

Sermon  
Rev. Lang Yang

**“Make the Most of Every Opportunity for the Days are Evil”**

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
St. Paul Lutheran Church – Caro, MI  
8-19-18

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Ephesians 5:16** *“making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”* This is the word of the Lord. (Cross reference – Galatians 1:4, Ephesians 6:13, James 4:5)

Illustration “Kublai Khan” (Show Kublai Khan)



Kublai Khan, the grandson of marauding conqueror [Genghis Khan](#), Kublai Khan is famous as the founder of the Yuan or Mongol Dynasty of China. Kublai Khan centralized taxes and administration, improved agriculture, and established a famously splendid court at Cambaluc (now Beijing). In 1269 Kublai Khan sent a request from Peking to Rome for “a hundred wise men of the Christian religion. And so I shall be baptized, and when I shall be baptized all my baron and great men will be baptized, and their subjects baptized, and so there will be more Christians here than there are in your parts.”

(Show globe pointing at Armenia)



The Mongols were then wavering in the choice of a religion. It might have been, as Kublai forecast, the greatest mass religious movement the world has ever seen. The history of all Asia would have been changed. But what actually happened? Pope Gregory X answered by sending two Dominican friars. They got as far as Armenia, could endure no longer and returned home. So passed the great missionary opportunity in the history of the church. (R. Dunkerly, in Resource, No. 2)

I. In today’s epistle lesson, St. Paul talks about seizing the opportunity, grasping the moment while you’ve got a chance. Rather Paul was talking about opportunities for spiritual growth, open doors when we have a chance to do God’s work. As Jesus said, (Show picture of day)



*“As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.”* (John 9:4) Because of the troubles and temptations of this world, those opportunities are limited. As St. Paul wrote, *“Make the most of every opportunity because the days are evil.”* (Ephesians 5:16) (Show Apostle Paul)



During his lifetime, Paul looked around him and saw opportunities. There were opportunities for evangelism and mission work. He saw wide open mission fields, people who hungered for a relationship with God. He saw thousands of his fellow Jews anxious to hear Good News about the Messiah. Paul had probably heard these words of Jesus from several of his co-workers: *“Go and make disciples of all nations...You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and all the ends of the earth...The harvest is great, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into the harvest field.”* (Mt. 28:19, Acts

1:8, Mt. 9:37-38) All around there was opportunity to proclaim the Good News.

(Show Billy Graham and John F. Kennedy)



In his autobiography, *Just as I Am*, Billy Graham tells about a conversation he had with John F. Kennedy shortly after his election: “On the way back to the Kennedy house, the president-elect stopped the car and turned to me. ‘Do you believe in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ?’ he asked. ‘I most certainly do.’ ‘Well, does my church believe it?’ ‘They have it in their creeds.’ ‘They don’t preach it,’ he said. ‘They don’t tell us much about it. I’d like to know what you think.’ I explained what the Bible said about Christ coming the first time, dying on the Cross, rising from the dead, and then promising that he would come back again. ‘Only then,’ I

said, ‘are we going to have permanent world peace.’ ‘Very interesting,’ he said, looking away. ‘We’ll have to talk more about that someday.’ And he drove on.”

(Show Billy Graham and John F. Kennedy having breakfast)



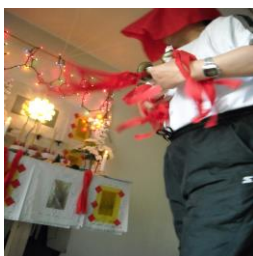
Several years later, the two met again, at the 1963 National Prayer Breakfast. “I had the flu,” Graham remembers. “After I gave my short talk, and he gave his, we walked out of the hotel to his car together, as was always our custom. At the curb, he turned to me. ‘Billy, could you ride back to the White House with me? I’d like to see you for a minute.’ ‘Mr. President, I’ve got a fever,’ I protested. ‘Not only am I weak, but I don’t want to give you this thing. Couldn’t we wait and talk some other time?’ It was a cold, snowy day, and I was freezing as I stood there without my overcoat. ‘Of course,’ he said graciously.” But the two would never

meet again. Later that year, Kennedy was shot dead. Graham comments, “His hesitation at the car door, and his request, haunt me still. What was on his mind? Should I have gone with him? It was an irrecoverable moment.” (<https://www.sermonsearch.com/sermon-illustrations/5352/president-john-f-kennedy/>)

- II. St. Paul looked around him and saw opportunity, an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel, opportunity to learn God’s Word, opportunity to help others who were hungry or poor or sick. And we have the same opportunities today! Most of the world is still a wide open mission field. In some countries like China or Japan, Christians make up only a tiny percentage of the population. Here in the United States more than half the population rarely or never attends worship. We have neighbors who have never heard the Gospel and who have never been invited to church. We have the same opportunities and perhaps even more advantages than Paul. (Show modern technology)



We have the printing press, radio, and television broadcasts, satellite communications and the internet. There are so many ways for us to proclaim the Gospel. And we can learn and study God’s Word here in our own town without fear of being arrested or arriving on Sunday morning to discover the doors have been padlocked. The opportunities are all around us. (Show Hmong Shaman)



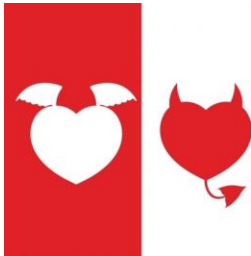
And, just like in Paul’s day, the evil is all around us too. The Hmong that still hang on to the spiritual believe tell others Hmong fellow that if you are Hmong, then you must believe only the Hmong religion. Putting their trust on Shaman as the mediator. False teachers tell us that Christianity is old fashioned and meaningless in today’s world. Evolutionists say there is no God; we just happen to be here by chance. We fear for our children and teenagers when we hear about on-line predators who try to talk to them in internet chat rooms.

