30] Like, you're not going to probably feel better than you do right now. You feel invincible, young, fast, knowledgeable. It feels like you could just go on forever.

Your whole life is ahead of you. But the honest truth is none of us get off this planet alive. Like, something happens and it's the end. It's over. And we don't know how much time is in front of us. But that's the sad truth of living in a fallen world. We all are going to die. Myself and you. And that is recognized universally.

And we do all we can, at least here in America, to negate that. Like, we're not going to die. Like, this isn't going to happen. So let's just live this way. A Victorian poet named Matthew Arnold wrote about man's fleeting and seemingly meaningless life back in the days of the British Empire and, you know, where he was surrounded by rugby players and tough young guys all the time.

He said, what is the course of this life of mortal man on the earth? Most eddy about here and there, eat and drink, chatter, love, and hate, gather and squander, are raised aloft and then hurled down into the dust, striving blindly, achieving nothing, and then they die.

[15:00] A sad reality of someone who has no picture of eternity and of God. But God says, no, you are not invincible, you are not immortal, and you will die.

God's word is so vivid about this, so much imagery everywhere you turn. It's really actually hard to turn somewhere in the scripture without a reference around that's alluding to death.

Job 14, man comes out like a flower and withers. He flees like a shadow and continues not. In the New Testament, James 4, 15, very familiar, you are just a vapor, your life is a vapor that appears for a little while and vanishes away.

And the Psalms are filled with stuff like this. Psalm 39, take this in. Oh Lord, make me know my end, and what is the measure of my days. There's a kairos there.

Let me know how fleeting I am. Behold, you have made my days as a few hand breaths, and my lifetime as as nothing before you.

[16:10] Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath. Surely man goes about as a shadow. Surely for nothing they have nothing but turmoil.

Man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather it. Very vivid picture of this life. So Paul says in Ephesians 5, don't be foolish to think that this life won't have an end.

Life is short. He calls his readers in our text to walk, not as unwise. So foolishness, he's saying you will be a fool, you will be an imbecile, and deceive yourself if you think that this present life is all there is.

If you think this is all we have, it's foolish to believe that our existence is only about the here and now and won't come to an end. It will come to an end.

And so many of us, myself included, we put our hope in broken cisterns that hold no water, and we look at that, and we watch time after time things that we think are going to give us life not give us life.

[17:28] Relationships, possessions, clothes, nice vehicles, big houses, money, big bank accounts, just name it. None of those things are evil in and of themselves. When you think that they're going to give you life, you're going to be brutally disappointed.

It's going to let you down. So don't carelessly waste your life, especially your college years, looking back through that lens, because you will waste and squander the kairos of your life.

But wisdom here, in view that life is short, wisdom would recognize the reality that time on this earth is short. You have a definite start, you were born, and you will have a definite end.

And it begs the question, what is this about in between here? Why are we here? So there's a call to wake up and realize that each morning you get out of bed.

Each morning you get out of bed, God has graciously sustained you while you slept. That's right out of the scripture. And by his grace, he's giving you yet another day for the sole purpose of knowing him, walking with him, and making him known to other people, and making disciples.

[18:45] This is why we're here. Not just to consume and enjoy. This leads into our second point. Eternity is long. Eternity is long.

It would be foolish to deceive yourself into thinking that there's not another life and another world beyond this one. That there's nothing that awaits for you after death.

Even those who know Christ, like myself, we so easily just throw away and squander so many opportunities and choose comfort, our laziness, our mediocrity over what we ought to do.

But Paul says, here's why we cannot be nearsighted. Paul says, because the days are evil, in verse 16. This fallen world, sinful man will try to lure you into that trap of the here and now.

But because we live in dark times, we need frequent reminders to wake up. We need frequent reminders to just wake out of the slumber that we are in.

[19:53] That there will be a judgment day, even for believers, not the same judgment as for unbelievers, but we will stand before God and give an account of our lives that we have lived as believers.

Without getting too much into it, if you would like, turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 3 really quick. A passage that's always kind of giving me chills a little bit.

1 Corinthians chapter 3. And I, here's what I don't want to get into. I know this is just going to make you go, what? When you hear this, but ask me later, I'll explain why.

But I believe in heaven there will be a measure of holy, not sinful, but holy regret that we did not do more than we did.

Because we're going to see like, wow, it was all going toward this, and I should have spent more time doing X, Y, and Z instead of this.

[20:57] In 1 Corinthians chapter 3, and let's start in verse 12, this is Paul talking about that day, and he's writing to the church, he's writing to Christians, he says, now if anyone builds on a foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and straw, each one's work will become manifest for the day, capital D, day of judgment, will disclose it.

Because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has is built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss. See that? Suffer loss. Like, how can you suffer loss? Though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Man, let your mind soak in that. As an old missionary once said, only one life will soon be passed, and only what's done for Christ will last.

Burn that in your memory. So wisdom here, in the view of eternity is long, is not wasting time that God has given you. We need wisdom to know how to walk in this evil age when there are so many things competing for our time.

[22 : 28] So many things saying, invest here, come here. So, having sovereignly bounded our lives with eternity, God knows he's set the beginning and the end.

There's a kairos of space in between that he has given us. Paul was very aware of this, how transient and temporary and fleeting life is compared to eternity.

Colossians 3, set your minds on things above and not on things on the earth. So, life is short, eternity is long, point three, and lastly, redeem the time.

So, with this in mind, God calls you and me to make the best use of the sacred kairos that we have in this life, the season that you find yourself in.

So, wisdom says redeem the time, buy it up, secure it, make the best use of it. No matter where you find yourself, no matter where you find yourself, be conscious of that allotted time, and don't waste it.

