

So many July 11, 71 P.M. WXR I -

"YOUR TWENTY-FOURTH HOUR"

Ecclesiastes 12:5-7

Someone has figured out your life in a 24 hour period.

We might as well face it the physical and material side of us is destined to die!

No one can escape - not one!

As Christians we look beyond the grave for eternal life - our hope does not end with the grave.

As far as this physical life is concerned - it will slip through your fingers.

Your 24th hour may come as a blinding accident - or at the end of a long terminal illness.

It may come in the bloom of your youth - or the extremities of old age.

The old epitaph on one gravestone reminds the living --

"As you are, once was I:

As I am, someday you will be".

This is clear enough to communicate to all. The person with little or much learning can understand that true--relevant--eternal truth.

How near you are to the 24th hour no one can say.

If we were generous with ourselves and assume we will live to be eighty (which is much longer than average) --

Assume this 24 hours compressed into a single day - this is one's life time!

Say there are 16 waking hours of a day that begins at 6 A. M. and ends at 10 P. M.

Figures out: - if

10 years old - it is now 8:00 A. M. and breakfast is over.

20 years old - it is 10 A. M.

30 years old - it is 12 Noon.

40 years old - it is 2 P. M. and lunch is past.

50 Years old - it is 4 P. M.

60 years old - it is 6 P. M. and dinner is being served.

70 years old - it is 8 P. M. and shadows have already fallen.

80 years old - it is 10 P. M. and time for the lights to go out.

And there is nothing you can do to stop the passing of time. You can unplug the electric clock, refuse to wind your watch - you can date all of your letters 1970 - but your appointment with these 24 hours moves steadily closer.

No such thing as saving time - we either use it or misuse it - but we never save it - death will kneel at your door!

Ostriches have come in for their share of humor - the ostriches were having a convention. 99 ostriches arrived on time and stuck their heads in the sand. Finally, the last delegate got there, looked around, and said, "Where is everybody?" This ostrich attitude will not solve our fears.

Michelangelo, great artistic genius - complained on his death bed - "I regret that I am dying just as I am beginning to learn the alphabet of my profession". He was tormented by awareness of the body's corruption and decay. Near the end of his 89 years life - he wrote "I have reached the twenty fourth hour of my day and no project arises in my brain which hath not the figure of death graven upon it. (Robert Coughlan).

One of his (sonnets) reflects this anguish - well - nigh the voage now is overpast and my frail bark, through trouble seas and rude,

Draws near that common haven where at last
Of every action, be it evil or good,
Must due account be rendered, Well I know
How vain will then appear that favoured art,
Sore idol long and Monarch of my heart,
For all is vain that man desires below.
And now remorseful thoughts the past upbraid,
And fear of twofold death my soul alarms,

That which must come, and that beyond the grave:
Picture and sculpture lose their feeble charms,
And to that love divine I turn for aid,
Who from the cross extends his arms to save.

The great artist spoke of the frail body at last going down in the sea of death.

Man is the only creature who knows he must die.

Vincent Scully, a great teacher, told a class in architecture: "You are a man, you want things that nature doesn't want. You would like to live forever, and nature will kill you".

Every man will at last go down the ways of death.

V. 5 - "Because man goeth to his long home - and mourners go about the street.

Long home - picture of death providing you a journey to a distant home, from which there will be no return.

Men still try to forget this a work entirely upon earthly security.

Insurance man seeks to anticipate life's unexpected hazards - yet he tries to sell the idea of economic security for us.

Our desire for this kind of security urges us to greater efforts to provide economic security. Has attraction for humanity.

Men drive themselves mercilessly so that they might have homes of their own - toil into the night to purchase food, clothes. Struggle to belong to the social fabric of the day.

Even nations seek national security. Live to be protected against.

Never has there been greater wealth in America - average income greater.

Never experienced greater personal insecurity - working man fearful his job will not last, lest his health break under daily strain.

Employer is afraid that his sales will not hold up, that increasing taxes will put him out of business, that a general depression is on the way, that the earnings of a life time will be wiped away.

Our hospitals are overflowing - more people suffering nervous breakdowns because of trust in a material security that is insecure.

We are easy prey to the common idea that we can be secure through material property - secure against what?

The pains of the human heart are just as keen in palaces as in log huts.

Death is no less death in a bronze casket as in days of a wooden casket.

Money can never bring peace of mind and serenity of soul. Man cannot live by bread alone. Greed will eat upon his soul.

McGuffey's famous reader had the story of an old miser who had a secret hideout for his money under his home. He spent his life making and hoarding his money and carried it to his secret hiding place through a trap door in the floor. For days the neighbors missed seeing the old man around his farm. When they investigated they found that the door had fallen shut and trapped him in his rich cave like a rat. "Man shall not live by bread alone".

We trust in false security of our nation. We are impressed with our powers and our virtues. We are strong, richest people on earth.

Remember the Pharaoh's of Egypt once strutted like peacocks but the only thing left of them is their tombs.

Babylonians once wallowed in wealth as their ruthless armies sent fears into the hearts of all men, but our only record of them is the remains of their dead cities.

Rome once spread her eagle wings over the whole world but the glory of Rome is no more.

Our military strength - national pride is false security.

