

**A time for change...making New Year's Resolutions
Psalm 90**

Well Friends, here we are once again. Every year we come back to the same spot, that familiar place where we pause and reflect as we begin a new year. Out with the old and in with the new.

Say goodbye to 2014 and hello to 2015.

And as we saw in the video clip, this becomes the occasion for many of us to make a New Years Resolution.

We've looked back at the previous year and evaluated what has gone well and what has not and we have identified some area or areas in our life which we would like to improve on or change - and so we set some goals for ourselves that we resolve we will achieve in the New Year.

However the key issue with your resolutions is whether or not you will be able to achieve them.

And this is where New Years Resolutions divide us into two camps – you have the optimists and the pessimists, and this is how they see 2015.

For the optimists - those who see the cup as half full, 2015 a whole new year, stretched out before us like fresh powder snow waiting to be skied on, a blank canvas waiting to be filled with paint, an open stretch of highway waiting to be explored, the sky is the limit.

The new year holds so much potential, it's an opportunity to do what you didn't before, to make up for the wrongs in the past, you get a second chance at life...

For the pessimists - those who tend to see the cup as half empty, 2015 only seems to hold more of the same old same old, or perhaps even get worse.

It stretches out before us like a desert, offering no hope of relief from daily grind.

Unpleasant deadlines like taxes, events like final exams or monthly inventory loom on the horizon like towering giants, and who knows when some unexpected misfortune, like an economic downturn might sideswipe you.

But the real question when we look at the New Year 2015 is not whether our glass is half empty or half full but rather “*why isn't our glass being refilled?*”

According the scripture the purpose of reflecting on the past year and looking ahead to the next is for the purpose of gaining wisdom.

Psalm 90:12 which we read this morning says “*Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*”

So when we fill our glass up with wisdom... 2015 begins to look more realistic, neither overly optimistic nor overly pessimistic.

The fresh powder snow may contain avalanche danger we need to be wary of, the open highway may not have a gas station anytime soon so we must be planning ahead, by the same token we can grow to see the beauty in a desert and even come across an unexpected oasis and grow stronger and braver by facing the giants in our lives.

So this morning we want to look at how we can go about filling up with wisdom as we make our New Years Resolutions so that we can look back at 2014 and forward to 2015 we see things with God's perspective on our life, because that really the starting point of wisdom – Fearing God, and committing your path to Him.

So we'll begin with gaining the wisdom that comes from numbering our days.

We just looked at Psalm 90:12 where it says “*teach us to number our days, in order that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*”

I must confess that when I first looked at this scripture verse, my first inclination was to talk about how little time we actually have, and how we must use it wisely, and put towards the most important things in life etc... because that's what first popped into my head – and its good advice.

But I think the wisdom which this scripture verse is referring to... the wisdom which God wants to give us... the wisdom that comes from numbering our days is being able to know what is appropriate for each stage and phase of life.

Friends, numbering our days means being aware of the times and seasons which life bring, which God has created and how best to respond to them.

That's why we find a video clip with kids making adult resolutions funny, we don't expect kids to make resolutions, especially adult-like resolutions - they are supposed to be kids.

Having this sort of wisdom is why King Solomon wrote that famous passage in Ecclesiastes 3:2, which was the inspiration

for the title of this message. *“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.”*

In the wisdom given to him by God, King Solomon had spent enough time observing the world around him and the life that went on around him, and he reflects that God has designed life in this way.

Now I don't know about you but I find this liberating. This kind of wisdom is full of grace and mercy because it frees people up from the tyranny of what one particular person, or group of people thinks is the most important thing that you should be doing.

It doesn't matter what someone else feels you should center your life around – because according to God's wisdom there is a time and a season for doing what needs to be done.

Now, if we go back and ask “why” we make our New Year's resolutions – is it because of this kind of wisdom?

Well friends, in truth if we are honest, most of our New Year's resolutions are reactionary instead of reflections on wisdom, right?

