

DOES ANYBODY REALLY KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS?

Final Week of the 6-Week Series, "The Songs of Life"

May 29, 2022

With Rev. Richard Maraj

Lyrics – "Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?" (Chicago)

As I was walking down the street one day
A man came up to me and asked me
What the time was that was on my watch, (yeah)
And I said

Does anybody really know what time it is
(Care) Does anybody really care
(About time) If so I can't imagine why
(Oh no, no) We've all got time enough to cry

And I was walking down the street one day
A pretty lady looked at me and
Said her diamond watch had stopped cold dead
And I said

Does anybody really know what time it is
(Care) Does anybody really care
(About time) If so I can't imagine why
(Oh no, no) We've all got time enough to cry

And I was walking down the street one day
(People runnin' everywhere)
Being pushed and shoved
(don't know where to go)
By people trying to beat the clock
(I don't know where I am)
Oh no, so I just don't know
(I can't see past the next step)
I don't know, I don't know-ow
And I said
Yes I said
(I don't have time to. I don't have time to look around)
(I just run around everywhere)

(I don't) Does anybody really know what time it is
(Care) Does anybody really care
(About time) If so I can't imagine why
(Oh no, no) We've all got time enough to die

Everybody's worryin'
(I don't care) I don't care
(About time) About time
(Oh no, no) I don't care

Message:

How many people find yourself looking at your clock or watch because you always want to know what time it is? Anybody ever? And how many people find that sometimes you just have enough time to do all the things you want to do? And how many people would say that you know you could probably use your time a little more wisely and effectively than you're currently using it?

You know, today we are going to talk about time. And what I find very interesting and intriguing about this framework called time is that it is absolutely consistent and constant. It is consistent and constant: same number of seconds in a minute; minutes in an hour; 24 hours in a day and; 7 days in a week; 365 a year. But as much as it's consistent and constant, we experience it quite differently. That there are various experiences, perspectives and things that we do with time.

Here are a few: We can spend time; we can save time; we can take time; we can make time; we can make good time. We can invest time; we can pass time; we can manage time; we can waste time; and we can even kill time! [Congregation titters] We have full-time; we have part-time; we have free time; we have spare time; we have go time; we have crunch time; we have overtime; we have too much time; not enough time; and sometimes we have no time. You can be on time; in time; just in the nick of time.

I find it interesting that time flies, and yet it drags on, and can stand still. [Congregation laughs] We can even turn back the hands of time! I know there's at least one of you thinking, *"It's about time or high time he stops doing this bit about time!"* [Congregation laughs] But I'm waiting for the right time! Because I want you to have a whale of a good time! [Congregation laughs] But time will tell. But even if this bit bombs, I will tell you, I'll keep trying ... When we travel east, we lose time. When we travel west, we gain time. If you have a lot of talent, you might end up in prime time. And if your behavior ain't so good, you might end up doing time. [Congregation laughs]

But no matter what, eventually we will all run out of time.

I wrote that bit 15 years ago. Once upon a time. [Congregation laughs] And even long before that, Benjamin Franklin said, *"Do not squander your time, for time is the stuff that life is made of."*

I mean, when you really think about it, time is one of the most precious gifts that we've been given. Because it is the raw material for everything we want to do or have or create or experience. If there's something you want to accomplish, it takes time. If there's something you want to become, it takes time. If there's something you want to experience or create, it takes time.

So my question for you is: how well are you using your time; spending your time; and investing your time?

Today this is Week #6 of our six-week annual "Songs of Life" series. Because we know how powerful music is. It can touch us; heal us; uplift us; comfort us; and inspire us. We all have at least probably one song that takes us back to a place that got us through a tough time; helped us heal; helped us pursue and continue our dreams.

We've looked at songs such as "Lean On Me" and "Go Easy on Me," "Landslide," "Here Comes the Sun." And today we're going to wrap it up by looking at the 1970's song from Chicago, "Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?" written by the keyboard player, Robert Lamm.

