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*Sermon script to go with the PowerPoint slides.*

Introduction

Economic researcher and futurist Chris Martenson (I don’t know if he’s a Christian or not), has an illustration that reinforces the fact that the actual end of earth’s history could be much nearer than we think.

**SLIDE:** Imagine we’re in Sydney’s ANZ Stadium for a Grand Final. We arrive early, before midday, and we want to guarantee our seats so we climb to the very top of the stadium seating—right to the highest point—and we handcuff ourselves to our seats! At midday we see a man walk to the middle of the field. We watch as he uses a magic eyedropper to place a single drop of water on the ground—a drop that magically doubles in size every minute.

**SLIDE:** If the ANZ Stadium were watertight, how long would we have to get out of the stadium so that we didn’t drown?

For minutes we see no obvious increase in water—one drop becomes two, two drops become four, four drops become eight drops etc.

Question: How long do we have?

**SLIDE:** By 12:44pm there would be just 1.5 metres of water in the stadium, still leaving 93% of the stadium empty.

Question: How long? How much more time do we have? It’s still 93% empty! Just 1.5 metres of water after 44 minutes.

**SLIDE:** Well, the startling reality is that if we don’t get out of our handcuffs within the next five minutes, our seats at the very top of the stadium will be under water at 12:49pm! It is the power of compounding, geometric progression. For 44 minutes we think we have all the time in the world—but five minutes later, it’s over! Forever.

So it is, Martenson warns, with our planet today. It’s what we call ‘hockey stick graphs’—global trends that for centuries have appeared to be flat-lined with slow, incremental growth, then suddenly have a growth explosion. For example:

**SLIDE:** World population

Other factors are also rising very fast:

**SLIDE:** Oil usage

**SLIDE:** Fresh water usage

**SLIDE:** National debt

**SLIDE:** Consumer debt

**SLIDE:** To outward appearances the stadium has hardly any water in it—plenty of time left to get out. But as the researcher warns, in these opening years of the third millennium, earth is facing a “perfect storm.” A perfect storm of critical trends now simultaneously skyrocketing off the graphs: global debt; energy consumption; scarcity of water and food, combined with an almost vertical population growth. We thought we had time to get ready—but time’s nearly up.

**SLIDE:** Martenson writes about economic and ecological survival—that’s his specialty. Others study nuclear war, climate change and pandemic survival.

**SLIDE:** Just over a century ago, in about 1905, a lady named Ellen White—a lady blessed with the Biblical, spiritual gift of prophecy—passionately wrote about spiritual survival. Under divine inspiration she wrote, *“Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones.”* (Testimonies Vol. 9, p. 11) 9/11—that’s an easy reference to remember!

**SLIDE:** She also understood and taught that “Our time belongs to God. Every moment is His, and we are under the most solemn obligation to improve it to His glory. Of no talent He has given will He require a more strict account than of our time”.

**SLIDE:** In light of the shortness of our life, in light of the urgency of God’s mission, in light of how fast our world can take a turn for the worse, and in light of how close Jesus’ coming is - How might we best manage the TIME that God has given us?

**SLIDE:** First, we need to realise that there’s a ‘great controversy’ raging between God and Satan, with competing views about time.

* God’s Blueprint says: Every moment is a precious gift, and we are most blessed if we use our time wisely for God’s glory.

Satan’s Counterfeit, on the other hand, wants us to believe that we have ALL the time in the world, we don’t really need to worry about how we use it.

* God’s blueprint says that God created the world in six literal, 24-hour days, and that he rested on the 7th.

Satan’s counterfeit says that life on Earth took millions of years to evolve, and it will just keep evolving. We don’t really need to take time out for rest and to connect with God, but if we do, it’s best to do it on any day *except* the 7th day Sabbath.

* God says that busyness can take us away from Him.

Satan says that busyness is the best way to get ahead.

* God says that Earth’s time will soon be finished.

