

Mere Humanity: The Calendar

Mere Humanity

By Ben Miller

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 23:14-17
Preached on: Sunday, February 13, 2022

Trinity Church Long Island

231 Jackson Avenue
Syosset, NY 11791

Website: trinitychurchlongisland.com
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/trinitychurchli

A few short readings today from a few places in scripture. Let's begin with Genesis 2,

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

Exodus 23,

14 Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me. 15 You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. None shall appear before me empty-handed. 16 You shall keep the Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor. 17 Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord GOD.

From Psalm 104,

19 [God] made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. 20 You make darkness, and it is night, when all the beasts of the forest creep about. 21 The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God. 22 When the sun rises, they steal away and lie down in their dens. 23 Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening.

From Romans 13,

11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. 12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the

works of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

This is the word of the Lord.

We pray for your Spirit to move now, Lord, as we hear it. In Jesus' good name. Amen.

You may be seated.

One of the blessings of being in a pastoral ministry for almost 20 years is you get to watch a lot of life unfold. I've gotten to see going on 20 years of certainly many of your lives, and it's just very interesting to watch and you really notice the change especially with the younger. I mean, I've watched many of us go from, you know, 15-20 years ago kind of middle-aged to, you know, the kind of graying into the deep wisdom part of life, but you really see the change in young ones. I mean, I'm ministering now, there are like people that were little ones, little people when I started ministering and now they are marrying or, you know, have children, people that were teenagers when I started ministering I've gotten to watch, they're now well into mid-life. Just a lot of life has happened so I've gotten to see sort of a bunch of the movie, not just, you know, kind of a snapshot and that gives me some confidence in this particular series we're looking through to say to those of you at Trinity who are younger now, so I don't know if I'll be here in 20 years from today, but looking at you guys who are young right now, having watched what I've seen over the course of my ministry so far, life will not be what you think it will be. It will not be what you think it will be. You look at your future right now and you have some ideas about it, I suppose. It will not be what you think it will be. There will be changes. There will be things that come upon you, you literally cannot begin to imagine right now, things that will be absolutely wonderful, things that will be extremely challenging, but it will not be what you think.

And I can also say, having gotten to watch, you know, my own life and the lives of others now for a bit, you are not who you think you are. You probably have some idea of, you know, who you are, you're not who you think you are. Some of you will discover that you are a lot stronger than you think you are. Some of you are going to find in the next 20 years you are a lot weaker than you think you are. Some of you will find that you have more wisdom than you thought. Some of you are going to find you're a lot stupider than you thought. But you're not who you think you are. Life will bring storms that will show you, "I'm just not who I thought I was."

But there are certain things in your life, whatever exact form these take for you, these things will be constant because they're just basic features of our humanity. To be human is to encounter these things in some form or another, I've called this pieces from the game board of human life. You know, the game may play out in a lot of different ways but the pieces are there and I've picked 12 of them, for what that's worth, and what I'm hoping to do in this series is to take these 12 pieces of our humanity and I just want to listen

together to what our Father says about these pieces, to his word about the pieces, and then having heard the word of our Lord, I want to turn then to the world and think about how do we play these pieces in the world for our good, for our neighbor's good, and for the glory of God.

And we've come to the fourth piece on the game board today. We've talked about the ear, the heart, and the table, and now I want to talk about the calendar, that thing that hangs on your wall or that shows up on your phone or your computer, and its very close cousin the clock. I want to talk about time and I want today to begin with the story of time. Time has a very interesting story. There's a social story and there's a scientific story of time and I want to just start with the social story for a minute.

If I ask you what day is it, most of you are probably thinking, "Well, pastor, you know, in case you haven't noticed, you are wearing a robe, we are assembled for worship, and you are preached so I'm pretty sure it's Sunday." And it's true, and what you do is you immediately jump to this thing that we call the week and, you know, the week is obvious to us. I mean, today is Sunday and everyone knows what Sunday is, right? That's, you know, it's Sunday. And so you have this weekly cycle and, to us, this is just by now entirely obvious. If you're talking to someone who says, "I don't know what Sunday is," you would think, "Wow, you are really not, you know, you don't get out much." But what if I were to say, "Well, I'm not so much interested in what day it is, I actually want to know what the date is. What's the date?" And some of you would probably immediately say, "Well, you know, I think it's February 13." So you kind of move from that weekly cycle and you've jumped out now to the monthly cycle, this weird lunar thing we do of roughly 30-31 days and, you know, there are 12 months in what we call our year, and so now you've told me where we are in the kind of monthly and yearly calendar. But if I said, "No, I actually want to know the exact date, like kind of give me the whole thing." And you're like, "Okay, so it is February 13, 2022." And interestingly now we've got the whole date. Somehow in identifying not just the day and the month but the year and now you've kind of helped me figure out where we really are in time, where we truly are in the big march of world time.