This lyric is really kind of a cerebral, existential kind of question: Does anybody really know what time it is? And he got the inspiration when he was a teenager. He was walking down the street in Brooklyn, where he lived, and he walked by a movie theater. And there was an usher there having a cigarette. And he said, *"Hey, man; what time is it?"* And the guy said to him, *"Does anybody really know what time it is?"*

And then he was trying to write a song like a "Beatle-esque shuffle" is what he called it, and he said the thing that inspired him was contemplating on this idea, *"Does anybody really know what time it is?"*

So our final Song of Life in this series, we're going to look and explore some of the life lessons and spiritual wisdom and insight we can gain from this fabulous Chicago song.

You know, the first thing I think it kind of teaches us is: **It's important to take time to release some of the pressure of time.** I want you to think about your relationship with time. And what are those feelings and connection to time? If I'm really honest, I have to tell you, sometimes I'm a little obsessed with time. I always want to know what time it is! I'm either asking people what time it is or looking at my phone.

You know, they say the average person looks at their phone or clock watch 10 or 20 times a day to figure out what time it is. You know, when I make up in the middle of the night, the first thing I do? I look to see what time it is. And besides the alarm going off to wake me up, it helps me ... because then I know what time it is! It is amazing how we want to know what time it is.

Do you know that there are over 300 idioms of time? You've heard me give the about 10% of them. But that's because that's how much we talk and think about time in our culture. And I would say, at some level, we're kind of obsessed. How many people have felt the pressure of time in your daily life? Anybody ever feel that? Anybody ever feel like the White Rabbit in Alice in Wonderland? *"I'm late; I'm late; for a very important date. No time to say hello/goodbye; I'm late; I'm late!"*

I mean, that's how we could feel sometimes in our lives. We are run by the pressure of time. We live in a very, very fast-paced world; sometimes fast food ain't fast enough, because we have so much stuff that we want to get done.

But they say that the pressure of time and feeling like we're constantly running against time -- racing against the clock -- actually wears us down more than we realize. That somehow we've convinced ourselves it's normal, and it's the best way to live.

I love the line in the third verse that says:

***I was walking down the street one day
Being pushed and shoved by people
Trying to beat the clock
Oh, I just don't know***

And the fact is: many of us sometimes are just constantly racing, going from one thing to another. That we're always in a hurry. And my question is: Where did this obsession with time and time driving us -- that it's almost a race against the clock -- come from? And it actually goes way back further than we realize. One of the things was in the 1300s, they started putting clocks in public places. In public squares. And in 1700, when watches came, we not only wore watches individually, but would time it with the public square clock. And then the railway time tables. And then production and industry. And then profitability. Everything started driving, and time became such a focal point. And the interesting thing is: I believe that the pressure of time is just no societal and cultural, but I think a lot of is self-induced; that we create our own pressure around time.

It's interesting that, in the 70s, the American work schedule and European work schedules were about that same, but then at that point it started changing. Because Europeans wanted ore vacation and shorter work hours, where Americans were happy to go with longer work hours and lesser taxes trying to get more money, get ore promotions so they could live the great dream and be great successes and have these great lives.

And sometimes we think knowing the time all the time, and working all the time, makes us feel more secure and happier and more successful. And it actually doesn't. It depletes us and it drains us. We don't have as good of balance and levels of fun and happiness. You know, we actually feel a little more exhausted, and we can't always enjoy all the good stuff we can, because sometimes we are so driven by the idea that time is money and our work ethic. And more is better.

And so this thing about time and the constant pressure of time. Can you imagine Jesus saying, "I'm late; I'm late; for a very important sermon?" [Congregation laughs] Can you see him checking his watch every couple of minutes? "Hey, what time is it?" No! Besides the fact that there weren't watches back then, you couldn't imagine it! You know why? Because Jesus had a peaceful mind. Jesus took time to quiet his mind. He took time for meditation to immerse his mind in the mind of God. He took time for God! And that's why he experienced, what it says is, "the peace of God that surpasses all understanding."

That regardless of the outside pressures and stresses of time and all the other responsibilities we have, we can live in a very peaceful, calmer, more centered way. That it isn't just about time; it's about how we show up in that time.

Unity has a fabulous affirmation I love. It's long, but it's good. And it's, *"I am poised and centered in the Christ mind, and nothing can disturb the calm peace of my soul."*

"I am poised and centered in the Christ mind, and nothing can disturb the calm peace of my soul."

