

Sermon
9/16 September 2018
West Kirk of Calder/Polbeth Harwood

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Reading: Matthew 6:25-34

We can't choose the time we live in, but we can choose how we live in this time...

We can't choose the time we live in, but we can choose how we live in this time!

And the time to do that, is NOW!

This summer, I have once again realised that this is easier said than done... While we were in South Africa, I tried to spend as much time as I possibly could with my dad and brother. But I caught myself worrying about different scenarios all the time...

What will become of my *brother* if something was to happen to my dad?

My dad seems frailer than last year this time, and he devotes his whole life to taking care of my brother.

Or... what will become of my *dad* if something was to happen to my brother?

I'd lie awake, worrying about them at night – in stead of getting a proper night's rest so I can enjoy every minute I have to spend in their company.

And that – Jesus said in Matthew 6 – is not a very wise move. We should live in the moment. It is utterly and completely senseless to physically be in one place, but to in our heads still be stuck in the past or keep worrying about the future.

Reading this passage just made me realise that it is inevitable – something is going to happen to my dad AND my brother one day – but I don't know what and I don't know when and I don't know how... *All* I know for certain is that I have them now – and I should make to most of the time we can spend together.

And that's just my personal story. I am pretty sure all of you know exactly what I mean. Things like this must happen to all of you too. We worry. About our past. About our future.

What's your story? What are the things in *your* life keeping you from living your life *fully* in the moment??

Sometimes something happened in our past that we can just not let go of. We find ourselves thinking about it so much, that a whole day can go by and we won't be able to say what we did with ourselves, what we accomplished in that day, because although we were physically there, mentally we were reliving yesterday, or last year, or even events from long long ago. And we'll wonder: What if? What if I didn't do *that*, what if

I didn't react like *that*, what if *that* never happened to me, what would my life look like now?

Or we will look at our lives and start worrying about our future. What if *this* happens – how am I going to cope? Is this diagnosis the doctor gave me a death sentence? When are my children going to get some direction in their lives? Am I always going to stay as lonely as I am now, and so forth and so forth...

We worry. We live in the past. We live in the future. And we completely forget about today. Today – the only day we HAVE to live in today!!

But that is not a sensible way of living, for anybody, but least of all for Christians. Because we have God in our lives, and we know that our past and our future is in his hands!

So while we were in South Africa now, I came across the work of Jean Pierre de Caussade. He was a French Jesuit priest and writer who lived in the 17th century. He wrote a book, translated as "The sacrament of the present moment" in which he states that every moment is a possible encounter with God – but you can only meet God if you are THERE, in that moment...

That was EXACTLY what I needed to hear. And there and then I realised that I wanted to share this with all of you too.

He explains that God *wants* to walk with us, he wants to be there for us when we need him – but *we* need to be *there* too!!

No wonder we sometimes feel far away from God – it's because we are not living in the present! We are here but we are NOT here. And in order for us to have a living relationship with God, we need to be present. God is present. Always. We need to be too.

We read that God takes care of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. Now these birds were worth next to nothing, they were sold for a single penny; and the lilies of the field were like the dandelions of Jesus' day.

So if Jesus takes care of these seemingly worthless things, how much more will he take care of us?

Everything is special to God. And if our lives are precious to God and he promises to take care of us, what on earth is the point of worrying??

Worrying about our past or our future is nothing but a waste of precious time – because things that happened in the past are over now – nothing can change our past; and we can't do anything about the unknown things that lie in our future either...

This wee passage encourages us to examine our priorities. What is the most important thing in your life?

The answer should be God.

Because if you can honestly say that God is your number 1 priority – you have no need to worry about anything, because if you really trust in God, you'll know that he will make sure things work out the way they should.

We need to be proactive in our approach to life.

Let me give you a wee practical example: Say you and a friend are on your way somewhere in a car. Your friend is driving, and he keeps taking his eyes off the road because he is blethering too much, and you end up driving right through a huge pothole and getting a flat tire because of that.

What should you do?

Should you say to your friend: “Look at the mess you’ve now gotten us into!!”?

And then start to rant about how all this is his fault and now you are going to be late or even miss your appointment completely. And all this because HE wasn’t looking where he was going?! Should you say things like: “If you could just talk less and concentrate on the road, if you could just look where you are going, if you allowed me to drive like I’ve offered, then none of this would have happened...?”

But – is *any* of that going to change the fact that you have a flat tire?

NO!

So it is quite senseless to say any of these things.

The better thing to say would be: “Oh no, that’s a shame. Where’s the jack? Let’s get the spare wheel on!” Because that will make a difference to your situation.

If you rant, you are just going to upset yourself more *and* upset your friend, who will be feeling bad enough about what he has done already, without you making it even worse. If you look for a solution – both of you might still feel rubbish, but at least you'll have the problem sorted soon. Ranting about what *could have been* is like living in the past. Senseless.

Stressing about what's going to happen if you now arrive late or dirty at your destination, is also not going to get that wheel fixed.

Just putting your head down and doing what needs to be done – THAT is living in the present. And at least you'll have a story to tell later!

So next time the wheel of your life-car bursts – due to your own stupidity or someone else's wrong choices or just the bad state of the road you are on at the moment – just take a minute, and decide to stay in the present. Make the most of the time you have. God is there with you. He will help you sort it. Just believe it.

And live. Complaining about your past or worrying about your future is not going to get you on the road again.

Not a single one of us wants to arrive at our final destination and look back on our lives and think – now what did I actually do with my life? No, we want to remember *all* the things we accomplished, with the help of God.

Live every moment.

At the beginning of the sermon I quoted a well-know phrase: We can't choose the time we live in, but we can choose how we live in this time.

There's nothing we can do about so many things that happen in our lives. Let's just accept these, and focus on the things we CAN do something about. Because doing this, whilst trusting God all the way, is the secret to a meaningful life.

If even a not-so-clever bear could do it (like I explained in the children's address), so can we. So let me quote Winnie the Pooh again:

"What day is it?" asked Pooh.

"It's today." Squeaked Piglet.

"My favourite day!" said Pooh.

Make every day your favourite day, and God *will* bless you in abundance.

Amen