

**“Making the most of time:
Moving from Mere Existence to a Satisfied Life
From Daily Task to Fulfillment”**

A Sermon outline preached 8/19/12, Proper 15B, The Rev. Arnold A. Bush, Priest in Charge, Church of the Epiphany, Tallassee, AL 35242

Text:” *Ephesians 5:15-21 esp.v.16* “*Making the most of time, for the days are evil*” NRSV.

“*Make the best use of you time*” (ph). “*This may be a wicked age, but your life should redeem it.*” (*Jerusalem Bible*)

John 6:57 ”so who ever eats me (the Bread of Life) will live because of me.” V.58 “*eating this bread on will live forever.*” V. 35 (Text, Sunday,)“*I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.*”

**Introduction: a continuum about life.
Which side do you want to be on?**

Mere existence	VS	Satisfied Life
Unsatisfied life	VS	Real Life
Unmet cravings and desires	VS	Fulfilled desires
Discontented life	VS	Contented, peaceful life

A continuing sermon on Satisfied Life during the month of August:

Where are you? How do you move to a more **satisfied life**? Move from work demands to fulfillment? How does our use of our time affect this? This sermon is about some ways to use our time to move to the right side. In August I preached on how Jesus the Bread of Life meets our deepest cravings and desires. Last Sunday I spoke of ways to increase our APPETITE FOR GOD. Two weeks ago I listed the compulsions of Adam and Alice and our contentment barometer. Now, let’s look at making the most of our time.

I. Appreciate ALL (EVERY DAY) my time as a gift from God.

In the Epistle for this Sunday, Eph. 5:18ff, (Pew Bible Page 1780) “*Be filled with the Spirit... Giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything.*”

Also, in *Philippians 4:11*, “*I have leaned to be content in whatever I have. Eccl.11: 8* “*Be grateful for every year you live.*” (*Good News*)

Time is a commodity. We cannot place it in the freezer. We cannot stop the clocks. We cannot place it in our bank lock box and then pull it out in five years. Time is a gift from God that is to be **enjoyed**. Americans tend to have an attitude of gratitude or an attitude of complaining. One game we play is “ain’t it awful.” Or “I’ve got a wooden leg, thus I cannot do that.” Complainers are usually on the left of our continuum. In the evangelical side of Christianity there is often an emphasis on being “fallen sinners.”

I am assuming most members of this congregation are seeking to **become fully devoted followers of Christ**. An apology for the next choice of words: Taking our walk through life so that we do not see life as “**one damn thing after another**” but see life as we walk through it as **something to be embraced and enjoyed**. Dr. Charles Swindoll, president of Dallas Theological School, states on Attitude: life is 10 % of what happens to us and 90 % of how I react to it. Here is a parable about attitude: A new worker was in his first two days in his position. His supervisor asked the new worker “What was it like in your last job?” The new worker responded by saying:

“Oh, it was miserable, the bosses were not fair, I was not happy working there.” The supervisor said to the new employee, “Well, you will find it the same here.”

A couple of weeks later, this same supervisor asked another new employee the same question, “what was it like in your last job?” This new employee said, “Oh, it was wonderful, I liked the bosses, everyone liked me, it was a good atmosphere to work in.” This supervisor said to this new employee, “ Well, this is what you will find here.” The attitude we carry daily in our life makes a difference if we see life as a gift.

Here are a few numbers regarding TIME. There are 86,400 seconds, **1,440 minutes in each day**, there are 24 hours in each day, and all this is a gift from God. Ever been by the bed of a dying person, who is maybe an older or middle-aged person who has just died? Then walk outside the hospital and say to God, thank you for the time on this earth you are giving me. Thank you for this gift of time. Or leave the graveyard of a friend or relative and say “**Thank you God for this life I have.**”

If these minutes were ten-dollar bills, would we make the most spending them? We would not throw them out the window of the car. Remember, you and I have just enough time to do what God want us to do with our lives. We cannot have too much or too little. As you look at the clocks or watches, let us appreciate what God has given us, and enjoy it, embrace it.

II. Accept that God has a purpose in both **POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE** times in our lives.

Eccl.3: 1ff (Pew Bible page 988), reads, “ *For everything has a season and a time for every matter under heaven.*”

POSITIVE

Be born
Plant
Heal
Build up
Laugh
Dance
Mend
Speak
Peace

NEGATIVE

to die
uproot
kill
break down
weeps
mourn
tear
be silent
war

“*Everything is appropriate in its own time.*” Eccl.3: 11 Is not this true? Life has its peaks and valleys, its potholes and smooth surface, “for better, for worse, in sickness and in health,” bitter-sweetness? (EG Matzo bread with bitter herbs) Both positive and negative!!!

