



*Be Careful How You Live*

*Ephesians 5:15-20*

*6th in the sermon series on Ephesians*

*Sunday, August 19th, 2018 ~ 13th Sunday after Pentecost*

*First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois*

*The Rev. Dr. Forrest Krummel*

Text: Be careful how you lived, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time because the days are evil. (v. 1)

The clock of life is wound but once,  
and no (one) has the power,  
to tell just when that clock will stop.  
at late or early hour.

Now is the only time you own,  
live...love...toil with the will.

Place no faith into tomorrow, for the clock may then be still.

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On a wall there hangs a counted cross stitch that my wife made for her father. It reads:

Do you love life?

Then do not waste time

For that is what life is made of.

The late Dr. Wayne Oates, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Louisville, once told the story of a professor that he had at Wake Forest University in North Carolina.

“Wayne,” the professor would say, “I want you to tell me in two or three sentences what you are doing today to justify the good Lord’s wisdom when he gives you the air to breathe!” And in the laughter of good friends, Dr. Oates would try to answer the question. (Your Right to Rest, Westminster Press, c. 1984, p. 40)

I have a question for you to consider. What is the fulcrum of your life?

“Be careful how you live...” the writer of Ephesians advised.

Make wise decisions.

In Ephesians the fulcrum is found in the gathered worshiping community.

It is found when the people of God gather together to sing psalms and hymns, pray together, support one another, have fellowship with one another and hear the Living Word of God proclaimed in all of its comforting, challenging and troubling dimensions.

True worship is not found in one style or another whether it be contemporary or traditional or blended, Pentecostal with “happy hands” lifted high or folded hands and bowed heads.

It is not found in stale tradition, rote prayers and statements or manipulated passions. Rather, it is found in a community bound together--knit together--by the Holy Spirit committed to living out the heart of the faith; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4: 4-6)

There is a South African word, ubuntu, which captures this sense of being bound together under God. Archbishop Desmond Tutu defined ubuntu in these words.

It is to say “My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up in yours.” We belong in a bundle of life. We say, “A person is a person through other persons.” It is not “I think, therefore I am”. It is rather, “I am human because I belong. I participate. I share.” (Such a person) is open and available to others, affirming of others ... (because they have) a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, ... or treated as if they were less than they are.”

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For as long as there has been humanity there has been an innate impulse to worship. Worship is not about getting our batteries charged for another week--though that may happen. Nor is it about feeling good about ourselves--though that may happen.

It is about praising the God from Whom all blessings flow.

Worship redeems time by drawing our gaze from ourselves, and lift it heavenward toward God.

True worship is the outpouring of a heart filled with gratitude.

The spirit of gratitude does not deny the existence of evil. Worship does not ignore the dark corners of this world; persecution, famine, war, disease, abuse, neglect, prejudice, discrimination, privilege.

Gratitude refuses, though, to limit God's Presence, God's Sovereignty.

In the book *The Dark Night of the Soul* Gerald May wrote:

“I must confess I am no longer good at telling the difference between good things and bad things. Of course, there are many events in human history that can only be labeled as evil, but from the standpoint of inner individual experience the distinction has become blurred for me. Some things start out looking great but wind up terribly, while other things seem bad in the beginning but turn out to be blessings in disguise ...

“I (believe) that the dark night of the soul reveals a deeper divine activity: a continually gracious, loving, and fundamentally protective guidance through all human experience--the good as well as the bad.”

The important thing is not whether we think that an event is good or bad. What matters is discovering God's Presence in every circumstance of life.

The days may be evil, but our lives are not evil, and the One who gives life is not evil but good. The attitude of thanksgiving and a discipline of giving thanks in worship orients our lives toward God. It is only by living all of life to the glory of God that we live into eternity.

To God be the glory.