

Stewardship Sunday – August 22, 2010 - Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY
Based on Ephesians 3:14-21 written by Pastor Paul Horn

Christ's Love, Our Calling

- I. In love, Christ sought you...**
- II. ...take the time to seek God**

Do you remember playing hide-and-go-seek as a child? There is an element that draws people into that game. The energy put into discovering where someone is, the thrill of finding them, the excitement of finding a hiding place where you are certain no one will find you.

The adult version might be geocaching. Geocaching is a high-tech version of hide-and-seek played throughout the world by adventure seekers equipped with a handheld GPS device. Plug coordinates into the GPS from the internet and the GPS will lead you to a cache of trinkets left by others. The biggest reward for most is the discovery of a place where they have never been – sometimes in their own neighborhood.

In some ways that is how it is with our relationship with God. It is not a game – it is the core of our life. Remember that he first sought us and now desires that we continue to seek him. As we seek him with our time, we will find the excitement of discovering him in his fullness.

I. IN LOVE, CHRIST SOUGHT YOU

In our lesson, we read a portion of a letter the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christian congregation in Ephesus. We were invited into the heart of a true shepherd who cares for his sheep, who falls on knees in humility, petitions his Father in heaven, that he, out his vast storehouse of blessings, would give a gift to the readers of his letter: to track how wide, long, high and deep the love of Christ is, and that they might know that love. Paul even admits that this love surpasses knowledge!

To understand that love we consider one of the many gifts he has given us, the gift of time. To help us grasp how awesome that gift is, imagine a bank that credited your account each morning with \$1,440 and allowed no balance to be carried over to the next day. Every evening cancelled whatever part of the amount you failed to use during the day. What would you do? How would you spend that money? Each morning credits you with 1,440 minutes and carries no balances to the next day. If you fail to use the day's deposit, it is gone, and you can't draw on tomorrow's deposit for today. God has blessed each and everyone of us here today with time, what we commonly refer to as our "time of grace;" time God has given to each human being on earth to come to know him and his love for us, to believe in his Son Jesus Christ so that, by believing, we might bask in his love for all time and eternity. How will you decide what to do with this rich deposit of time?

Since he's the one who blessed us with this gift and knows what's best for us, let's ask him. He reveals his will for us in this letter. At the beginning of this section, we listened as Paul fell on

his knees in prayer. This is a show of deep humility, recognizing that God deserves and demands first place in our lives. He will be the first we turn to and the first we depend on. After all, the First Commandment means that, "We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things." Rightly so, God is our highest priority. Time spent with him in his Word is intended to build up our understanding of his love for us which builds up our relationship with him. We will put him first when we sit down and think about how to manage our time. How much time have you scheduled every day this week to sit down and spend time exclusively with God and his Word and in prayer with no distractions?

Problems arise when we view time as "my time" and not "God's time on loan to me." Sometimes the problems arise when we allow people to manage our time. Family, coworkers, friends clamor for our attention. Sometimes the problems arise when we allow things to manage our time. Walk around your home and you can hear your possessions calling out to you. The remote control and computer mouse and video game controller are cold and they say, "I've been sitting here for a while now, and I'm cold, use me!" You open a box and the item jumps into your arms and says, "Thank you for freeing me from my prison! Let's spend some time together!" The "toys" in the garage or shed cry out, "Play with me!" Instead of bowing before the Lord in humility, we have bowed the knee before the cravings of our sinful nature, its desires, the ways of this world. We often misuse our gift of time, which is a gross sin against God and against his will for our lives. Where does that get us? Stressed out because we're running this way and that with no time to think. We're so busy we don't know if we're coming or going and by the time we do get home all we want to do is sit on the couch and do nothing! I've worked all day and want to rest! And we pout, "But I have no time to put God first in my schedule!" And whose fault is it? It is our own grievous fault. We are guilty of not taking the time to seek God.

And yet, in love, Christ takes the time to seek you. Even before God said, "Let there be light..." he was tracking you. In the first chapter of this letter Paul says, "**For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ.**" (Eph 1:4,5,11) The Son of God took the time to come down from heaven, leave its comforts and pleasures and peace, and live as one of us, among us, for 33 years. And during those 33 years his priority was to spend time with his Father in worship and prayer, even though he had been with the Father from eternity! And at the end of his time on earth, he did not consult his "bucket list" and say, "What shall I do before I leave this place?" He sought the will of his Father. He spent time in hell suffering on a cross, so that you would not spend time suffering. He spent time enduring God's wrath because of your sins of mismanaged and wasted time, so that you would not spend time separated from your God forever. He spent time in the grave and then stepped out of his grave so that you would not spend eternity in your grave.

How wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ! That he would take the time out of his busy schedule of managing the world, to do this for the world, for you, for me! To seek my soul's salvation, to look for me in this vast universe among billions of people, and make sure that the Water and Word were sprinkled on my tiny head so that I might personally know and

receive his love and forgiveness!

Not only that, but in his great love for you, Christ now takes the time **to dwell in your heart**. Our children have begun school already and now it's time for college students to head back to campus. Some will be meeting their dormitory roommate for the first time. There's always that uneasiness, "Will we get along? Will they annoy me to no end?" No need to wonder with Christ who has taken up permanent residency in your heart! and he will continue to in the future, that's a good thing! Christ living in us demonstrates the great love he has for us. For since dwells in our hearts, he gives us all that he has done for us, the time he spent in his perfect life, his death, his resurrection, is ours, and so we always know that he loves us.

Since God through Christ Jesus has made me his top priority, and continues to make me his main concern, I will make him my number one priority as I look at how I can manage the time God has blessed me with... how can I put God first with my time?

II. TAKE THE TIME TO SEEK GOD

It begins today. Today we will go home and sit down at the dinner table with our family or spouse or a friend and pull out our calendars or Blackberries or cell phones and schedule time to seek God in his Word. It might be that we have to sacrifice time spent with someone or something else. It may mean that we physically write that time on our calendar or punch it into our cell phone so that it beeps at us, "Hey! Spend time seeking God." You have wonderful resources to begin seeking God in his Word. The booklet provided by the stewardship committee is a good place to start. If you read it, you might find I've stolen some things out of it for the sermon this morning! Your Bible is a good place to begin. Start by reading a chapter a day. Parents, you will schedule time for your children so that you have the opportunity to seek their God. They have a wonderful resource. Today and every Sunday your child will bring home their Sunday school lesson sheets. My catechism students, do your homework with parents and siblings. Take time to seek God in his Word.

Because we are so busy! When we come home from work or school or carting the kids to practice or rehearsal and fix supper and get them down to bed we're exhausted! Do you want true rest and relaxation, less stress in your day, reassurance that guilt of your sin of mismanaging God's time has been covered by Christ's blood? You will not find that rest on your television screen or video game or by searching YouTube for funny videos. Take time to seek God and will find true rest for your souls. So that you are able to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you maybe filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now, to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.