III. Affirm my faith in the **BAD AND DIFFICULT** times.

When I cannot see what is happening, God can see the end. When the storms of life move in, often we can see a break in the weather. As Jesus was washing the feet of the disciples, just before he was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane he said, (John 13:7, Pew Bible page 1640), Jesus said, “*You do not understand now what I am doing, but later you will understand.*” In the 8th chapter of Romans (v. 35) Paul writes about the bad times, “ *For who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecutions, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, of sword? For I am convinced (I have the faithful confidence) neither death or life, or angels, nor rulers, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ our Lord.*”

Yes, sometimes we cannot figure why something is happening. Why did she/he die and not him first? Why was he hurt and not she? Times are **confusing** but Christ is constantly coming to us. Nothing can separate us from God. The Gospel readings in August from the 6th Chapter of John contain **38 verses** that deal with the metaphor of Jesus as the **Bread of Life**. There are six references to Christ **coming down** from heaven to be with us. The foundational doctrine of Christianity is the **Incarnation**. God comes to us in human flesh. God walks with us in our troubles and adversities.

As Christians we **are not immune** to receiving the bruises and storms of life, but Jesus the Bread of Life will give us strength and sustenance to sustain us in the bad and difficult times of our lives.

IV. Apply the GOOD AND PRESENT times for doing well.

One of my favorite passages from Paul in Col. 3:17 (page 1792 bottom) is “*And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord, Jesus, giving thanks to God.*” Also in Ephesians 2:10 (Page 1777) Paul writes, “*For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.*” “*He created us for a life of good works.*” (Good News Bible)

As you wake up every day, I suggest you ask: “**Lord fill me this day, use me this day. What can I do for you this day?**” You and I were created by God to do good works. We are wired to do good works. This is our DNA; this is how we were made. As we give ourselves to help others, we are energized.

Peggy Noonan (*O Magazine*) and many other Christian writers challenge the concept that most Americans are motivated to work hard and help others because of the rewards of money, possible promotions and even peer pressure. Noonan believes we do good works, complete a piece of work that is good, or do something truly well because of an intangible payoff. **This payoff is a rush of pleasure or aha moment of accomplishment.** A sense of feeling good. Endorphins are released throughout our bodies. God has made us so when we do that act of kindness and gesture of caring then a flood a contentment and satisfaction rush through our emotions. I have heard many in Epiphany say, “I was not sure about this Beans and Rice, but every time I volunteer, I feel good in coming.”

V. Cut out a space for quiet time DAILY, so the Lord Jesus can feed you. Cut out a space to let the Holy Spirit plan your time and commitments. Bill Hybels, pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago wrote a popular book a few years ago called *Too Busy to Pray*. No doubt about it: If one is too busy to pray, then one is too busy. How busy are you? I have read many books on healthy churches in America; I notice the habit or characteristic in all the books: “**Healthy churches grow healthy mature Christians or Growing Churches grow Christians into maturity.**”

How important is this daily time with the Lord? Cutting out a daily time to praying and planning is like placing a rudder on your large boat. Or is like having a compass in your car or boat in the midst of thick fog and rain. Here are some BIG IF’S. If we do not set aside quiet times for planning and prayer we have no priorities for the day and the week. **If** you want to be a better manager of your God-given time; **if** you want some better control of you life; **if** you want to mature as a Christian and be formed into Christ, then each of us need to cut out time for a quiet time. Before the morning TV news, the morning paper, or screen time before talking to the Lord.

These are the moments when you allow Christ the Bread of Life to touch your deepest needs.

If you went to any of the following seminars in Montgomery or Birmingham, here is what you may hear: A seminar on....

- a. Working with addictions and compulsions: Have a quiet time and let God fill your God-shaped vacuum
- b. Overcoming work with stress and burnout: Have a relaxation time each day
- c. Attending a seminar or reading a book on time management: Have a quiet time to set your priorities
- d. A few weeks ago I mentioned Stephen Covey's seminar and book on *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*: Sharpen your saw with a daily quiet time for planning and forecasting
- e. Thousands of Episcopalians and Methodists have attended a Cursillo weekend at Camp McDowell: Make part of your Rule of Life a daily time of meditation and study.
- f. Daughters of the King have a Rule of Prayer and Service: to wear the cross reminding one of prayer, service and evangelism

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

If the 1,440 minutes in each day were \$10 dollar bills we received from the ATM machine, would we make the most of them? You and I have just enough time to do what God wants us to do with our lives. We cannot have too much or too little. As you look at the clocks or watches, let us appreciate the chronological time God has given us and enjoy it, embrace it.

Here are some questions to ask yourself about making the most of your time:

What can I learn from the BAD TIMES? Do I know internally that the Bread of Life (the living Jesus) is sustaining me?

What good works is God calling me to in the next week?

Am I ready to cut out some time for daily nutrition from the Bread of Life, Jesus"? Am I willing to cut out time for planning with the Holy Spirit guiding me?

Am I ready to use my time to move from a mere existence to one of being fulfilled, contented, satisfied, giving thanks for the minutes, hours and days I have been given?