

Why the Church Must Seize the Day During These Chaotic Times

In adversity, there is often great opportunity. We are living in one of those moments as a nation.

While there is division and unrest, there is unity and wholeness to be found. There are also incredible opportunities for the discerning—for those who will seize the day.

The Latin phrase *carpe diem*, meaning “seize the day,” was popularized after the 1989 movie *Dead Poets Society*. In the film, Robin Williams played John Keating, a man who loved poetry and worked as a passionate English teacher at a boys’ Ivy League preparatory school.

In one of the early scenes, John led his class of young men into the school foyer where several trophy cases lined the walls. In these cases were pictures of previous classes and the trophies they had won. Mr. Keating, or “O’ Captain” as some of the boys referred to him, told the boys in dramatic fashion to look closely at some of the old team photos of the young men that preceded them.

The youth began to look with awe and wonder as Mr. Keating, like an old sage, declared:

“They’re not that different from you, are they? Same haircuts. Full of hormones, just like you. Invincible, just like you feel. The world is their oyster. They believe they are destined for great things, just like many of you. Their eyes are full of hope, just like you.

“Did they wait until it was too late to make from their lives even one iota of what they were capable? Because, you see

gentlemen, these boys are now fertilizing daffodils. But if you listen real close, you can hear them whisper their legacy to you. Go on, lean in. Listen, you hear it?—Carpe—hear it?—Carpe, carpe diem. Seize the day boys, make your lives extraordinary!”

Throughout the movie, this impassioned English teacher strove to impart zeal, creativity, his love of poetry and life into these boys. Some received freedom from their fears and timidity and attempted that which they thought was otherwise impossible. Still others brazenly misdirected their zeal and passion toward wrong pursuits. Mr. Keating saw the potential in these boys and dared them to live life to its fullest, and to make their lives matter—to become extraordinary people.

Years ago, I was deeply impacted by this movie. I was in my late twenties and discouraged about how life was going. I thought to myself, “Seize the day—make your lives extraordinary—that’s a truth everyone needs to be reminded of daily.”

I realized that our ability to overcome fears, hurts and past failures determines the richness of our lives today and the legacy we leave for tomorrow. Change and transformation is the path forward for overcomers.

As I write, my mind recalls times when I seized the day and later saw the fruit of my pursuit, even though sometimes years would pass before the realization of a goal or dream. I also remember days and seasons of my life when I missed opportunities. There were times when I found myself hindered by a past event or overcome with feelings of inadequacy.

The truth is that we will all be “fertilizing daffodils” one day. Each day is a gift; our time is our most precious commodity, and we choose daily how we spend that time.

I was painfully reminded of this reality last week. First, our family dog of 15 years, Mya, suddenly passed away. It’s never

easy to lose a devoted family dog. More tragically, a friend in Florida lost his wife after a 6-month battle with sudden and aggressive cancer. My heart breaks for Brian in losing his wife, Ann. To say life is short is an understatement—each day is a bonus friends—use them wisely!

Paul exhorted the Ephesians about time:

Ephesians 5:15-17 says, “See then that you walk carefully, not as fools, but as wise men, making the most of the time because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” The Common English Bible translates verse 16 this way: “Take advantage of every opportunity because these are evil times.”

Evil surrounded the people of Paul’s day, and we face the same dilemma. We must learn to be careful and intentional about how we spend our time—that’s wisdom—despite evil and contradictory circumstances. Paul would write Timothy later, “Know this: In the last days perilous times will come.” (See 2 Tim 3:1-5.) Evil has always beset humanity; our day is no different.

The Founding Fathers of our nation also understood evil in their time. The tyranny of the King of England reached a tipping point. They acted and redeemed their day, envisioning freedom and a new nation. Two hundred and forty-four years later, the United States of America is the greatest example of democratic government, freedom and civil liberties our world has ever known. Our nation is not perfect, neither were our Founding Fathers. Despite their flaws, God worked through them to envision a government by the people and for the people that is unparalleled today. America is a great nation, despite our past failures and blemishes.

COVID-19, the lockdowns and economic hardship and uncertainty pushed our nation to a tipping point this in 2020. The tragic death of George Floyd triggered pent up anger and hostility in many. What started out peaceful, quickly became violent.

Peaceful protests for racial injustice and police reform largely have been taken over by leftist extremists bent on culturally changing our nation—and our history. Yet, despite this turmoil, God is still in control and is working among His people to be the light amid darkness. Church in America, we have an opportunity to pray and seek God for revival and healing in our land—we must seize the day!

God often brings major transitions during times of uncertainty. While this may seem like an inopportune time to pursue dreams, it may be the moment to act on what God has revealed to you. You are the only person who can “seize” your day. You must wisely use your time and learn to live in God’s will to fulfill your desires and calling. Learn to invest your time, treasure and talent—it’s like putting money in the bank; you gain dividends!

You are God’s masterpiece, His special creation in Jesus destined to accomplish the good things He planned for you long ago. In some respects, you have to try hard not to be extraordinary! {eoal}

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