

Baptist hour messages



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WHEN I GET TIME

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Scripture: Psalm 15

If one lived as long as Methusaleh, he wouldn't have time to do all the things that he would like to do. Just about time one finishes school, gets his job, settles down to real learning, old age has crept in, and life ebbs away. Today as I speak to you on one of human nature's oldest excuses, would you give me your undivided attention?

When I get time! One would think that the world is populated with idealists from start to finish, what, with all the good intentions voiced from time to time. "I am going to read the great classics, help the unfortunate, lift my fallen brother, pay off the old debts, . . . that is, when I get time." In every marketplace these words are echoing.

We must admit that we have all the time there is. Methusaleh lived a long time, but there were no more hours in his day than in ours. There is the same number of minutes in a twentieth century day as there was in any preceding one with few variations. An old proverb reads, "The road to hell is paved with good intention." Some pavement indeed . . . and it must be 10 feet thick reckoning from man's reservoir of pledges, testimonies, and good intentions. But if I only intend to pay my debts, they remain unpaid.

Today we are living longer (thanks to sulphur drugs, tranquilizers, and frozen foods) than any other preceding generation of our forebears. Our work week is being shortened all the time! Yet with these luxuries and conveniences, time wears wearily on the hands of many, leaving undone the chores of importance.

What is the solution to the feverish pace of life, this maddening maze of things? More prosperity? Shorter working hours and days? I believe the only solution to the cluttered up hours and days is not more free time but taking time to sit down with will power and prayer and decide once and for all what really matters most. What is worth absorbing time and talent? What can you give your time to that will last awhile? What club, or business, what hobby or vocation, will bring out the best within you?

I know of nothing more important than a sense that sees the value as well as the price in everything. Little wonder Jesus frowned on things as indices of worth, while pointing men to the upward way whereon is life eternal. Actually, when it is all said and done, there are few things that matter at all. Perhaps nine-tenths of all those worries, which fret us and siphon off energies are totally worthless in the final weight of values. Then to embrace them as worth now marks us as stupid.

For instance, what are you doing right now? What thought is consuming you . . . I mean, more than listening to this broadcast. Will you go from it to give yourself to some absorbing, worthwhile enterprise? Or, to dabble in some mudhole of valuelessness?

In three classical lines of reasoning Jesus portrayed the day-to-day excuses which fall from the lips of many.

EXCUSES

One man had bought some property—a field, and needed to walk over it. Because of such a purchase, he sent in his

excuse that he didn't have time to attend the Lord's supper. The excuses that proprieties involve, whether surveying, renovation, reinvestment, or the multi-billion gamut which creates a vortex of tension . . . all fall before the critical eyes of the Saviour.

Another man said, "I have bought some oxen which need to be proved, please have me excused." How many modern oxen, whether in turbines or derricks, have involved the people of God through the week and on Sunday to the extent that in church and other areas of service they ask in one accord, "Please have me excused?"

The third had married a wife and made it very clear that he could not come. To have married that kind of wife in the first place marked him as an unholy man. No one should be so united that a life partner becomes a deterrent to the things of God. Domestic battles do not speak of a life of spiritual unity.

But how about some of our modern excuses? Are they not equally as flimsy? Indeed so! one says, "I cannot come to church because Sunday is my only day to rest. What with working all the week, on Sunday I am all washed up." Of course, that is to be expected after a man rationalizes all the week and absorbs his energies in the things of the world. Quite naturally he would say, "I'm worn out on Sunday."

Oh, I am not depreciating work. But it is the kind of work, and the economic Joneses we swear that we must keep up with that I am condemning! One is acutely confessing that it takes six days to satisfy the flesh and Caesar, and the effort leaves neither inclination toward nor desire for spirit and Christ. What a tragedy! What appalling shame!

"I do not go to church," says another, "because there are too many hypocrites in the church." Well, of course, there are too many hypocrites in the church. One would be too many. But where is there a better place for a hypocrite to be than in church? That is the place he is most apt to stop being a hypocrite. He must be somewhere, and why not in church? I had rather be in church with a few hypocrites than in hell with all of them hereafter. And isn't it strange that you can play golf with them, socialize at the club, work all

day with them, but suddenly become incensed by their presence in church.

DANGERS OF WAITING

Then let me point out some of the dangers of waiting . . . of postponing that which should be done today. One such danger is that tomorrow it is just a little bit harder to do it. Why? Well, you are one day older for one thing. The grip that slipped a half digit by not doing it today might slip three-quarters of a digit tomorrow. The mountain that was once a mole hill became altitudinous only by putting off the mole hill. It is just a bit harder tomorrow. Too, indecisiveness can become one's second nature. Like the couple in a former pastorate that talked to me about getting married. Thinking that the date was just around the corner, I asked them when they wanted to tie the knot. She was 57, he was two years older. They had been engaged for 18 years. To this day they have never married. Comical? No, tragic—but no more so than many whose nature is to procrastinate.

The danger increases when one overlooks the fact that the verbs of Jesus were "go, give, tell, pray, love and lift." Verbs of action . . . not dangling prepositions of indecision. Another danger is that tomorrow's sun may never shine. There comes a time when one says, "I am going to turn over a new leaf," and says this so often that it is like an alcoholic who is always reforming . . . between drinks. It is utterly meaningless.

Friends, right not is the best time to do the things you have been putting off.

Jesus Christ will be no different 20 years from now—but you will. Chances are that if you fail to accept Him, you will harden and grow more calloused and sense little if any need to accept Him. Without postponing another minute, would you not accept Him as personal Saviour, here and now?