

**Reeks:** Gasspreker...

**Titel:** ... Let Go: Life at the Speed of Blur

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Good morning, I'm glad I get to be with you this morning. We are going to explore what it might look like for us this morning to let go of a life that's running at the speed of blur. Anybody going at the speed of blur, at least in your head, right, whether you're actively moving that way?

It's been said that in the modern era one of the quintessential metaphors might be the motorcycle where we would jump on, go to the open road, leave it all behind and get on with... out there and just go, but a sociologist said recently that maybe in the late modern era it's not so much the motorcycle as a metaphor, but the wheel spin. You know, the car that is not getting quite enough traction, and so you hit the accelerator a little bit harder, and pretty soon what little traction you had you have now no longer, and all the dirt and all the rocks have spun out behind it, and what we typically do is, as the wheel spins we think, well, apply a little more accelerator. And if you just continue doing that you're going to blow the engine.

And maybe the wheel spin is much more typical of how we feel life is. It's not so much just go to the open road and leave it all behind; it's I'm trying to leave it all behind and I'm trying to get to the open road, but my wheels just keep spinning. Maybe the treadmill is a better illustration, right, going, really, nowhere fast.

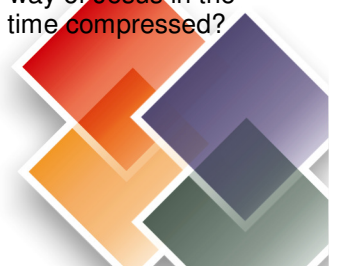
Solomon, arguably the wisest in history, right, in a book that is full of what appears to be lots and lots of discouragement with efforts to fill his life, has a refrain throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, and I want you to reflect with me this morning on this: after looking at the way things are on this earth, here's what I've decided is the best way to life. Take care of yourself, have a good time, it sounds a little hedonistic almost, doesn't it, and make the most of whatever job you have for as long as God gives you life, and that's about it. That's the human lot. Yes, we should make the most of what God gives, both the bounty and the capacity to enjoy it, accepting what's given and delighting in the work. It's God's gift, and this last piece is so strong. God deals out joy in the present, the now, it's useless to brood over how long we might live.

I wonder in my own life how much I actually experience now and enjoy now, because so much of the time I'm trying to get over there. There's something fundamentally inferior about now. Have you ever noticed that? And do you know how you know that? Because you're always trying to get from here to there. It's quite content enough. It's never quite provisioned enough. It's never got quite exactly what we want, so that we're always in transit over there.

Have you ever noticed that? And you know what you find out, which is really frustrating, is once you get over there, there, darn it, is another over there to get to. So here is fundamentally flawed. Here is fundamentally dissatisfying. Here is fundamentally not what I want it to be, and so I move faster and faster and faster to get over there, and what I find out is, once there it's no more satisfying, and so Solomon says, hey, the gift of God is to experience the joy right here, and right here is right now.

So I wonder this morning, if you and I don't need to let go, if we don't need to loosen our grip on something, and I'm not sure what it is that you need to loosen your grip on this morning, but you might want to begin thinking about it. What is the thing that's got you constantly moving at the speed of blur, because there's a piece of paper in your bulletin this morning, in your handout, and we're going to do something with that later where I'm going to ask you and invite you to pencil in what is the thing or things you really need to let go of so that life at the speed of blur can slow down to the life that operates at the speed of now, so I want you to think with me about that.

If we were really to evaluate all this my sense is that we would get in touch, that we are most of the time feeling these emotions of being hurried, of never having quite enough time, of feeling like life is out of balance. We say things like that, that we're always moving to and fro and hurry and scurry, and for many of us that's sort of how it feels. Is that fair? And those feelings of hurriedness and time pressure and inability to keep pace leads us to really wrestle with how is it then that we actually get to experience God and be connected to the way of Jesus in the midst of all of those things that we so share in common, of feeling hurried and rushed and time compressed?



