

## **Time Matters**

David Hall - February 1, 2015

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Good morning. For those of you who may not know me, my name is David Hall, and I am one of three men who are in the process of being candidates to be campus elders here at The Village Church, Fort Worth. My wife is Mary Claire, and we've been a part of The Village Church since 2006. We've led a Home Group, and we're currently serving as Home Group coaches. I can't tell you what a great honor and privilege it is to stand before you this morning with the task of preaching the Word of God. It's a great opportunity that I treasure and a responsibility I take seriously.

I also need to tell you I'm an Aggie. Please don't hold that against me, even if we did get a good recruiting class this year. At A&M, and I suppose it's this way still at most other large universities, there's a tradition, or at least an unofficial rule (I'm pretty sure it's unofficial; I know it's unwritten), that if the professor comes to class 15 minutes after class is started, the class gets a walk. That means you can leave class with no penalty for not attending.

Well, the story goes that in one such situation, the classroom was equipped with one of those ancient analogue clocks, where the minute hand sits still until the minute has passed, and then it jumps to the next minute. Well, in this one class, where the professor was not exactly punctual, the students, being students, discovered that if you threw a chalkboard eraser at the clock in just the right way, it would jump that hand forward a minute. You see where this is going, right?

The students would wait for the professor by taking target practice at the clock, and very soon 15 minutes would have passed and the class would walk. Well, the professor figured out what was going on and wisely waited until it was time for the next exam. He walked into the classroom, passed out the exams, and announced, "You have one hour to complete the exam."

Then he proceeded to collect all of the chalkboard erasers in the room and carefully aim them and launch them at the clock. It took him several rounds, but, shortly, he had succeeded in moving the

clock forward one hour, and he announced the end of the exam, collected the papers, and walked out of the classroom. Time matters.

Time matters because matters of time are matters of eternity. There is an urgency to this thing we are doing in joining together in a community following Christ. This is not just a casual, culturally acceptable way to spend Sunday morning or to kill a few hours before the Super Bowl starts. There's an urgency, because what is at stake is so great.

The nature of time is that it is limited. We don't know how much we have, but we do know that time is constantly passing and that once your clock is jumped ahead you can't get those minutes back. It is absolutely crucial that we know what time it is. I want you to join me this morning in looking at a text that points out that time matters. Please turn in your Bible to Hebrews, chapter 10. We're going to start in verse 19 and read through verse 25.

If you don't have a Bible with you this morning, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you, under the chair in front of you, maybe. We're in the book of Hebrews, and the book of Hebrews is an amazing book. Though we're not quite sure who the author was, we do know it was written to Christians who had grown up as Jews. That's why it's called the epistle to the Hebrews. Then they had later come to faith in Christ.

These Jewish Christians were experiencing persecution, and they were beginning to question their faith. They lived in the Roman Empire, and if you study world history you know Rome was not exactly known for its tolerance of other religions. They were getting persecution from the Romans for being Jews, but now that they were following Christ they were also getting persecution from their fellow Jews for being followers of the Way.

In the face of all this persecution, they began to ask themselves, "Why don't we just go back to Judaism? That worked for us for a long time. At least that will eliminate one stream of the persecution." How many of you know that when you're suffering, time matters a great deal? When you are in pain, pain of any kind, it seems that you can feel every second tick by.

This letter to the Hebrews was written to explain to them the timeline and how the timeline of history fit together. It demonstrates how all of the Old Testament was the precursor of the coming of Christ. Everything that happened before was a shadow, but with the incarnation of Christ, the light was turned on. Now we can see the substance and not just the shadow. Christ fulfilled the Old

Testament, so there was no option of going back. The full revelation of God had come in the person of Jesus Christ.

The letter to Hebrews starts with a great opening line. It reminds us that time matters. Hebrews 1:1 says, **"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son..."** We find our passage for this morning at one of the key pivot points in the book of Hebrews. It is at this point the author moves from *explanation* that he has been giving to *application*.

He has spent the first nine and a half chapters telling us who Christ is and what he has done. Jesus is the final Word of God. He is greater than the angels, because he is the Son of God. He is greater than Moses and all of the Old Testament prophets. The author then uses the imagery of priesthood to show that Jesus is the ultimate High Priest who has mediated the new covenant by offering himself, once for all, as a sacrifice for sin. That's where we pick up. All of that is contained in the word *therefore* that starts verse 19. Let's read it.

