

EVANGEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCA)

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Sunday Worship 8:30 AM and 11:00 AM

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Thinking About the Time of My Life

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”—Genesis 1:1. In so doing God created time. The Hebrews, very early, recognized the day, month and year as means of dividing or measuring time because these measurements involved the circuit of the earth, the sun and moon. They also observed the seven day week for which there is no satisfactory explanation except for divine revelation.

Later the day was divided into several parts called watches, but there was no concern with lesser divisions such as hour, minute or second. More exact measurements of time were made possible with the sun-dial.

Plautis of Rome a second-century B.C. playwright railed against this continual dividing of time: “The gods confound the man who first found out how to distinguish hours. Confound him, too, who in this place set up a sun-dial, to cut and hack my days so wretchedly into small pieces.”

The Bible teaches that God has appointed a time for everything—Ecclesiastes 3:1. He has set eternity in our hearts but He has limited our time upon the earth—Ecclesiastes 3:11. It’s no wonder that we define value in terms of time and try to cram all the activity we can into the time we have. It seems reasonable because we don’t know when time will run out for us.

Many books have been written on how to accomplish more in the time we have. Many Christians have joined the rush to do something before it’s too late. Someone has stated the American creed as, “That outworn, hilariously twisted and disfigured ethic which urges people to compete for the sake of competing, achieve for the sake of achieving, win for the sake of winning and which honors him who does all this without pause or letup.”

Some have looked at the modern pace of life and checked out completely. Consider Les Waas, President of the Procrastinator’s Club of America. He says, “People who rush around and never relax and get all worried about being on time are people who die early. Then they are referred to as the late Mr. so and so. Why not be late while you’re alive?”

We may try to laugh off the breathless pace of modern life or dream of a less hurried age, but the only real hope of a solution to time pressure lies in coming to terms with the time we have.

When people from another culture step into North America they immediately feel a different pulse—beat. A university student, reared by missionary parents in Africa, wrote that when he came to the U.S. to study, “everything seemed to blare out; do, taste, read, feel, and quick, before it’s too late.” Some observers, such as the Brazilian sociologist Vianna Moog, can hardly contain their disdain for the North American pace of life. “The American no longer knows how to contemplate; he does not know how to reflect or even rest.”

Rudyard Kipling reflected on this in the days of the British Empire: “Now it is not good for the Christian’s health to hustle the Aryan Brown, for the Christian riles, and the Aryan smiles and he weareth the Christian down; and the end of the fight is a tombstone white with the name of the late deceased, and the epitaph drear: ‘A fool lies here who tried to hustle the east’.”

What is God’s view of time? Does He favor the western view where time is money and is seen as a limited and decreasing resource or does He favor the view of most of the world, who live in event oriented societies rather than time oriented societies?

C.S. Lewis points out that the time we call ours is really not ours at all. In the *Screwtape Letters*, Screwtape’s advice to the junior tempter Wormwood is to, “Zealously guard in your patient’s mind the curious assumption ‘my time is my own’.” But he warns, “You have here a delicate task. The assumption which you want him to go on making is so absurd that, if once it is questioned; even we cannot find a shred of argument in its defense. The man can neither make, nor retain, one moment of time; it all comes to him by pure gift; he might as well regard the sun and moon as his chattels.”

The Japanese Theologian Kosvke Koyama connects God’s speed with His very nature (which is, of course, love and not mammon). And he suggests we are more likely to perceive Him at work in our inner time rather than in the rush of activity:

“God walks ‘slowly’ because He is love. If He is not love He would have gone much faster. Love has its speed. It is an inner speed. It is a different kind of speed from the technological speed to which we are accustomed. It goes on in the depth of our life at three miles an hour. It is the speed we walk and therefore it is the speed the love of God walks.”

If time is a gift from God, it is to be shared, to be invested, but invested in people. It may be that we are missing something when we relate our time solely to efficiency and accomplishment. The value of our lives depends on relationships, not just activity.

You know the truth—let your life show it!

Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do. Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days. Don’t be vague, but firmly grasp what you know to be the will of God. Don’t get your stimulus from wine (for there is always the danger of excessive drinking), but let the Spirit stimulate your souls. Express your joy in singing among yourselves psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making music in your hearts for the ears of God! Thank God at all times for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And “fit in with” one another, because of your common reverence for Christ.—Ephesians 5:15-21 (J.B. Phillips Translation)

I wish you a joyful and prosperous New Year,