Psalm 90:12; Ephesians 5:11-16 September 9, 2018

*Pointers, Part 2*

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Two weeks ago, we started a new sermon series entitled “Pointers.” We are thinking together from a biblical foundation about how our lives point to Jesus as our Savior and our Lord, not just a Savior or the Savior, not just a lord or the Lord, but our Savior and our Lord. How do our lives point to Jesus Christ as our Savior and our Lord. Two weeks ago we thought about what it means to raise our children in a way that points to Jesus Christ as our Savior and our Lord. Today we are looking at how we use our time, next week Gary is going to preach about how we choose our friends, then how we choose our words and our attitudes, how we pray, and how we view the use of money. If there is something you’d like us to add to the series, just let me know. I pray that each week we will be encouraged and challenged to live our lives in a way that points to and honors Jesus as our Savior and our Lord. Let us pray:

*Gracious God, thank you for hearing our prayer. Thank you for calling us here. Thank you for opening our ears, our eyes, and our hearts to your freeing truth. Thank you for helping us to focus now on what you want to teach us. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be found acceptable in your sight, be received as beautiful moments of worship to you, our God and our King. This we pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Every morning at 12:00 a.m., 86,400 seconds are credited to each of our accounts. If you like it in smaller numbers and bigger chunks that’s 1,440 minutes credited to our account each and every day. Every night as the clock moves from 11:59 p.m. to 12:00 a.m., whatever of those 1,440 minutes that I wasted are gone forever. I can’t get them back – and I can’t borrow against tomorrow’s minutes. We only get 1,440 minutes per day to spend. Is the way that we are spending the time God has given us – the most precious commodity we have to spend – is the way we are spending those 1,440 minutes each day pointing to Jesus Christ as our Savior and as our Lord?

Many of us always seem to be fighting the clock. We stay up too late, we sleep as late as we can, then we rush out the door to school or to work or to a meeting or to church, gulping down a pop tart or a granola bar, applying makeup or maybe even shaving at the stoplight, while talking on our cellphone. That’s a picture, isn’t it?

But Jesus never seemed to be in a hurry. Although he was doing the most important job in history (redeeming the world), and although he only had a few years to do it, I don’t remember reading that he ever said to his disciples, “Come on, hurry up, what do you mean you can’t find your sandals, ahhhh, we’re going to be late again…” He always seemed to have time to do what was most important. Time was his friend. That’s where I believe God wants all of us to be. God wants time to be our friend, not our enemy. Psalm 90:12 is a prayer to God, *“Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”* The New Living Translation (NLT) of that verse reads, *“Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom.”*

Numbering our days is not about counting how many days we have lived or predicting how many days we have left. Numbering our days means, as the NLT puts it, *realizing, comprehending, becoming aware of*, the brevity of life. It means knowing that we only have so many days on this earth, none of us know how many seconds, minutes, or hours we have - and therefore, as followers of Jesus Christ, children of the King of kings, we want to *carpe diem* – seize the day – live each day to its fullest to the glory of God!

When we recognize and accept that we only have so much time to invest on this earth, that truth will help us think rightly about how to spend our time. This, in turn, will encourage us to grow in wisdom. It helps us to say no to some things and say yes to others. It’s not just knowing what we can do, but its knowing what we should do, and then choosing to do it. When we number our days, we are striving to fill each day with value, living every moment for God’s purposes and glory. Let’s just stop and think for a moment about the value of time:

* To realize the value of one year, ask a student who has failed a final exam.
* To realize the value of one month, ask a mother who has given birth to a premature baby.
* To realize the value of a week, ask Judge Cavanaugh.
* To realize the value of one minute, ask the person who just missed the bus.
* To realize the value of a second think about how many times we barely missed being hit by a car or a deer leaping out of the woods?
* To realize the value of one hundredth of a second, ask the person who got the silver medal at the Olympics.

Oh, Lord, teach us to treasure every moment that we have – to make the most of them – to

not squander them doing meaningless things that empties us of life rather than filling our lives with goodness and grace. A.W. Tozer wrote, *“Time is a resource that is nonrenewable and nontransferable. When it’s lost its unrecoverable. When you kill time, remember that it has no resurrection.”* So, to help us remember what God is teaching us today, we are going to go through the word ‘time’ to give meaning to each letter. T in time, stands for treasure. **Treasure** the time God has given us as the most valuable asset we have.

The I in time stands for **invest**. Time is more valuable than money, but like money, it can be spent and it can be invested. Unlike money however, time cannot be saved. In the early 1970’s Jim Croce wrote that song, *“If I could save time in a bottle, the first thing that I’d like to do, is to save every day ‘til eternity passes away, just to spend them with you.”* Nice lyrics, impossible to do. A few months after he wrote that song he was killed in a plane crash at the age of 30. Billy Graham said, “Time is the capital that God has given us to invest.” Where we invest our time reveals what is most important to us.

There are 168 hours in a week. On average we spend 56 of those hours sleeping, 24 of them we spend eating or on personal hygiene, and before retirement, about 50 hours working, at school, or traveling to work or school. That leaves about 35 hours a week to openly invest – 5 hours a day. If you’re retired that number grows to about 15 hours a day. Where are those hours going? How are those hours pointing to Jesus Christ as our Savior and our Lord?

If someone followed me around for those 5 hours, after 10 days, they could tell what was most important in my life. How many hours are we spending on our phones, on the internet, watching TV, reading romance novels, memorizing sports stats, planning our next hunting adventure or the next vacation? How many of our discretionary hours are spent devoted to doing what God is directing us to do? We can’t keep telling our spouses or our kids or our families, in a couple of months we really going to have some quality time when we do this thing together or take that trip. Every moment of our days is meant to be quality time, vital time, connecting with your Savior and your Lord-time, and connecting with the people around us-time. We need to learn to invest wisely and well.

