

Ephesians 5:15-20

Living in our world today calls for a lot of **wisdom**. When it comes to **finances**, it's important to **spend** our resources wisely, as well as to **invest** them wisely. If we **don't** act wisely, we'll end up with unmanageable **credit card debt**, or we may even have to go through **bankruptcy**. When we're driving our **cars** - when we're operating a **chainsaw** - when we're sitting around a **campfire** - and in so many **other** situations which we face on a very regular basis - it's important to make **wise** decisions. If we **don't**, we could end up hurting **ourselves**, and we could also end up hurting **others** too. Certainly those are things we'd like to **avoid** - and being **wise** about our actions can help us to **do** that. But it's even **more important** for us to use **wisdom** in our **spiritual** lives, because our **eternity** depends on it. We can **wisely** spend our eternity in **heaven**, or we can **foolishly** spend it in **hell**. So, we want to make **wise** spiritual decisions for our **own** benefit, as well as for the benefit of our **family** and **friends**.

Our Lord **wants** us to be **wise**. One entire book of the **Bible** - the Book of **Proverbs** - is **dedicated** to teaching us how to live **wisely**. We heard some of those words in our 1st lesson today. But in our sermon this morning, we're going to spend some time considering some of the words which the Apostle **Paul** wrote to the **Ephesians** - words which encourage us to **Live As People Who Are Wise**. We can **do** that by making the most of our **time**, by understanding what the **Lord's** will is, and by being filled with the **Holy Spirit**.

Our text begins, "*Consider carefully, then, how you walk, not as **unwise** people, but as **wise** people. Make the **most** of your **time**, because **the days are evil**.*" Paul first directs us to the use of our **time**. Our time is **precious**, and just as we wouldn't want our **keys** or our **money** to slip out through **holes** in our pockets, we don't want our **time** to slip away either. God gives us all kinds of opportunities to **grow** in our **faith**, and to be **served** by His **Word**. And He encourages us to **do** just that - to make the **most** of our time.

That's important because the world we live in is filled with **evil**. **Godlessness** and **immorality** continue to **prosper** among the people around us. Back in the 60's it was **free love**. Since the passing of Roe vs. Wade it's been the **killing** of thousands of **babies** every year through **abortions**. For as long as I can remember it's been couples **living together** without being **married**, and more recently even a total **attack** on God's **design** for marriage - one **man** and one **woman** for a **lifetime**. Now the most radical parts of our society are trying to drive **wedges** between various groups of people by teaching us and our children that we

fit into one of two groups - we are either **privileged** or **oppressed** - as critical race theory is being pushed in our **schools**, in our **businesses**, and in the **media**.

All of these things are **sinful**, and God wants us to **repent** of our sins - to turn **away** from them, and to receive the merciful **forgiveness** which was earned for us by His Son. People are all wrapped up in their businesses, and in sports and recreation, and all too often they think that it's **unimportant** to take the time to listen to and to study **God's Word** - the **Gospel** which is the **only** thing which can save their souls. That's not very **wise**, is it. If we were given an additional day every week, what would we **do** with the extra **time**? Many people would **work** more hours, in order to **earn** more money, so they could **buy** more things. Others would use the time to catch up on their **sleep**. Still others would try to fit in as much **fun** as possible. It's not that there's anything **wrong** with **any** of those choices. But the question is, are those choices really making the **most** of our time? The world we live in is filled with **evil**. How can we safely navigate our way **through** it?

The world is **evil**, but our **God** is **good**. In His love for sinners He sent His only **Son** to us, and Jesus achieved a **salvation** that is not "**half-baked**," but rather it's "**well done**". Jesus' holy life won a **righteousness** for us which makes us **acceptable** to God. His death on the cross **atoned** for the sins of the whole world. He **lives** - and He calls out to **us** through the **Word** to come and **receive** these free gifts for ourselves. Our **time** here on the earth is a time of **grace** - a time to **repent** of our sins and to **believe** in Jesus - a time to be clothed in **His** righteousness, so we will be able to stand with complete **confidence** before God's throne on the Last Day. God gives us the precious moments of our lives to come to the **banquet** of His **grace** - to attend **worship** and hear His saving **Word** - and to receive the **Lord's Supper** for the **forgiveness** of our sins and the **strengthening** of our faith. All of these things will **equip** us, so that as we face the **evils** of today's world we are able to stand our ground **in faith**. Don't **unwisely** make **light** of these opportunities, but rather, **Live As People Who Are Wise**, and make the most of **every** opportunity to be **enriched** by our gracious Lord.

