

**Stewardship of Time**  
**24<sup>th</sup> January 2010**  
**Stephen Partridge**

Ecclesiastes 3. 1-14  
Mark 1.35-39

Time is a fascinating concept, we can't recycle time, we can't live our time again,  
We can't stop time, although the sellers of anti-ageing cream would want us to believe that we can even turn back time!!  
we can't touch or hold time. Can we really save time? We certainly can't make new time.

Janice has spoken before about the 2 Greek words mentioned in the bible for time – Chronos and Kairos, Chronos being continual time and Kairos being the special moments – God's appointed moments.  
Our challenge is to be good stewards of all the time God gives us – the chronos continual time ticking by, and the kairos – special moments that flash before our eyes and need to be grabbed or missed.

So Where does it all go? The 24 hours of each day or the 168 hours of each week?

Some days go by in a flash, but what would we do if we could go back and live some of our time over again? Would we end up making the same mistakes?

I recently watched a film about a man who had to live out the same day over and over again. He was an arrogant city news reporter and became stuck in a rustic town watching a strange ceremony involving a groundhog (small rodent) predict the weather for the next 6 weeks. Everyone else started the day as if it was a new day for them but the central character remembered each day and he hated every minute of being in what he saw as a backwater town full of local yokels.

Obviously at first he couldn't make out what was happening when he woke to the same song on the clock radio in the hotel where he was staying and people said the same thing to him as the previous day.

Then he became aware that whatever he did had no implications because where ever he ended up at the end of the day he would wake up in the same bed on the morning of that same day.

So first he became reckless using what he felt was his Godly status to drive at high speeds around the town. Then he tried to use his time to woo his attractive producer, by manipulating her feelings for him.

But this didn't have the desired effect and time again he ended his day with a slap on the face.

Then he gave up and tried to end it all by committing suicide in lots of different ways but always woke up alive and well in the same bed.

It was only after all this that he finally used all he had learned about this small community and spent one day doing good deeds – catching the boy whom he knew would fall out of tree above the pavement, saving the town official who he knew would be choking in a restaurant. Showing up with a car jack for some elderly ladies he knew would have a flat tyre on their car. Helping an engaged couple sort out their differences. He just spent the day sorting out any problem he had noticed whilst he'd been living through the day so many times. And at the end of the day it was clear that not only had the community benefitted but that he had changed – deciding to do good and then doing good had transformed him. The next morning he woke again in the same bedroom but now time had finally moved on and he was ready to begin the rest of his life. It was like God pressing the pause key until he had sorted his attitudes out and then letting him carry on living his life.

Time is so short for all of us, what should we do first?, who or what should we put first? How long should we take to decide all of these things?

Our Ecclesiastes reading can reassure us because it reminds us of God's sovereignty of time,

It speaks of the seasons in our life, that there will be a time for different activities, good and bad, easy and hard, but God is working through all of this: Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

Change will come but God will not change. He will remain in ultimate control over our lives – and the seasons that we live through as he shapes and moulds us.

but God's control is not predictable – I'm reminded of CS Lewis' quote in 'The lion the witch and the wardrobe, 'Mr Tumnus says: "He is not a tame lion", "no" says Lucy, "but he is good"

and so God's control remains a mystery to us, we cant predict where he will impact us next. We just have to trust him with all of our lives – including our time.

In our Gospel reading today we see Jesus carving out time for all that's important to him –

Jesus has just begun his adult ministry on earth. The day before our reading he had healed many sick and driven out demons.

And I guess he could've just continued that pattern – there were so many sick and possessed people around. And when he had finished with the paralysed, the lepers and the deadly diseases and fevers he could've started on the broken legs, broken arms, then maybe, bad backs or athlete's foot, but he didn't.

He began his next day not in the company of his adoring public, or his amazed close followers and friends.

No ... He rises early to pray in a solitary place – to meet with his Father, to refocus on his mission, maybe to deal with the human emotions he is feeling due to the great adoration he has received and is going to receive at this time. And then He instructs them – lets go somewhere else, but notice he is not going somewhere else just to do amazing healings – but to preach – to not just be a famous miracle worker- he wanted to be recognised as a saviour - so he needed to preach the good news, along with driving out demons and healings.