The M in time stands for **manage**. I know you’ve seen this before so I won’t redo the whole thing, but remember that if you put all the small stuff in the jar first, the big things just won’t fit. But if you put the bigger, more important things in the jar first, you can fit the smaller things in around the big things. So, what are the big things in your life when it comes to time? As disciples of Jesus, giving time to the things of God should be our biggest rock, right? I’m not saying you need to be sitting in the sanctuary 24/7. We can and should be giving our biggest chunk of time to God no matter where we are. Here is just a quick example of what I mean – of what helps to make that rock the biggest in your jar.

Last week I went on my daily walk early in the morning before I came over to church. That’s backwards of how I usually do it, but I knew it was going to be a long day here and probably wouldn’t get my walk in if I didn’t do it early. Walking, for me, is a time of prayer, of praise, of worship, and often a time of learning. I’ll find a podcast of some bible teaching and listen to it while I walk. On this particular morning, I passed a woman with a dog early on in my walk. As I passed her I thought, “I think that is Beth’s sister.” Beth was a friend of mine in junior high school. We had many fun times together. We spent the night at each other’s houses, all the time. She taught me to speak pig latin. ☺ Beth sang in the choir when I was the director of music at Falling Spring church. Beth committed suicide in the mid 90’s. I don’t know that I had seen her sister to talk to her since the funeral. Ironically, right before I walked past her I had read an article about a young pastor who had committed suicide, leaving a wife and 3 young sons behind.

Trying to make the most of my time, I kept on walking. I had to get home, get cleaned up, and get to work. But isn’t all the time God has given us, his time? Aren’t all the conversations, all the decisions, all the thing we do, part of his time - his work in the world through us? I kept thinking about her, wondering, asking God if I was supposed to say something to her. I’m a fast walker so I was way ahead of her by this time. But I knew I needed to stop and turn around. So, I went back and told her who I was, and why I felt an urge to stop to say something, and I shared some funny stories that came to my mind about her sister, my friend, Beth – nearly 25 years since her death. It was a blessing. It was time well spent. It was part of the big rock in my jar.

I think the big challenge for us is not time management but learning how to manage ourselves. Ephesians 5:11-16 in the Message tells us, *“Don’t waste your time on useless work, mere busywork, the barren pursuits of darkness. Expose these things for the sham they are. It’s a scandal when people waste their lives on things they must do in the darkness where no one will see. Rip the cover off those frauds and see how attractive they look in the light of Christ. Wake up from your sleep, climb out of your coffins; Christ will show you the light! So, watch your step. Use your head. Make the most of every chance you get. These are desperate times!”* A good running back doesn’t run with his eyes shut. A good running back runs with his eyes open, seeing the holes as they open, and then running through those holes. That’s what God is saying to us here: Live life with our eyes open, watching for the opportunity to invest our time wisely in godly pursuits. Then do it. Run with it! Stop fretting about what might happen tomorrow, or next week, or next year, or whenever. Live right now with your eyes open to the opportunities and see the power and the gift that God has given you right here, right now! If something isn’t right and good, don’t ignore what your heart is telling you to do. Which leads us to the E in the word ‘time.’ **Enjoy!**

Enjoy! Enjoy the time God has given you! Say NO to time-robbers, to things that suck the life out of you. Say YES to things that bring inspiration to your time, to things that give life to your body, your mind, your heart, and your soul! Remember, folks, it is the things that are done for Christ that truly last. It is more blessed to give than to receive. Giving our time to serve others helps us feel that our time has been expanded! Choosing to invest not just one but two hours on a Sunday morning to learn, to grow, to connect with each other, to invest in being and making disciples of Jesus Christ – THIS – opens up your life, your spiritual life, your everyday, walking-around life, to God’s purposes for you for the other 166 hours you have to enjoy as his child.

I want to finish with a couple of thoughts about the word ‘margin’ in regard to time. I read somewhere that margin is the space between your load and your limit. Margin is breathing room. It’s not going from one thing to the next thing to the next thing with no space in between. We all need margin. “Margin is having breath at the top of the staircase, money at the end of the month, and sanity left over at the end of the day.” “Margin-less is not having time to finish the book you’re reading on stress. Margin is having time to read it twice.”

Building margin into our lives brings peace. When we aren’t hurrying or worrying all the time we have time to think. Time to relax. Time to enjoy life. Building margin into our lives brings better health. Stress is harmful to our bodies. We need some downtime to heal from the unrelenting chaos. Building margin into our lives also helps us build stronger relationships. Good, healthy relationships take time. And finally, and most importantly, building margin into our lives helps us become more useful to God. Being available to God makes a difference in the world! When you have built in some margin, when the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart and says, “I’d like you to serve on Wednesday nights,” or “I want you to go on that mission trip,” or “I want you to serve in the nursery,” your first response isn’t “No way! I can’t do another thing…” Your first response is thanksgiving that you have this wonderful opportunity to make an eternal difference in the lives of the people around you. Everyone, take a deep breath. May the Lord help us make the most of the time we have been given.

I want you to pray out loud after me. I’ll say the sentence and you pray it after me.

* Heavenly Father, hear our prayer.
* I want my life to count for you.
* I don’t want to waste the time you have given.
* Help me to treasure time as a gift from you.
* Help me to invest well in the time you’ve given me.
* Help me to manage myself better.
* Help me to enjoy the time I have for your glory.
* I want my seconds, my minutes, my hours, my days, my months, and my years to count for you.
* In Jesus’ name, Amen.