

So much to do, so little time

1. Don't be discouraged by the passing of time.

I remember back in 1999, how weird it was to be entering the new millennium. It was so exciting and filled with anxiety, all at the same time. Everything was all Y2K – Year 2000. We worried because the computer software and even chips had been designed to only read the last two digits of a year, not all four digits. \$300 billion was spent worldwide to try to compensate so business systems and such software embedded in things like medical equipment would not fail. When we had used to speak of something that was in the last century it was 100 years ago. When Y2K came when we spoke of something from the last century or the last *millennia*, it would be only a matter of a few days before. It made me feel like I had aged a hundred years. After Y2K came the elevators didn't malfunction plunging people to their deaths. What was strange, though, is that 2000 was the *final* year of the 2nd Millenia. It sort of ended like a dud firecracker. The really bizarre thing about reaching the new millennium was that we had no idea of what was going to take place just nine months into the *real* next millennium. Nancy was planning our daughter's wedding and before that day came I buried my father and America was attacked. When 9/11 came, it was a beautiful cloudless day and I was on my way to a preachers meeting where we were going to be talking about starting new churches. It never dawned on us that there were those extremists who were deadly serious about plunging us into the 6th century by forcing their Moslem world and ideology into the heart of our nation and the world.

Well, now it is 21 years later and we are beginning another new year. This is the time when by virtue of the fact that we have to discipline ourselves to write 2021 we are forced to recognize that another year has passed in everyone's consciousness. We find time to be elusive and hard to pin down.

Psa 90:9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale *that is told*.

It's elusive alright, but sometimes while we're trying to catch it, it catches us instead. Someone said, "Time sneaks up on you like a windshield on a bug. " [John Lithgow]

The trouble with the times we live in is that they appear so futile and filled with despair. At times like this it's helpful to remember, as someone put it, that "The trouble with our times is that the future is not what it used to be." [Paul Valery] In 1967 Walter Cronkite predicted on the show *The 21st Century* that food would be assembled by your

computer from the freezer, sent on a conveyor belt to a microwave oven, and the used dishes would be placed, unwashed, in a unit that would burn away the scraps, melt the plastic, and make new dishes. In that day we promoted China as a way to deal with problems in Southeast Asia. We worried about the Vietnam War, the draft, drugs, and nuclear holocaust. In the 1980s we switched from paper bags to plastic to save the planet, and we also worried about nuclear holocaust, war in the Middle East, and drugs. As we continue to inch our way into the 3rd Millenia, we are switching from plastic bags back to paper to save the planet. Some still worry about nuclear holocaust, but we seem to worry more about a pandemic, drugs, Chinese aggression in the 5G market, the Pacific Rim, and the impact of their influence in sports, education, entertainment, and government.

Paul Harvey suggested that we should take note that "In times like these, it helps to recall that there have always been times like these." We can't let the times discourage us.

Eph 5:13-17 But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

14Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

15See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

16Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

17Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

2. Before *redeeming* the time, we have to *deem* the time.

You can't deem something again if you don't deem it the first time. What do I mean about *deeming* the time? To deem something means to value it. If I deem a book as worth buying, that means that I find it valuable enough to make it worth buying. Before you redeem time, you have to have a sense of the *value* of time.

If I gave you \$86,000, do you think you could find something to spend it on? How fast do you think you could spend it? Could you spend it all in one day? It might actually take some doing, but you might be able to manage it. Now what if I opened a bank account for you and placed \$86,000 in and told you that you could spend it all, but you had one stipulation: you had to spend it all in one day. Anything you didn't spend would be gone from your account the next day. You couldn't hold any over to spend the next day, you would lose anything that you didn't spend. Now I'm a generous sort, so I will set it up that your account would be filled up with \$86,000 the next

day, and the next day, and every day for the rest of your life. The same stipulation exists. What you didn't spend would be gone at the end of the day. You could buy things of value, you could feed the poor, you could burn the money up, but it would be gone from your account when midnight struck.

Well, similarly, God has given each of us an account and fills it every day with something so precious. He gives us time. Specifically, He gives us 86,400 seconds each day. At the end of the day, they are gone. No one gets to hold them over to the next day. You can do things of value with them, or you can waste them away. It is up to you how you use them. What is even more interesting is that they really aren't yours. They are on loan to you from God. At the end of the shopping spree of your life, you will have to give an account of how you used those 86,400 seconds each day. God is actually very generous. He wants you to use a portion of those for rejuvenating your body (sleep, rest, and recreation). He wants you to use some of those seconds for serving Him in what you might think is indirectly His work like things that you are interested in or your job. He wants you to use some of the other seconds directly in His work at church. No matter which way you use them, though, at the end of the day they are gone!

What is your life it is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away!

Jas 4:13-14 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

14Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

2Co 6:2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

Lk 4:16-21 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

17And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

18The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach

deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20And he closed the book, and he gave *it* again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

Heb 3:12-13 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

13But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Lk 12:16-21 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry.

