

## **DEADLINES**

**Sermon Dec 27, 2020**

**Scripture reading:** Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

**Golden verse:** “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens” Ecclesiastes 3:1.

Towards the end of the year, we think more about **time**. What is the **time** exactly? How much time do we have on earth? For what do we get the time? Have I used this year behind me for the real purpose God has given it to me? Am I going to get one more full year in 2021? How much time might I have?

It can be very useful to close this year by evaluating what we learned, and to make some decisions about how we should continue next year.

I would recommend to all of us to take this Scripture reading in serious consideration, which could help us to think about time correctly. I would like to highlight three points now.

The very first verse says: *“There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens.”* Ecclesiastes 3:1

Everything has a set time. Who sets the time for everything? God, because time belongs to God, and He gives us some of it.

In Psalm 31, David says: *“My times are in your hands.”* Psalm 31:15/a Only God knows why He sets special times and special moments in our lives and in history. It is our responsibility to use the time for what He gave us to use it. If we don’t use the time for what we are intended, or we use it for other things, we will regret it later.

Just a few examples of how we misuse time:

- Some people get in trouble at work because they chit-chat too much instead of focusing on their duties
- Some people don’t have the necessary sleep because they are workaholics.
- Some are escaping to their work instead of having a serious conversation with their children or spouse or friends.
- Some spend too much time watching TV or playing on computers instead of working.
- A quote on the internet says: “Do you ever get off Facebook long enough to live the life you keep bragging about?”

A few days somebody sent me the following story. Two people are chatting on Facebook. One of them said to the other person: “Oh my ... guess what? My partner just sent me a message on Facebook, saying that I should go off from Facebook chatting and I should start cooking our supper.” “And? What did you do?” “Used the ‘Block’ button!”

This is how we can miss many important occasions, and we are losing the time which we received from God for a special reason. And often the omitted time cannot be reversed. Such

omissions usually trigger a spiritual avalanche in us, because often, realizing that we are running out of time, we start to rush and do things quickly, and this is how we make one mistake after another. This will have an effect on our health, on our relationships, on the quality of our work, on our personal credit, and more.

The improper usage of time leads us to constant hurry and hurry. The modern man is characterized by HURRY. We do not have the patience to wait. Often, not even Christians have time to wait patiently until God would carry out His plans. We want to help God or we say that we can resolve issues without God.

Yevtushenko, a Russian poet says:

*The rush is the curse of the age,  
A man wipes his forehead,  
Then, finding time confusion  
As a puppet rushes on and on.*

*They all hurry to love, to drink,  
Until the soul finally collapses.  
They are in a hurry to destroy, and again  
They regret things in a hurry.*

Because we constantly hurry, the quality of our work and actions will suffer and after a while, our spirit will collapse. We will be soul-less, insensitive, and weak. As a result, we will suffer and everybody around us will suffer.

We say we don't have as much time as before but we have fast-food restaurants, fast programs on dishwashers and washing machines. I am wondering how our grandparents were able to find time to cook and to do laundry and to raise sometimes six children. And they had time to pay attention to each other and to talk to each other.

So this is the first main message today: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens". God gives us the time and we have to use it wisely as good stewards. We should be thankful for what we can accomplish. What we cannot, we have to let go and we should not overschedule ourselves, because that would damage us, our relations, and our health.

The second message is that God sets up our life history. He gives us gifts or challenges. And those are always coming in God's right time. Sometimes we are asking: why did this happen to me? Why to me and why right now? We have to remember: it is God's timing. "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens".

For this reason, nothing can happen to God's children by chance, but by God's wise providence. In our lives, everything is timed.

If we look back on this year, 2020, we see horrible events. I am happy that this year, somehow, is behind us. If somebody had told me a year ago what we would have to experience in 2020, I

would not have believed it. This year was full of trials, but was prepared by God for His special reason, to realize how fragile we are, and that everything is in God's hands and not in ours.

But God was good to us. Although so many suffered and died, we are still here and we have to be thankful.

Why do we say so often that: I don't have time, I don't have enough time, I ran out of time? I'm in constant time confusion.

Let us see some simple facts.

God consistently gives us the same amount of time. We all get twenty-four full hours from God every day. It is silly to say that "I have no time or little time." We always have time for those things we want to. The problem is not with time but with us and how we use time.

We should create a schedule, a time table and every morning we have to decide what to do and what not to do. We definitely need to set up a ranking: what I absolutely have to do, what it is important to do, and what might be less important.

