

Would you read the Bible verse on the screen with me: *"Teach us to make the most of our time, so that we may grow in wisdom."* (Psalm 90:12, NLT) That is the lesson Jesus is teaching us today in the Gospel. *"Teach us to make the most of our time..."*

How did we do with the time we were given this past week? Chances are we spent a lot of time planning what to do with our time; because time is so precious to us.

We know that because of the number of clocks and watches and electronic devices which have a time function on them. How many clocks and watches and gadgets do you have which tell you what time it is? I have 12 I look at regularly.

Time. On vacation I spent time with my Dad – that was special. I spent time with my brother – that was special. I spent time this past week in jail – that was interesting.

Did you notice that every time I said that "I spent time"? That is the way we talk about our hours and minutes and seconds.

Time is like our bank accounts; we have so much time, we spend it, and then it is --- gone. But unlike our bank accounts, there is no way to make a deposit for more time. So time is like sand in a bottle that trickles out until... Time is precious to us.

Do you remember this little ditty by Harry Belafonte? He sang: *"Where are you going, my little one, little one. Where are you going, my baby, my own? Turn around and you're two, Turn around and you're four, Turn around and you're a young girl going out of my door."*

I remember listening to that song as a teenager because I liked the tune. Now the words make me stop and think: "How true."

Do you recall this little ditty by Harry Chapin? He sang: *"A child arrived just the other day, He came to the world in the usual way. But there were planes to catch, and bills to pay. He learned to walk while I was away. And he was talking 'fore I knew it, and as he grew, He'd say, 'I'm gonna be like you, dad.'"*

Then, a couple of verses later, Chapin sings these words: *"I've long since retired and my son's moved away. I called him up just the other day. I said, "I'd like to see you if you don't mind." He said, "I'd love to, dad, if I could find the time."*

This brings us back to that Bible verse: *"Teach us to make the most of our time..."*

Three men came to Jesus. **The first one said, "I will follow you, Jesus."** Jesus looked at him... I mean: Jesus looked at him...

He looked and saw the outer stuff: what the man lived for in terms of spending his time, talent, and treasure. Jesus saw the pleasures that he enjoyed and the comforts that he sought after. Jesus saw what these things meant to him; that his life consisted solely of these material things.

Jesus looked at him again... I mean: Jesus really looked at this man...

He looked and saw the inner stuff: the lack of security this man had. Jesus saw that his security was in the home he kept and the treasures he had stored up. And he was worried – rightly so – that someday he would lose them all.

So Jesus said to this first man: *"Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay his head."*

What Jesus is saying is: **We are moving over to a new security**. True security is in the presence of Jesus. In order to trust this new security, we need to let go of our old security blankets. We need to have a Paris Hilton experience...

I promised myself I would not say anything ever in a message about Paris Hilton. I was not ever going to say a thing...

And then she went on Larry King. And she made references to God and having a Bible and changing her life by going to Mass and finding a way to be of service.

Hilton said: *"I feel like God does make everything happen for a reason. And it gave me a time-out in life to really find out what's important."*

Now whether Paris changes or not is up in the air. But the point is I think we all need a time-out once a week to find out what is really important in life: this is your weekly time out!

The first way to make the most of our time is to let the treasures and trinkets of life have their place in life. And to be reminded that even if we have no den to live in or nest to fly to, we still have Jesus to walk with. That is our ultimate security.

Jesus called to another person. That person said: *“Lord, first let me return home and bury my father.”* Jesus will say to him: **We are moving on to new obligations.**

Now, follow me on this one... There was a practice in Bible days among the wealthy to do two burials.

The first burial was done the day the person died. There was no way to preserve the bodies, so burial was held immediately. That is what happened to the body of Jesus following his crucifixion. For poor people, that was the first and last burial.

The man whom Jesus called was not concerned about this first burial. If he was he would not have been on the road that day; he would have been at the burial.

For the wealthy people there was a second burial, one year after the first burial. At that time what was left of the body – the bones – were gathered and placed in an *“ossuary”*: a small box that would hold the bones.