We are in the year 2022 and, again, this somehow feels obvious to us. I mean, it would not feel obvious to you though if you think about our culture, this would actually make an enormous amount of sense if I said to you, "No, you've got it all wrong. The actual date that matters is that this is the 17,154th day of the life of Ben Miller." That's what really matters. That's the date that matters to me because it's my story I care about. I couldn't care less about where we are in the grand march of world time. This is my particular day of my life and that's the date, but you realize we've gotten very used to calendars and clocks being standardized where it's not just Ben Miller time or Ben Miller date, it's kind of this standardized thing and it's very hard for us now to imagine life before our calendars and our clocks became standardized but this is actually a somewhat recent invention because up until about the year 311, what we call BC, Before Christ, or BCE as the non-religious describe it, Before the Common Era, until about 311 years before Christ, clocks and calendars were actually based pretty much entirely on local things.

They were often based on changes in nature. The sun is overhead, that's what time it is. And where you are, you look at where the sun is, it's not, you know, the guy 300 miles away where the sun is over his head doesn't matter. It's overhead here and so this becomes, you know, it's midday, that's what time it is. It's time to harvest, you know, so that's how clocks and calendars kind of were driven, by many times events in nature, local events in nature, or as you know, the other thing that very often was the basis for clocks and calendars was royal affairs. You would have this idea that event X happened while Y was chief, or event X happened so many years after Z was king. And so time was sort of ordered, the clocks and calendars were ordered to the royal affairs.

And it's easy to imagine how when this was how it was, in agrarian societies where people were farming and very very close to the soil and growing things, time in these kind of nature-based societies could take on, time could take on religious significance. It's time now to ask God or the gods for rain, right? There's a religious significance tied to nature. We need the sun to do certain things, the rain to do certain things. We need the weather to cooperate and so there's this idea that we ask the powers that control the weather to act, and so time often became very religious and religious authorities in those societies were able, then, to kind of direct people's sense of time and how to live in it as they sort of directed the calendars in those societies, or over in more politically-based situations like empires, imperial contexts. Time here was framed by events of empire, you know, just like you figured out how long is the king's foot, that's what a foot is for his lifespan.

So, you know, you dated things by the king and you had a sense of time kind of flowing with the events of empire, and so not so much maybe here religious authorities but just political authorities, kings and princes and aristocracy. They could kind of direct and manage people's sense of time and how to live in it because time was sort of run off the empire. And all of that is why, as the story of time is told, very often standardization, breaking our clocks and calendars free of nature and religious, you know, views of nature, and breaking our clocks and calendars free of empire and kind of having these global clocks and calendars, people often viewed that as very liberating. It's kind of a story of emancipation, that time is no longer controlled by the priests, no longer controlled by the kings. Although I must say, as my friend John Ahern and others have pointed out, you have to wonder if actually what's happened is we've just replaced one set of time lords with another because, of course, now it's completely irrelevant if the sun is overhead where you are noon, to what the powers of commerce decide it is, and we decide what noon is based on that clock over in London because that, of course, is how you make sure that two trains aren't operating with different understandings of noon and crashing which would be very disruptive to commerce. How are you going to have day trading and powerful global markets if you don't have standardized clocks and calendars?

So you have to wonder if maybe we've just sort of swapped out one set of time lords for another, but that's the social story of time, and what's interesting is if that social story of time kind of runs from local diversity of nature and empire to worldwide standardization, kind of this homogenizing of things, kind of making all things one, it's interesting that the scientific story of time runs in exactly the opposite direction and here we're going to from sort of standard history to some really deep weird.