Let's do that together, but only for half: *"I am poised and centered in the Christ mind."*

Together: [with congregation] *"I am poised and centered in the Christ mind."*

Deep breath. Again: [with congregation] *"I am poised and centered in the Christ mind."*

Deep breath. *"And nothing can disturb the calm peace of my soul."*

Together: [with congregation] *"And nothing can disturb the calm peace of my soul."*

Deep breath. And one more time: [with congregation]: *"And nothing can disturb the calm peace of my soul."*

You know, one of the things I really like is the story with Mary and Martha. Because I really think it shows the importance and difference between "doing" and "being."

And so Mary is sitting ... Jesus is over for dinner, and Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet listening. And Martha was distracted ... It says Martha was distracted by all the preparations that she had to make. And she came to Jesus and she said, *"Lord, don't you care that my sister left me to do all the work? Tell her to help me!"*

And Jesus said, *"Martha, Martha. You are worried and upset about many things. But few things are needed or, indeed, only one. Mary has chosen the better part, which shall not be taken away from her."*

And the fact that, while Martha was "doing," Mary was "being": being present, being connected, being willing to listen. And Jesus doesn't dismiss everything about the value of what Martha was doing; doing is important! But sometimes in the scope of our lives, we somehow get out of balance between our being and our doing. In terms of our prayer and our actual activity.

I find consistently when I've got the pressure and crunch of time and deadlines and so on, the best thing I can do to help myself is always take time for prayer and meditation. I find I always come back feeling more peaceful, more calm and more centered. And somehow things tend to flow a lot easier and smoother, and having more time than I actually thought that I had before.

Time is a powerful thing, but when we get overly obsessed with it, and let it drive our lives, the best thing we can do is take time to relieve stress and pressure of time by taking time to quiet our minds. Like Jesus, a peaceful mind will always lead us and guide us through the most difficult times.

The second thing I think this song teaches us with regard to time is that we need to take time to get clear on what we want. Lee Iacocca once said, *"If you want to make good use of your time, the first thing you need to do is you've got to get clear on what's important."* Sometimes we don't know what is important!

I was reading an article and it said one of the most common traits of a successful individual is the clarity of focus. How many people have ever had a time where you were unclear and unsure both about what you wanted and what you wanted to do? Okay; six or seven. Good. [Congregation laughs]

And the fact is: what happens is ... Here's an interesting thing to think about. If we are procrastinating or wasting time, or if we are running around like chickens with their heads cut off trying to do it all, they're both a sign that we aren't quite clear what's the most important thing to us. **One of the most important things we can do is to take time to get clear on how we want to spend our time.** One of the biggest

wastes of time is because we're just not clear. We haven't sat down to take time of how we want to spend our time, and what we want to focus and what we want to do.

So my question for you is: Right now, what is your highest value and priority in your life? What is the best way for you to invest your time currently? What's the most important thing that you want to change? What's the most important thing that you want to learn? What's the most important thing that you want to heal or to experience? Who are the most important people that you'd like to spend more time with? Or what is one thing in your life that you're spending time on that it's time for you to stop spending time on? And what is some time that you need to start spending time on?

I'll say without a doubt that not being clear is one of the greatest wastes of time that we have. Because clarity directs our spiritual energy and a lack of clarity dissipates it.

You know one of the lines from the Apostle Paul; it's in 2 Timothy, and these are the words he speaks upon his dying. And he said, *"And the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith."* And the reason that Paul could say he fought the good fight and he finished the race and he kept the faith was because he was clear on the fight that he was supposed to fight! He was clear on the race that he was supposed to finish. And he was clear on how he was supposed to demonstrate his faith.

So my question for you: At the end of your life, what is the good fight that you would have fought? At the end of your life, what is the race that you were meant to finish? At the end of your life, what was the way that you were meant to keep the faith? And the way that is possible is by being clear.

"Do not squander your time, for time is the stuff that life is made of." The best way to not squander our time is for us to get clear on how we want to spend our time.