Now is the time to teach our **children** and **grandchildren** the truth of God's Word, so that they will be deeply rooted in **Jesus** their Savior, and will be able to **join** us one day in **heaven**. We need to make the most of **every** opportunity. In fact, it's beneficial for **all** of us to learn more about our Savior. So, let's give the **highest priority** of our time to things like **worship**, **prayer**, and **Bible study**. And since God wants His heavenly banquet hall to be **filled**, now is **also** the time to tell **others** about Jesus, and His amazing **love** for them. Let's **Live As People Who**

Are Wise - making the most of **every opportunity** to let our light **shine**, so that others will **see** that light, and will **come** and **experience** the mercy of Jesus.

Secondly, the Apostle Paul goes on to explain that our lives are not to be centered around **our will** - but rather around the **Lord's will**. He writes, "*Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*" Jesus once told a parable about a man who **foolishly** built his house on **sand** instead of on **solid ground**. Consequently, the foundation was **weak**, and when the **storms** came, the man's house came **tumbling down**. And in **another** parable Jesus told about a man who built **bigger** and **bigger** barns, in order to store up all of his earthly **wealth**. But that night **God** came to take his **life**, and said to him, "*You fool, this night your soul will be demanded from you. Now who will get what you have prepared?*"

It's **foolish** to spend our lives just trying to accumulate and preserve **earthly wealth**. What's **important** is that we understand what the **Lord's will** is for us, so we will be moved to make **wise** decisions for our **eternal** good. So, what **is** the Lord's will for our life in this world? How does He want us to use our **time**, and our **talents**, and our financial **treasures**? How does God want us to build up our **marriages** and **families**? The **answers** to these questions are found in **God's Word**. There we learn that it's God's will for us to be **content** with food and clothing and the **necessities** of life. There we learn that it's God's will for us to be rich toward **Him**, and to store up treasures for ourselves in **heaven** - treasures which will never **rust** or **decay**. There we learn that it's God's will for us to build our **lives**, our **marriages**, and our **families** on our Lord **Jesus** and His **Word**, because **He** is that solid, immovable **rock** which will always **stand firm** when the storms and stresses of life afflict us.

To really **know** God's will and put it into **practice** involves keeping a **clear head**. Paul writes, "*Do not get drunk on wine, which causes you to lose control. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*" The **excessive** use of alcoholic beverages, and mind altering drugs, is all too **common** in our world. The **reasons** for that are **varied**. Some people use them to try to **escape** from the problems they experience at home or at work. And all too often, the **misuse** of alcohol and drugs leads to even **more** problems. So Paul encourages us "*Do not get drunk on wine, which causes you to lose control. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*" The Holy Spirit was poured into our hearts at the time of our **baptism**, and He **continues** to work in our hearts day after day - freeing us from the **guilt** of our sins with the **forgiveness** which was won by **Jesus** - renewing our **faith**, and restoring the **joy** of salvation for us.

The Holy Spirit **accomplishes** these things by leading His people to gather together to **worship** the Lord, and to **encourage** one another in our **faith**. Paul goes on to write, *“Be filled with the **Spirit** by speaking to one another with **psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs** (singing and making music with your hearts to the Lord), by always giving thanks for **everything** to God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* The **hymns** we sing each week contain the Good News of God’s **mercy** to us in Jesus. They tell about God’s **love** in sending His Son to win **forgiveness** for us. They tell about God’s love in sending us the **Holy Spirit** to make us **His people** through **faith** in Jesus. It’s truly **wise** for us to actively **participate** in **all** the aspects of our worship services - listening to the **Word**, singing the **hymns**, and praying the **prayers**. All of these things **encourage** us in our walk with **Jesus**, and they offer **real help** to one another.

And finally, Paul encourages us to give **thanks** to God for **everything**. That’s what Christian **worship** is all about. We know that because of our **sins** we don’t deserve **any** of the things which we enjoy in this life. The blessings of physical **health** and eternal **salvation** - the blessings of **family** and **friends** - the blessings of **work** and **play** - **all** of them are **undeserved** gifts from our gracious God. And so we **thank** God for **all** of the benefits which He has chosen to **share** with us. In fact, we even thank God for the **difficulties** and the **crosses** which He sometimes sends, knowing that in **everything** God is working for the **good** of those who love Him.

The way that you and I live our lives today **matters**. As Paul wrote, *“Consider carefully, then, how you walk, not as **unwise** people, but as **wise** people. Make the **most** of your time, because the days are **evil**.”* May we make the most of **every** opportunity to **hear** and **study** God’s gracious **Word**, to grow in our **understanding** of God’s will, to be filled with the **Holy Spirit**, and to **encourage** one another, as we **Live As People Who Are Wise**. Amen.