[23 : 39] Make the best use of it. Opportunities that are going to come your way, so, here's what this can look like. We're going to get into a lot more application next week.

Like, how do you redeem the time in certain areas of life? But just by example, relationships are given to you by God so that you might live with those people in such a way that shows that they are not your treasure, but God is.

That's sort of what we're going after. chapter. And we'll get more into that next week, but since you're kind of in the Corinthians area, jump over to 2 Corinthians, just one book over, and understand this idea of eternity, things that we see before us are temporal, but we have an eternity that is before us, that awaits us.

2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 16. 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 16.

A passage that's weighed very heavy over my life. Paul says, so we do not lose heart, though our outer self is wasting away.

[24 : 55] Let that sink in. It's wasting away. All that you are right now and all that you see is deteriorating before your eyes. Our inner self is being renewed day by day.

For this light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen.

For the things that are seen are transient, are temporal, but the things that are unseen are eternal. eternal. That ought to really make us think about the season of life that we find ourselves in right now.

In closing, just a couple things. Most of you know, but there's some new folks here today, that I was born with cystic fibrosis 40 years ago, almost.

This October, I'll be 40, which is bizarre. I don't see it as a decrepit thing. I see it as grace. Like, wow, I've been alive for 40 years. That's sort of a little different for me, but I have a respiratory disease that I was born with.

[26 : 05] And so throughout my life, thoughts of eternity and death really weighed heavily on my mind. While I was at North Georgia, I picked up John Piper's book called Don't Waste Your Life, and it still, today, is seared into my brain.

God uses the weak and infirm people a lot of the time as reminders to the strong that life is short. You're not going to be here forever. You may feel great now, but it's all going to go downhill one day, no matter how strong you think you are.

But God has used my disease as a blessing of my life to teach me what life is about. Growing up, my lifelong dream was to be in the Marine Corps.

That was what a lot of my family had done, and really there was mainly this pride behind it. I wanted to be seen as that bad invincible dude, all about me, and God was just like, oh yeah?

Cystic fibrosis cured. And it killed me. When I was 18 or 19, 9-11 happened, and I had probably 10 of my buddies actually join, while I couldn't join.

[27 : 25] But that was also the same time that I really think that I was born again, around that same time. So God was just tearing my loyalties apart so they would just be focused on him.

And after graduation in 2008 in North Georgia, I put in for a double lung transplant at University Alabama, Birmingham, and I waited for about a year, got the transplant, and a few months later I got a really bad infection that nearly killed me.

I don't have any actual memory for about a month. I don't remember anything that happened. I was sort of on life support for a week. They didn't really know what was going to happen, but in the CICU at UAB, I actually was in there, I didn't know, obviously I was out of it, but with two other people, that one had CF like me and was waiting for a transplant, and one had just got a transplant, kind of like myself, all in their early 20s, and my parents got to know their parents very well, and my parents got to bear witness to Christ, to their parents, were both just all on life support, and for some reason I'm the only one that lived, I'm the only one that made it out, and I don't know why, but that just weighs on me so much that I just want to make the most of my life for the Lord.

It could have not been me. I might not be here with you, and there's nothing special about me. This is about focusing on the greatness of our God, God, but eternity should weigh heavily on our minds, and it just created in me a deep longing to want to make the best use of this time for eternity. eternity. But, one thing that I've learned is thanks to good brothers in this church as well as to my wife, that I can be a little hard on myself about this.

[29 : 37] I visited UAB not too long ago with my wife, and I took her up to the transplant floor, where I spent a year plus, and I just broke down like I couldn't walk down the hallway.

It was just too much for me to take in, just weighing on me, God, have I used what you've given me faithfully? Have I used this kairos faithfully?

But if you're not careful, what can happen is it turns into a works-based acceptance thing, where you're trying to pay God back for what he's done. And that's the trap I've fallen into many times. So a good desire gone wrong often, where I'm trying to earn God's favor, earn what he did for me. So here's in closing, as you study the Gospels, you see that Christ was very aware of a kairos that the Father had set for him, his life, and how it worked.

If you look at the Gospel of John, in John 2, he says, my hour has not yet come. Referring to that last hour, the finish line, where he would die on the cross and accomplish the work of redemption through his death and resurrection.

[30 : 53] He had his eye fixed on that last hour. In fact, people tried to hurt him and do things to him, and it said that he would just sort of walk away, and it would say because his time had not yet come.

Right? His hour had not yet come. In John 12, Jesus says, Father, save me from this hour, but for this purpose I came to the world.

And then a very clear one, John 17, verse 1 and 4. Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.

I glorified you on the earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. I want to be able to say that. I hope you do.

And then finally, John 19, it is finished. That work has been accomplished. So the good news for us is even as believers, if we have squandered time, if we've wasted so much, we can take hope in Christ that he did not waste any of the time that he lived out for the Father.

[32 : 05] He stayed faithful until the end. And he secured an eternal salvation for us as we go to him in faith and to be saved. And as one man has taught me over the years, we don't strive, as we're striving to redeem the time, know that we're not striving to enter God's love, but we're striving in the midst of God's love, the love that he has already been secured by Christ.

We don't strive to earn it, we just strive in the midst of that love. But yet, true faith in Christ, true faith in Christ will create a desire to redeem the time and to make the best use of it, of this life on earth.

So as the psalmist said, Psalm 90, talking to the Lord, so teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom.

So next week, we'll talk about how to redeem the time in three different areas, in our relationship with Christ, our relationship with God's people, and our obedience to Christ's mission.

How can we make the best use of those kairoses?