

Dec. 8, 2002

“TIME, TIME, TIME”
Ecclesiastes 3
Dr. John A. Wells

Christmas is coming quickly, too quickly. It seems that the older I get, the more I have to do and less time to do it. This past week I read a prayer that caught my attention that had to do with time. It reads: “Living God, the numbers on my watch I think are time, but they’re not. The real time for which you made me are the moments out of time, the times when you surprise me, the times I say, “Oh, my God!” These are memorable times for them because of the miracles God provided for their freedom. Time is remembered in the great acts of God, not just in the time shown on a watch.

I don’t know about you, but time seems to be a big factor in my life, sometimes too big. It seems I never have enough time to do all the things I want to do or feel I need to do. For others, time may seem to go by very slowly, especially for the unaccompanied soldier or family member wanting to get back home. When crises come, it seems like time can get distorted. It can race by and then seem like the minute hand never moves.

Time can mean a lot of things and be measured in different ways. It can mean what we see on our watches. It can mean seasons, such as winter time or spring time. It can mean a span of events, such as the Olympics or military exercises. It can mean a countdown, such as “your time is running out”. It may be interesting to think about how you define “time” the majority of the time. I find I usually define time by subject matter, i.e. by what I need or want to do, and then schedule time around those things. Sometimes that gets hard to do when my life is mostly designed around an hourly calendar.

The Bible uses time in a lot of different ways. When you read the different stories you will find time is thought of in terms of key events such as the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses, the Babylonian captivity, the time of the prophets, the birth of Jesus Christ, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, the conversion of various disciples, etc. Time can be measured in minutes or in terms of eternity.

I think that the times that seem to count the most, though, are the times when God enters our everyday world and surprises us with His presence. It can come in the form of the birth of a child; the gift of a wedding day; the joy of healing a diseased body; the answer to prayer concerning an important relationship; or, the success of a child to overcome a significant obstacle. The times when God enters the ordinary to show us the extraordinary are precious moments indeed. The text today from Ecclesiastes is familiar and a comfort to many. I like what he also says in chapter 11, verse 7: “It is a wonderful thing to be alive! If a person lives to be very old, let him rejoice in every day of life, but let him also remember that eternity is far longer.” I pray we are all surprised this week by God in “our moments of time”. Have a blessed week.