

## 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

<sup>29</sup>I also say this, brothers: The time is short. From now on, let those who have wives live as if they have none; <sup>30</sup>those who weep, as if not weeping; those who rejoice, as if not rejoicing; those who buy, as if not possessing; <sup>31</sup>and those who use the world, as if not getting any use out of it. For the way of life that belongs to this world is passing away.

### Short!

#### I.

I brought with me today some of my most prized military paraphernalia. Perhaps the twenty or so members of the congregation who have past military experience will understand. I have here my short-timer mug as well as my short-timer poster.

The short poster was to let you count down from 1000 days left of service. Some guys counted down until they would leave the foreign country they were stationed in, others, like me, counted down to the day we would be separated from military service.

“I also say this, brothers: The time is short” (1 Corinthians 7:29, EHV). Paul didn’t know when the Last Day would be. Jesus said: “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Mark 13:32, EHV). Paul wasn’t going to try to make a short-time poster with a nice, definitive end date, like the military one. But “The time is short.” So...what do you have time for?

Today is our Life Sunday. Before he left office, former President Trump declared January 22, 2021 “National Sanctity of Human Life Day.” This past Friday marked the 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Roe v. Wade ruling by the Supreme Court, which legalized abortion nationwide. Since that decision in 1973 more than 62 million Americans have been killed by abortion. 62 million lives snuffed out. 62 million lives which were far too short.

The Psalmist David wrote: “Certainly, I was guilty when I was born. I was sinful when my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5, EHV). Every human life is sinful from the time of conception. As such, every human life is in need of salvation. We call life the time of grace. We call it that because it is during a person’s lifetime that they are able to come to faith. It is important not to cut that time of grace short.

#### II.

“From now on, let those who have wives live as if they have none” (1 Corinthians 7:29, EHV). Some people despise marriage. While some might think that remaining unmarried is a holier path than marriage, the more likely reason is they don’t want any constraints put on their sexuality. “You can’t tell me what to do with my body.”

Last week’s Second Lesson found Paul very specifically and very literally explaining many ways human sexuality is misused. He told us to be chaste, to be pure in our use of human sexuality. He told us to follow the commands of God and not to engage in things that God forbids; also, not to try to redefine human sexuality to fit the mold of current culture. Does Paul with this verse indicate he has changed his tune?

Not at all. Whether married or unmarried a Christian is to always remember that God is in first place, even above one’s spouse, even above yourself. A Christian with an unbelieving spouse or a difficult spouse is to focus on Christ and continue to show love and respect to that spouse.

“Those who weep, as if not weeping” (1 Corinthians 7:30, EHV). Christian people are to have a different set of criteria for what makes us happy or sad. Losing loved ones makes us

feel sorrow, but when we know they trusted Jesus for salvation, that sorrow turns to joy.

“Those who rejoice, as if not rejoicing” (1 Corinthians 7:30, EHV). That sounds kind of strange. Live as though we are not rejoicing? Several million people were probably disappointed that *they* were not the one with the \$740 million winning lottery ticket this week. One single ticket holder is probably rejoicing. Even taking the lump sum amount of over \$500 million and paying all the taxes will leave a lot to rejoice over, right? But the saying goes: “money can’t buy you happiness.”

“Those who buy, as if not possessing; <sup>31</sup>and those who use the world, as if not getting any use out of it” (1 Corinthians 7:30–31, EHV). The money from the winning lottery ticket is quickly gone. It’s spent on things and experiences and trips and special celebrations. Most lottery winners wind up bankrupt just a few years later. Those special times are fleeting. The things one buys fade and spoil and become less interesting and less important. Only fond memories of the experiences remain.

### III.

“For the way of life that belongs to this world is passing away” (1 Corinthians 7:31, EHV). The things and relationships and experiences so many people build their whole existence on are fleeting. We lust after the things of this world and then discard them again and again through the years.

So many people crave wealth and power; they look for adoration from others. All of it passes away. The whole cyclical process ought to make us realize that those things don’t really have all that much value.

There *is* something of value, though. “The way of life that belongs to *this* world is passing away.” Paul makes us think about a different world; the world of redemption Jesus came to bring.

Jesus was so far above this world, yet he humbled himself and came to be a part of it. In all his earthly relationships, Jesus always remembered to put God far above them in first place. While he showed sorrow as those he loved died, he came to win the power over death so that death no longer would have a lasting sadness. His rejoicing was over the lost sinners he came to redeem. He lived without the wealth of a winning lottery ticket, or *any* wealth, for that matter, so that he would bring us the kind of wealth beyond any human comprehension.

### IV.

“I also say this, brothers: The time is short” (1 Corinthians 7:29, EHV).

We are short-timers. Since the time is short, take time for things that are timeless.

God wants us to take time for things that are *really* important. You are listening to God’s Word today. That is priceless. God’s Word and sacraments bring the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Those blessings are not things that are passing away. They are not blessings that are here and then gone again. They are eternal. Wise men and women still come to hear the Word of God—to kneel at the manger of the Savior, to cling to his cross, to gaze in thanksgiving at his resurrection from the dead, realizing that because he lives, we will live also. Never-ending life in the mansions of heaven he is preparing for us awaits.

Short! The time is short before we go to enjoy that eternal life he is preparing for us.

But there *is* still time. Don’t be so busy filling in the squares on your short-timer poster so much that you forget that others are short-timers, too.

Use some of the time you have remaining to serve your neighbor. It’s one of the reasons you are still here. Your time is not yet finished—God still has a plan for you.

Serving your neighbor includes loving your spouse, if you have one. It means mourning with those who mourn, rejoicing with those who rejoice. It means acquiring and using money and worldly goods to serve others. Serve in your vocations. There are probably more than one: your job, a friend, a child or a parent—or both. Whatever positions you find yourself in are corners of the world where God has placed you.

Sometimes, maybe often, you will have an impact that is timeless. You can witness to a friend or a spouse about what is really important—the one thing needful.

The time is short. But there still is time. Don't become so busy with the things of this world that you have no time for that which is timeless and eternal—the Gospel.

At the same time, remember that God has given us the things of this world to enjoy. Enjoy your spouse and the people around you.

No one knows how many squares are left on your short-timer poster—only God knows. As you mark your days, keep your attention focused always on your greatest joy—your Lord and Savior, Jesus. Amen.