What I am saying is even nations have their 24th hour! Nations dies as do individuals.

I have been talking to you on the basis that you might live 80 years. Even this is no measure of your life.

The person who have lived the longest, as far as the record goes was-

Methuselah. Yet his was among the shortest biographies ever written. Here it is, "and all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years and he died". That's all - nothing else to be said about Methuselah. He had one life. A shortened life means a shortened opportunity to assist in bringing in God's kingdom.

V. 6 - Reminds us that life is like a fragile clay, pitcher which gets "broken at the fountain" one day. Silver Cord - Solden Bowl Broken - Picture - Wheel -

Like the pulley wheel which gets broken at the cistern.

So the water falls and spills out on the ground from the broken pitcher, or the water remains undrawn in the cistern because the pulley is broken.

Picture death.

Occasionally a person feels that the four walls of a room are gradually closing in on him.

In a real sense the four walls of the universe are moving in on us. May slow down but not stop - as the teacher said - you would like to live forever but nature will kill you.

We go for periods when we forget this - then a close friend dies - or we visit a critically ill person - or see a news story - reminds us.

How do people react to this?

I. THEY LIVE IT UP.

Pattern of life - philosophy is eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.

Live and let live.

Get it while you can.

Let the other fellow look out for himself.

Whats in it for me - living a frenzied, hectic life.

One fellow wrote.

There are a number of us, who creep, into the world to eat and sleep.

And know no reason why we are born

Save only to consume the corn,
Devour the cattle, flock and fish
And leave behind an empty dish".

II. THEY "DROWN IT OUT"

Tired of living and scared of dying.

Some want to get it over as soon as possible. Extreme example is suicide - some feel they are going to beat death to the draw. Feeling there is no reason for living.

Escape the grim reaper by jumping into his arms.

Some choose a slower but effective method of self destruction through such habits as alcoholism and drug addiction.

Alcoholism may take as long as 30 years and thousands of dollars to do the trick. This is a gradual descent.

Not able to face reality - alcoholism, drives him toward death - steadily approaching that goal.

Mrs. Marty Mann head of the national council on alcoholism has described alcoholism as an "iceberg disease".

Which may affect far more people than is immediately apparent.

Alcoholism ranks in the 4th major health threat in the nation behind heart disease, cancer, and mental illness, but it may well be the number one and just not show.

Under influence of alcohol, the escapist feels temporarily that he can handle his own problems as well as taking on the whole world. Unable to deal with reality, he flees into a world of fantasy.

Some use other manifestations of escapism. The schizophrenic lives in his own little private world of imagination and distorted thinking. Go off in own thoughts of fantasies.

III. THEY EMBRACE DEATH IN A REDEMPTIVE WAY

Cross - enemies mocked Jesus - "Save thyself and come down from the cross".

"He saved others, but himself he cannot save".

He could have come down - he wanted to save others. I Cor. 1:23. Cross became the power of God unto salvation.

Christ as the son of God could have used his supernatural powers to escape the cross.

But there is no escape for you and me - the walls are closing in.

As far as this present life concerned, I look into the faces of dying men and women, and they look into the face of a dying man.

There is no question as to the fact of our death.

Like Christ - we can use both life and death redemptively with ourselves.

Instead of morbid pre-occupation with ourselves or false escape from ourselves we can live to bless someone else.

Most people live just the opposite.

It is upsetting - humbling -

"Self-interest is the greatest motivating force in the lives of most people".

When we look outside at the weather each morning - our first interest is how it will affect our plans for the day!

When we read the newspaper we judge the news by the influence it will have on us!

When we are ask to do something, our first reaction is what it will or will not mean to use.

Now - your first reaction may be that I have judged you falsely.

Perhaps I have - only you can see your life - if you have a desire to help others, then nurture it. If it is absent, pray for its presence.

Few of us will die on a flaming cross of glory - few of us will live to achieve spectacular redemptive deeds. Most of our redemptive living will be an inch at a time. Few will be heroes, martyrs - but we do need to pray to be loose from self and live redemptively.

24 hour will have no dread - your death will in some small way bless others.

The only ultimate security is the security of God. His security involves repentance and forgiveness.

In the song of Deborah we read: "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera".

If Sisera fought against God, you might expect the stars to fight against Him because God made the stars.

You can not find peace of mind and serenity of soul this side of an altar of repentance.

What hope is there for personal peace if you seek to live with a tormented conscience?

If the inner voice says, yes -

You stubbornly say no - you carry on a civil war in your heart. Stop tormenting yourself - make peace with God.

It is said that an American Chaplain was riding through a little french village that had been practically destroyed during World War I.

To his amazement he heard the strains of organ music. Then he saw a church, two thirds of which was wrecked but the chancel and organ loft were only slightly damaged.

On the organ bench was a British soldier who, on the day before, had been in the thick of the battle.

He was playing the great hymns of the church - "Abide with Me", "In the Cross of Christ I Glory", "O Come All Ye Faithful" -- what amid the wreckage and despolition of men here was the music of eternity. What a picture.

Your 24 hours may come - this is God's kind of security. This great faith is yours for the asking and it will not let you down.

"Death took me by the ear & said I'm coming for you" - so true