Philosophers, as you probably know, have very long debated what is time. What is time? We talk about it like we know what we're talking about, but what is it? We can mark it with a clock, we think, or mark it with a calendar but what actually is time? And that problem, you may know this, it went to a whole other level with Albert Einstein and what we know as quantum physics. One of you who will remain nameless put me on years ago to the work of Carlo Rovelli whose book "The Order of Time," I must highly commend to you because let me just, let me talk for just a minute about deep weird, and I am going somewhere with all this. So we've talked about the social story of time but in the scientific story of time, particularly when Einstein and quantum physics came along, we now know some really weird things about time. We now know scientifically it has been demonstrated that time moves more slowly for moving objects than for objects standing still. If you take a clock and do this really really really fast and you have a clock sitting still, time will slow down on the moving clock and they will not show the same time when you bring them back together. It is actually the case you are growing older if you're standing still because more time is elapsing when you're standing still because time has sped up. This is so minuscule the differences in ordinary life that you don't actually feel it but it's actually true that you are aging faster if you're standing still. We also know, scientifically it's been proven that time moves more slowly the closer you are to the ground so that actually though it may not feel it, your head is older than your feet because your head is aging faster because time is moving faster the farther away from the earth you get.

Now what gets really crazy about all of that, what we call the relativity of time, that also means however much it may not seem this way, that none of us in this room is in exactly the same "now." What you are seeing right now and what you are hearing right now from me, what right now for you you are seeing and hearing, is actually a few nanoseconds in my past. So what you are seeing and hearing, we don't notice this because nanoseconds are imperceptible but you are actually seeing and hearing something that is a few nanoseconds in my past, and what I'm experiencing right now as I speak and relate with you is actually a few nanoseconds into your future. That's actually scientific demonstrable which in this room doesn't feel like very much at all but if you begin to stretch this out to large distances, let's suppose I have a friend, Carlo Rovelli points this out, suppose I had a friend on the tiny little planet Proxima B, it's four lightyears away. Let's suppose I could look through a telescope right now and I could see, right now I could see what my friend on Proxima B is doing. What I'm actually seeing through that telescope is what my friend was doing on Proxima B four years ago in the past, and that means that my "now," what I'm experiencing right now as I look through the telescope, is actually four years in his future.

So the reality is there is no such thing as time. There are multiplicities of times. God has ordered the cosmos in such a way that none of us is living in exactly the same "now." None of us is actually sharing precisely the same time because past and present and future are all actually relative and you can do whatever sort of weirdness you want to do with all of that, it's got philosophers staying awake at night, but it brings us back to this question: then what exactly is this thing we call time? And what I'd like to suggest to you

as we are coming to the scriptures, is a little thesis based on the social story of time and the scientific story of time, when we talk about time, we are talking about something that's really happening and we are talking about our thinking about what's really happening because what is happening as we talk about time, what is actually happening, the thing we're actually talking about that is truly happening whether we think about this or not, is change. When we talk about time, we're talking about something that's really happening and that thing is change. Time is just a way of talking about the fact that everything is ceaselessly changing. Change is a constant. Nothing that we know does not change. And when we talk about time, we're just talking, in part, about that but we're also talking about how we think about change because for human beings, the Bible tells us, we're unique in this among God's earthly creatures. God, the Bible says, has put eternity in our hearts so we're experiencing the changes under the sun but we're experiencing change as those who have eternity, kind of timelessness, put in our hearts by God.

So what that means is that even as you and I are experiencing change, like your world has changed even since this service started, as we experience change, we're like in the change, we are changing along with all the other changes, there's something in us that wants to stand above it and actually does stand above it a bit, and kind of almost from outside of it surveys the change, wants to understand the change. We don't just experience change, we want to think about it, almost like we're above it. We want to narrate the change. We want to remember the change. We want to anticipate the change, almost like we're spectators whether that anticipation brings longing or utter dread, this is how we are. We are always like trying to get above the change and we want to plan for it. We want to exert ourselves to direct the flow of change. You might even say we want to somehow try to rule change and this is just what mature human beings do. If you think about what is it that makes a child different from an adult? A little tiny child has not yet lived enough change to learn from it. I mean, a child experiences change but doesn't reflect on it, doesn't analyze it, doesn't draw lessons from it. That's something that more mature people do. And at the other end of life, you think about things like dementia, you think about things like Alzheimer's disease, they have reduced the experience of change to mere experience of change and there's no longer the ability to reflect upon it, to narrate it, even to remember it, and so there's a kind of something dehumanizing about that. It's very very hard to watch and experience.

