

McCabe United Methodist Church

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Ephesians 5:15-20

“Did We Have Fun”

by: Pastor Gary Walters

Be very careful then how you live, not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity because the days are short. Therefore, do not be foolish but understand what the Lord's will is, do not get drunk with wine which leads to all sorts of indecency, but instead be filled with the spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the father for everything in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.” The Word of God for the people of God, thanks be to God!

I have to admit I'm a Star Trek fan and I'd like to share with you a scene from the Star Trek movie called Generations. It bears on what I have to say later on, as we get into this passage. The wonderful thing about Star Trek is worm holes and time warps and all of these things that normally those of us bound by time just don't get to bend the rules. But, in the movie world, you can go through a time warp and suddenly have hours or years that you didn't have otherwise to accomplish whatever it is, and in most cases it's saving the world or the universe in this case. Wouldn't that be nice? In this particular movie, this is Star Trek The Next Generation so Jean Luc Picard is the captain and he goes back in time and gets Captain Kirk and here is the scene when they first meet. Kirk is looking at Picard and says “Captain of the Enterprise, huh?”, “That's right.” Picard responds. “Close to retirement?” “I'm not planning on it.”, Picard responds. “Well, let me tell you something, don't, don't let them promote you, don't let them transfer you, don't let them do anything that takes you off the bridge of that ship because while you are there the excitement, the joy, the fun, the adrenaline rush,” and then he pauses and sums all of that up and says “You can make a difference.” Picard looks at Kirk and says “Come back with me. Help me stop Zoran, help me make a difference again.” Kirk responds with his usual smartalec way “Who am I to argue with the Captain of the Enterprise. What's the name of the planet, Viridian III?” “That's right.” “I take it the odds are against us and the situation is grim?” “You could say that.” “You know, if Spock were here he would say I am an irrational, illogical human for going on such a mission like that.” And then Kirk finishes, “Sounds like fun.”

There is something of that vane that runs through this scripture passage. Like I said, we can't do worm holes or time warps, at least not yet, so we are stuck with the 168 hours in a week that all of us are given, or, the 8,760 hours in a year. And, frankly, when I hear that number, 8,760, it doesn't sound very big. When I think that for about a third of that I'll be sleeping the time starts to get really short. When I think of all of the things I am supposed to accomplish by this time next year, I realize that time is indeed short. We all have something of that kind of an experience. We wish for that worm hole or that time warp so that we could somehow pull it all off or get ahead of ourselves or get a jump on accomplishing all of these different tasks, but we don't.

Paul understood that. In this passage he is giving advice on general Christian living to this young church. He spent the first half of the book of Ephesians laying out just what it is Christ has done and the work that he accomplished for us when he died on the cross. But in this second part he gets into the nitty gritty and just the details of what that means and he is giving them all of these principals for how they should live and how they should conduct themselves. So he is giving advice to these young Christians and this young church but it works for us too. First of all, Paul makes clear, at least in this chunk of scripture, that because these Christians live differently than their neighbors, that they will be scrutinized and that the reputation of the gospel hinges upon their living and how they respond to one another and how they respond to the world around them.

That's kind of a heavy load or a great responsibility, but there it is. Indeed, we have all heard the phrase, so much so that it has become a but of a cliché, but no less true, that our lives are the only gospel some people will ever see. We could preach for months on that alone but I want to stick with this idea of time.

Paul then goes on to talk about how the days are growing short. It is worth taking a look at what the disciples and Paul and the early church thought in terms of the return of Christ. They knew that it could be at any moment. They didn't know when, in fact Jesus said, only the father knows, but they knew that everything that needed to happen had already taken place for Christ to return, and we've talked about that a little bit. But, because of that urgency after days turned into months and those months turned into years, the early church didn't grow complacent, in fact, if anything, they gained more and more intensity and urgency about how they lived and how they

used those moments and how they used their time; because they understood there was a world out there that they hadn't heard that Jesus Christ had died for their sins to redeem them, to bring them to God the Father. So, they were anxious, eager to be about the work of the Lord.

Now almost 2000 years later, we don't quite have that same intensity; although we should, because the fact of the matter is if the early church had that kind of intensity and that kind of sense or understanding that Christ's return could be imminent, how much more so for us 2000 years later. That is a time frame we can't even comprehend. But, one thing we know for sure that if they lived with that kind of intensity and that assurance, that Christ could return at any moment, how much more so for us. For one thing, it's at least 2000 years closer now for us than it was for them, and another part of that is we know that Christ's return is closer today than it was yesterday. How will we use that time, how we will use that gift of those hours and those days that we are given?

I don't need to lecture you on the shortness of time. We all understand it, we are continually in transition, whether it is the end of one season from winter to spring, from spring to summer, summer to fall, and we're experiencing that right now, the end of a school year, and partly the reason I chose this topic for today, the end of my time here but the start of someone else's, the end of Art's ministry here. Well, retirement is not quite the right word, it's the end of Art's paid ministry, we'll phrase it that way. I'm sure there is plenty on his list. We are always in those transitions and it goes fast, boy it goes fast. With all of that in mind, it fills me with something of that kind of urgency about how will I use the time that I have. It makes me look back at how I've used my time here, sometimes good and sometime, well sometimes I probably could have done a little better. But, it fills me with a purpose, something of that kind of intensity that Paul spoke with, something of that kind of a focus.

John Wesley said, "I am always in a hurry, but never in haste." When I first heard that I thought, "Phfft, what a dork." Who would always want to be in a hurry? On the other hand, I understand that now. Always in a hurry in the sense that he didn't want to waste any moment. He always wanted to be about the Lord's work doing something that was drawing him closer to Christ or drawing others closer to Christ. That's a legacy worth living up to. But then he threw in that part about never in haste because he didn't want to be so harassed and pressed by the urgent that he forgot to live in the time

and the place where he was at. Always in a hurry but never in haste. That's a pretty good guideline for us.

There is another scene from Star Trek Generations I'd like to share with you. It's at the very end of the movie and they have saved the universe once again, but Captain Kirk is laying there dying. Don't be sad though, he has been hoisted several hundred years into the future and is at the ripe old age like 400 or something, so it's fine, it's appropriate and he has used his time well. But, as he is laying there dying, he looks up at Picard and he says, "Did we have fun?" And Jean Luc Picard looks down and says "We made a difference." Then Kirk opens his eyes one last time and he says "We had fun."

Well, it's been fun to be here for four years and I thank you for that. I hope it made a difference, eternity will tell, but I will leave that for others to judge. My prayer, my hope for all of us as we start our new adventures, is that we will have fun, that indeed we will use those times and those moments to their fullest, grabbing hold of every moments, to make a difference for Christ and for his kingdom. So, boldly go where we have not yet been, grabbing hold of those moments, making the most for Christ and his Kingdom. Would you pray with me?

Lord, we thank you for every hour we are given. Indeed, help us to take account of our days that we would make the most of them for your sake and for the sake of your kingdom. Amen.