

**Grace, mercy and peace are yours through faith in our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

<sup>29</sup> What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; <sup>30</sup> those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; <sup>31</sup> those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.

**Dear Friends,**

Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, was trying to give their congregation some direction and guidance. There were specific issues that Paul addressed and then he also tried to answer some questions they had for him. Chapter 7 seems to be a portion of his letter where he was answering some specific questions about marriage and a crisis that the congregation was going through or a crisis they were facing in their general region.

In the portion of scripture before us this morning, Paul notes that the time is short. The opportune time to make changes is short. In a way, we could say that this is an ongoing theme throughout history. When Jonah went to Nineveh in our Old Testament lesson the time was also short for the Ninevites to repent and come to faith. The Lord gave them 40 days to have a change of heart and to turn to the Lord. God's message is powerful and it changed the lives of the Ninevites.

In our gospel lesson, John the Baptist also proclaimed a message of repentance to the people as he prepared the way for the coming of Jesus. The time was short for the people to get ready for God's fulfillment of his promise to send a Savior. Many people paid attention to this message, repented, and were baptized. God's message is powerful. It changed their lives and they were ready for Jesus and his public ministry.

Even today, we could say the time is short. With everything going on in our world it certainly seems like we are in the end times. Is Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> coming going to happen soon? I don't know but the time is short to make sure we are prepared. God's message is powerful in our lives too. It has changed our hearts and helps us as we move forward.

This morning, as we take a closer look at Paul's message, let's use his words for our theme: **"The Time is Short."** As we consider this portion of God's Word, **"What does Paul mean when he talks about marriage,"** and also **"What direction does Paul give us for our emotional life."**

**I.** Paul directed this letter to the congregation in Corinth. They believed in Jesus for their salvation but there were a lot of areas where they were not following God's Word. Paul was trying to help them step back and look at how they were living their lives – how they were dealing with different situations. Apparently, some in the congregation had questions about marriage. In answering their question, Paul said, **"From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none;"** What a strange thing to say! It would be easy to take this

out of context and say he is advocating that men can ignore their wives and do whatever they want but that is not the case. To understand Paul, we must let scripture interpret scripture. We don't have to look far to find out what Paul means.

**“<sup>32</sup> I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. <sup>33</sup> But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife— <sup>34</sup> and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. <sup>35</sup> I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.”**

It's all about focus – what is your priority in life? If you are married, it is so easy to get caught up in taking care of your family that God and his Word might take a back seat to everything else. Paul's not saying that marriage is bad, but he is encouraging us to look at our lives and our priorities. Are we **“living in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord?”**

Think about your past week – how much time did you spend with kids and kid activities? How much time did spend with doctors and appointments? How much time did you spend doing things for your spouse? How much time did you spend working? How much time did you spend with hobbies or sports? How much time did you spend with the Lord? All these things are important but where was your priority last week or the week before , etc?

We would like to say that our undivided devotion is to the Lord and at times it is, but there are also times when it isn't. So how do we do a better job? Maybe start the day with the Lord with a short devotion or reading your Bible. Maybe take a few minutes after lunch for prayer (for yourself, those around you, our country, our health, the list could get to be long). Maybe also end your day with God's Word as well – a devotion or Bible reading again and prayer. The time is short. We need God in our lives – we need him first in our lives. Remember that he put us 1<sup>st</sup> when he went to the cross for our sins. When we come in repentance and confession, He puts us 1<sup>st</sup> as he assures us our sins are forgiven. He puts us 1<sup>st</sup> when he assures us that he has prepared a place for us in heaven.

The time is short so let's make sure we put God and his Word first in our lives. But Paul has more for us to think about.

**II.** He continues by telling us, **“<sup>30</sup> those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not;”** Should I laugh or should I cry? Sometimes we can be on the verge of one or the other. A member once told me it is better to laugh than to cry and yet there are times when life isn't going right and it seems so unfair and we just want to cry.

Paul had some of those times: when he was beaten and thrown into prison. When he was on a boat headed for Rome and it was shipwrecked. When he was falsely accused and his accusers ran him out of town. He endured a lot of pain and suffering as he shared the

gospel message. He could have spent most of his days mourning and in sorrow but he didn't.

Even in prison he praised God and sang hymns. He encouraged others to rejoice in the Lord always – to rejoice in every circumstance because the Lord was with him. He had faith and nothing could take that away. His faith in Jesus was all that he needed to change his mourning into happiness. His faith was his most important treasure in life.

Luther echoed the same feeling in verse 4 of the hymn, *"A Mighty Fortress is our God,"* when he wrote, *"And take they our life, Goods, fame, child and wife, Let these all be gone, They yet have nothing won; The Kingdom ours remaineth."* (TLH #262 verse 4)

Our faith allows us to be happy even in the midst of trouble for our faith brings us the joy of salvation. God alone is the one who can bring us true rest for our souls, peace, and yes, even joy in the midst of trouble.

But then Paul seems to contradict himself when he says, **"those who are happy, as if they were not;"** Paul wants us to trust in the Lord for our salvation but he also wants us to remember where we came from and that's something we don't like to do.

Have you ever thought that maybe a sermon you were listening to contained too much Law? Maybe it hit too close to home – reminded you of a sin you had committed or a temptation that you were too eager to give into. We don't like to hear about our sins but that is necessary to prepare our hearts for the gospel. And so, as we acknowledge our sins, it brings us sorrow rather than happiness.

Many churches don't preach the Law because they say they want their members to be happy. But even though I don't like to hear the Law, it prepares my heart for the gospel, and as I hear that Jesus paid for all of my sins and they are all forgiven it brings me even greater joy as I realize how much my Savior loves me.

The time is short. We are children of God because we believe and trust in Jesus for our salvation. This enables us to be happy in all circumstances. The time is short and so I do sorrow over my sins but I rejoice in the forgiveness that Jesus won for me on the cross.

Paul reminds us, **"For this world in its present form is passing away."** This past week I heard about people dying from coronavirus, cancer, heart disease, a snowmobiling accident and a helicopter crash. I'm sure there were more deaths from other causes but it is a stark reminder that the time is short.

Now is the time to focus on Jesus our Savior. Now is the time to listen to him speak to us through his words. Now is the time to sorrow over our sins but to rejoice in our salvation. Now is the time to remember that our real home is in heaven and what we have on this earth is only temporary. The time is short. Let us make Jesus our priority in life, let us listen to him as he guides us through life. The time is short but with Jesus in our hearts we have nothing to worry about. Amen.