So time is change and time is also a way of thinking about change. So having thought about our experience of time now in the world, the social story of it, and the scientific story of it, what, then, is our God our Father's word about this thing we call time? So we've looked at the story of time and I want to turn now to the sanctifying of time and in these four brief texts that I have put before you here, what we see in these four very brief texts is two ways that God talks to us about time, and I think it might be helpful to visualize these two ways that God talks to us about time as two geometric shapes. I think as you look through these four little texts, you see circles, or we could call them cycles in time, and you also see a line that creates a sense of expectation. So you can see the circles there in the Psalm 104 text, for example, because it's a creation Psalm and it says to us what we know from Genesis which is that from the beginning of what we call time, God made changes to happen under the sun in cycles. Psalm 104, there are seasons, there is

the rising and setting of the sun, day becomes night becomes day becomes night becomes day becomes night, seed time becomes harvest becomes seed time becomes harvest becomes seed time becomes harvest.

These are cycles of change and it's very interesting also mentioned there in the first verse of this Psalm 104 text, who rules over these cycles and circles of change? It is very interesting to notice that the ruler of day and night, the circle of day and night, and the ruler of the seasons, you know, summer and winter, summer and winter, the rule over those circles and cycles of time is not committed to man. In fact, in Genesis 1 we're told that God made the sun and the moon and the stars to rule over day and night. He ordained forces of nature that govern the cycles of change in the world, and it's a reminder to us that many of the changes in the world, we're just subject to them. I mean, you know, Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk notwithstanding, the idea of stopping the cycle of day and night is just not going to happen. You're not going to be able to prevent the circles that God has ordained in nature itself. We are not able to escape the cycles of time. We are not able to control them. Many of them are just built into creation itself and there are, of course, strange cycles even you notice in your life of, you know, there's life and death as a cycle, and there seems like there's this odd cycle sort of good times and bad times. There's just a lot of stuff and we're not able to control it and Ecclesiastes is a book in the Bible that just wrestles with the fact that, you know, the rivers run to the sea and they run back to where they came from, and all things in a kind of sometimes exhausting way just keep going in circles.

But you don't even get out of the creation week before there's also a line. So there are the circles of time but there's also this line. In the Genesis text here, starting with the sabbath, God sanctifies, he sets apart as his own in a special way a day of rest and contemplation because God's just looking at what he made and enjoying it and delighting in it, and God sets that day apart and he imposes markers in the cycles. So there is 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, sabbath. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, sabbath. And God has imposed a marker in that cycle. He made the moon to mark the seasons. The sun knows the time for its setting. And so God has put markers in the cycles but there's more because while time after the sabbath is sanctified, even though time continues to move in cycles, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, it's also clear now that time is moving toward the seventh because it isn't just seven, it is the seventh in a sequence. The first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, there's a kind of destination to time and that is actually astonishingly significant as God talks to us about time because if all we had were the circles, that would be one thing, but God is telling us in this movement toward a day, movement toward sabbath, this kind of endpoint towards which time is moving on a line, it tells us, beloved, that you and I today and throughout history, we are not just living in a spatial world full of changing things. The world of space is the world of things and the things in the world of space are constantly changing, we are living in that world of space where things are always changing but we are also living in a storied world that is full of God's presence in the story and his purposes in the story, there's the line. The sabbath is a ritual that God put right there in the creation week that lifts our hearts above the changes in the world of spatial things, lifts our hearts to the fact that there is eternity at work in time. God is here and God has a plan.

I'm drawing this from Abraham Joshua Heschel's just brilliant work on the sabbath in a little chapter called "The Architecture of Time." Listen to what he says. He says, "The meaning of the sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space. On the sabbath we try to become attuned to holiness in time. It's a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation, from the world of creation to the creation of the world."

It's such a powerful thing, that's the point of the line, to draw our hearts up to God who is working in all this, and you can see that that sabbath line in Exodus 23, it's later developed in Israel's feasts, many of which are in the seventh month, or there's a seven day feast, they're just kind of the sabbath enlarged. And it's interesting these feasts, they're still tied to the cycles of nature, you know, there's planting and harvest, you know, sort of feasts, but they're also feasts that pay attention to the story, the line of God's covenant with his people; unleavened bread in Aviv because that's when God brought you out of Egypt. So they are kind of, the feasts pay attention to the cycles of nature but they also are telling the story of the line, the mighty works of God in time. And what are they doing as they cycle through Israel's year? They are teaching Israel what every human heart deep down, even if you don't know or worship God at all, deep in our hearts there's this hunger to know this, that all of this change in the world, you know, every good thing you're tempted to clutch it because it's going to change. Do you ever find yourself wondering like what bad things might come, or if you have good things if they'll be taken away? And our hearts, as the world changes, this change can be so bewildering, it can be so overwhelming but these feasts were teaching Israel that all of that change, it is ordered and it is orchestrated not by us and not by the lights of heaven, not by the forces of nature, all that change, it is ordered and orchestrated by the Maker of heaven and earth, by the eternal purpose of the living God.

