

Sermon 6/7/15 Proper 6B

In an inspirational book by Lewis Timberlake with Elinor Griffith, is this thought-provoking thought: If you had a bank that credited your account each morning with \$86,400—with no balance carried from day to day—what would you do? How would you spend your money? Well, you do have such a bank...not of money but of time.

Every morning, time credits you with 86,400 seconds to use for whatever purpose you choose. Every night it rules off as “lost” whatever you have failed to use toward good purposes. It carries over no balances and allows no overdrafts. You can’t hoard it, save it, store it, loan it, or invest it. You can only use it.

Here at Trinity, our use of time, in many ways, revolves around our weekly celebration of the Resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ. From now until November 29 we will travel through the season of ordinary time in the Church worship calendar. The Bible readings will tell us of times when people of faith encountered God’s Love, Uplifting, Healing and Blessing.

Over the next five and 1/2 months, we have the opportunity to walk with Christ and make the best use of time. How, you may ask? The authors offer six truths about time for us to ponder in their book **First Thing Every Morning**.

First: Nobody can manage time. But you can manage those things that take up your time. We can choose to follow right and avoid wrong, choose to walk upon the path of righteousness or the one “paved with good intentions” that leads to hell.

We make that choice in big ways and in little ones, over and over and over again throughout our lives. Mostly, thanks be to God, we choose the path of righteousness, we choose to enter into the kingdom of God.

But sometimes, we make a different choice. We all do this, each and every one of us. From time to time, we all make the wrong choice. It is called sin. We make a choice that puts our own selfish wishes over the real needs of the community that surrounds us. We make a choice that wreaks violence on someone else – be it physical, emotional, or spiritual pain. We make a choice that belittles other people according to category – be it race, or gender, or disability, or you name it.

Second: Time is expensive. As a matter of fact, 80 percent of our day is spent on those things or those people that only bring us only two percent of our eventual results. Cautious use of our selves in activities, deeds, words and even thoughts means putting aside our own egotistical need to have power over anyone else, and instead cultivate compassion, understanding, and cooperation.

When walking with Christ we would cease all violence, repenting of the evil that enslaves us, and instead promote true dialogue, empathy, and acceptance. In the kingdom of God, we will bring an end to our own oppression of others, and instead

foster open-mindedness, willingness to encounter what is new, and appreciation for difference.

Third: Time is perishable. It cannot be saved for later. We all have had those moments of hindsight when we might have said, “if only...” But Jesus offers to us every day a hopeful vision of paradise and eternal bliss, in his parables, in the sacraments, and in the spirit embodied in everyone we meet.

Fourth: Time is measurable. Everybody has the same amount of time...pauper or president. It is not how much time you have; it is how much you use. It seems so very clear. Choose the good and reject the bad. So why is it that so often we do not make the right choice?

One reason – perhaps the biggest reason – is fear. When we are afraid of something, we sometimes choose what is safe over what may seem challenging. When we are afraid of what we know about some people, we sometimes choose to avoid or disparage them rather than take the opportunity to make new acquaintances. When we are afraid of what we do not know, we sometimes choose to turn aside the opportunity of the growth that comes only through learning something new, retreating instead into a cocoon of ignorance.

Fifth: Time is irreplaceable. We never make back time once it is gone.

The Holy Spirit inspires us to respond in hopeful confidence, trusting that God is doing more than we can ask or imagine – even when we cannot see, or refuse to see, or do not comprehend and are hindered by the past.

A few years ago, an article in the New York Times quoted Harvard professor Kimberly M. Thompson as saying that the problem is that “we’re not taught how to cope with uncertainty. We tend to want answers to be in black and white without a whole lot of gray.” Her research tells us that most of us respond to risk and fear through some sort of gut instinct, rather than any sort of analytical calculations.

But so often what we take as “gut instinct” is not the leading of God. We are called to study, to pray, and to consider how best to make the choice to live in the kingdom of God.

We’ve all heard the excuses: Sure, it’s wrong to lie, but I was under such pressure! It was a sin to treat her the way I did, but I was so very angry! I know I’m married, but this other person made me feel so good!

That list goes on and on, as well. Those examples – and every example – show us what temptation and sin are all about: refusing to stop and consider how best to make the right choice in the time we have.

Sixth: Time is a priority. You have enough time for anything in the world, so long as it runs high enough among your priorities. And that is what we Christians are called to do: to consider the consequences of our actions, to turn away from evil, to choose to live in the kingdom of God.

Can we respond in hopeful confidence, trusting that God is doing more than we can ask or imagine – even when we cannot see, or refuse to see, or do not comprehend?

In a few weeks, I will have been the priest here at Trinity for four years. It has been a time of learning, caring, leading, and sharing with all of you the call of Christ to God's people in this place. Together we have accomplished some things, fixed some things, and planned some things which will guide you into the future.

In my own mind, I have wanted to see all your bills paid, your loan paid off, the facilities improved, as tangible signs of progress.

In the remaining months before a new priest is called, I think we will achieve progress towards these goals. We have also made a commitment to moving away from business as usual and habits of organization, administration, and management that were built up in the past but no longer adequately serve the mission and ministry of Trinity.

I still hold firmly to the belief, as I have said before, that God wants Trinity Church to be all it can be for those who are here, those we serve, and those who are yet to come to know this loving, caring, welcoming community.

So, while we have this time together, let us gladly encourage one another. We can pursue and accomplish the things necessary for Trinity's well-being. Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the people of God. Trust and obey God. Pause for reflection and above all, Search deeply within your heart for the powerful motivation of the Spirit to live, work, and pray for the endless possibilities that are set before us. Amen.