For eg. we hear about the latest study from some institute which claims that walking 20 min each day reduces your risk of heart disease – so we resolve to walk more.

We notice there is more content and stories on the news about climate change and extreme weather - so we resolve to reduce our carbon footprint and lobby the gov't to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

We receive appeals to provide financial support for the response to the Ebola Crisis and we resolve to set aside money in our next budget to help out.

We watch a heart tugging family movie about some guy who discovers the true meaning of Christmas through leaving his high profile career and spending more time with his family, so

we resolve to spend less time at work and more with our family in the New Year?

We are besieged by all sorts of special interest groups lobbying us to throw our lot in with them and dedicate our lives to their cause.

Can you relate to what I'm talking about here friends?

We can be pushed and pulled one way and then another reacting to all these good causes - making resolutions about what we should be doing with our life, our time and our resources.

I should do this; I should do that, etc... etc...

Pretty soon we are swamped and overrun with good things; and we know that we need to get out from underneath them to make a change but how?

After all isn't it our resolve to do this, and do that, which got us here in the first place?

Friends it is part of God's grace that He can teach us to number our days. God, the creator of all that exists, says to us there is a time and a place for every activity under heaven.

You are free to enjoy and give time to the many wonderful things God has created. Work, Family, sports, nature, arts, learning, helping people, etc...

There are times to say **yes** to one thing and **no** to another.

You have God's permission to do so and we have the confidence given to us by the bible that God can teach us to know when it is time for one thing and when it is time for another, when it is time for a change.

But friends, please notice that Solomon says all these activities take place "*under heaven.*"

That is to say there is no activity which is somehow outside of God's concern, no area in His creation which does not have a "religious" aspect in it, or a "spiritual" side to it in which you must honor God and obey him.

In other words your relationship to God is not just one piece of the pie of your life; it's the dish in which the pie is baked.

God is the only one who has the right to make a claim on your entire life and all that you do in it – and He does! And we need to honor and respect that claim.

This is why Proverbs 4:23 says; "*above all else, guard your heart for it is the wellspring of your life.*"

Friends, many things want to lay claim to occupy your heart, the center of your life - where your body, soul, and spirit define who you are.

But wisdom says only God may occupy this place, and He will give you life, as a spring of water gives life to plants and animals in the forest.

Even the good things which He has given us may not lay claim to the center of your life - because when they do, as I just described, we become overburdened by them.

Now, our sinful nature inevitably puts something other than God there, and we pay the price... but friends, in His grace and mercy God reveals to us that there is a time and a place for all these things other than the center of our lives, and he will teach us and show us when it is time for them.

So we are freed from the tyranny of the good, the imposition of the most important, and being controlled by the urgent.

Friends there is a time and season for everything but it is never time to ignore God or take a break from Him, to allow something else to become the center of our lives – that is utter foolishness.

So perhaps this is the time to make a change, but not one where we resolve to take on one more “good thing.” Instead it’s a change in which we resolve to turn away from being foolish.

God’s grace and mercy are there for all of us when we foolishly attempt to put other things at the center of our life, for the umpteenth time - and are reminded yet again realize that only God belongs there, both by right and by design.

The Apostle Paul writes to us in his 2nd letter to the Corinthians saying *“As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For God says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.”*

Friends, Is it time for a change?

So, if it is... as we resolve to turn away from foolishness and seek wisdom instead, numbering our days also means looking at how we mark our time.

The front of the bulletin this morning has a few devices which we use to organize our time and mark it.

Calendars, Clock, smartphones allow us to mark the passing of hours, minutes, and seconds and when enough of these units of measurements have passed we have days, months, and years.

And our smartphones remind us that when certain amounts of time have passed that we have appointments, deadlines and commitments.

Friends, if you think about it... our smartphones are like compasses for us. They let us know where we are, what we are supposed to be doing, what others are supposed to be doing, and how much time we have allotted for any given activity.