Satan says that mankind will find a way to save the planet from total destruction.

* God’s word says that ‘Today is the day of salvation’. I must not delay my commitment to God.

Satan says that there’s no urgency, that we should make our eternal choices tomorrow.

**SLIDE:** But why is it that Satan is so engaged in making us believe that we have all the time in the world? According to Revelation 12:12, the Devil is “filled with fury, because he knows that HIS time is short.”

If Satan’s time is short and he’s trying to do the best to destroy as many lives as fast as he can, then our time is precious. We must urgently cooperate with God in saving as many lives as we possibly can, to snatch them out of Satan’s hands before it’s too late.

And that’s why God is so concerned that we have the right appreciation of time. As in any kind of war, time management is also super important in the spiritual battle for minds and hearts.

This is why the Apostle Paul teaches us the following principle about the stewardship of time:

**SLIDE:** Ephesians 5:16 says, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

We are called to make the most of our time, because that is what a wise follower of Jesus would do. The book of the prophet Daniel expands on this wisdom: “Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.” (Daniel 12:3)

Notice how this passage is comparing being wise to leading others to righteousness, in other words, leading others to Christ.

So, to be wise in God’s eyes, is to be engaged in God’s work of saving souls, and to do so in a time-effective manner.

**SLIDE:** Let’s have a look into what Ellen White wrote about this idea of ‘Redeeming the Time.’ “We are admonished to redeem time. But time squandered can never be recovered. We cannot call back even one moment. The only way in which we can redeem our time is by making the most of that which remains, by being co-workers with God in His great plan of redemption”. *Ellen G. White, Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 350.*

In summary, to redeem time is to participate with God in His plan of redemption.

So, how can we put that into practice? I’ll share with you two practical ways.

**SLIDE:** First, find out what role you can play in God’s mission.

According to the Bible, the Holy Spirit gives to each one of us at least one gift that can be useful to further God’s kingdom, and many times He gives more than one.

1 Corinthians 12:29 says that God has appointed in the church, first apostles (people with the gift of starting new ministries or churches), second prophets (people with the gifts of encouraging and coaching others), third teachers, then miracles (those focused on prayer), then gifts of healings (or health ministries), helps (helping other people), administrations, various kinds of tongues (ministering to international communities in our area in their own language).

Other gifts mentioned by the Bible include creative communications, generous giving, leadership, evangelism and pastoral ministry.

Do you know what spiritual gifts God has given you? Speak to your pastor or elders, there are many resources to help you find out what they are. Every one of us can assist in God’s mission using the gifts that we have.

Some gifts are more geared towards organising the church, others to building up the saints, and yet others to serve and share the gospel to those outside of our community. Identifying your gifts, and using them in your day-to-day life, is only the first step in ‘redeeming time’.

Let’s take a look at another practical way of being a faithful steward of time.

**SLIDE:** Psalm 90:12 says: “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” What does that mean?

First, it means that we need to remind ourselves that life is short. That some important spiritual decisions cannot be left to tomorrow, they must be made today.

But it also means that we need to be intentional about using our time. “To number our days”, or to “number the hours of our day”, is to assign to each hour, each moment, a significant task, something that will help us in our goal of glorifying God.

**SLIDE:** A great way to remember that is that we need to “Schedule our Priorities, instead of prioritising our schedule”. In other words, unless we schedule the things that are really important to us, we will be doomed to be always doing only that which is important to others.

And what are the priorities that God has given to His people?

