

Proper 15B – Eph. 5.15-16 *What time is it?*

What time is it? That seems to be an innocuous question. What time is it?

We ask the question of friend and stranger alike. What time is it? Time is common to us all; we all drift along upon its unstoppable current. As the hymn says, “Time like an ever rolling stream bears all its sons away.” But asking the question of the time may tell more about us than we may think. It shows that we have some concern as to how our time is spent.

A recent study concluded that in a lifetime, the average American will spend:

Six months sitting at stoplights

Eight months opening junk mail

One year looking for misplaced objects

2 years unsuccessfully returning phone calls

4 years doing housework

5 years waiting in line

6 years eating

We may shake our heads at such a silly survey, but it should be evident that we spend much of our precious time performing very mundane tasks. What time is it? What are you doing with your time?

The apostle Paul is concerned with the time in our passage appointed for this day from his letter to the Ephesians. He says to them, “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil.” Greek is a great language, especially if you need a language that has the ability to express the shades of meaning between to similar words. Greek has two words for time: *chronos* and *kairos*. I have on my wrist a watch. Ideally it tells me the time or more exactly, it allows me to quantify the passage of time. I look and see that it is 10.45 now and I expect that I should be finished with this sermon in about an hour! I look on its face and upon it is written the word “Chronograph”. This instrument on my arm marks the passage of *chronos*, linear time.

But Greek has another word for time: *kairos*. This is not simply the passage of time, but instead it is meaningful time. It is the thing that we refer to when we say something like, “Could you believe the news about the foiled terrorist plot they discovered in London? The police uncovered their plans...

just in time!” This is not simply tick-tock time. It is meaningful time. It is a “moment in time”. It is time that matters.

This *kairos*, this meaningful time, is the time that St. Paul mentions in our lesson today, “Redeem the time, for the days are evil.” What time is it? Paul says the days are evil. It would be wrong to see Paul dabbling in political or social editorial here. There were wars and civil unrest around the Roman Empire. A drought had caused a famine in Israel and the Christians in Jerusalem were starving. The churches Paul had planted were being persecuted from without and were bickering within. But when Paul says that the days and times were evil he means that world is still following the Devil in rebellion against the true king – Jesus. For Paul had already written earlier in his letter to the Ephesians, “you Christ made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.” What time is it, Paul asks? It is an evil time that took the only Son of God and hung him upon a tree, and continues to shake its fist in the face of Almighty God. They serve the lusts of the flesh and the desires of body and mind, and so were children of wrath. That is, dear friends, that all those who oppose God and his Messiah

are enemies of his kingdom, would work to destroy it, and receive the just punishment for their rebellion which is the fires of Hell!

But God... Oh, what sweet words are written here dear friends? Two simple words, "But God..." They are very much in every way like the two beautiful words, "For God" that Jesus speaks to Nicodemus in the Gospel of John.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all that believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." So Paul writes, "But God". It is an evil time, deserving of damnation, "But God". It was an evil time, a degenerate time. But in the fullness of time, God sent his Son. So we see here that it is no mere passage of time, but meaningful time that Paul focuses upon. It is at that evil time that Almighty God chose, out of his great providence, to act and to save all those who were in Christ. So he says, "But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

What time is it? It is an evil time, it is the fullness of time, and it is time to redeem the time. St. Paul writes, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as

unwise men but as wise, redeeming the time, for the days are evil.” For the great philosopher Plato the difference between man and beast was simply that humans had knowledge of themselves. Animals simply lived from meal to meal. So Plato summed up all wisdom in this one statement, “Know thyself”. Great thinkers like St. Augustine and John Calvin followed him in this. The wise man knows himself.

So Paul says that the man who is wise redeems the time. The unwise man does not. See how St. Paul describes the unwise man: his is a fornicator, filthy and greedy; he laughs uncontrollably, braying like a donkey; he is envious of his neighbors’ successes; he wastes his time in drunkenness. He is a slave to his own desire. He has no mastery of his own life. He is, in a word, an animal. Paul says that there is no place for such in the Kingdom of Christ.