We know from the Gospels that Jesus Christ worked a lot. He journeyed through the whole country. He taught, healed, struggled with enemies, and had time with good friends. Mark mentioned once that they were so busy that one day they didn't have time to eat. However, Jesus never hurried but was always and everywhere on time. Why? Because He always looked at the Father's clock and He was completely dependent on His Father.

There is a beautiful scene we can read in John 7 where the whole family prepares for a great feast in Jerusalem with Jesus. They are asking Him to hurry and prepare Himself. But he said: *"You go to the festival. I am not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come."* John 7: 8 He knew what He had to do and nobody was able to force Jesus to do something different, because He adjusted His time to God's timing.

We should learn this today from our Lord Jesus Christ, to look at our Heavenly Father every way as we schedule our days. He should be in the first place in our lives, and we should spend time **FIRST** with Him before we do anything else.

As a first thing in the morning, it should not be a pressure for us but a great gift to spend time with our God in prayer. We will not lose time but we will gain **TIME** because God will give us wisdom and strength for the rest of the day.

Remember what Martin Luther said once: "I have so much work today that I am not praying for one hour, but two hours to get enough strength and wisdom to finish everything in time." Unfortunately, we are used to doing it the other way. But please remember, that by spending time in prayer, you will not lose but you will gain time. The word of God encourages us to do this.

Because if everything has a set time, we don't have to rush, but we have to recognize for what we can use THE TIME wisely, here and now. In this way, we will find time to nurture our relationships as well.

There is a wonderful and famous novel, written by Saint-Exupéry. THE LITTLE PRINCE. I have recommended it quite a few times as a good book to read. You can find it online, and you can read it in a half-hour. I used to read this once a year because it is so lovely and so rich in thoughts. In this novel, we read about a conversation between the little Prince and a fox. The little prince does not understand how it can be that there are more beautiful roses than his rose, and yet only his ONE rose he has at home is important to him. Why? The fox explains that question: "The time you spend on your rose makes your rose so important. People have forgotten that truth. But you MUST NOT forget."

The time we spend on our families and friends will bring us fruit.

It is a blessing to find time to be with God and to be silent in His presence. That time will add strength and peace to us.

Let us make some changes in the next year, and may God allow us to understand for what He sets time for us.

Let me share a prayer, written by a French priest Michel Quoist.

### **Lord, I Have Time**

*Lord, I left,  
people went outside.*

*They went,  
They came,  
They hurried,  
They ran.  
I rode bikes,  
I drove cars,  
I drove trucks,  
I ran the streets,  
I ran the city,  
I ran everything.*

*They ran so they would not waste of time.  
They ran in the morning to catch up with the time to gain time.*

*Goodbye, my friend, forgive me, I don't have time.  
I will come to this again, I can't wait, I don't have time.*

*I finish the letter because I don't have time.  
I would have liked to help you, but I don't have time.  
I can't take it, I don't have time.*

*I want to pray, but I don't have time.*

*Lord, you understand they have no time:  
The child is playing, there is no time at this moment - then ...  
The student has to take a lesson, there is no time - then ...  
The student has his books, so much work, no time - then. ..  
the young man does sports, there is no time - and then ...  
the young man gets married,  
Lord, You have to resolve what he destroys, there is no time - and then ...  
There are kids around the father – he is losing them because he has no time  
The grandparents are there for their grandchildren, but they don't have time - then ...  
We are impatient because we don't have time - then ...  
Then ... it's late - they don't have time anymore!*

*This is how people run in the footsteps of time, my Lord.  
They run in these earthly fields,  
in a hurry, in a fight,  
Overwhelmed, Grumpy,  
Loaded,  
And they do not reach their destination, because there is little time.  
They work hard, though there is little time.  
Moreover, there is very little time.*

*Lord, You must have been  
wrong in your calculations somewhere,  
There must have been a fundamental error here,*

*Hours are too short,  
Days are too short,  
Lives are too short.  
You smile, Lord, standing above the time, seeing our struggles,  
and you know what you are doing.  
You are not mistaken in measuring a person's time.*

*You give everything Your time,  
But You don't waste Your time,.  
Time is a gift.*

*A passing gift.  
No, it cannot be stored.*

*Lord, I have time!  
All the time You gave me is mine.*

*The years of my life, the days of my years, the hours of my days, are all mine.*

*It is up to me to live cleverly, calmly, devotedly,  
To use it for the final second  
to live in Your presence.*

*Lord, I'm not asking You tonight to do this and that.  
I ask you for grace and to help me to do faithfully everything  
in the time you have given me, what you have entrusted to me - for others. Amen*