

It's Time for a Change
Psalm 90:1-17

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.

Say goodbye to 2012 and hello to 2013, out with the old and in with the new. And for many this becomes the occasion to make New Year's Resolutions.

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 goals for ourselves that we will try to achieve.

However the key issue surrounding these 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 2013.

For those who see the cup as half full, its 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. 2013 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 those who tend to see the cup as half empty, 2013 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 looms on the horizon like towering giants,

and who knows when some unexpected misfortune, like an economic downturn or a fiscal cliff might sideswipe you.

But friends the real question when we look at the New Year 2013 is not whether the cup is half empty or half full... but rather “why isn’t the cup being refilled?”

You see according the scripture the purpose of reflecting on the past year and looking ahead to the next is for the purpose of filling ourselves up with 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 2013 begins to look more realistic, neither overly optimistic or 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 2012 and forward to 2013 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 looked at this verse to start with I wanted talk about how little time we 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 God wants us to have, which comes from numbering our days, is being able to know what is appropriate for each stage and phase of life.

Numbering our days means being aware of the times and seasons which life bring, which God has created.

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

It's also why a very wise man named King Solomon wrote down 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."*

After Solomon had spent enough time observing life – he could see that God had designed it in this way.

Now I don't know about you but I find this liberating, it's 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, what somebody else feels you should center your life around... because friends the truth is that there is a time and a season for doing what needs to be done.

So friends, when we make our resolutions are we making them in light of that truth? Or are we making them in response to the avalanche of information that comes at us on a daily basis?

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

We see the ads about global warming so we resolve to recycle more and drive less to help the environment, we hear about the Refugee crisis in a war zone and resolve to set aside money in next months budget to help them.

We watch a heart tugging family movie about some guy who discovers the true meaning of Christmas in leaving his high profile career and simply being with his family again and we resolve to spend less time at work and more with our family?

Friends in our information age we are besieged by all sorts of special interest groups – lobbying for us to throw in our lot with them and dedicate our lives to their cause.

So we can be pulled back and forth between all these great 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 end up then making a New Year's resolution that we need to not do so much... which is ironic because isn't it our resolve to do this and do that which got us here in the first place?

Friends, the good news this morning is that God can teach us to number our days, to determine which season we are in.

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 that the Holy Spirit will 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 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 of 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 what the scriptures talk about in Proverbs 4:23 where Solomon says “*above all else, guard your heart for it is the wellspring of your life.*”

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

Even good things may not become the center of your life and as we explained, when they do we become overburdened by all the good things which we are resolving to do something about – family, friends, work, our health etc...

But God says that for these things there is a time and a place 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, 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 any of us who foolishly have tried to put other things at the center of our life and now 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

¹As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. ²For 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.

Is it time for a change? Is it time to allow God to re-center our lives?

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

Friends, If you think about it our Smart Phones are like compasses for us, we know where we are, what we are supposed to be doing, what others are supposed to be doing, and how much time we have to finish it in. They orient us.

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

And so for us modern technological people marking time is very mechanical and precise endeavor. We focus, almost exclusively on this “Chronological” time.

And you can see that in the fact that we make such a big deal out of counting down the last 10 seconds until a new year begins?

But friends I'm not sure if you've noticed that for all the noise and celebration which our official New Year's parties have – *where we mechanically and precisely count down those last seconds of the old year* – that these celebrations are really devoid of **meaning**.

They may be entertaining and fun, and it's a nice opportunity to be with friends...

But 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. Why, because another 365 days have passed... so what?

Friends, there is no **meaning** to marking time in just mechanically and precisely counting the passing of seconds and minutes and hours.

Chronological time only has meaning when it is tied to a significant event.

So its 2013... what that means is that two thousand and thirteen years have passed since the Birth of Jesus Christ.

It is that significant event of the Savior of the world being born that is the starting point for how we mark time – both before and after. B.C. Before Christ and A.D. Anno Domni, year of our Lord...

You see friends it was two thousand and thirteen years ago when God determined it was the right time, the opportune time, the time when everything was in the right place for God to act and for the Savior to be born.

And friends these kinds of times are called “Kairos” times. They are what gives “Chronos” time its meaning.

So friends, the good news for us is that this Kairos event gives meaning to the accumulation of seconds and minutes and hours in our lives.

It helps us orient ourselves to where we are at in the big picture, in history, in His-Story...

Because friends the passing of Chronological time is really the blank pages on which God writes His story, and we can read the outline and the important highlights of that story in the scripture.

If we were to draw a time-line of that story 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 instructed to number our days – friends we number them first according the Kairos outline of His Story, and secondarily Chronologically as to how much time has passed as we live in the time before all things will be made New again.

But what wisdom comes from knowing that?

Well to quote the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:15 “The Holy Scriptures... are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

The wisdom that comes from numbering our days correctly causes us to put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ as savior of the world.

And, also the wisdom and knowledge that whatever we do now, in this life... we do because it reflects the certainty of the Kairos event that is yet to come.

Put this in practical terms friends - our New Year's resolutions will not make the world a better place; only Christ's return will put an end to all suffering and evil.

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 2013 years ago that Jesus Christ came to be the Savior of the world, and who knows how many more minutes and seconds will pass until He returns as King of the New Creation?

Who knows friends? But when I read the scriptures I get the feeling that counting down minutes and seconds is not that

important – save for the fact that every year which goes by brings us one year closer to that amazing day!

What is important is that we must change how we view time.

In Christ our life no longer consists of minutes, seconds, years, that have come and gone and in which you keep score of your achievements, what resolutions you'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 the Holy Spirit convicts us of our rebellion, Christ forgives us and we are being transformed into new creatures, the first fruits, the prototypes of a new creation.

So, in 2013 whenever somebody asks you “what time is it?” I hope that instead of looking at your wristwatch or pulling out your Smart Phone , you'll be thinking...its redemption time! and the New Creation is up next.

So Friends let us make 2013 the year where we resolve to number our days correctly so that we may gain wisdom – wisdom for salvation.

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 so that we look forward to the next Kairos event which brings in Eternity. 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.