

Opening Scripture

Revelation 4:8b - 11

Opening Prayer

Scripture

Matthew 25:1-13

Message

Living with a Sense of Urgency

I was shocked! I recently came to a moment that is sometimes called a Reality Check: ***NEXT WEEK IS LABOR DAY!*** I was shocked when I came to that realization. Of course Labor Day comes every year on the first Monday in September. So I should not have been surprised. BUT this has been such a strange year, I just had not given it much thought that we were that close to the end of another summer. In February we realized that the COVID Virus was a reality and that it was going to impact the way we live our lives for at least the next 6 months. We were encouraged to take measures that would protect us and our families from the virus. Wear a mask whenever we go out; Avoid gathering in large crowds; keep our distance from others; avoid handshakes, hugs. Life has just looked and felt different than we ever knew. There were certain states and parts of the country that we were encouraged to avoid. Many vacation travels were put on hold or cancelled. We did not go to visit loved ones. When we started this period of quarantine, we called it a season, expecting that it would be a short season – maybe a few months. But it has turned into a longer season than we anticipated with no signs of it ending soon. It feels to me like time has disappeared. It feels like we went to lay down for a nap in March and now we are waking up to the reality that September is here. Where did time go?

- ***Labor Day is next week***
- ***Schools are re-opening***
- ***In 3 months Thanksgiving will be here***
- ***Then the season of Advent***
- ***Then in 4 months Christmas (husbands – get ready)***
- ***And then a New Year!***

Where did it go? Why didn't the calendar just stop in March, until this all went away. Sneaky September has arrived and caught us by surprise.

As this realization came to me that Tuesday is September 1, I started to reflect on the whole matter of time and the importance of remembering that Time does not stop. There is a Proverb that we hear quoted sometimes: **Time Waits for No Man.** The full expression is **Time and Tide wait for no man.** The specific origin of the Proverb is not known. It does appear as early as 1225. Chaucer uses the expression in his writing in 1325. So, its been around a long time. What does it mean?

“One must not procrastinate or delay, as in ‘Let's get on with the voting;’ time and tide won't wait, you know. This proverbial phrase, alludes to the fact that human events or concerns cannot stop the passage of time or the movement of the tides”

So the Covid 19 period of pandemic and subsequent quarantine did not stop the passage of time. And whether we noticed it or not, time has marched on.

As I have thought about the passing of time, and how it does not stop and wait for us I have thought that **we ought to live our lives in this world with a sense of Urgency.** Be aware the time is moving. We don't know how much time we have. Don't put off till tomorrow.... And yet many live with an attitude of complacency, passively going about their activities without any sense of urgency.

The Bible has some things to say about the passing of time. Listen to some of the words from Psalm 90. This is a Psalm written by Moses. He makes some important observations: **Psalm 90:1-6, 10-12**

- **Our Time is limited:** Death will come for all
 - **The length of our Days is 70 – 80 years (Maybe!)**
- **God has a different way of keeping track of Time than we do:** A thousand years in your sight is like a day that has just gone by

So our time in this world is limited. We can't afford to be complacent or passive about life.

Jesus also talks about the movement of time. He talks about a day when God will intervene in the timeline of this world and bring about the Consummation. When time as we know it will come to an end

Mark 13:26-27; 32-37

When we realize that time is always moving forward, whether we realize it or not, we are encouraged to take some action steps. In Psalm 90, Moses challenges us to **Number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom**. Because our life in this world is short, and we will all sleep in death, we must make Wise choices about how we live our lives.

And as Jesus reminds us **we do not know when the end will be**. Whether that end comes through death or through this time of God's intervention, when Jesus comes back, we must always be prepared. We don't know how much time we have left. So Jesus warns us to be prepared. **WATCH! Be Vigilant. Be alert** so that when the master comes, he will find us faithful. **We can't afford to be complacent or passive about our lives.**

As Jesus talks with his followers about the Last Day, he uses several parables to drive home the lesson that we must always be prepared for His coming. We must not put off what is important. I want to look specifically at this parable of the 10 virgins. As we read it from our 21st century frame of reference, it may sound strange to us. Wedding customs in the day of Jesus were much different. The bridegroom would travel to the home of the Bride to take her to the place of the wedding feast (usually the bridegroom's home). The maids of honor would wait for the bridegroom so they could accompany him to the bride's home and then to the wedding feast. BUT the maids would not know the exact time that the Bridegroom would come. SO they had to be prepared at any moment. They would have lamps in case he would come in the middle of the night, so they would be able to light the way for him and his bride. In the story there were 10 maids who had been invited to be prepared to accompany the Bridegroom. They each had a lamp. The lamp was probably a long stick with oil soaked rags fastened to the end of the stick. As the lamp burned and consumed the oil, the maids would have to have more oil to relight the lamps. 5 of the maids had additional oil. 5 did not. When it was announced in the middle of the night that the bridegroom was coming, those who had oil were prepared to trim their lamps and had oil to keep their light burning. However the other 5 did not have oil in reserve. Their lamps were going out, so they asked the other 5 if they could have some of their reserve so they could re-light their lamps. The wise maids who had oil in reserve knew that if they gave their reserve away, their lamps could go out and they would have no light to light the way for the bridegroom and his bride. So they refused. They were not being cruel. They were being wise, because they had prepared in advance for this possibility. They told the "foolish" maids to go and buy oil, which they did. By the time they got oil, they had missed the bridegroom. They made their way to the place of the wedding feast but are refused entry. Again, it may sound cruel, but it is actually a rebuke that these maids did not take the invitation to be a part of the wedding seriously. So Jesus' warning is to Keep watch, because you do not know the hour. Don't put off getting ready.

As I have thought about the passing of time, and how it will not stop and wait for us, I have felt some concern that many people seem to be putting off what is important. I observe that we do put off important things:

- We put off touching base with friends or family.
- We put off repairing relationships, or reconciling when a relationship is strained or broken
- We put off saying thanks to people who have had a positive impact on our lives.

We need to realize that time is moving on, and we may not have the opportunities to connect with friends or family that we hoped we would have.

But I am concerned that many people put off matters of the soul and heart. Just as the foolish maids in the story did not take the invitation to the wedding feast very seriously, many people do not take spiritual things seriously, and they risk being caught off guard and unprepared.

The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is God's final word to the world. He has made purification for sins through his death on the cross. Then the writer warns us, "**How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?**" God has sent Jesus to make it possible for us to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. But many people prefer to ignore, or at least put off trusting Jesus as their Savior. We do not know how long we have. We cannot afford to live with an attitude of complacency or passivity. There must be an urgency to our lives.

Not only do people put off inviting Jesus into their lives, they will put off making the changes in their lives that Jesus expects. They continue to live life in their own way, on their terms, rather than repenting of their sin and following the pattern and example of Jesus.

Time waits for NO ONE! Whether we are ready for it or not, Tuesday is September 1. Next Monday is Labor day. BUT there is something much more significant or important than Labor Day coming. If you have been putting off preparing for the Day of the Lord, for the day when Jesus comes back, for the day when you will stand before God as you life comes to an end Don't put it off any longer. Don't get caught with your guard down. Don't miss out because you weren't ready. We cannot afford to have an attitude of complacency or be passive about our soul.

INVITATION

Blessing