

Epiphany 3: 1/21/18
St. Paul: Luxemburg, WI
Text: I Cor. 7:29-31
Theme: The time is short!

The time is short! We are told that all of the time in our lives. Usually, we hear it from advertisers who are trying to tell us to buy something from them. I remember looking at a car some years back, and the salesman was very insistent that I needed to buy the car that day. The reason for that was because the time was short. The salesman wanted to convince me that the car might be gone tomorrow. Someone else might buy it before me and the financing deals might be gone very soon. He kept telling me that the time was short, so buy now.

We are also told that very same thing when it comes to how we spend our time. We are often times told that the time is short so we should live life to the fullest. Our world tells us that with the idea that we should indulge ourselves in the things of this world. Since the time is short, we are often times led to believe that we should pamper ourselves with every luxury imaginable in this world. We should spend our time grabbing all of the possessions that we can possibly get a hold of. The time is short! Take that trip that you've been thinking about. Build that house that you've always dreamed of. Spend your

money-on yourself. Don't hesitate to quit your job and start that business that you've been considering. Don't hold back. Enjoy life all you can.

The Apostle Paul tells us in our text for this morning that the time is indeed short. Paul agrees with the thinking that the time is short because indeed it is, but Paul shows us that this has a much different implication for our lives as Christians. Paul is showing us what impact the fact that the time is short should have on our lives. Paul is showing us specifically the impact that this has on three areas of our lives. He is showing us the effect that this has on marriage, our emotions, and our possessions.

The Apostle tells us that the time is short and what he is getting at is the fact that our time in this world is limited. We are to live with the realization that we will not be in this world forever. He is telling us that Jesus is going to return. This could happen at any moment. He is also telling us that we will eventually die. Our time on this earth will come to an end much quicker than we want to imagine, and this affects the way we live our lives. It affects our attitudes and what we do with our time. Those who have faith in Jesus Christ are able to live with the confidence that we look forward to eternal things in

heaven. We have the joy of knowing that the things of this world are only a prelude to far better things. We have the joy that comes from knowing that Jesus Christ has redeemed our time in this world. He has made it possible through His death and resurrection for us to have the assurance that our sins are removed and that we look forward to far better things. That affects our lives right now. The fact that we live with the realization that heaven is ours affects our view of time.

The time is short! Paul tells us that this means that those who are married are to live as if they were not married. That seems like a very strange thing to say, especially since I have always believed that one of the problems with so many marriages today is that many people do exactly that. The Apostle Paul is not saying that we should neglect our spouses and children. What he is telling us is that we are to understand that even marriage is secondary to our relationship to Jesus Christ. He is telling us that the time is short, and we are to see our faith in Jesus Christ as being the most important thing in our lives.

God is telling us that we are not to allow the relationships of this world to interfere with our relationship with Him. I have seen far too many times when

good Christian people become desperate to be married or to have some sort of relationship in their lives. This desperation can very easily lead them away from Jesus Christ and His church.

We want to keep our relationship with Jesus Christ at the center of our lives. We live with the realization that we look forward to far better things. I remember listening to Al Barry, at a pastor's conference many years ago. He was the president of our synod when I first started out as a pastor. He talked about how during his first term he used to get up extremely early in the morning so that he could be at work well before seven in the morning. However, his wife had recently been diagnosed with cancer. He talked about how that changed his view of things. He started going to work later so that he could spend time with his wife and have devotions with her and pray in the morning. He talked about how important it was for him to have that time with his wife where they could focus on the eternal treasures that Jesus holds out to us. He talked about how important it was for both of them to be reminded of God's love for them. His wife died less than three months later. The time is short!

The Apostle Paul also tells us that the fact that the time is short affects our emotions. That's what Paul means

when he says that those who were in mourning should act as if they were not. In other words, Paul is telling us very clearly that we do not mourn as the world around us. The time is short. We can't sit around living our lives in mourning unable to go on living because of losses that we have suffered. Certainly, we grieve the loss of loved ones, but we do not mourn as if we had no hope. We have eternal hope.