**"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."**

What is he saying? He's reminding us that because of what Christ has done, those of us who have been baptized into Christ, our bodies washed with pure water, can have confidence to stand before God, knowing that we are forgiven, that no matter what our sins were or how evil our thoughts, God now sees us through the lens of Jesus, and we are accepted, loved, and holy, not because of what we have done, but because of who our High Priest is and what *he* has done.

Believer, the blood of Christ has brought you into reconciled relationship with God. You can stand before your Father with the confidence and assurance that your High Priest offered himself as the final sacrifice and substitute for your sins. Too often we take this for granted. This is unbelievably good news, and it is significant enough that it demands that time matters. Don't let your clock jump forward when you could be spending that time drawing near to your Father.

Look at verse 23. **"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful."** Again, the author is addressing the Hebrew Christians' impulse to go back. "Is all this Jesus stuff really true? Is it really necessary?" They're thinking, "The old sacrificial system was good enough for our fathers. Why wouldn't it be good enough for us?"

Those questions come. I experience questions of faith, and I'm sure you do as well. Can all of this stuff in the Bible be real? Doubts and questions are natural, but we hold fast, not because *we're* faithful, but because *he* is faithful. He who promised is faithful. The one who has promised us himself, who has promised us eternal life, who has rescued us from our sin and darkness, is faithful, so we trust him. Because we can trust him to do what he has promised, time matters.

Look at verse 24. **"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works..."** How is it that we encourage one another to walk out this new life he has given us? Verse 25: **"...not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."** Here the author really gets into the implications of how time matters.

What is this *day* he's talking about? **"...all the more as you see the Day drawing near."** Well, in most English translations, the word *day* is capitalized. That's because he's talking about a specific day. He's talking about the day of the Lord. The *day of the Lord* was a familiar phrase in Hebrew prophecy. Isaiah used it. Joel and Amos both used it. The *day of the Lord* describes a day when God's patience finally comes to an end and he reveals his judgment.

If you are an enemy of God, the day of the Lord is a scary, threatening, and bad thing, but if you are a servant of God, it is a hopeful and exciting day. You see, judgment is only a bad thing if you're on the wrong side of the judge. If you are guilty before God, then the day of the Lord should rightfully scare the daylights out of you.

On the other hand, if you have been justified before God, if God sees you as righteous, which can only happen if the only man who was truly righteous has transferred his righteousness to you, if your sin has been blotted out and you stand before God in the righteousness of Christ, then the day of the Lord is your vindication. It is a day of joy, to be celebrated.

In Acts, chapter 2, at the day of Pentecost, Peter identifies *that* day as a day of the Lord. He says, "This is what the prophet Joel was talking about." On the day of Pentecost, Christ was revealed as

the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, and the revelation of Christ is the ultimate judgment of God. That means if you recognize Christ as God and receive his sacrifice for your sins and stand in his righteousness, you are justified before God, but if you reject Christ, then the full wrath of God will fall upon you for all eternity.

If you're here this morning and have not placed your faith in Christ, I want to plead with you that time matters. You don't know how many minutes you have left, how many throws of the eraser are left before you face the day of the Lord. Don't wait. Embrace the love he offers today. Going back to the text, what does it mean for us to do all of this he has told us to do all the more as we see the day approaching? It means that we live soberly with an awareness of where we are in history. Time matters. What time is it? What time is it for us?

I have a confession to make. This is a safe place to confess, right? I'm a chronoptimist. Yes, a chronoptimist is a thing. A chronoptimist is a person who always underestimates the time required to do anything or get anywhere. So unfortunately, I'm often late or, even more often, I'm scrambling around, running around like crazy in order not to be late.

It's not that I don't care about time. I do care about time very much. And it's not that I think being late doesn't matter. I hate being late. It's definitely not that I feel like my time is more valuable or more important than anybody else's. I don't. It's just that I think I can get more done in any given five minutes than I actually can.

Just this past week, I was working on a project with my office manager, and we were making great progress. I looked down at my watch, and it said 4:15 p.m. Now it just so happened that my wife had planned a dinner that night with several couples to talk about some important stuff we needed to go over, and this was very important to my wife and important that I be there on time.

