

“Be Still: When the Sun Stands Still”
Joshua 10:12-15

Do you ever find yourself saying, “There’s never enough time!”? Life seems to be full of things we want to do or see, but there is never enough time for it. This is what Henry Bemis from “The Twilight Zone” experienced in his life. “The Twilight Zone” is an old Science Fiction TV series about a different kind of time when ordinary people find themselves in extraordinary situations where the normal rules of science or life don’t seem to apply. One such episode is about a bank teller by the name of Henry Bemis. He is a bookworm who loves just being alone with a book. But his day job, his wife, and the demands of everyday life on his time, limit his ability to read as much as he wants. One afternoon, while Henry was taking his lunch break in the bank’s vault and was reading about the H-Bomb, a big explosion takes place and he is the only survivor. Let’s watch what happens:

“Time Enough to Last” - <https://youtu.be/UAXARJyaTEA>

(Second service) What ends up happening is that Henry feels such great despair at first because he was all alone and the whole world was destroyed, but then when he realizes that he finally had all the time in the world that he needs and all the books that he can read, he gets very excited and starts planning what he is going to read. The only problem was that his glasses get broken which leaves him with all the books and the all the time he needs but without the ability to read. I love how “The Twilight Zone” episodes always ended with such an ironic twist.

So how would we act if we had all the time we need? What would we do if time was not limited?

Today’s Bible story is about such a supposition. Time stands still for Joshua and his army to defeat their enemies. Joshua was the next leader after Moses. He continued the mission of the Exodus/liberation of the people of Israel. The 40 years in the wilderness had ended and this was the time when the people of Israel would enter into the Promised Land. The people of Israel were about to enter the land that God promised them. This was a big step for them. The promise was made to their ancestor Abraham hundreds of years before and it was about to be fulfilled. They had been through a lot in the desert where they had to learn to let go of their slave mentality of fear and subordination. They had to learn the new ways of God’s love and justice under the leadership of Moses. They had to trust in God’s provision for them every day through the gathering of manna for food. They had to learn the law of God by heart. But they also had to face many challenges and dangers. Here is the story for today from Joshua 10:12-15 (screen).

The book of Joshua reports many battles and victories for the people of Israel as they entered the land of Canaan, but it also reports many of their losses and struggles. There are great memories of joy, faithfulness, and success, but there are also memories of pain, disobedience, and failure. On the surface of the book of Joshua, we may hear a

cheerful voice that says that all things went really well for the people of Israel. Here is an example of this voice in Joshua 10:40-42 (screen)

So Joshua defeated the whole land, the hill country and the Negeb and the lowland and the slopes, and all their kings; he left no one remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded. And Joshua defeated them from Kadesh-Barnea to Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, as far as Gibeon. Joshua took all these kings and their land at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel.

But a minority voice is also heard in the book which reports more honestly about the struggles and failures of the people. Here is an example of this minority voice in Joshua 15:63 (screen)

But the people of Judah could not drive out the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so the Jebusites live with the people of Judah in Jerusalem to this day.

While the cheerful voice may make it sound that the people of Israel took over the land in one swoop, the minority voice tells us about the areas where they could not get in like Jerusalem and other places. The famous song, "Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho," presents the dominant voice in Joshua which says that Jericho's walls came tumbling down so quickly and that the army of Israel was powerful and unified. But I am thankful for the minority voice in Joshua because it tells of a more complex and real experience of the entry of the people of Israel into the land. It shows us that the people of Israel's entry into the land was gradual and more of a process than a one-time event. I believe that the minority voice helps us to realize that the people of Israel and their experience of following God were very much like us. Following God's voice in their lives did not eliminate all their troubles. Their story did not end like a fairy tale by saying, "they took possession of the land and lived happily ever after." The minority voice which also continues in the book of Judges reminds us that faith does not end all of our problems. In the story for today, we learn an important lesson about time and our sense of it. Even though we live on earth where time is predetermined by sunrise and sunset, i.e., human clocks and measurements, we also live in God's eternal time. The story's metaphorical and faith nature is not about time literally stopping or the sun not setting. It is about people's faith in God's eternal time where the sun feels like it stands still in the sky and we are able to live in the abundance and promise of God's presence.

We are citizens of two time zones at the same time! The first one is the one which belongs to the times of clocks and calendars. The second one is the one which belongs to eternity: God's time which is not limited by our life here on earth. The challenge is to take time to be still each day to pay attention to both kinds of time. Trusting like Joshua and his people did, we are invited to see our lives not just through our physical eyes but through the Spirit of God in and around us. We are going to take a few moments to practice this kind of seeing. I invite you to get one item out of your pocket or purse (if you don't have anything like that, just think of an item you are wearing) and try to see it

from both perspectives (time zones): the time of the clocks and the eternal time. Reflect for a few moments on that and see what insights come to you. Now, turn to your neighbors and share with them. How might we practice this kind of wisdom and seeing each day?

Here is a story about someone who was transformed through faith to see through God's perspective. It is from the famous musical "Les Miserables" based on the novel by Victor Hugo. There is a scene in Les Miserables where Jean Valjean, on parole from prison, is required by law to show his passport to anyone he meets. His passport identifies him as an ex-con and a dangerous man. So he can find no innkeeper willing to let him in. Asleep on a rock wall, he is awakened by a priest who decides to take him in despite the fact that he was an ex-con. Let's watch the clip:

<https://youtu.be/yhpwV4cwB4o>

(For second service) Without hesitation, the priest invites him in. Valjean responds, "Look, I'm a convict." He launches into his story about his time in prison, the circumstances of his parole, and then he shows the priest his passport, identifying himself as dangerous. The priest immediately invites him in again. Skeptical, Valjean throws back his hood, to reveal his dirty face, and re-peats, "I'm a convict. You saw my passport." The priest tells Valjean, "I know who you are." Stunned by the invitation, Valjean says, "You're gonna let me inside your house?" And then the priest did. He fed Valjean and gave him shelter. But Valjean stole some silver from the priest. When he was caught, the priest covered for him saying that he gave him the silver! An incredible story of grace of someone who is aware of both times zones!

This is the power of seeing as God sees! So take time, be still, and let God shape and transform your vision and your life! Amen.