

Stewards of God's Grace: January 2021

It's about time!

It's time to change the calendars in our homes and places of work and worship. Societally we are in the 'new year' of 2021 with people saying good riddance to 2020 and the turmoil it brought. Liturgically we are in the Season of Epiphany, a season which asks us to consider the manifestation of God in Christ and his claim upon our lives. Both ask us to consider our relationship with time.

Our watches, smart-phones and calendars all reflect a human measuring of time. Whether we do so digitally or with an old-school clock-face, we think of time in measurable chunks—seconds, minutes, days, years, decades, centuries. We refer to the past, the present and the future as if we had a way of grasping them all. Yet the Scriptures speak of time differently. God's time is not like ours. *"With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."* (2 Peter 3:8) We might not be able to fully comprehend what that means but it does indicate that time is present for God in ways it is not for humans. A thousand years are not like a day for us; we do not have access to all dimensions of time. We cannot time-travel to the past (despite the many novels based on that premise) nor can we see the future. We cannot hold on to the present. We do not even know how much time we have in life.



There is something freeing in that. We are not asked to redeem our past—that is God's work. We are not asked to control our future—it is God's alone. Like the first disciples, we are asked only to follow Jesus in the time we have—this day, this moment. Peter and Andrew, James and John made decisions about what to do with their time when Christ passed their way saying, "Follow me." Those decisions changed their lives. When Christ is revealed in our lives, our time is one of the first things we can commit to him. We can give him time now to learn more about being a disciple. We can give time today to care for others. We can be a witness to his love this day. And if we do that day by day, our lives will be stronger and deeper and more gracious than we ever thought imaginable. Being a steward of God's grace means honouring God each day with how we spend our time. Like the Magi's gifts, our time is precious. Giving our time and energy to Christ's work is a rich offering indeed.

In 1780 John Wesley began holding a Covenant Renewal Service in his congregation at the New Year. Perhaps his prayer, reflecting his complete self-giving, is one we can offer today:

Lord, I am no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be employed by you or laid aside for you, exalted for you or brought low for you.

Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and willingly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are mine, and I am yours. So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

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