As I looked at my watch, I realized I still had to go from my office to my parents' house to pick up my son, and then drive 121 all the way from Grapevine to downtown Fort Worth. You see, the problem was that when I sat down to work on the project I didn't know what time it was. Time matters.

Today is Super Bowl Sunday, and I know a lot of you know exactly what time it is. Well, let me ask you, what are the Seahawks and the Patriots doing today? They're not talking about football inflation or football deflation today. Not today. It's game time. Today is the Super Bowl. This is what

they've worked for and prepared for all season and even in the off-season before that. For some of these players, today is the climax of their life. It is game time. They know what time it is, and now they're serious about it.

What time is it for us? What day do we see drawing near? We're not in the Old Testament. We're not waiting for God to send in the Babylonians in a national takeover to bring judgment on the sinners. We're not in the days before Pentecost when the church was really being birthed and discovering what it meant to be a church.

We're not where the Hebrews in this letter were, somewhere between Pentecost and AD 70, facing the persecution from the Jews, who saw the Way as a dangerous cult, and the Romans, who saw any religious strife as a political threat. We're not in the days of the Great Reformation, where Martin Luther rediscovered the truth that the just shall live by faith, and the Scriptures were returned to the people of God.

We're not even in the days of American Christendom when, at the very least, the story and values of Christianity could be assumed. Time matters, and the church of Jesus Christ in each of these eras had an identity, a calling, a context. So where do we fit in the grand narrative of history? What is our context? I want to say it's game time for us, but what's our game? Where's our stadium? What's our game plan?

Let me ask it this way. What does it mean for us to be the outpost of the kingdom of God known as the Fort Worth Campus of The Village Church in 2015? Our game plan is this: we exist to bring glory to God by making disciples through gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service, and gospel-centered multiplication.

I want to focus on that one word that ties them all together: *gospel*. We talk a lot about the gospel, but what do we mean by it? What is it really? Time matters, and as I see the day drawing near, as I evaluate where we are in our context, I see God clarifying the gospel. I see that being his call to his church today in this time.

We are committed to being a gospel-centered people, and we have to know what the gospel is so we can talk it and walk it and do it and live it. We need to bleed gospel. Mark, chapter 1, says that Jesus came preaching the gospel and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe." The gospel is an announcement. It is a proclamation of a transfer of authority.

The picture is this. In the ancient times, they didn't have iPhones or Wolf Blitzer to tell them what was going on on the other side of the world, so when two armies went out to battle and one of them finally won the war, the king of the victorious army would send out heralds into all of the newly conquered territory. The heralds would go into each town and village and declare that the king who had won had won the war and that this was now his territory and they now lived under his authority, in his domain.

We, as the church, are called to be those heralds. The battle has already been won. The good King won the war, and we have the privilege of telling the story of how the war was won and sharing the joy of living under the authority of the King who defines himself as love. From before the fall in the garden of Eden, God has been orchestrating history to reveal his glory by bringing reconciliation through the sacrifice of Jesus' blood on the cross.

Because of Adam's choice, we were born into sin and into a broken world, but in the fullness of time, as the fulfillment of all that had gone before, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was born as a man. He lived a perfect, sinless life. He was unjustly tried and crucified but submitted willingly, offering his life as the sacrifice for the sin of all who would believe in him.

Three days later, God raised him from the dead, demonstrating to the entire world and all spiritual beings that he held the keys of life and death. Before Jesus ascended back to the Father, he promised to send the Holy Spirit to live in and empower believers as a sign and seal of his promise. That's the gospel. It's a story, but it's also an announcement of the reality of what our great High Priest has done for us.

All you have to do to get in on it is to repent and believe. *Repent* means you change your mind. You stop pledging allegiance to the old king and start pledging your allegiance to your new King. Unbeliever, this morning I invite you to repent, to change your mind, to believe in the gospel. That's the message Matt preaches. That's the message Anthony preaches. That must be central to everything we do.

Paul says the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. If you believe, then learning to live in the reality that God, in his goodness, love, and mercy, reached out to you and, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, reconciled you to himself, and now he sees you just like he sees Jesus. If you believe that, that reality will transform every facet of your life.

My definition of discipleship is learning to apply the reality of the gospel to the everyday situations and circumstances of our lives. So how do you do that? Well, I think you go back to the "let us-es" in the Hebrews passage. I'm not talking about salad; I'm talking about where he says, "Let us draw near."