As a kid, I grew up living next to a cemetery. I always remember one man whose wife died. After she died, that man was unable to go on living. He would go out to the cemetery everyday and just sit there by her grave. I remember him going out with a truck one day that had a sand blaster on it and polishing the tombstone. He would spend hours and hours grooming shrubs and flowers. His life became one of nothing more than fulltime mourning. Paul tells us the time is short. We cannot spend our lives going around mourning as if we had no hope.

There is a story about King David in second Samuel twelve that most people are not familiar with. It talks about how David had a child born to him, and the child became very ill. David fasted, prayed, and pleaded with God to save the child but despite his praying and pleading the child died. David was laying on the ground praying

when his servants came in with the bad news. They all stood in a corner trying to figure out how to break the news to him. They were convinced that David was going to do something desperate when he found out that the child was dead. David saw them talking in the corner and said, "The child is dead isn't he?" They said, "Yes."

But then David did something remarkable. He got up washed himself, changed his clothes and worshipped God. The servants were amazed. They said how can you act this way now that the child is dead? David responded by saying that while the child was alive there was hope but now that he is dead how can I fast and weep? David said, "I will go to him, but he will not return to me." In other words, David was saying the time is short. David was pointing to the fact that he had an everlasting hope. He would not go around living his life weighed down with grief because the time is too short. David understood that he had the hope of everlasting life. He understood that he was able to look forward to eternal life in heaven. He understood that it is there that we will be reunited with our loved ones, and that affected the way that he lived his life right now. The time is short!

The last thing that the Apostle Paul deals with is our possessions. We are told that the fact that the time is

short affects the way that we view our possessions. The world around us tells us that since the time is short we should indulge ourselves. We should grab onto everything that we can, and we are very easily taken in by that type of thinking.

I was surprised many years back when someone was showing me the new Harley Davidson motorcycle that he had bought. It was quite a machine, and I asked the individual who was in his fifties why he had bought it. He explained to me that he had always enjoyed motorcycles when he was younger. He said that he was getting older and you only go around once. He explained that he wanted to enjoy it while he could. He said, "The time is short." His thinking seemed to imply that since the time is short you want to indulge in everything you can in this world now.

The Apostle Paul tells us that it is because the time is short that we should use our possessions accordingly. In other words, we should live with the realization that the things of this world are not going to last. We should live with the realization that they are only temporary, and that we look forward to true treasures in heaven. That means that we want to use our possessions in service to others. The fact that the time is short causes us to seriously evaluate our support of God's church right now.

It causes us to evaluate how we use our time and other things. The time is short! We want to use our possessions in such a way that others are brought to the realization of how short our time in this world really is. We do not simply use our possessions to indulge ourselves.

I remember watching an interview of Mike Holmgren shortly after the Green Bay Packers had won the Super Bowl with him as the head coach. It was a long time ago! He was talking about the fact that he had numerous invitations to speak at various events throughout the country in which he made a great deal of money. Late one night, he was leaving an event where he had spoken. He was in the car with his wife, and said to her, "What do we need that we don't have?" He said that it dawned on him that he was chasing around to all of these different events and he was neglecting the things that were truly of importance. He said that he decided at that point that he wasn't going to do it anymore. The time was too short. He said that he was going to focus on those things that were truly of importance.

That's the way it is for us. We realize that the time is short. We do not have to pursue after the things of this world as if they were going to last. We focus instead on those things which are truly of importance. We

understand that those who have been given faith in Jesus Christ have the hope of eternal life. We look towards those things which are permanent.

We take great comfort in the fact that Jesus understood that the time is truly short. He lived His life on this earth constantly focusing His attention on the cross. His time would be shortened by His death on the cross so that we could be forgiven for all of the times when we have lived as if the time were not short. It is because of His resurrection that we take comfort in knowing that the time is short. We are able to know that this means we look forward to eternal life in heaven. The time is short! Amen!!!