**SLIDE:**  I have compiled a list of those priorities. For the sake of time, I will not read the verses to you, but I’ve included some references so that you can check them out later:

1. **Devotions** – Spending time with God first thing in the day, receiving grace and power from basking in His presence. (Psalms 46:10; Deuteronomy 6:7, Matthew 6:33)
2. **Family** – Includes quality time (no devices involved) with your spouse, children and relatives. (Deuteronomy 6:7, Proverbs 5:18, Hebrews 10:25)
3. **Health** – Looking after your earthen vessel—by eating right, sleeping well, exercising, drinking an abundance of water. (Romans 12:1; 1 Corinthians 6:19)
4. **Sabbath** – Preparing for and enjoying the blessing of the Sabbath. (Exodus 20:8-11)
5. **Mission** – Participating in activities where the ultimate goal is drawing people closer to God. (Matthew 6:33)
6. **Useful Work** – Performing useful work that blesses others, provides for you and your family, provides for God’s mission and provides you with a context in which you may ultimately influence others for God’s kingdom. (Ephesians 4:28; Colossians 3:23)

**SLIDE:** When writing to counsel parents, this is how Ellen White addressed this subject:

“As far as possible, it is well to consider what is to be accomplished through the day. Make a memorandum of the different duties that await your attention, and set apart a certain time for the doing of each duty … Give yourself a number of minutes to do the work, and do not stop to read papers and books that take your eye, but say to yourself, “No, I have just so many minutes in which to do my work, and I must accomplish my task in the given time.” *Child Guidance 124.6*

What great practical advice to make better use of time!

**SLIDE:** After all, as Ellen White herself once said; “Our instances are filled with eternal consequences”. *Every Day With God, 119*

In other words, even our small decisions today will have a big impact down the line, and some of the consequences of our choices today will ripple even throughout eternity, for ourselves and for others.

**SLIDE:** A good way to remember the value of time is to ask ourselves, ‘Will what I do today make a difference in eternity?’

**SLIDE:** Jesus is our example when it comes to time management. His time was entirely consecrated to God and to His work. The gospels don’t portray an image of a stressed-out Jesus, but of One who is limited by time. His time is dedicated to those who need Him.

**SLIDE:** If we, like Jesus, set aside quality time for God every day, he will make us more efficient with the rest of our time, so that we will still accomplish the same amount or more.

**SLIDE:** Just as the canary in the coal mine used to notify underground miners of poisonous gas leaks, a quick look at my calendar notifies me of my life’s true focus. I can *profess* to be living for noble causes, but my calendar (time manager) reveals what I'm actually living for.

**SLIDE:** To close this message, I’d like to share with you the words of a beautiful song written by Christian singer and songwriter Josh Wilson. The name of the song is ‘Dream Small’.

**SLIDE:**

*It's a mother singing songs about the Lord. It's a daddy spending family time, the world says he cannot afford. These simple moments change the world.*

*It's a pastor at a tiny little church. 40 years of loving on the broken and the hurt. These simple moments change the world.*

*Dream small. Don't buy the lie you've got to do it all. Just let Jesus use you where you are.*

*One day at a time.*

*Live well. Loving God and others as yourself. Find little ways where only you can help. With His great love a tiny rock can make a giant fall. So dream small.*

**SLIDE:**

*It's visiting the widow down the street, Or dancing on a Friday with your friend with special needs. These simple moments change the world.*

*Of course there's nothing wrong with bigger dreams, Just don't miss the minutes on your way to bigger things. Cause these simple moments change the world. Dream small.*

*Don't buy the lie you've got to do it all. Just let Jesus use you where you are.*

*One day at a time.*

*Live well. Loving God and others as yourself. Find little ways where only you can help. With His great love a tiny rock can make a giant fall. Dream small.*

**SLIDE**: On page 113 of the book *Counsels on Stewardship* by Ellen Whitewe read this important statement, “A steward identifies himself with his master. He accepts the responsibilities of a steward, and he must act in his master's stead, doing as his master would do were he presiding. His master's interests become his. The position of a steward is one of dignity, because his master trusts him.”

**SLIDE**: So, how can we be faithful stewards of the time that God has entrusted to us? A faithful steward does what their Master would do if He were present. How would Jesus manage your time if He was in charge of your schedule?

Ask yourself today and every day, “Will what I do today make a difference in eternity?”