

BETHANY COMMUNITY CHURCH

April 18, 2021

RUSS: Praise God for the gift of a new day.

Good morning, Bethany. I'm Russ Nemece, and I'm so glad that God brought you here today. If you think someone else would benefit from this, please be sure to share it with them.

Now, I'm pretty tired of just talking to screens all day, and I'm looking forward to our planned regathering on May 2nd. There's a lot of preparations that are going on behind the scenes for that, so please pray for those.

I am just looking forward to being in the same room with you people. So until we can be there, let's just continue to praise Him here and now.

ALLI: Good morning. Welcome to Bethany Community Church. My name is Alli Milner, and I am the director of the youth ministry. I'm so glad that you've been able to join us this morning. And if it's your first time, I just encourage you to put your information in the chat. We would love to get connected with you.

I am currently standing in our youth space. We've done some renovating down here, and I've got to tell you, you can't see it, but it looks awesome. So shoutout to Chris Kelly and the Becraft family for all the hard work that they've put in to making this space so awesome. And I'm so looking forward to our students being able to utilize this space as we are moving towards meeting in person again.

We are meeting right now via Zoom, every Wednesday night, 6:30-8:00. If you have a student from 6th-12th grade who is interested in joining us, getting to know the other students here at Bethany, being able to connect and have a time of fellowship and games and study, we just finished a study on the book of Galatians, and per the request of our students, we're diving in to a study of the book of Revelation. So it's a great time for us. If you have a student who wants to get involved, shoot me an email.

BCCyouth@bethanylaurel.org. Or if you're interested in serving in the youth ministry, I would love to hear from you for that reason as well and see how we can get you connected.

Now is the time in our service where we worship through giving. Our giving does a lot not just for this church, but for the community. If you're interested in knowing more about that or getting information about how to give, you can go on our website or give through our app.

Please join me in prayer.

Heavenly Father, I thank You so much for this community, for this body of believers who are working to further Your kingdom. God, I just pray over them as we've gone through a really challenging season as a church, but God, I am just so excited for the ways that You have been at work and the ways we've been able to see You make an impact in this time. So we thank You for that and we give You glory for that, God, and we just praise You for what is yet to come.

I pray over this service. I pray over the teaching. God, I just ask that You guide our hearts and help us to glean Your wisdom from it.

I pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.

Have a great week.

PASTOR NATE: Amen, amen, amen.

Well, it's time for the word. If you would, turn with me to Ephesians 5. We'll be picking up in verses 1 and reading through verse 21 before we get into the meat of today's message.

We're at the beginning of a series entitled "Trustworthy Trustees."

Let me pray for you before we get there, though.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for another opportunity to step into Your presence. We know that You are everywhere, but, Lord, today we are grateful that we have an opportunity to study Your word, to understand Your will, so that we might become imitators of You.

Lord, be in the midst of this message. Be in the midst of each and every situation in each and every home or venue where this word is being viewed. Have Your way in the hearts and minds of Your people, in Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. So listen, we're going to be picking up here in Ephesians 5 as a part of a five-part series entitled "Trustworthy Trustees." You see, I looked up this word "trustee," and what I found was that a trustee is an individual or a member of a board given control or powers of administration of property, entrusted with a legal obligation to administer it solely for the purpose specified.

That's a long way of saying that something is placed in your care and you are to manage it in accordance with the will and expressed desires of whom or who it belongs to. You see, everything that we have belongs to the Lord. The earth and the fullness thereof is what the Bible tells us. So in this series, we're going to examine what a

trustworthy trustee looks like, as we examine how we handle the various things that God places in our hands.

Today I want to talk about handling God-given time. Handling God-given time. You see, I've done a number of funerals now, and in each case when I've done a funeral, I've asked the question about what we do in the dash. What do we do between the date that we opened our eyes on this side of heaven and the date when we closed them on this side of heaven. You see, our tombstones read two different numbers, but the important part of the whole heading is really that dash in between. It's there where we do our work. It's there where we serve our Lord. It's there where we make decisions that will carry on long after the last date is issued on our stones.