I don't know how many of you remember this. You have to be old enough to have lived a couple of decades, so that some of you are out, but how many of you remember in the 80s, covers of magazines, periodicals that were getting ready to usher in the golden age of leisure where we would have half of our work week no longer necessary for us to work because time saving technology would come on in and do our job for us. Do you remember this? This was on the cover of magazines, golden age of leisure on the way. We are going to move from 40 to 30 hour work week. We're going to move from five day to four day weeks, we're going to have more vacation time.

Do you remember this craziness? Where did all that go? I mean, all the sociologists, oh man, time saving technology. It's going to change our lives. Oh, and it's changed our lives. It's definitely changed our lives, but it actually hasn't created a golden age of leisure at all, right. I want you to think about this, from walking to horses to ships to cars to planes. We have increased our speed of travel ten to the third [?] times, ten to the third power times, but do you have more time? I don't have much more time.

I want you to think about this: post. Send a letter. Now think about how they used to send letters. There used to be ponies, you know, horses, sending letters by post. Then we could send letters by car or truck. Then we could send letters by aeroplane, and now we hit send and in milliseconds it's halfway around the world, so how much time has that freed up for you? Any? No, none.

From fires to microwaves, from horses to aeroplanes, from post offices to email, we actually do not have any more time on our hands than we've ever had, and we are finding out that the acceleration of technological innovation has been outstripped by the increase in the quantity of activity you and I have to engage with that technology, right.

I mean, what's interesting is how many of you email people that you would have never sent a letter to by post? That would be all of you, right. There are all sorts of people now that, because they have your email address they fill your inbox and you feel some sort of, like, obligation and responsibility to respond. These are people you'd never in a million years write a letter to, true or false? No way. So now all of a sudden it's like, oh, this email thing is really nice because I can stay in touch with my kids or my family or, you know, business gets done a little quicker, but what about all the other people that get in that inbox?

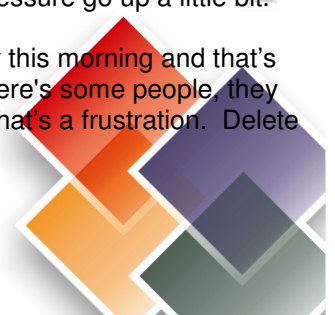
Think about this: Facebook. Think about this. I'm not a big Facebook guy but I do it, largely because my publisher said, listen, you need that. You need this platform and, you know, so when somebody friends you, hit accept, so I hit accept, okay, and a lot of you do the same thing. And I want you to think about this. You hit accept for this friend that's found you that you went to varsity with and you haven't seen him in 26 years, and all of a sudden you go, you accept.

This is not a guy you'd ever take a look at his photo albums if you ever walked into his church or his house and got into his cupboard and started looking, but pretty soon you're browsing his family holiday photo albums, finding out what this guy you haven't seen in 26 years is up to, and pretty soon what was a simple accept and took a millisecond, you've now spent 26 minutes looking in his photos. Who cares? Who really cares? So all the social technology that goes ahead and makes its way into our life that's supposed to save us time is actually taking up a ton of time, because the quantity of time used to engage the technology actually takes more time than it saves us for what it accomplishes.

So one of our most well known experts in social acceleration, he says this: a micro change in technology enables something to be done faster and more efficiently, but this has the obvious benefit only so long as the macro environment in which the change takes place remains unaffected. Before too long the cumulative effect of little micro changes is to actually reconfigure that macro environment ushering in new expectations and assumptions regarding scales and velocities and rates of productivity. This, he says, is a contraction of the present. The past no longer holds or is no longer relevant to us. The future does not yet hold. The present then is the time span for which the horizon of experience and expectation collide.

Can I give you the simplest translation of what he's driving at? You SMS somebody and when they don't respond in 6.2 seconds you're a little irritated, huh? The time horizon and expectation is now. We've contracted the future and backed it up into the present. We say, listen, hey, did you get my text, or we call him. Yes, I got your text, like, three minutes ago. You didn't respond. It was three minutes ago. You feel your blood pressure go up a little bit.

You hit send on your email thing and you're thinking, hey listen, I sent an email to that guy this morning and that's like three hours. That's plenty of time to respond. Where's my response? True. Then there's some people, they treat email like post office mail. Anyway, they check their email box, like, once a week. That's a frustration. Delete



your account and just send me a letter. Don't give me the illusion you might respond quicker than post office mail, right.

