

Life in Time

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12 September 2009 (part of Stewardship Month)

Introduction

What is time? It is not something that we can see, measure, bottle, exchange. It is really nothing. Not like the environment or our money. Time is the space between then and now, or between today and tomorrow. Really, time is life. So when we talk about stewarding our time, we are really talking about stewarding our whole life.

So, what does the scripture teach us about time and life? Let me suggest three things and try to pull through the implications for stewardship.

Life is Seasonal

Just like the environment goes through seasons, our life goes through seasons. Ecclesiastes explains beautifully that there are seasons for everything – for work and rest, for creativity and lethargy, for raising families and for laying people to rest. This passage gives us the assurance that we are called to different things at different times, that the present will not always be as it now is, that things change over the course of our lives. At different times in our lives we have different priorities and foci.

The implication of this for stewardship is that we need to regularly assess in what season we are presently, to determine what work we should be doing now. The ministry we did this year is not necessarily the ministry we should be doing next year. Perhaps there are times when our times and talents should be invested in the home and not in the church, or in the workplace and not in the church, or in the church more than in the community. All of this is good – because life is seasonal.

Life moves Forward

The book of Revelation, particularly the last chapters, paints a vivid picture of a new creation. God brings to a close history as we know it, and inaugurates a new era. We sometimes think of Revelation as the book of the End Times. And in a way it is. But it is really a book of the New Times. It is a time of new beginnings and hope. A time when God makes things new and fresh, when God restores the world into the image he originally had in mind when he made it. In this new world, we live in fellowship with God and with each other – in perfect, peaceful, harmonious relationship, cooperative, egalitarian.

The implication of this for stewardship is that we should be using our time now already to give expression to this vision of a new heavens and new earth. Although these things will really come to fruition – to fulfilment – only later, Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God is here, now. This means that we should use our time for noble causes, to achieve God's vision. So, what contribution does our time, our life, make towards this? How does our work – our job – contribute to a society that is premised on these values and ideals? Everything that we do should help to bring down the new Jerusalem.

Life is Urgent

Finally, Jesus' story in Luke tells us that Jesus' return is immanent and that we should therefore be dressed and ready, with our lamps burning, waiting for the master to return, so that as soon as he knocks on the door we can open it and welcome him in. Jesus emphasises that we do not know when he will return, and therefore we must be constantly ready, vigilant.

The implication of this for stewardship is that we should be living our lives with a sense of urgency and purpose. Sometimes we kind of lie back and allow life to unfold around us, like being on a raft on a meandering river, allowing the river to take us wherever it wants. This is not how Jesus says we should use our time, live our lives. Rather, we should live with an intensity, a passion, a purposefulness, a richness – that comes from expecting Christ's

immanent return. Imagine what our lives would be like if we knew for sure that Jesus was going to return on 1 October! Yet that is exactly how we should be living.

Conclusion

So, in summary, as we approach DG Sunday, when we are called to commit our time, our lives, to the work of God, let us consider in what season we are now, so that we have a clear sense of where God desires us to invest our time and energy. Let us ensure that everything that we do, in whatever season, in whatever sphere of life – not just at church – helps to inaugurate God's reign in the world. And let us live with heightened sense of Christ's immanence, his nearness, and ensure that we don't waste time, that we don't waste our lives.

Because every moment that passes by, is gone forever. We can never go back and regain it. If it is wasted, it is wasted forever. Let us live in way that cherishes and values the life, the time, that God has blessed us with.