But the wise man knows himself. He knows what he is: he is created in the image of Almighty God. He knows who he is: he is a child of God remade in the likeness of Christ through faith in his blood. He knows why he is: he lives and breathes to glorify the Creator who made him and preserves him. He knows what time it is: it is time to put off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

So, if you would be wise, you must redeem the time. If you had a bank that credited your account each morning with \$86,000 that carried over no balance from day to day...Allowed you to keep no cash in your account, and every evening cancelled whatever part of the amount you failed to use during the day, what would you do? Draw out every cent every day, of course, and use it to your advantage! Well, you have such a bank, and its name is TIME! Every morning it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it rules off as lost whatever of this you failed to invest to good purpose. It carries over no balances, it allows no overdrafts. Each day it opens a new account with you. If you fail to use the day's deposits, the loss is yours. There is no going back. There is no drawing against tomorrow.

This is the time that you must redeem. This is the time that you must win back from the world, the flesh and the Devil. It is not theirs, it is Christ's! He won it passionately upon the cross at Calvary. They would tempt you to sit idly by while the clock ticks and your life slips. No, no, dear friends. The battle is not won sitting by the camp fire! You must take up your armor of truth, righteousness and faith; your helmet of salvation and your sword which is the word of God. You must take them to battle for your life and redeem the time!

The great 19th-century naturalist and Harvard professor Louis Agassiz was once approached by the emissary of a learned society and invited to address its members. Agassiz declined the invitation, saying that lectures of this kind took up too much time that should be devoted to research and writing. The man persisted, saying that the society was prepared to pay handsomely for the lecture.

"That's no inducement to me," Agassiz replied, "I can't afford to waste my time making money."

Dear friends, there is nothing wrong with money, as long as it has not become your master. Consider this beautiful Parish Church and her lovely appointments. Think of the many ministries that are funded and performed through this congregation. None of these could have been achieved without large sums of money. As I look about me this morning I see the pews filled with men and women who have made every effort to prepare for their financial futures. If you have not I am sure that there are any number of attorneys and financial planner that would like to talk to you! If they are worth their salt, they will construct a financial plan that will insure that your time will run out before your money does.

What time is it? It is the age of the Kingdom of Christ! Though the nations rage and imagine vain things, there is none other king than Jesus the Messiah. It is his Creation and it is his time! The wise man knows this to be true and lives in this life, redeeming the time, so that he may live for all time in the presence of the blessed Trinity. The great reformer, Martin Luther once said, "I have so much to do today that I shall spend the first 3 hours in prayer." This man lived in the pre-industrial world. He had no internet, telephone or Palm Pilot. Yet, he tells us he has too much to do, NOT TO PRAY! Oh dear ones, this world belongs to Jesus Christ. Worshipping him is the most important task that we have been given in this time of our lives. Placing your careers and financial commitments in front of your worship, tithing and mission in the Church does not make you frugal or prudent. It makes you an idolater! So come to worship and give thanks for all that the Lord has done for you. We have Morning Prayer in the Chapel at 8.30 Mon-Thursdays. We have Holy Communion in the Chapel on Wednesday's.

And after you have worshipped Almighty God, then work for the good of the Kingdom. The Westminster Shorter Catechism states, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." Have you always wanted to know what the meaning of life, that is, how to redeem the time? This is it. God wants men to live their lives winning the world for his glory and enjoy

themselves while they do it. Men, God doesn't want to make you nice.

Heaven isn't filled with nice men. God wants you to be his soldiers, to win the world for him. It may be in the boardroom, courtroom, or the bedroom of your young children as you say prayers with them before they slip off to sleep.

Women, the Father doesn't want workers who have worked their fingers to the bone and have nothing to offer the kingdom but fatigue. Instead, he wants you to be filled with radiant joy. There was no more beautiful woman than the Virgin Mary when she sang, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and spirit hath rejoiced in God my savior."

Let us redeem the time that we have been given in these evil days. For Christ is coming, may he come soon! Then there will be no time, for there shall be no sun or moon. There shall be no weeping, no tears, and death shall be no more. Let us therefore walk wisely that we may enter the joy of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. AMEN