The last point I want to make is about enjoying your time NOW. There's a little five-year-old boy. He's hanging with his grandma on a Saturday afternoon. And he says, "Hey, Grandma, can we stop for some ice cream with strawberries and whipped cream on top?" And the grandmother says, "You mean a sundae?" And the little boy says, "No, Grandma; I mean today!" [Congregation laughs]

You know, where I got inspired to do a talk on this song is when I was in Canada at the hotel room with my family at my brother's funeral. At that visit I had in April. And this song came on the radio. And somehow the words, *"Does anybody really know what time it is?"* hit me. Because we don't know how much time we have. We don't how much time we have left. And it reminded me how precious the time we have every single day really is. Because we're all going to run out of time at some point. Life isn't some other time in the future; it's now! That the moments that we have are absolutely vital and important and precious.

There's a Buddhist saying that says, *"Take care of this moment and you take care of all of time."* And I love it, because life's made up of moments.

I was once in the Heathrow Airport in London, and there was a watch advertisement and it said this line, *"Wherever you are in the world, make the most of now."* And I really, really liked that a lot. Because wherever you are in your life, it's now. And we need to make the most of whatever our "now" is.

So what's the most important thing you could do today? What's the way you can make the most of your present moment and your time right now that going's on in your life? In your family? In your world?

Jimmie and I both love the Psalm 1:18 verse that says, *"This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it."* And I love it, because it's so powerful and uplifting. Because it reminds us that what we have is today. That is all we have! Live this day! Live it well today!

And there are other reminders of how important it is to live in the present. Remember when Moses asked God, *"Who should I say sent me if Pharaoh asks?" And He said, "Tell them I AM that I AM. I AM that I AM sent you."* Remember? He didn't say, *"I was that I was."* Or, *"I will be that I will be,"* or, *"I could*

be that I could be." [Congregation laughs] I AM that I AM means that God is in the present. The I AM is the fullness and the presence and power of God that is in the now.

And even remember when the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness, and God promised them manna from heaven? It was their daily bread. And the instruction was, *"Don't save it or hoard it. Use your daily bread fully for that day."* And what did they do? They stored and hoarded it, and it spoiled. And the message there is don't try to hoard and spoil by thinking in the future or the past; use your daily bread today. Otherwise we will spoil our present by thinking of the future or the past.

And so what it is saying is: Life is NOW! Does anybody know what time it is? Yeah! It's called NOW! And how fully engaged and present are you to it?

And sometimes we are trained in our culture, like: *"Wait 'til this happens, and then I'm going to be happy! Wait 'til this happens; then I'm be successful!"* We're always waiting for something! You know, we're waiting to lose 10 pounds; we're waiting to gain 10 pounds. We're waiting to get married; we're waiting to get divorced." [Congregation laughs] We're waiting to start work; we're waiting to retire. We're waiting to have kids; we're waiting 'til the kids get out. [Congregation laughs] We're waiting 'til next Tuesday. We're waiting for all kinds of things! You know, and we can't really put it off.

Like, it says, *"Time waits for no one."* So the time for happiness is NOW! Remember when Jesus said, *"You say three months until the harvest; I tell you, life up your eyes and see that the fields are white and ripe for harvest!"* Lift up your eyes; you've got a great life! There's so much good going on in this NOW! The question is: How engaged are you in it? How present are you in it? And how much are you enjoying your time? How much are you enjoying the NOW?

Time's a good thing. But we shouldn't get obsessed by it, or let it control our lives or keep racing against it. Somebody once said that time is God's way of making sure that everything doesn't happen all at once. [Congregation titters] Oh, it didn't work at the first service, either; that's okay. [Congregation laughs] But I will keep trying ... time after time. [Congregation laughs]

So what can we learn? Here's the three things! Number one, release some of the pressure of the time that we put ourselves under by taking time to develop a peaceful mind. Quiet your mind; immerse your mind in the mind of God. And the second is to get clear. Get clear about what it is that you want. Get clear about what you want to focus on, because you'll direct and channel your energy, and life will be much more fun. And finally, enjoy your time, for the time is NOW! We have no idea how much more we're going to have; all we do is what we have now and how we live now.

And those are the life lessons and the spiritual insight that we gain from, "Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?"

God bless you, everybody! [Congregation applauds]

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