In fact, even if we don't have a smartphone most of us keep a clock on our wrist – so we'll be able to tell what time it is anywhere we go.

For us, marking time is very mechanical and precise – why else would we make such a big deal out of counting down the last 10 seconds until a new year begins?

Now I'm not sure if you noticed or not – but I have, that for all the noise and celebration which our official New Years parties have, they are devoid of meaning.

At the most they are just another excuse for people to do what they do every other week-end of the year, drink and dance and stay up late.

There is no meaning to marking time in this way.

Certainly our modern mindset of understanding time as simply "Chronological" - where one second comes after another - means that we have been able to coordinate our efforts and

abilities in order to do great things, like build cities, fly airplanes, launch spacecraft, make computers and surf the internet.

And we even have a couple of our own proverbs about time - **Time** is money, and **Timing** is everything.

But these reflect our very narrow understanding of chronological time and show we have forgotten about Kairos time.

Kairos time is the opportune time friends, that critical moment when everything lines up to fall into place to achieve something and requires the right response.

Kairos has to do with the importance and significance of what it means to be here - at this point and time in history, in His Story...

Because friends it is God's story that will help us once again to number our days, not just with minutes and seconds but with meaning and purpose for the season we are in.

The Apostle Paul tells states this in 2 Timothy 3:15 when he writes that *"The Holy Scriptures... are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."*

God's story is told in the scriptures and if we were to draw a time-line of that story this is what it would look like this, with four major plot developments giving meaning to the time-line. Creation, Fall, Redemption, New Creation.

And we find ourselves right now between Redemption and New Creation.

Christ has come – we just celebrated his first coming and now we wait for Him to come again to make all things new.

That's what time it is.

So when we are exhorted to number our days, when we are called to determine the season of life – friends... we are living in the time before all things will be made New once again.

But what wisdom comes from knowing that?

Only the small fact that whatever we do now is done because it reflects the certainty of what is to come.

Friends the unpleasant fact is that our New Year's resolutions will not do much if anything to make the world a better place.

The truth is that only Christ's return will put an end to all suffering and evil that afflicts this world and each of us personally.

But... how we serve and love each other as we wait for it is a confident testimony that the New Creation is coming to change everything as we know it.

So... We give shelter to the homeless, food to the hungry, pray for the sick to be healed because in the New Creation there will be no homelessness, no hunger, no sickness.

We are not doing it to change the world, we doing it to tell the world that it will be changed.

It was roughly 2015 years ago that Jesus Christ came to be the final sacrifice to pay for our sin, who knows how many more minutes and seconds will pass until He returns as King of the New Creation? Who knows?

But friends, when I read the scriptures I get the feeling that counting down minutes and seconds until this event is not the most important thing - instead the concern is for how we view time.

Brothers and sisters – In Christ our life no longer consists of minutes, seconds, years, that have come and gone and in which you keep score of our achievements, what resolutions we've kept and broken.

Your life is now defined by the fact that you live in the age of Redemption where the grace and mercy of God convicts us of our rebellion, forgives us and turns us into new creatures, new creatures who are the first fruits of a new creation – the new heavens and the new earth that Christ will return to establish.

So, in 2015 whenever somebody asks you “what time is it?” I hope that instead of looking at your wristwatch or pulling out your smartphone, you’ll be thinking...its redemption time! and the New Creation is up next.

So Friends let us make 2015 the year where we resolve to number our days so that we may gain wisdom, and our actions will proclaim our faith and trust that Christ will return and this world will be changed!

Let us embrace God’s story in the scripture as our own story so that we are made wise to seek Jesus Christ, and let us trust Him that there truly is a time for all good things, for every activity under heaven, including a time to change by changing how we see time. Amen.

God beyond all Time, when you act, it defines time
Act in our lives, define who we are
So we may become your people
Your church the body of Christ
Amen.