That's what these feasts were teaching Israel and it is because the cycles of time are God's and the line through time is God's, that is why we as human beings, we're not just swept along by the changes that happen in time, we, because God has a plan for time, God has a line and a story in time amid the changes, we, then, also made in his image, can story our time. Not just be swept along by it, experiencing the next thing like animals, just acting on sort of instinct and the flow of nature, we can actually step up and as human beings who know our Father, we can tell the story of time. We can stand above it and survey it and mark it and meditate on it and order our daily and monthly and weekly and yearly experience of it so we don't lose our sense of who we are.

There's a story. It's kind of like the prisoner in the cell scratching ciphers just so he doesn't lose his story, doesn't forget that he's a man, part of something. Well, we can do much better than the prisoner in the cell, we can mark time and meditate upon it and remember it and anticipate it because we're made in the image of God who owns the cycles and the line. And for Israel, that eternal purpose of God towards which all time and change was flowing, what was it flowing toward, beloved? You know this well. All that change in time in Israel's story was flowing toward the Messiah. That's the Romans

13 text there, the last in your bulletin. Christ was coming and all of God's purposes in Christ to restore his kingdom, and for you and I sitting here in 2022, yes, anno Domini, the year of our Lord 2022, now, of course, 2,000 years ago that in-breaking of the great sabbath, the great rest, the great salvation, the great kingdom of God, that has broken into time and all time and change now that that watershed has been crossed, all time and change is now flowing out of that watershed, that turning of the ages, to the ends of the earth, to the ends of our life, and that's what Romans 13 says. You know the time. The hour has come. Dawn has come. Daytime is here. God has filled time with eternity. God has walked among men. God has taken Adam's curse upon himself and he's put away the old world of sin and death that we could now call nighttime by comparison. The daytime is here and the world is filling with light as the sunrise from on high is filling the earthy with his beauty and glory. And you, Paul says, are children of that light so live accordingly. There are just things that don't belong in the daytime: the orgies, the drunkenness, the sexual immorality and sensuality, the quarreling and jealousy. These are nighttime activities. The day is here. Walk as children of light.

I want to offer a few exhortations, especially to those of you who are young, about your clocks and calendars. One thing I want to really encourage you upfront, and the younger you are, the more I think you probably really need to just ponder this. 1. Re-rhythm your life. Re-rhythm your life. We are not living in a society anymore that is connected to the natural world. Psalm 104 says man goes out into nature to his work. We don't now. We live by and large in human built boxes, staring at human built machines. That is pretty much ordinary life for us now. It's unusual to break out of that, and I don't know if we can appreciate how that has separated us from the rhythms that God built into nature. It is possible now to live without day or night, to live without seed time and harvest, to be completely abstracted from all of that.

Michael Sacassis(ph) has made the observation that the human built world was not built for humans. Let me say that again: the human built world was not built for humans. God built the world for humans but the human built world was not necessarily built for humans and the more we build sometimes the worse it gets for humans, and one of the things that we have built is a world in which we now have pretty much a total absence of daily, weekly, monthly, yearly seasons. We don't have seasons. And what is interesting as I listen to people talk about their lives, the lack of daily seasons, that day runs into night runs into day runs into night, I mean, eventually you have to sleep but, you know, you just kind of do that so that you can get on with, you know, weekly, people don't keep sabbath. There's nothing special about the turning of January to February. We don't have harvest and seed time and yearly seasons. We have a school district telling us there are seasons, I guess, in a way. But this is part of why our lives often feel kind of uninteresting, why often I talk to people and they don't really have much of a sense of anticipation because we don't have rhythms of seasons that we look forward to. Our lives can have a certain kind of grinding sameness to them because we don't have the seasons and rhythms that God designed for us, and it's kind of like music. If I said, "I've got a song for you and it goes like this, aaaaaaaaaaaaa," I just sang one note at the same volume for like 20 minutes, there would come a point when you would say, "You know, Pastor Miller, you are talented but that is exhausting." But life has become often like that. One

note, at one volume, we are always on and it creates a kind of boredom that then what do we do to fix the boredom? We turn to hyper-stimulation which, ironically, just feeds the boredom. And we're just sort of always on. And if you're young, I would encourage you, take a mentor in your life, an older person that you trust who has some wisdom, and get them out for a burger or a salad or whatever it is you enjoy, and ask that person how you can build rhythm back into your life, seasons, to the glory of God.