First of all, *you draw near*. Through what Christ has done, you can have confidence. Your assurance is based on his righteousness. His faithfulness is how you can have full assurance of faith, and with a true heart you can draw near to him. That's what we at The Village like to call *gospel-centered worship*. Revel in it. It's not just singing songs you really like. It's about a heart that desires to know him intimately.

I have two young boys. Sam will turn 5 tomorrow. We celebrated his birthday yesterday. Ben is 2-1/2. When I put them to bed, we have kind of a routine we do. Each one of them usually picks out a book, and I'll read them the book. Then I'll pray with them and try to convince them to pray with me. Then, as I get ready to go, one or the other, or usually both of them, will say, "Daddy, will you sleep with me?" Of course, that melts my heart, and I can't say, "No," and I lie in their bed as they drift off to sleep. Believer, you have the privilege of relating like that to Almighty God, the Creator of the universe.

Secondly, *you hold fast to the confession of your hope, grounded in his faithfulness*. Notice that it's the confession of your *hope*, not just a confession of your *faith*. Your faith is a promise, and the one who promises is absolutely faithful. Therefore, yours is a confession of hope. That's the gospel-centered component in all that we do. It's building our lives on the truth of the gospel.

Thirdly, *you stir one another up to love and good works*. That means you get together. You encourage one another. You preach the gospel to yourself and to one another. That's what we at The Village call *gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service, and gospel-centered multiplication*. It's what we do in our Home Groups. It's what we do in Recovery. It's what we do in Steps.

It's what we do when we reach out to the refugees at North Hills Manor. It's what we do when we partner with other organizations, like Beautiful Feet or The Net, and loving the homeless. It's what we do when we walk with each other, when God calls us to go into some rather uncomfortable places for the sake of the gospel.

So my question to you this morning is...*How are you doing it?* Our time matters. It matters a great deal. How are you redeeming the time by living out the gospel-centered life? How are you drawing near? How are you holding fast and trusting his faithfulness? How are you stirring one another up to love and good works? How are you encouraging one another?

Time matters. Every moment, there's an eraser being thrown at that clock. When the clock jumps ahead, you don't get that minute back. The day of the Lord is drawing near. His judgment, that is Christ, will be revealed. Are you living in view of that day, or are you at the back of the classroom throwing erasers at the clock? Do you need to repent of your indifference to the significance of the message you have been given?

"All the more as we see the day drawing near" means we know our context. You know what time it is. You know the issues that are facing us that the gospel demands we confront. We've just spent most of January praying through some of those issues. We focused on racial reconciliation, God's heart for the nations, and the sanctity of life. There are more.

What time is it? What is God doing with The Village Church, Fort Worth? Look around you. This isn't Flower Mound. I love Flower Mound. We drove there for a long time. This isn't Flower Mound. It's not Dallas, Denton, or Plano. We love those campuses too. Our hearts have been knit together as part of The Village Church. We are committed to a common message, the gospel, but we look a little different, and that's a good thing. I like the way we look.

We are The Village Church, but we are The Village Church, Fort Worth. God has a specific identity marked out for us. Each campus of The Village has its own story. Ours has been unique. We've had some really sweet and warm times, for those of you who were here far enough back to remember the soft launch and the intimate times we had together over at Fielder Road before we moved into this building.

We've also had some tough and trying times, as we walked through the leadership transition of last summer, but I'm excited about our future. We are growing. We are moving forward, and I think we are right on the cusp of discovering what that specific destiny God has for The Village Church Fort Worth is all about. As we embrace who God has called us to be as a gospel community, let us be a people who are marked by faith, hope, and love. Let us be a people of the gospel. It's game time, brothers and sisters. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we just thank you for this opportunity to hear your words of encouragement and exhortation, to be invited to draw near to you on the basis of what our great High Priest has done for us, the righteousness he has transferred, to be able to put our trust in your faithfulness, not in our own, and to love one another, to encourage one another, to stir one another up to love and good works, to meet together, and to live with a consciousness that our time matters, that there is a day of the Lord coming, that we can live with that in view and be serious about our pursuit of the gospel.

Father, I pray that you would leave us with that sense of urgency, that as we go out we would remember we're not just throwing erasers at a clock but that our time matters because of the significance of the mission and the message and the love and the glory of your name that we get to carry. In Jesus' name, amen.

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