

SOWING TIME

Read John 6.1-13. Now, this is a powerful and often preached passage on sowing and reaping – the boy had a tiny measure, but he gave it to Jesus and it multiplied so much – but today I want to try and look at this passage from another point of view.

Now I want you to know that without working a miracle, I could feed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes. Now, there needs to be some caveats – firstly, the two fish need to be alive, and they have to be male and female. Most scholars believe that the fish in the feeding of the 5000 are tilapia. Tilapia take six months before they are mature enough to have baby fish. Then they carry the eggs in the mother's mouth for three months. So with two fish, in nine months, I could have about 200 fish. That's not enough to feed 5000, but if the 200 all survived to adulthood and were equally male and female, then after a second round of breeding, I could have 20000 fish. That would be enough to feed the 5000. Of course it would take nearly two years and by then the 5000 would have starved!

One grain of barley will give 2000 grains as a good yield. So, I could sow my barley, but again, I would have to have two harvests of near-perfect yield to multiply that much, and I would need a lot of land and time invested in that. So again, in two years it could be done, but it would take a lot of time.

But here is what I want you to see: Jesus did what should have taken two years in the natural in minutes! He is above time, He is the Lord of Time, time is His servant! We think of time as a fixed entity, but you can actually sow time and reap time. And the harvest of time is this: Jesus will do for us in minutes what will normally and naturally take years.

Read Amos 9.13. Jesus is so much the Lord of time that He can have a season where the man who treads the grapes can go before the man who plants the grape seed. Imagine a harvest so fast it arrives before you even sow it!

Imagine you are getting ready for a harvest, you start to sow, and as you start to sow, before you even finished sowing, the money comes into your hand, and you have walked past the reaper! You have walked right into your harvest while still sowing!

Imagine walking to the card reader in church, and as you are on your way – ready to sow your financial seed, someone stops you and says "Excuse me, God has just told me to give you this cheque" – the ploughman has met the reaper, the treader of grapes is before the sower!

You need to realize that time is not a natural concept – it is a spiritual force. Jesus can do for you in minutes what you would take years.

The same Jesus who can create two years' worth of bread and fish in minutes, could give you a cheque for two years salary in one minute. Could you believe that? Would you realize that gift would also be a gift of time. It would be a harvest of time. So, we can reap

time – therefore we can sow time. Your life will be a lot more fruitful if you can make time a seed.

Now the devil is aware of the power of time, and he hates it – the devil hates time because every second that passes is a second closer to his final judgement. Time is a creation of God – He made the moon for the month, the sun for the year, the earth for a day, and then rested after working six days to teach us to rest once a week. God made time for us, not us for time!

But the devil will always try and get you to hate time. And he has two ways of doing that. Firstly, he will try and convince you that you do not have enough time. That you cannot have enough time to do everything you are called to do, that you need to pick and choose – that you cannot have both money and health, that you cannot be a good businessman (or woman) and a good husband and father (or wife and mother). The devil will try and get you to view time like does, like every second passing is a ticking clock as you are running out of time.

The second trap is to push you the other way and make you hate time because there is too much time. You might be waiting for a financial release, to enter into ministry, to start your own business, to complete an education, to wait for a man to marry or woman to marry. You want things now, so you cannot wait, so you break God's principles – you date someone inappropriate, not waiting for God's person, you step out into ministry before God releases you – you end up creating an Ishmael, and God still loves you – but you have to feed and look after Ishmael! We are our own worst nightmare when it comes to deciding whether we are ready. Pretty much if I think I am ready for a new challenge I am not, and if I think I am not, I normally am! Go figure!

The devil is trying to get you to hate time – when time is a gift from God, and if you learn to celebrate it, then you can sow it and reap it. I will show you some principles today on how to do this.

What I want you to see is that this whole process of Jesus' taking the loaves and fish into His hands, blessing it, breaking it and distributing it, is the whole sowing and reaping process condensed into a matter of moments. That years of increase happen in minutes. That lad sowed his five barley loaves and two small fish into the ministry of Jesus. Jesus received the boy's seed—planting it in fertile soil. He watered it, then *immediately* there was a harvest. Not only was there enough to feed everyone until they were full, there was also plenty left over for the storehouse. Whose storehouse? That little boy's storehouse! He was the one who planted, wasn't he?

