

**“With A Song in Our Hearts”**

“Those who sing pray twice.” So says St. Augustine. The Apostle Paul would approve. Sing once. Pray twice. That’s a real time saver, and time is what Paul urges us to save: *Ephesians 5:15–16 (NRSV) Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil.*

Paul isn’t inviting us to embrace superior time management techniques; he isn’t asking the Ephesians to get more done in less time. He recognizes how hard it can be to live a Christian life. “*The days are evil,*” and that can take a toll on us. Our spirits erode and our efforts to be faithful and obedience leave us bitter not better.

“*The days are evil,*” but God is good. To lift our spirits so that we are not so dreadfully serious, we’re going to make the most of the time with a song in our hearts.

**Make the Most of the Time**

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Few things bring as much delight to a Presbyterian as a good bargain. We want to get our money’s worth, but if we can get more than our money’s worth? There is “joy, joy, joy down in our hearts!”

So when we host Presbytery, we rejoice! We serve a fine meal for the Presbytery rate of \$8 per plate, and thanks to some sage shoppers, we prepare that fine meal for \$4 per plate. “Joy, joy, joy down in our hearts!”

Each week, we are blessed by these colorful and creative arrangements. A few years ago, our flower team evaluated what we were getting for what we were paying and resolved that we could do better, and have we ever! Thanks to a sage shopper, we fill our sanctuary with beauty every week, and we get more than our money’s worth.

And on September 12, we will again be a part of Mount Penn Days with the big slide, fried oreos, and this year; something new. I reached out to John Tubuwa and asked if there were local crafts we could buy from his refugee camp and sell. We will have beaded jewelry made in the camp and the money raised will support John’s ongoing training to be a minister of reconciliation in South Sudan. \$100 isn’t that much here, but in that camp it is making a difference and spurring economic development in Jesus’ name!

That’s the kind of attitude Paul has in mind when he urges us to “*make the most of the time, because the days are evil.*” We’re on the lookout for an opportunity; an opportunity to rejoice, an opportunity to do the right thing, an opportunity to give thanks; and when we see that opportunity, we seize that opportunity; we make the most of it.

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This doesn't mean that we live a sheltered existence filled with pious clichés. *“The days are evil,”* and we can be supremely realistic and accurate in our assessment, but we don't let that reality rob of us of our joy. We keep our spirits up by recognizing where evil is at work and at the same time recognizing that God is also at work and making the most of the holy moments God sends our way.

A popular quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer expresses this “make the most of the time” attitude well: “Being a Christian is less about cautiously avoiding sin than about courageously and actively doing God's will.””

*Ephesians 5:15–16 (NRSV) Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. Keep your spirit up! Be on the lookout for the opportunities God will send your way to do the right thing, to give thanks, and rejoice with a song in your heart!*

### A Song in Your Heart

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*“The one who sings prays twice.” Ephesians 5:18–19 (NRSV) Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts.*

Music occurs in time. In fact, one of the great challenges of music is to sing in time. A whole note is a whole note; a half note is a half note; a quarter note is a quarter note; but if the time is different it changes everything. Some of our most challenging moments in worship come when we can't quite catch up with the time that the song writer had in mind.

We change everything by keeping a song in our hearts that's in a different time, in God's time which is always present to us any time. In God's time, our song rises above the temptation to react to what happens; we react without thinking and make fools of ourselves. Instead, we keep a song in our hearts that's in God's time; we respond to what happens; we think; we pray; we *“[make] the most of the time”* by *Ephesians 5:20 (NRSV) giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Again, living with an attitude of gratitude doesn't mean denying the reality of what has happened. It does mean that we draw upon the resources of our faith that we develop through our daily spiritual practice of doing our devotions – reading the Bible, using a devotional like “These Days” or [www.d365.org](http://www.d365.org), and saying our prayers. *Psalm 119:9 (NRSV) How can young people keep their way pure? By guarding it according to your word.* That's true when we're “young-at-heart” as well! We give thanks at all times and for all things, because we are learning

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to sing in God’s time; we are learning to listen for the music God whispers, because good times, bad times, all times are in the hands of the Maestro.

What time is it in your life today?

One of my favorite books is written by a Maestro, Benjamin Zander, who is the conductor of the Boston Philharmonic and tells the following story:

*Two prime ministers are sitting in a room discussing affairs of state. Suddenly a man bursts in, apoplectic with fury, shouting and stamping and banging his fist on the desk. The resident prime minister admonishes him: "Peter," he says, "kindly remember Rule Number 6," whereupon Peter is instantly restored to complete calm, apologizes, and withdraws. The politicians return to their conversation, only to be interrupted yet again twenty minutes later by an hysterical woman gesticulating wildly, her hair flying. Again the intruder is greeted with the words: "Marie, please remember Rule Number 6." Complete calm descends once more, and she too withdraws with a bow and an apology. When the scene is repeated for a third time, the visiting prime minister addresses his colleague: "My dear friend, I've seen many things in my life, but never anything as remarkable as this. Would you be willing to share with me the secret of Rule Number 6?" "Very simple," replies the resident prime minister. "Rule Number 6 is 'Don't take yourself so ... seriously.'" "Ah," says his visitor, "that is a fine rule." After a moment of pondering, he inquires, "And what, may I ask, are the other rules?"*

*"There aren't any."<sup>1</sup>*

“The one who sings prays twice.” Sing in God’s time. Live with an attitude of gratitude. Make the most of the time with a song in your heart. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> quoted from "[The Art of Possibility: Transforming Professional and Personal Life](#)" by Rosamund and Benjamin Zander, in the book "[The Power of Intention: Learning to Co-Create Your World Your Way](#)" by Dr. Wayne Dyer