

Teach Me To Make the Days Count  
Texts: Psalm 90:12-17, Ephesians 5:11-20  
Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian Church – August 2, 2020  
Rev. Michael F. Atzert

So, one of the benefits of using Zoom as our worship format is that we can prerecord parts of the service and then just play them as if they were happening in real time. This morning, I am not in the sanctuary. I am about 350 miles away in New Hampshire – here – sitting on Webster Lake – probably enjoying another cup of coffee with my Bible in my lap. Although I miss you, I am in a place that holds very dear memories for me and where I have experienced God so fully and genuinely.

I have been thinking a lot of these last five months about time and how we spend it. I have spoken with some of you as you have shared that you are looking at time differently – and are trying to take time to enjoy life more, do things you have not done in years, and are looking at how you spend your time with more care. These Scripture texts from Psalms and Ephesians are great ways to view life, I think. And to frame our time this morning, I want to share a story that was shared with me through email 19 years ago. It goes like this:

“The older I get, the more I enjoy Saturday mornings. Perhaps it's the quiet solitude that comes with being the first to rise, or maybe it's the unbounded joy of not having to be at work. Either way, the first few hours of a Saturday morning are most enjoyable.

A few weeks ago, I was shuffling toward the kitchen with a steaming cup of coffee in one hand and the morning paper in the other. What began as a typical Saturday morning turned into one of those lessons that life seems to hand you from time to time. Let me tell you about it. I turned the volume up on my radio in order to listen to a Saturday morning talk show. I heard an older sounding chap with a golden voice. You know the kind, he sounded like he should be in the

broadcasting business himself. He was talking about "a thousand marbles" to someone named "Tom." I was intrigued and sat down to listen to what he had to say.

"Well, Tom, it sure sounds like you're busy with your job. I'm sure they pay you well, but it's a shame you have to be away from home and your family so much. Hard to believe a young fellow should have to work 60 or 70 hours a week to make ends meet. Too bad you missed your daughter's dance recital." He continued, "Let me tell you something Tom, something that has helped me keep a good perspective on my own priorities." And that's when he began to explain his theory of a "thousand marbles." "You see, I sat down one day and did a little arithmetic. The average person lives about seventy-five years. I know, some live more and some live less, but on average, folks live about seventy-five years." "Now then, I multiplied 75 times 52 and I came up with 3900 which is the number of Saturdays that the average person has in their entire lifetime.

Now stick with me Tom, I'm getting to the important part. It took me until I was fifty-five years old to think about all this in any detail," he went on, "and by that time I had lived through over twenty-eight hundred Saturdays. I got to thinking that if I lived to be seventy-five, I only had about a thousand of them left to enjoy."

"So I went to a toy store and bought every single marble they had. I ended up having to visit three toy stores to round-up 1000 marbles. I took them home and put them inside of a large, clear plastic container right here in my workshop next to the radio. Every Saturday since then, I have taken one marble out and thrown it away. I found that by watching the marbles diminish, I focused more on the really important things in life. There is nothing like watching your time here on this earth run out to help get your priorities straight."

"Now let me tell you one last thing before I sign-off with you and take my lovely wife out for breakfast. This morning, I took the very last marble out of the container. I figure if I make it until next Saturday then God has blessed me with a little extra time to be with my loved ones." It was nice to talk to you Tom, I hope you spend more time with your loved ones, and I hope to meet you again someday. Have a good morning!"

You could have heard a pin drop when he finished. Even the show's moderator didn't have anything to say for a few moments. I guess he gave us all a lot to think about. I had planned to do some work that morning and then go to the gym. Instead, I went upstairs and woke my wife up with a kiss. "C'mon honey, I'm taking you and the kids to breakfast." "What brought this on?" she asked with a smile. "Oh, nothing special," I said. "It has just been a long time since we spent a Saturday together with the kids. Hey, can we stop at a toy store while we're out? I need to buy some marbles." (Source Unknown, from an email 04/25/01)".

"Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" is what the Psalmist writes. "So be very careful how you live. Do not live like people who aren't wise. Live like people who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity." Whether you have 1,000 Saturdays left or much less than that, God is giving you a new opportunity to focus on what is good, what is wise. You will not get this time back, so I encourage you to make the most of every opportunity to grow in your faith in Christ, spend more time with your family, do the things for which you have a passion.

Chris Rice, contemporary Christian singer, sings a song where the lyrics are, "Teach us to count the days. Teach us to make the days count." Friends, let us each make our days count for the Lord – let us live lives where we have no regrets and pass up no opportunities to show the love of Christ. Let us pray...

God of time and eternity, we thank You for this reminder to spend our time – spend our days – doing things that are wise and good. Lord, time passes so quickly, and we often do not accomplish all that we want to in a single day or week. Help us to focus on those things which bring us wisdom and keep us growing in our faith in You and our relationships with others. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.