“The days are evil,” St. Paul writes. We are attacked by those who hate us; we are also attacked by ourselves, and our own sinful nature. In St. Paul’s day, both Jew and Gentile Christians fell away from the faith. The same thing happens to us. 55% of all children baptized in the Lutheran Church never enroll in catechism class. We loose half of them between baptism and confirmation, and it usually happens because the parents have their children baptized, but don’t bother to go to church after that. (Show parable of sower)



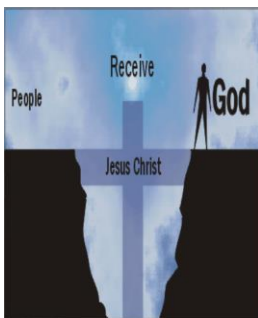
And 40% of those who are confirmed in the Lutheran Church loose interest and stop attending after confirmation. It reminds us of the parable Jesus told about the farmer who went out to sow the seed. Some of the seed fell on rocky soil and other seed fell among thorns. As Jesus explained, the worries of life, the deceitfulness of wealth, troubles and persecution cause them to fall away. The days are still evil.

III. Because the days are evil, Paul writes, we should make the most of every opportunity. We should make the most of every opportunity to worship and study God’s Word. (Show of good and evil)



That’s what Paul means when he writes, “*Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will*” (Ephesians 5:17) The way to understand the Lord’s will is to understand his Word. The days are evil, and we never know when those opportunities will be gone. Christians in other times and places have experienced persecution when Bibles were taken away and burned, and churches were closed. We may think, “Oh, that’ll never happen here.”

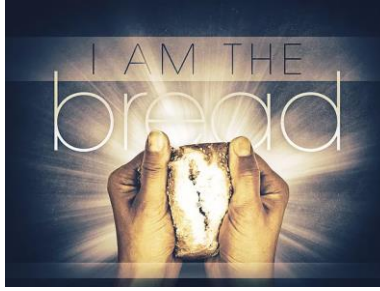
(Show go and tell the people)



Brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, what opportunities will you have this week? A chance to start the day of right? To get a promotion at work? To help someone in need? God presents us with opportunities every day too - opportunities to pray, to worship, to tell others of His love and how we can be saved through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May we make the most of every opportunities He gives us. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. Amen.

# Children Message



**Theme:** The Bread of Life

**Object:** A slice of Bread

**Scripture:** John 6:51 "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." (NIV)

Good morning, boys and girls. Have you ever thought of the things that Jesus said he was, or what he called himself? Jesus wanted everyone to understand why God had sent him, and so he called himself some very interesting names. He said that he was like a "vine," the main vine. He called himself the "groom" like in the bride and groom. He said that he was a "shepherd," and one time he called himself "living water." Another time he talked about being the "Lamb of God," and once in a while he was the "teacher" and "master."

Jesus wanted people to know who he was, when he talked to them and each name meant something special to him and to the people whom he was talking to. I brought along with me something that Jesus called himself one day, something that all of us know a little bit about. (*Show them the slice of bread*) What do you call this? (*Let them answer*) That's right. Bread. Did you know that Jesus called himself "bread"? (*Let them answer*) He did. It might not surprise you that he called himself bread when you know that he also called himself a vine or water, but let's think about being bread.

What do you like about bread? (*Let them answer*) You like the taste of it. Do you like it in the morning? (*Let them answer*) You like toast, don't you? And do you like bread in sandwiches for lunch? How about with butter and jelly on it when you eat your dinner? Some people eat a peanut butter and jelly sandwich before they go to bed at night. One of the things about bread is that it is good at any time. Jesus is good for us all of the time. Bread also fills you up, doesn't it? (*Let them answer*) It sure does. Bread can make you feel so full that you can't eat another bite. Jesus is also enough for anyone. When we have Jesus, we don't need anything else, but of course when we have Jesus, we are wanted and shared by everyone.

But Jesus said he was a different kind of bread. You eat this bread and by lunch you will be hungry again. (*Show the bread*) You eat some bread at lunch, and you will be hungry again by dinner. The food we eat here, even the bread, only lasts a little while. Jesus said that he was different because he said that once we have had him, we would not need any other kind of Lord or Savior. Jesus said that he was the kind of bread that would fill a person up with the Spirit of God so much, that once we had him, it would be enough for our entire life. That is the kind of Savior that we want. We want a Savior that will fill us up forever.

Pray: Gracious God, thank you for being the bread of life for us. You are our Savior forever. Amen.