That's important because, you know, the Bible tells us that there's a time and a season for everything under the sun. And the question becomes, so what do we do with the time that we have?

Turn with me here in Ephesians 5. And I'm going to read through those first 21 verses. And then we're going to key in on some specific things that we are called to do with the time. The Bible tells us:

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous -- that is, an idolater -- has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true, and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Awake, O sleeper and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.' Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."

I want to pull you in to this passage here, and I want to really hone in on the verses down around verses 15-21. You see, Paul begins this portion of his letter to the circular churches in Ephesus. You see, this letter isn't to a single church. It's to some house churches that are in the region of Ephesus. That's it's called the letter to the Ephesians, much like me being from Washington, D.C., I may be referred to as a Washingtonian.

But when he gets here, he starts talking about walking in love and how we should conduct ourselves, but he begins this passage in verse 1 saying, "Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us."

I want to talk about this by coming down into these verses 15-21 because I believe that if we're really going to be imitators of our God, and if we're really going to walk in love, that we have a time frame for when to do it. And in order to maximize the time, and that time being the time we've been given to be transformed into the likeness of our Father, and to share the will of our Father with the world. In that time parameter, there's some things that we have to do in order to be successful at managing or stewarding the time that God has given us.

So how do we make the best use of our time? In this passage, there's some things that come out. They're not the totality of the passage, but they are some things that I pull out of this passage because it's so rich that I could go on in this passage for a number of things, about the things that we shouldn't do and about the things that we should do. But the first thing I want to give you is that as we look at this passage, dropping down into verse 15-17, we'll see that in order to truly manage the time that God has given you well, you must use that time to seek to understand the will of the Lord. We must seek to understand the will of the Lord.

You see, many of us spend most of our time seeking to get what we want out of life, seeking to understand our purpose in life, or seeking to carry out someone else's purpose. And whether we know it or not, that's the reality that many of us fall into. You see, when we go to our jobs, there's someone who is in authority, they have a will or desire for what they want to be accomplished, and we spend hours of our day seeking to fulfill their will.

When we're in our homes, we determine what we want to do, and then we spend time seeking to fulfill our desires. But the reality is that God created you in His image. He sent His Son to die for you to restore a relationship between us and Himself. And to do that, there are some things that fall on us outside of the work that Christ has already done. You see, Christ already freed us from the penalty of sin, and He's already made it possible for us to be reconciled to the Father. But the way that we understand our Father better is through His word.

So let me show you this in verse 17. I'm going to start at verse 15. The Bible says, "Look carefully then how you walk" -- how you live, how you function -- "not as unwise but as wise." Not as one who is lacking in wisdom but as one who has attained wisdom. James will tell us that let anyone who lacks wisdom ask of God, who gives freely in it.

He says "making the best use of the time." Don't walk in the ways of the world because that's not the best or the most opportune use is what that "time" word here in the underlying language really supposes, the opportune time, the best time. So making the best of the best time, which is the time that God has given you.

But then we get down to verse 17, and it says, "Therefore" -- "therefore" is the conjunction that connects us to the last statement. So "Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

Now, right before this, Paul compares being wise and unwise. And then he comes back and says, therefore don't be foolish. So the unwise is seen as foolish. But the wise one is seen here as one who seeks to understand or understands what the will of the Lord is.

And I would say to you that when we think about our time, when we think about the whole gamut of what God trusts us with, see, God trusts us with time, talent, treasures, gifts. He trusts us to return His tithe. He trusts us with the overflow even above it and expects us to manage all of it well.

But when it comes to your time, there is a wise way of using that time and an unwise way. And the determining factor is, did you use the time to fulfill the purpose for which you were created. You see, Jeremiah in the Old Testament was born, and God told him as a young person, he said, before you were formed in the womb, I knew you, I called you, I ordained you. God said, I created you in the beginning, before you were birthed into the earth, with a purpose and a plan. And that purpose and plan was according to My will.

And the same thing applies for each and every one of us. When God created you, He created you with a purpose and a plan, but here Paul says that the foolish go on about their lives doing all kind of things, getting as drunk as possible, or inebriated beyond self-control. They're coveting things that are not their own. They are living ways that displease God.