He knew his mission was to see people transformed -in mind, body and soul.

(Lesson 1) – The first thing that struck me from the passage is that Jesus is making time to speak and listen to his Father in Heaven. He chooses the best time of day for Him and then he spends time refocusing himself on what God wants to achieve through Him on this day.

(lesson 2) - Next Jesus uses this time to sort out his priorities for the next part of his ministry and to align them with God's priorities.

(lesson 3) – Finally we see that Jesus is dividing his time between Preaching, healing and driving out demons. He is balancing his time between caring for the minds, the bodies and the souls of the people.

As ever when we look deeper into Jesus' life we see an important pattern for us in our lives as we focus on our use of time...

Firstly like Jesus **we need to make time for God**, some can maintain hours each day in his presence, I am happy to manage 5 minutes snatched in the shower room at school before heading into my classroom. The important challenge for us is that we do offer ourselves daily and then as we accept God afresh into our everyday lives, so he can work better in us and through us. We do need to find the best time for us during each day. Great if that's at the beginning of each day or even at the end or perhaps both. But that may not

work for everyone so I would challenge you to carve out the best time for you, when you can come back to God, perhaps a short walk round the block at lunchtime, maybe during the journey to or from work. Maybe in the bath even (but watch out as the thin pages of a bible don't like getting splashed as I found out the hard way)

Secondly like Jesus **we need to seek God's will**, God's mission for our days – this can be through quiet prayer, bible reading, a time of silent listening, or reflection. We need to think about how we pray at this time – its about 2 way communication – I could misquote JFK and say we need to 'ask not what Your God can do for you, but what Your God can do through you' .As we seek God in this way, he will enable us to follow his way, guiding us to have his priorities.

Thirdly like Jesus **we need to aim for balance**, for Jesus it was dividing himself as he spent time with his Father and ministered to the people's body, mind and soul. For us it will be holding in tension all the parts of our life – our family life, our church life, our work unpaid or paid and our own desires and needs. This balance will change through the seasons of our life, but it is one that needs constant attention in case any one area takes over and dominates us. As we aim for a good balance the other important word I think is **pace**. I think about the balance and pace we need when riding a bike. Too slow and we lose balance and fall off, or have to push it along and we don't get anywhere. Too fast and we are liable to crash when too much happens too quickly. If we get our pace just right then it easy to balance and we can enjoy our journey. Yes there will still be hills to climb up and cars cutting us up when we least expect but also we may get a glimpse of the wonder of God's creation as we ride – I have exchanged my cycle to work from a country route with a vista across Poole harbour to a vista of industrial units BUT as I cross the Broadstone way bridge I know if I gaze south I can usually get a few seconds glimpse of the beautiful Purbeck hills. With balance and pace we will be well placed to do God's will during the chronos everyday times and we will be able to spot and make the most of the kairos special moments that God places before us.

As is often the case I have used Jesus as a model for our stewardship of time today but this approach should really carry a health warning – as Jesus is perfect and we're not(well I'm definitely not anyway)  
We can't always do just 'what Jesus would do' but it is something to aspire to even in the knowledge that it will be impossible this side of heaven. If we

earnestly ask for the power of the Spirit to assist us then we can make small steps towards that goal. Left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot

**By making time for God, seeking His will for us, aiming for balance and pace in our lives**

One step at a time... one moment at a time.

American poet Henry Van dyke is quoted in the early twentieth century as saying "Time is too slow for those who wait, too swift for those who fear, too long for those who grieve, too short for those who rejoice, but for those who love, time is eternity."

As we move now into a time of prayer and reflection, my prayer is that this wont be a time of 'Oh dear I am sorry Lord I haven't found that hour a day I promised last year to serve You and pray'. My prayer is that we can come before the Lord afresh and simply say, as Samuel did 'Speak Lord as Your servants we listen and we want to know what's on Your heart for us'. What small steps do You want us to make? How can we find a rhythm and a pattern in this jumbled life that will let You in, that will allow You to work in us and through us. Father transform our minds, reshape our thoughts, renew our hearts with Your truth.

Amen