

Week 2 Stewardship Sunday

Text: Psalm 31:15

Trinity Lutheran Church

Adapted from stewardship materials by Rev. Ron Chewning for "Living Wisely in an Unwise World."

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Using Time Wisely

Rev. Tom Boeck

In the name of Jesus, who holds our lives and all our days in His gracious hands. Amen.

"My times are in your hand." Those are just six words from **Psalm 31:15**, but they say an awful lot about stewardship.

Last week, as we began our stewardship emphasis, *Living Wisely in an Unwise World*, we talked about following God's wisdom. Today we turn to something every one of us has been given, something none of us can save up, replace, or get back once it is gone. Time.

God gives each of us time. We don't know how much. We don't know how many years or months or days remain. But David gives us a wonderfully simple confession of faith: **"My times are in your hand."** That changes the way we think about time because, strictly speaking, our time isn't really ours. It belongs to God. And that makes time a stewardship issue.

Pastor Ron Chewning, in the original stewardship materials on which this message is based, makes the point that we can waste time, misuse it, or use it for the purposes God has given us. And we certainly know how easy it is to waste it. Sometimes we even wear busyness like a badge of honor. We fill our calendars and then complain that we don't have enough time.

Of course, for many of you, the calendar looks different than it did twenty or thirty years ago. You may not be getting children ready for school or rushing to work every morning anymore. But retirement doesn't necessarily mean life suddenly becomes empty.

Doctor appointments have a remarkable ability to multiply. There are errands to run, homes to maintain, family members who need attention, friends who need help, activities we enjoy, television, computers, phones, hobbies, travel, and sometimes simply wondering how it became Thursday already. And somehow we can still find ourselves saying, *"Where did the time go?"*

Scripture gives us a better question: **Where is my time going?** Paul writes in Ephesians, **"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil."** **Ephesians 5:15-16** Notice that Paul doesn't say, "Make sure every minute is productive."

That isn't Christianity. And it certainly isn't stewardship.

God created us to work, but He also created us to rest. There is time for family. Time for friends. Time to enjoy His creation. Time for laughter. Time to sit on the porch and watch the world go by. Rest isn't wasted time. But there is a difference between rest and simply allowing our days to disappear.

And perhaps that is where the story of Mary and Martha becomes helpful. Martha wasn't doing anything wrong. Jesus had come to her home, and she was serving Him. Somebody had to prepare the meal. Somebody had to take care of the details. But Martha became so consumed by those things that she was missing the One who was sitting in her house.

Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened. And Jesus said, **"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary."** **Luke 10:41-42a** That is an important word for us. We can become so busy doing things, even good things, that we neglect the One who gives us everything.

That includes church work. We can serve on committees, attend meetings, sing in the choir, volunteer, help other people, and fill every open space on the calendar. Those may all be wonderful things. But stewardship isn't about keeping ourselves perpetually busy for Jesus.

It begins by being **with Jesus**. Worship. His Word. Prayer. His Supper. Receiving before doing. Because Christianity isn't ultimately about what we accomplish for God. It begins and ends with what God has accomplished for us in Jesus Christ.

And that is especially important when we talk about stewardship, because the temptation is always to turn stewardship into another list of things we ought to be doing. Give more. Serve more. Volunteer more. Do more. And pretty soon stewardship becomes another burden.

But Christian stewardship begins somewhere entirely different. It begins with God giving to us. He gives life. He gives daily bread. He gives abilities and resources. He gives people to love. He gives opportunities to serve. He gives time. And most importantly, He gives us His Son.

Because we haven't used everything God has given us wisely. We have wasted opportunities. We have neglected people. We have spent hours on things that didn't deserve minutes. We have sometimes been too busy for God and sometimes too preoccupied with ourselves to notice the person God placed right in front of us.

And Jesus went to the cross for those sins too. He gave His life for every wasted day, every misplaced priority, every selfish choice. And when Jesus cried, **"It is finished,"** our salvation was accomplished completely. You can't add to it. You can't improve upon it. You can only receive it.

That is why Jesus says, **"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."** **Matthew 11:28** Pastor Chewning makes an important point in his original message. Jesus Himself knew what it was like to have people constantly demanding His time. There were occasions when Jesus and His disciples were so surrounded by people that they didn't even have time to eat. And Jesus told them to come away and rest.

Our Lord understands the pressures of life. But even more importantly, He gives us what our frantic lives cannot produce. Grace. Forgiveness. Peace. Rest. And then He sends us back into our days to live differently.

That may mean giving someone our time instead of simply giving them advice. It may mean making the phone call we have been putting off. Visiting someone who is lonely. Spending time with a spouse or family

member. Serving somewhere in this congregation where God has given us gifts that can be useful. It certainly means making room for God's Word and worship, because we need to hear again and again what Christ has done for us. And it means recognizing that our time is also part of our witness.

Our Gospel reading today has Jesus telling His disciples, **"Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning."** Luke 12:35 He tells them to live ready for their Master's return. That puts our time into an eternal perspective. We aren't here forever.

There will come a day when there are no more appointments to make, projects to finish, lawns to mow, meetings to attend, or calendars to organize. Christ will return. Or He will call us home. And until then, He gives us today. Not to earn His favor. Not to prove our faithfulness. But because we already belong to Him.

So maybe the question isn't simply, "Am I using my time wisely?" Maybe the better question is, **"Lord, how would You have me use the time You have given me?"** And when we look back and realize we haven't always used it well, we don't despair. We return to Jesus. We receive His forgiveness. And then we begin again. Today. This hour. This moment.

David said, **"But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in your hand."** Psalm 31:14-15. That is more than good advice about managing our schedules. It is faith. My past is in His hands. My present is in His hands. My future is in His hands. And because Jesus Christ died and rose again, even my eternity is safely in His hands.

So use the time He gives you. Love people. Serve when you can. Rest when you need to. Spend time with Jesus. Share the good news of Jesus Christ. And receive each new day for what it truly is: another gracious gift from the God who has already given you everything in His Son. **"My times are in your hand."**

And there is no better place for them to be. **Amen.**