But the wise one seeks the will of God because in the will of God you will fulfill the purpose for which you were created.

And I want to call us that when it comes to managing the time that we've been given to steward, we have a temporary allotment of resources. And the resource in this case is the time, the time that God has given us in the earth to fulfill His will in the earth.

You see, in Genesis 1:26-27, God creates mankind in His image and likeness, and He immediately sets out and gives them a purpose. They had jobs right from the beginning. They had a role in managing the garden and having dominion in the earth. They were supposed to multiply and be fruitful and subdue the earth and reign over it even as God reigned over the cosmos. So at creation, God had a purpose, and individually you have a purpose too.

And the reality is, if you're a trustworthy trustee, meaning God can trust you with what He has placed in your hands to manage, then even your time is a stewardship process. And if you find yourself doing more people watching or more show watching or more game playing or more life living in a way that is external to the will of God, you are not stewarding the time He has given you well. In fact, I could say that to myself. If I am spending too much time in games and in leisure but I'm not functioning or being intentional about maximizing the opportunity that God has given me to fulfill His will for my life in the earth, then I am not managing well the time He has given us. I am not making the best use of the time when I allow it to be squandered or wasted away.

And that's what he says here. If we were to break down these words, what we would get, that word that is underneath "make the best use of," another word is redeem the time. You know, 2 years ago now, time is getting a little away from us because of the last year's circumstances, but there was a woman in Congress and at a point in a

heated debate, there was a statement made by her that rang out. It was on memes and it was on social media platforms. I believe her name was Maxine Waters. And what happened was she asked the question and someone talked beyond their time. They sought to keep on going, but what was happening was, the time that was allotted was not theirs; it was hers. And when she wanted to get the time back so that she could get to the goal for which she had set, she made a clear statement, and she said, "I'm redeeming my time." And what she was saying was, the time that you're using doesn't belong to you so I'm redeeming my time, I'm taking back the time so that it might be used for the purpose for which I have it.

And the same thing applies for you and I. You see, it's God's time that He has allowed us to have in this earth. And we need to redeem it so that we might use it in a pattern and practice that is consistent with the will of God for our lives.

But that's not the only thing. Not only are we seeking to redeem the time so that we can make the most use of it, and the crux of how to do that is that we understand the will of God through spending time in His word. But that's not the only thing. You see, another thing that comes into this is that we should be filled with the Spirit of God. You see, when we spend time in God's word, God has already sent His Son to die, He's already sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. And if we spend time in His word, then we will be filled.

I want to take you down to verse 18-19 to show you this. You see, in verse 18, the Bible says, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit." So don't be filled with this, but there is something that you should be filled with. "addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart." I want to talk about this for a minute, because the reality is, many of us don't mind filling our time or filling our lives or filling our bodies with all kinds of things. We fill our minds while watching all kinds of shows. Some of us watch the scariest movie we can and then wonder why we can't sleep at night. Some of us watch these TV shows that I call them people watching, where all we do is watch other people live, for hours on end, and we're taking that in. We're being filled with the things that we put in.

But some of us put things in our body. And Paul here is talking about this drunken stupor that these people may have been functioning in. And he's saying, no, no, no, don't fill yourself to the point of inebriation. Don't fill yourself to the point where you lack control to the point of where you're losing time. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is always at work. See, the Holy Spirit doesn't lay back and function in a lazy state like some might when we take ourselves to a place of inebriation. But the Holy Spirit is working in you, so when you're filled with the Holy Spirit, there's something happening. On the inside that's meant to come out to the world.

But here Paul does a direct contrast. I want you to see this because he calls it debauchery, and that word means lavishness. It means the act of spending or using something excessively. He's saying, that's excessive. We're being excessive in all these things, and in doing so, you're being filled with the consequences of all these things. And he says, don't be filled that with; be filled with the Spirit of God.

I don't know if you recall. Last year I was doing a series called "Abiding." We were abiding in God. And one of the illustrations that I gave you then was I had a bowl. And in the bowl there was water. And I took a rag and I laid the rag in the bowl and I pulled it out and it was slightly wet, but the water was still in the bowl. But the longer the rag sat in the bowl, when I pulled it out, what we found was that the longer we spent in God's presence, the longer we spent in God's word, the more filled we were. You see, the rag was being saturated by the presence of the water.