The Czech novelist Milan Kundera says speed is a form of ecstasy the technical revolution has bestowed on man. Ecstasy is a state of simultaneous freedom and imprisonment, he says. He is caught in a fragment of time, cut off from both the past and the future. He is wrenched from the continuity of time. He is outside of time. He says this is our condition, a culmination of millennia of evolution in human societies, technologies and habits of mind.

I think what you and I are up against, if we're really quite honest, is what I want to call life density. Our lives move faster and faster and faster, and we pack more and more and more into the same amount of space so that life takes on this feeling of, like, moving through honey. You're trying to move faster but life's actually just denser. There's more stuff packed into the same amount of time. Nobody got more hours of the day. None of us got that bit. We asked for 28 more hours instead of 24. We voted for 32 hours in a day, not 24, but none of us got that. We all got stuck with 24, but we pack it fuller, right, so there's a life density that puts you and I in a position, like Solomon, of saying what can I put more into this 24 hours that I'll experience more satisfaction, and Solomon says, really nothing. I've already tried all that.

Isn't it interesting that Jesus was known as one of the peripatetic teachers, the peripatetics? The Greek word peripatetic means to walk. He was a walker. He was a walker, and the peripatetics walked along and typically, very interesting, typically if you wanted to follow one of the peripatetics you just got up and you followed them. You just walked with them. You were in. That's what peripatetics did, they just wandered around. If you wanted in you followed.

Jesus, interestingly, actually as He's walking around He says you can follow, you can follow, you can follow. He was a walker. There was something about the pace. He couldn't have gotten into his Porsche so he walked, right, but I think this is the challenge that we have, right, and I think Jesus is big on texture. The density and the quantity of our lives have changed the texture of our lives, and the density suffocates plenty many of us, and space it seems like it's shrinking. Space feels like it's closing in around us, and when that happens the quality of what we experience shifts, it changes, and so life at the speed of blur ends up being life at the speed of numb.

How many of you have ever stood in the middle of a body of water, you know, the sea or a lake or a pool, when you were a kid, and you spun around, you put your hand on the surface of the water and you spun around as fast as you can and your hand goes fr, do you remember that, and if you spun around quick enough your whole hand and your whole arm got numb. I think that's what we're doing. I think we're spinning around with our arms out. We're trying to catch stuff. We're trying to feel the water. We're trying to feel the experience, but the whole time that we're skimming space is contracting and we're going numb. We're going numb.

I wonder if the skimming is in part our inability, in a modern world, because of the wheel spin, to really go deep, because there's no time to go deep. Life density, space contraction, a full e-mailbox, time saving technologies that were going to usher in a golden age of leisure actually have got you and I running on the surface but never really going deep, and we end up doing life at the speed of blur, which is really life at the speed of numb, and life at the speed of numb does something to shrivel my heart.

And I wake up one day and I recognise that relationships have been skimmed, relationships at the office, relationships with my spouse, relationships with significant others in my life have been skimmed, and all of a sudden I find out that that skimming and that density and that inability to go deep has created something in me that's shrivelled my heart because the nourishment and the sustenance necessary for a heart that's full and rich and open and alive and deep has evaporated, because life at the speed of blur doesn't allow for deep.

It doesn't allow us to allow our hearts to be fully engaged. It doesn't allow our hearts to be fully plumped, and so when it comes to having the reserves to really do life well and to do life fully, and to do life deeply, and to experience, we don't have the capacity. In some ways life at the speed of blur, life at the speed of skimming, life at the speed of numb desensitises our hearts, right, and puts us in a position where we almost have to relearn what it's like to feel again, and I wonder if that's part of the challenge that we live in, in this late modern era. What does it mean for us to acknowledge and realise that we are at some level going to have to pay attention to the fact that we live in a society and a culture that has spliced episodes?

I don't know how many of you have read Zygmunt Bauman. If you haven't, he is one of the most brilliant writers of our time. He's a retired lecturer from the University of Leeds, but he writes, in *Liquid Times*, this quote. It's kind of



dense, but I want you to follow this with me because I think it's a powerful commentary, and from a guy who, to my knowledge, has no Christian moorings, but I want you to see what he says here. He says the collapse of long term thinking, planning and acting and the disappearance or weakening of social structures in which thinking, planning and acting could be inscribed for a long time to come.