What happened? The reaper overtook the sower, the seedtime and harvest all ran together – that young man gave into JESUS' ministry in the morning and that same day, he had 12 baskets left over. That is power over time.

Read Ephesians 5.16. It tells us we need to redeem the time. Redemption means to get out of the slavery of someone and become a free man. We do not need to be slaves to time. We can have harvests of time. We can redeem the time!

If you are a “too little time” person, you can find a rhythm of grace and be fruitful in ways that are amazing. Read Mark 4.27. When you are in the flow, you sow what you need to sow, and then rest! The seed does the work and you can sleep. Imagine baby Jesus – he slept loads – he let the wise men bring the gold to him! There is always a way that you do not have to do everything. You don’t have to make the seed grow, just plant it.

If you are a “too much time” person, learn to trust the process – you have sown, so one day you will reap. Apple trees take 4 years to bear apples - God didn’t make instant adulthood in the animal kingdom, for trees, or for humans. You need to learn to welcome the season of time between here and there, the corridor between call and commission. You can use the time to grow and develop so you are ready when the time comes!

So how can we redeem the time? Read Ephesians 5.10. Our first step is to test what you are doing and see if it is acceptable to the Lord. Stop wasting time! Stop doing things that do not please the Lord. Now the religious people will immediately think of secular things – stop listening to rock music, stop watching Star Wars, spend that time praying in tongues. And there is a measure of truth in that – we can all waste time with amusement.

But I have found that we are built with what look like inefficiencies – God designed the human body, a near perfect machine, a machine that can self-replicate, heal itself, it looks amazing, it can process images, sounds, ideas – it really is remarkable. But, it needs to be turned off about one third of the time. And on top of that, we need to rest one day in seven. So, we are all designed to rest, and part of that rest is watching a movie, or listening to some music. Now of course, anything can become a weight that slows us down and eventually an idol, but in most cases London Christians are not getting enough entertainment not too little.

No - wasted time is time working when you should be resting. That is dead works, and it is a waste of time. Wasted time is doing things that no one called you to do. That does not please God – because it is not done out of faith. You need faith to please God – do things out of faith, and when you have done what you need to do out of faith, then rest out of faith. When a lady gets pregnant, she cannot get pregnant again. She needs to rest, eat well and get ready to give birth. When you have got pregnant with your dream, rest!

Wasting time could be praying about something that you simply need to believe for. Sometimes our long prayers are unbelief (I am not talking about the sweet fellowship of the

Lord, fellowship as long as you like), but often our prayers end up being Godward panic. Remember God never slumbers or sleeps, so there is not point in your both staying up!

Don't waste time doing things that are not part of your calling. Now you can go overboard in this – we need an usher – well I do not feel called, well you are family, so you are called to help family! But the general direction of your life should be doing what you are designed to do.

Read Ephesians 5.11. Our second step to redeeming time is realize darkness is always a waste of time and causes a loss of time. It never produces. You go out clubbing trying to find a lady – even if you find one she won't be worth anything! You find a guy there, he won't be worth finding. People waste hours, days, weeks, months and years on this kind of darkness. Far better to come to church, find someone who loves Jesus, and loves the Word of God.

Anything you do to chase after darkness is a waste of time – lying is a waste time, adultery is a waste of time, theft is a waste of time, hating people is a waste of time, holding onto bitterness is a waste of time. Not just the time you spend chasing darkness, but it drains the rest of your time, your energy to create, to produce.

Read Ephesians 5.12. Speaking about the darkness is a waste of time, and sadly the church has medals in this. We gossip about this person and that person, then spend hours talking about the darkness in the country. If it is not election season, there is very little you will gain looking at all the darkness in politics. You can pray, but why look at the world's information, look to the Holy Spirit inside you for information! You do not need to study all the conspiracy theories – what a waste of time!

STOP FOCUSING ON THE DARKNESS – it not only wastes your time, but it infects your mind, and it is the light inside your mind that leads to the time being redeemed!

Read Ephesians 5.13. Our next step is to focus on the light. **THE ONLY THING THAT MAKES THINGS CLEAR IS LIGHT.** That's pretty obvious isn't it.... First thing you do when you walk into a room is turn on the light. If you had to live in the dark for a week, how much time would you lose?