Who cares, you say? Good question. Here is the point: Remember late last winter when the Discovery Channel had a show on proclaiming that a “scholar” had found the bones of Jesus in Jerusalem? What he found was one of these *ossuaries*. There are thousands and thousands of them underground or in old burial chambers in Jerusalem.

This man was probably asking permission of Jesus to hang around and wait for his father’s bones to dry.

If the conversation went on it might have gone something like this:

- The man: “I will follow you Jesus, but first I must place my father’s remains in the ossuary.”
- Jesus: “How long before that happens?”
- The man: “9 to 10 more months.”

To this idea of waiting 3 months or 6 months or 12 months before we take up our cross and follow, Jesus responds with these words: *“Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”*

Why are we putting off praying? Why are we putting off taking time and money to serve the people whom Jesus loves and died for? Why are we putting off using our talents for God’s glory?

There are Habitat Houses to build. There is a boiler to repair that we can help fund. There is a funeral on Tuesday to serve for. There was a new baby born to members of the congregation this week to pray for. There are Bible verses to learn and consider; teachings of Jesus to reflect on. There are children to teach and elderly to care for.

Jesus loves you dearly. He does not want you to come to the end of next week with regrets. So he tells you today: Make the most of your time this week. Do what you know God wants you to do.

Leave the dead things to be dead things. But you – you are living right now this day. Go and share Good News. Tell people that there is hope; that there is life.

Jesus can help us make the most of the time we have this week by giving us a new security and a new obligation. And then last for this morning...

A third person comes to Jesus: *“Lord, I will follow you, but first let me say good-bye to my family.”* Jesus will tell this person: **We are moving ahead to a new family.**

When I was young, and my mom joined my dad in going off to work every morning, I was left in the care of my Grandpa and Grandma. Grandpa would take me to the

farm to roll bales and trap gophers and pick blackberries. He watched over me so I would not be hurt by farm equipment or rattlesnakes or my own sheer clumsiness.

I went off to college, and my Grandpa died. My life changed. For the first time in my life my family was broken. Christmas came and a chair was empty.

Over time my family became more broken. Others joined my Grandpa, others went through divorce, and still others just got really busy with other things.

You all know what I am talking about. You have been there. For a while we think that our family will always be there. Then we realize that our family can be hurt and broken.

Jesus tells us we need to not just be connected to our earthly family, but also connected to our heavenly family. It is important to say "hello" to our new family.

So Jesus says to this person: *"Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God."* To make the most of the time one needs to look forward.

On my vacation I was standing in a Truck Stop parking lot in Salt Lake City. It was evening; about 10 PM. I was standing off to the side just looking at the stars.

A trucker came over to me said, "In four minutes if you look to that part of the sky you will see the space shuttle, and then a little behind will come the space station."

So we stood together and looked up; Bart the Trucker from Chicago and Doug the Pastor from Fargo.

In four minutes the first light appeared, and shortly thereafter the second light. Bart and Doug watched the lights cross the whole sky from horizon to horizon. It was a spectacular sight in that high altitude.

As the lights were disappearing on the horizon Bart asked, "Where are you heading?" "That way," I pointed, to where the lights had come from.

Bart said, "Too bad. I am going that way tomorrow morning," pointing to where the space shuttle and the space station were just disappearing.

Where are you heading tomorrow morning? Back to old wounds, old pains, old frustrations, old baggage, old quarrels, old battles?

No. You are following Jesus. He leads forward to new hopes and new visions. He has a new security and new obligations and a new family for us every morning.

Let us pray: Lord, today we heard you invite three people to make the most of the time they are given. We hear that call today as well. Lord, this week, because you have given me security and a family, send me out to live confidently. I ask that I might play with a child this week, and that I might reminisce with a saint. I ask that I might speak a kind word to a hurting person, and laugh with a friend. I ask that I might find the strength to say, "Forgive me," and the patience to listen to someone else's story. I ask that I might learn some new trivia this week, and also learn a new truth. Above all, I ask that by your grace I might *make the most of my time, so that I may grow in wisdom.*" Amen.