20But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

3. To *redeem* the time means to get it back under control.

When I was a kid I remember my mother getting green stamps every time she went to the store for groceries. For every so many dollars she spent she would get these stamps. You would take them and put them in booklets. After every so many books were filled in, you would take them to the green stamps center and *redeem* them. You would turn them in and you would get the value out of them by getting different products. What the grocery store did, in effect, was to hold a portion of the purchase price of the groceries captive and you would get that value *back* when you turned in your stamps. We need to be *redeeming* the time. We have been given so much time that slips away from us, we need to be redeeming it, getting it back under our control.

Time itself is not so valuable. Its

value depends on what you fill it up with. Groucho Marx put it this way, "I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book."

The Thessalonians thought that Christ's coming was so imminent that they were slacking off in their earthly responsibilities. Paul had strong words of admonition for them.

2Th 3:11-12 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

12Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

Back in 2008 I said:

"Each year around Thanksgiving and Christmas I sit down to work on the programs and the decorations and I am thankful for how many things we have figured out to do that work for us. I know how many eggs we're going to need for the French toast. I know a year ahead of time we are going to need to make the disks for catching the drips from the Christmas candles. And yet, each year, I find myself surprised by how many details we have to rush to get ready, the food, the decorations, the music, the sermon, and the cleaning. There are four weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas to change everything from the Fall decorations to the Christmas decorations. But not really. The first of those weeks is taken up with Thanksgiving itself. The last week is taken up with carrying out the Christmas program. We really only get two weeks to get everything ready and during that time we have the missions program taking place and preparation for the annual business meeting in January where we present our plans for the next year. I'm already planning for Christmas of next year while I'm trying to develop a discipleship program to follow up for the revival meeting for next month that we all have to start working on *this* week or else it's going to fall flatter than the government of Saddam Hussein or the millennial reign of Hitler's Third Reich."

Our church and other churches have responded to the times and adapted and shifted like factories did back when WW2 started. We still see some of those challenges that we faced at that time, but some challenges have changed. It is time to push forward to meet the challenges

we have ahead. Paul calls for us to wake up. We can't sleep away the daylight that Christ gives us to get the job done here at Peoples Baptist Church. We need to redeem the time.

Ecc 3:1-8 To every *thing there is* a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

2A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up *that which is* planted;

3A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

4A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

5A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

6A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

7A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

8A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Ecc 12:1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

Ecc 12:11-14 The words of the wise *are* as goads, and as nails fastened *by* the masters of assemblies, *which* are given from one shepherd.

12And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books *there is* no end; and much study *is* a weariness of the flesh.

13Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man.

14For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil.

Ro 13:11-14 And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed.

12The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

13Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

14But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts

thereof.

There are and always will be great challenges for us. We have to remember the greatest challenge of all.

Jn 4:35-38 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

36And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: **that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.**

37And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

38I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

Jesus points out that the task is not all up to you. You have entered into other men's labors. In our time, we build upon the work that has gone on before and we are preparing for the work that is to follow.

We want to see God's blessing in 2021. Thanksgiving and Christmas are over. We should be like a horse at the gate, champing at the bit, ready to spring forward. 2020 has been widely recognized as the *annus horribilus*, the horrible year. By contrast, we have to believe that 2021 has *got* to be different. By redeeming 2020 we can make 2021 the *annus mirabilis*, the wonderful or miraculous year. John Dryden, England's first poet laureate, used that as a title for a poem in 1667 which could have been thought of as a terrible year. In the poem he recognized how terrible things had been with the country undergoing great battles, but he had also recognized the miraculous turns of events that came out of them. Since 2020 has been dubbed the *annus horribilus*, we must redeem 2020 and turn 2021 into the *annus mirabilis*, a miracle year. The time to pray and visit and work is now. Don't pray for 2021 like you would for some other Sundays where the preacher reminds you to be praying for the services and you think, oh yeah, I should start doing that someday. Don't invite someone out the way some people do where they wait to the last minute on a Saturday to call someone and they get a busy signal and say, "Oh well, I tried." Don't wait until the week before to put meetings on your calendar only to find out that you had a previous engagement. Oh, how I hate to hear people say they had a previous engagement that they can't get out of for a Sunday morning. Here, I am now giving you an invitation so you can have a "previous engagement" to come together with God each week for the rest of your life. When anyone asks you about a time that conflicts with church, tell *them* instead of God that you have a

previous engagement.

This should not only be a year that we deem and *redeem*, but maybe this will be the year where some realize that God deemed them worth enough to Him that He sent His son to *redeem* them from death and hell to become a child of God. Our prayer then is that 2021 is filled with redemption in every way possible. We don't ever know if there will be a next year because every year that passes is a year closer to the time when Jesus comes and there is no more time. Hence, so much to do and so little time!

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2. Before redeeming the time, we have to deem the time. Jas 4:13-14, 2Co 6:2, Lk 4:16-21, Heb 3:12-13, Lk 12:16-21,
3. To redeem the time means to get it back under control. 2Th 3:11-12, Ecc 3:1-8, 12:1, 12:11-14, Ro 13:11-14, Jn 4:35-38