Last week I was sitting at the Burger King over by Coney Island Ave having my breakfast, then I saw an elderly man and a woman pulled into the handicap parking space. And as they got out of their car, immediately I noticed the cap that the elderly man was wearing. It said “*Air Force Veteran*” on it and on the side of the cap, there was a pin that says WWII. I was like… “WOW”. Right off the back, I know this man was special. As I watched this elderly couple gingerly getting out of the car and entering the restaurant, they sat down at the table right next to mine. At first, I wasn’t going to engage with them, but now I had no choice but to say hi and strike a conversation with them.

 Well, as it turned out, Bill is a 94-year old Air Force Veteran who served in the Asia-Pacific during WWII as a photographer on a plane that dropped bombs onto the island of Japan. Although he didn’t specify whether he was on the same plane that dropped the two famous Atomic bombs, nevertheless his background surely got me intrigue and I was fascinated by what stories he had to share.

 Bill asked me if I am Japanese and I said no. I then went on to tell him the story of how my mother was almost taken by the Japanese, if it were not for my grandmother’s bravery who refused to let my mother go. Bill went on to tell me how he met his first wife, how she died and how he has met his current wife, who is from Brazil and is about 30 years younger than he is. Bill seemed to be a man full of wisdom and had many stories to share. His mind was still clear, for a man of his age and knew exactly what he was talking about.

 When I asked him, what’s one good advice that he would give to someone like me, he paused for a little and then replied, ***“ask good questions and choose wisely. Make the most of every opportunity, because you never know when the end might come!”*** Wow, Bill sure has some sound wisdom and advice to pass on to some random stranger who happened to be in the right place and at the right time.

 The more I thought about it, I think Bill was right. Over the course of our lifetime, we all have to many some important choices and life-changing decisions to make, some might be more critical than the others…what school to apply for, what career to pursue base on my personal interests, who to date or marry, whether to have kids or not…and how many? Where to buy your house and settle down…the list goes on and on and on. Or how about making some important medical or end-of-life decisions regarding someone whom we care for, especially with someone who is near the end of his/her life. Those are hard, hard decisions that we have to make, but ultimately we do place our faith and final trust in God’s hands.

 Earlier we read from Paul’s letter to the early church in Ephesus. The Apostle Paul was also passing along a series of ethical and moral wisdom among the early Christians (and to us today). By no means, Paul was being boastful telling them you must do this or do that. He was simply offering them some helpful advice and encouragements, as the early churches were wrestling with various challenges of their time and in their particular contexts.

 Paul challenged the early church to think about their everyday behaviors in their pursuit towards God’s wisdom and holiness. How shall we exercise our spiritual disciplines and living in community with one another and in communion with God, in spite of our differences. These were all practical challenges for the early Christians back then, as it is for churches today. **Living in Godly wisdom and honoring our faith discipline!**

 Paul challenged us to take a step back to examine our lives, not only spiritually but in our disciplines, including everyday decisions that we have to make that may impact others. In verse 16, Paul advised us to, ***“Make the most of the time, because the days are evil.”*** In the NIV- *New International Version,* it translates as ***“make the most of every opportunity.”***

 If we look at the original text in Greek, the word for the chronological time is *“chronos”,* while the word for opportunity or the moment of time is *“kairos.”* In our text this morning, Paul was referring to the **“*kairos”*** time, meaning the “opportunity” or the “moment” of time, and NOT the chronological “tick-tock, tick-tock” kind of time that we are all so familiar with. In other word, Paul was saying to us that, we need to make wise decisions about the “moment” that we are living in and to take advantage of the “opportunity” that presents itself with.

 Now keep in mind that “Taking advantage” does not mean to exploit one’s personal gain at the expense of others. It simply means that we need to cherish and maximize the full potential of every opportunities that we are presented with. Continue to count God’s blessings each day…for better or for worse.

 The book of Ecclesiastes reminds us, *“God has made everything beautiful in his time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of [humankind]; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from [the] beginning to [the] end. There is nothing better for [humankind] than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all of one’s toil-- this is the gift of God.”[[1]](#footnote-1)*

 In the King James’ version, verse 16 was being translated as “Redeeming the Time” which implies a sense of salvaging and cherishing whatever we received from God as good and go with it. Whatever we’ve got, it’s all good in God’s sight. Don’t complain because it’s all fitting for God’s use. Ultimately all things come from God and belong to God at the end.