I took Joel to a blind museum in Holland – we had to be blind for the afternoon. And you can't just cross the road, we went to a pub blind – and you try paying for a beer when you can't see the notes or the coins, and then the bartender slaps the change down on the table. The lack of light meant things took a lot of time!

Now that makes sense in the natural, but in the spiritual it is the same. When you are sitting there – can you believe she did that, this man in my church did this, this TV evangelist – did you hear, can you believe May did this, Corbyn did this, that's the same thing as turning out the lights in your brain! Then your brain is in the dark and you walk away from someone and remember what you should have said, and you forget your creative ideas and you

forgot to do things that end up costing you more time. If you want a harvest of time, you must turn the lights on. And the only source of light is Christ.

Read Ephesians 5.14. The only source of light is the Lord.

Read Ephesians 5.15. The next step is to stop being a fool. We need to walk circumspectly. This means no stone unturned – it's the word used for Herod telling the guards how to search for Jesus. Herod was telling the guards that this search for Jesus is important, leave no stone unturned because it affects all our futures. We need to take at least the same care looking for Jesus that HEROD took! We need to be operating in the same level of care – have I read my Bible today, have I been focused on the light today? Have I been a bit darkness obsessed? AM I WASTING MY TIME DOING WHAT GOD HAS ALREADY DONE?

If you are not redeeming the time, you are a man with no wisdom. You could know a whole bunch of things – but if you are not carefully walking in the LIGHT OF JESUS then you lack that wisdom.

Read Ephesians 5.16. The reason we need to redeem the time is because the days are evil. Maybe "tough" is a better translation than evil. We all know life is tough, but if you turn your eyes on Jesus, if you focus on the light, if you have nothing to do with darkness, then things get easier, things get faster, and you redeem the time! You are no longer a slave of time, but you are a master of time.

That boy with the five loaves and two fishes – multiplied in seconds – what would take years. Some of you are going to have promotions that take years in the natural, but they are going to happen for you in minutes. Some of you have twenty years left on your mortgage, why can that not be paid off in minutes? That would make you the master of time!

Some of you have believed the lie that you cannot be a great business man and a great dad, husband – or great business woman and great mum and great wife. No, the truth is you have time – you are the master over time! You have time!

Some of you are older right now, your hair is grey, your natural body is saying wind down and your natural mind is joining in the chorus – but that's not what to listen to. You need to realize that the rest of your life will be the best of your life. You are going to have more fruit in the next year, than you have had in the last 50!

IMAGINE LEADING AS MANY PEOPLE TO THE LORD THIS WEEK AS YOU HAVE ALL OF LAST YEAR, LAST DECADE.

IMAGINE SEEING AS MANY MIRACLES THIS WEEK – THIS MONTH – as you have ALL OF LAST YEAR, LAST DECADE, EVER

In 8 years, we have planted 5 churches. IMAGINE WE COULD PLANT ANOTHER 5 THIS YEAR, before the year is OUT! COME ON!

TIME IS NOT OUR ENEMY, it is our servant!

Cabernet Sauvignon is widely regarded as the best red wine to drink. On average it is aged 7 years before drinking, sometimes 10 and even 20 years. You don't make the best wine in days, weeks and months – it takes years, even decades. But Jesus - the wine is taken from the POT, in a glass, taken to the MASTER OF THE CEREMONIES – this man knows WINE – and HE SAYS “THIS IS THE BEST OF WINES” - in under a minute.

I believe that for us, today, Jesus is going to transform you from plain water to the best of wines. I believe that decades of growth, of wisdom, of seeking – all of it is going to be implanted into you within a second. That is the redemption of time, that is a true miracle! There is just one thing you need to ask yourself: are you ready?

SOWING TIME

1. Why did Ben say he could feed 5000 people with two fish and five loaves?
2. What is the perspective of the feeding of the 5000 that Ben wants us to see in this message?
3. How much over control of time is Jesus? (clue: Amos 9.13)
4. Are you a “too much time” or “too little time” person?
5. Read Eph. 5.16. What does it mean to redeem the time?
6. What are some of the steps we need to take to redeem the time?
7. What does it mean to “focus on the darkness” and why does that steal and waste time?
8. Which step do you think that you need to take the most so you can start sowing time in your life?
9. What would a harvest of time look like for you?
10. What about this message inspired, encouraged or challenged you the most?