Now as part of those the rhythms, the second thing, re-rhythm your life, frankly you adults could probably use that too, but re-rhythm your life but as part of that, rehearse the faithfulness of God. Rehearse the faithfulness of God. Every one of you is narrating your life, every one of you is narrating the world somehow and most of us have a pretty awful narrative, honestly, often that we are telling about our lives and about the world. Not all of us but many of us narrate our lives and the world pretty badly so it is really important to practice, to push back against that, to practice just narrating as storytellers who can get above time, narrate God's faithfulness, first of all, in your story. I know that some of you have started journaling because you don't want to forget the works of the Lord in your life and you want to sort of, well, I'll come to that. I mean, just remembering how God has been at work in my story. As I get older and I look back over more and more years, I'm sometimes just floored as I remember. Sometimes pictures help me because I know I was there but I'm just shocked as I remember what was going on in that picture and I'm just remembering all that God was doing. But tell those stories. Take some time in your life to just sit and remember, "God has brought me thus far."

And also your family's story, like learn your family's story. Why? So you can tell God's faithfulness in your family's story, even if you come from a family of just rapscallions like these people are just, you know, they're not, weren't, you know, God worshipers or, you know, faithful or even necessarily good people at all. But still the fact that you, God has brought you to himself out of that family, out of that background, learn to tell God's faithfulness in that story. Spend some time with your elders before they die because once they die, that story is going to die with them.

And I would add when it comes to rehearsing the faithfulness of God, not just your own story and your family's story, if you're young – listen to me, please, especially if you're about to go to college – commit yourself more than your commitment to college, commit yourself you will always worship in a church that tells the story of God's people in its preaching, in its liturgy, in its calendar. Hopefully they know to do something with Advent and Epiphany and Lent and Passion Week and Easter and ordinary time. Be in a church that marks time before God, tells the story of God and his people. Do not be in a church that refuses to do that and don't be without a church that does that, because what you'll find as you rehearse God's faithfulness in your story, your family's story, in church, in worship, it will help heal your memory. Many of us need our memories healed. If we ever look back on really dark hard things in our life and remember, remember God and it will quiet your anxiety as you look to the future. As you are telling the story of God's faithfulness, it will quiet your heart as you look to whatever the future changes come, God is here, God was there, God will be there.

And finally, re-rhythm your life, rehears the faithfulness of God, thirdly and oh so importantly, my dear young saints and all of you, redeem, redeem the next moment, the next moment of your time. If there ever was a generation in which God's people need to buy back time from slavery, that's what redemption is, buy back your time from that which has enslaved your time, this is that generation. My prayer would be that every time you see a clock, every time you see a calendar, a little bell would go off in your mind that says, "What will I do for my God in this hour? What will I do for my God in this day?" Redeem that next moment before you.

I'm going to close with this quote from Oliver O'Donovan that has helped me so much. He says, "The opening of the present is to the future but not equally to the whole of the future but to the future immediately before us. The next moment into which we may venture our living and acting, the moment which presents itself as a possibility. There are vast tracts of time past and quite possibly of time future but the only time of practical immediacy is this future moment offered to present wakefulness. It is a future moment because we must still act into it but, in a sense, it's also present because it is now before we act that we may confront it and deliberate about it. And because we may deliberate about it, we are unquestionably responsible for it. The only moment of the future about which you can deliberate is the one right in front of you, and because you are able to deliberate about that moment and think about it and ask yourself what would God have me do, you are responsible before God for that moment and not the vast tracts of future that lie beyond it. Of no other moment in time but this future present moment is that true. The future of prediction dreary with anxiety or buoyant with hope, that has to be held at bay so that we may use this moment of time to do something however modest that is worthwhile and responsible, something to endure before the throne of judgment." That's redeeming the time. This hour. This day. Right in front of you. What would God have me do however modest that is worthwhile and responsible and will endure before his throne of judgment, that is redeeming the time.

That's what next Sunday's sermon is about so let's pray.

Father, God of time, God without time, we ask you to enable us to redeem the time, to see time through the lens of the eternity you've put in our hearts and to buy it back from so many things in this world that enslave it to your glory and especially in an age, Lord God, that just has so much noise and sound and fury. Help these young saints. Help them, Lord. In Jesus we pray. Amen.