**How we manage our life each day is a matter of stewardship through the choices that we make.** Each day God reveals to us a new page of **God’s greater plan and purpose** for us. Unfortunately, often times we exercise our own judgment and make our own decisions. We squander the opportunities that God has presented before us.

Just as in the Old Testament passage that we read earlier, King David’s son, Solomon didn’t ask for anything that was materialistic or anything for himself. What did he ask for instead? He asked for wisdom - wisdom from God that would help him discern what’s right and what’s wrong, wisdom that would help him become a better leader for his people.Solomon could have asked for other things for himself, but he chose not to. The Lord had been faithful and blessed him and his father David for the riches of the earth. God grants us wisdom and expects us to use it for God’s glory and upon God’s people.

 Ultimately our actions reflect upon our personal faith and our obedience in God. *Are we on the same page or in the right relationship with God? What do we do with the choices that we make and the “opportunities” that presented themselves in our lives?* *How have we exercised God’s wisdom and judgment for the glory of God and for the benefit of humankind?*

John Calvin, the renowned Reformed theologian once wrote*,* ***“For we always seem to ourselves righteous and upright and wise and holy - this pride is innate in all of us.”*[[2]](#footnote-2)** Human beings are naturally prideful and self-focused. We tend to serve ourselves first before we see the needs of others. We think we can be like God or at least be as wise as God. Romans 1:22 reminds us that ***“when we claim to be wise, we have become fools.”*** How often have we found ourselves in situations like that? That’s why King Solomon asked, “*Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil.”[[3]](#footnote-3)* Solomon didn’t ask more for himself. He selflessly asked for what’s in the best interest of his people.

This is an exciting and an “opportune” time to be church, as we find ourselves standing at the crossroad of our faith asking God, **“What shall we do with what we are being entrusted with, in the midst of the various challenging situations that we face?”**  We may pray for “opportunities” where we may exercise **God’s wisdom** and **God’s will**, but ARE WE willing to step up to that challenge? ARE WE willing to take a giant leap of faith out of our “comfort zone” and do what God may be challenging us to do next?

As a retired minister once offered me a word of wisdom and encouragement, he told me that *“now is the time for the church to speak with a prophetic voice and to respond in boldness, instead of remaining silent and praying that things will right themselves out? But unfortunately, that is not going to happen. We must ask and choose wisely and pray deliberately for God’s wisdom, on earth as it is in heaven.”*

**God has been faithful to His people** in spite of our unfaithfulness. Just as King Solomon and his father David had their shares of shameful moments with a few vices and unwise decisions of their own. But time after time God demonstrated God’s faithfulness and mercy upon God’s people, as long as they come to God in confession of their sins. Miracles can happen!!!

 Finally, our passage also reminds us that **God continues to lay down a vision** for his people and engage us to be a part of God’s mission for years to come. God is challenging us to invest our time wisely in the lives of others, rather than our own. Instead of asking God to bless us with more blessings, how about if we ask, “what fruits have we bore with the seeds that God has planted and nourished in our lives?” What would you want us to do in planting God’s seed in making a difference in someone else’s life? Know that we are never going solo. We are in this together and the Holy Spirit is going before us…in all that we do.

 Friends, in such time as this when the world seems to evolve in a senseless and unexpected chaos, or when the course of nature seems to be dictated into an irreversible pattern, or when things seem to be flipped upside down and inside out, it is more so than ever that we need to humble ourselves and count on God’s wisdom and not our human own. We need to entrust our lives and our hope onto God, who is our soul anchor and our rock.

 In the midst of these standing trails and adversities, the Apostle Paul encouraged us to keep on ***singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves. Let us keep on making a joyful noise to the Lord in our hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.***[[4]](#footnote-4)Thanks be to God.In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit,*Amen.*

1. *Ecclesiastes 3:11-13 (NIV)* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Calvin, John. Institutes of the Christian Religion.* Book I. I.2 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *1 Kings 3:9* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Ephesians 5:19-20* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)