And when we spend time in God's word, seeking to understand His will for our lives, then we also position ourselves to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Instead of wasting the time we have filling ourselves with everything that's going to take us away from the will of our Father, I'm calling on us to seek the will of God and to do that spend time in His word, so much so that we are filled with the word, that we are filled with the presence of God, and that we are filled with the Spirit of God so that we can redeem the time.

But that's not the only thing. You see, after you come through those two things, there's one last thing I want to give you. And that's, with the time we have, that we should be thankful. We should be thankful. Verse 19-20. Actually, I've got to start at 18 through 20. And verse 18 says, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."

Paul here is dealing with the dynamic, the interchange between people and how they handle one another. But it's ironic because the listing of things that he says in this verse before he gets to be thankful for everything all still point to our Father. You see, we use terms that we're familiar with like psalms and hymns, but I want to do a bit of a breakdown here because I checked into this and I looked, and psalms are a sacred song used to praise a deity. So our psalms are sacred songs to our God. So we're greeting each other with songs about our God.

Then it says hymns. And hymns are a musical composition with words of a religious nature praising our God. So we're going to go ahead and praise God both times as we greet one another.

The spiritual songs here is categorized as songs that are spiritual or mature of or characterized by the Holy Spirit, especially of the mature Christian life in its relation to the Spirit.

So what we've got here is three different ways of praising God that a mature person, a mature person of faith, is going to operate in having been filled with the Holy Spirit. And he says, when you greet one another, greet one another with the praise of our Father on your lives.

And why do we do that? Because down in this same passage, he continues on in verse 19 and says "addressing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." This giving thanks is to express gratitude or show appreciation for something. But it's an indication of the heart. And here the heart is cardia. It's where we get cardiac in our language. We talk about

the heart. And when we deal with the cardia, it says the locus of the person's heart, their mind, their volition, their emotion and their knowledge of right from wrong. He says you're praising God from your heart, from your volition, from your will, from your mind, from all of those put together, give God praise in all things, and be thankful in everything and for everything.

So we need to spend time praising our God. So we need to spend time seeking His will by His word. We need to spend time in God's word. We need to spend time in God's presence that we might be filled with the Spirit of God. And then we also need to spend time thanking God for everything. You see, when we thank God for everything, we don't just thank God for the bad, we don't just thank God for the good. We thank Him come what may. That means there are times when I may not be appreciative of what I'm going through but I thank God that I'm getting through. It means I may not enjoy what I'm going through but I thank God that He is walking me through. And there may be times when I am ecstatic about what I have but I'm more ecstatic about the One who has me.

You see, there are times when we have to refocus and reshift so that we can truly make use of the time God has given to us. You see, when we spend time seeking God's will, that seeking of God's will is not just so we understand God's will, but so we can carry out God's will. So when I seek to understand is when I get into the word of God. It tells me how I should live my life, how I should engage others, how I should flow, what my purpose is in the earth. And when I have that understanding, I come to a place of walking out what God has given me to do.

And when I'm walking out what God has given me to do, I understand that I can't do it under my own power, so I spend more and more time in His presence. I spend more and more time in prayer. And in my time of prayer, I have the opportunity to be engulfed with the presence of God and let the Spirit of God fill me in such a way that the work that needs to happen in me is being done by the Holy Spirit so that God can work through me in a dying world.

And when I come to a conclusion on that, then I know that I can function in a grateful place. I can be thankful and grateful for all things, because I recognize what God has done. You see earning the Bible gives us the history of all the times God has come through on account of those who came before us, but when we spend time in God's word, we can also be aware of the things God is doing in our lives. You see, these are things that we can do to handle the time that God has given us well. We use that time to spend in His presence, in His word, to be used by Him in the world, and we are ever showing our appreciation, gratitude, praise, and worship for the One who created us, who sent His Son to die for us, who redeemed us and continues to keep us in spite of our circumstances and in spite of our decisions, the things that have drifted us away. God still is worthy to be praised.

So as you hear this, I'm praying that someone on the other side of the screen is realizing, yeah, I may have had all the time in the world, or so I thought I had all the time in the world, but I haven't been managing it well. I haven't given God any of the time that He has given me to manage. I haven't spent any time in prayer. I haven't spent any time in praise. I haven't spent any time in devotion or in the word of God. And I challenge you today that in order to be truly managing the time that God has given you,

that you might spend time doing more than what you've done in the past. That you will spend time in God's word, that you will spend time in God's presence, that you will be grateful to God. And in all those things, you will walk out His will in the earth, that you might handle your brothers and your sisters in a way that's consistent with how God would want you to handle them. That you might handle your service, whatever God has called you to do or be, in a manner that it is a priority on your list of the things you do with the time He's given you. And not just checking the box, not just that we came to church on Sunday, but in each and every day, I am seeking the will of God and in seek the will of God, I want to walk out the will of God in love, being imitators of God, fulfilling the call that we might be holy because He is holy. Fulfilling the call to love as He is love. Forgive because He forgives.

And I pray that in doing that, we might all truly become imitators of our Father, that we might truly become imitators of our Lord. And in doing so, that we might redeem the time that God has given to us.

Father, I thank You for Your word and I thank You for Your people. I pray now that You might rest in their homes, that You might help them to shift their time and their focus that they might manage it well, that they might redeem the time, and in redeeming the time, that they might seek and understand Your will, and in doing so, that they might also walk it out.

Lord, I pray that even as they walk it out, that they might also be filled with the Spirit of God, that where they go, the Spirit of God may be working in them and through them to carry out Your will in the earth. And Lord, in doing so, I pray that we might have an attitude of gratitude, grateful for all that You do in our lives, but Lord, even more so, grateful for what You did before You were in our lives, that You called us, that You set us apart, that You sent Your Son to die for us, to redeem us, even before we knew that we had fallen, in Jesus' name, amen.

I pray that that challenged you and I pray that in its challenge it also encourages you, that there is a time and a season, and that you have time to do all that God has called you to do. I pray that that tells that you that you have a purpose and that God has a plan. And if you don't know what that purpose is, I pray that you might seek it in His word, that you might spend time in His presence.

I pray that even now for someone who may be viewing this cast, maybe you're saying, I'm not sure I even know who my Father is from the spiritual side of things. I may know who my earthly father is, but I don't have a relationship with my heavenly Father is. And if that's you, we can pray with you right now and you can connect with us as a church so that we might walk alongside you as you begin to understand and become and continue to grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ.

If you're here and you're saying, I've walked away, I haven't used the time that God has given me well, I've been checking the box, I come to church and that's it or I viewed a cast and that was it but I haven't really sought to understand God's will for my life and therefore I haven't walked in God's will for my life, I pray for you as well.

And for you who are saying, I'm doing these things or I want to do these things but I need to do it in relationship with other people, Bethany Community Church would love to have you join with us as we continue to walk, grow, and become more like Christ.

So let me pray with you.

Heavenly Father, I pray for each person viewing this cast. You know where we are spiritually. You know where we are mentally. So Lord, I pray that You might extend into every home and every venue that is viewing this cast, that the person who doesn't know You, Lord God, that they might know You, that they might know that Your word says that "If we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead, we shall be saved."

Lord, I pray for the person who has either backslidden or just simply has not been using the time in a manner that would be Your will. I pray that You might both provide forgiveness but Lord also provide a path. Help them to know what is your will for their lives, that we all might walk in the newness of life that You have given to us.

And for the person who is looking for a church home and in need of a church family, I pray now, Lord, that they might get connected so that they might not only become believers, that they might not only become disciples, but that they might continue to grow, becoming more and more like You, redeeming the time that the devil wants to steal, so that in the day when we stand before You, we might all be able to hear You say "Well done, thy good and faithful servants."

It's in Your holy Son's name I pray, amen.

And now may the Spirit of God and the sweet communion of the Holy Spirit rest, rule, and abide with you. Until we meet again and until we greet again, God bless.