Those of you in business think we don't do ten year planning anymore. We're trying it figure out six months, right. Ten years, ten years, I mean, that's like... that's Nirvana that that day came and gone, that we don't do that. We're trying to figure out how do we even think ahead for the short term, so Bauman says you know what, the collapse of the very systems and structures that used to help us in the long term thinking, those are gone.

He said the collapse of that long term thinking leads to a splicing of both political history, I'm not quite so interested in that this morning, but a splicing of individual lives into a series of short term projects and episodes which are in principle infinite, and they do not combine in the kinds of sequences to which concepts like development and maturation, career, or progress could be meaningfully applied.

I want you to think about this: when my dad took a job out of varsity the assumption was, and for many of you in that generation, the assumption was I'm going to work for the man for 45 years and take my pension and retire. Whatever it is, if you're a lecturer at the university, you work in a shop, you're a farmer, you're an automotive person, you're a CA, it really doesn't matter. The idea was I work for the man. I'm going to have one job. If I change firms that might be a big deal, but the truth is one job, one career, basically one line, and that was pretty standard, right, pretty accepted, pretty known, pretty stable, pretty certain.

The current research is that right now kids graduating from varsity, about 18% of them, parents hate this word, are going to do what you actually paid for them to do at varsity, 18%. Year one out of varsity, only 18% are going to actually do what they studied, okay. Statistics are they're going to have in their lifetime 16 to 22 different jobs. Some of them do that in the first three years, but... right, and they are going to operate within nine to 11 different domains, like I'm not going to just go from this accounting firm to this accounting firm to this accounting firm, no. I might be in accounting a while, then I might into art design, then I might go... like those are worlds apart, hey.

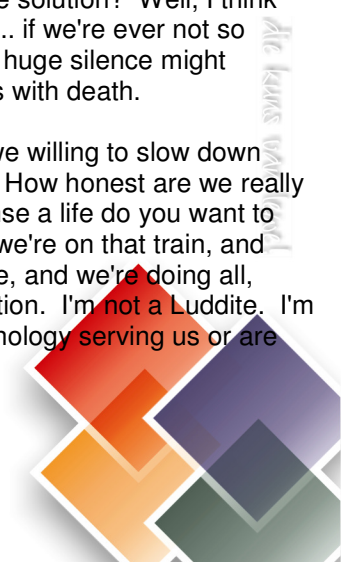
So Bauman, take a look, Bauman is very, very concerned to say do you know what, when you splice your life together like this the challenge is there's nothing that feels like a traditional word would apply, like maturity or maturation, or a trajectory line, or a career. Those typical words to describe that no longer hold in this spliced together world, but this last line I think is brilliant, from a sociologist. Listen to what he says: a life so fragmented stimulates lateral rather than vertical orientations.

What's he saying? He says, do you know what, if I know that I'm going to be in 19 different careers and 12 different domains, then I'm constantly on the lookout on the horizon to say how do I position myself for this, how do I get prepared for that, how do I need to go ahead and do some on the job training to get ready for this next thing, so I'm constantly scanning the horizon. Can you just insert the word skimming?

I'm constantly scanning the horizon, and you know what Bauman says? When we're constantly in lateral mode we never get the opportunity to develop vertical mode, and that means reaching deeper. That's where roots are, and that means being tuned in somehow to the transcendent, you and I would say the walk with Jesus, connections to God, that life becomes so focused on the lateral we never have opportunity for the vertical.

What's our solution to these realities which we participate in and we struggle? What's the solution? Well, I think we could have some long conversations, but this poem might be one of our solutions for... if we're ever not so single minded about keeping our lives moving, and for once could do nothing, perhaps a huge silence might interrupt the sadness of never understanding ourselves, you know, threatening ourselves with death.

It seems to me that Narude [?] has got a Solomon type take on how all this works. Are we willing to slow down enough and to wrestle with the compulsions that drive us to do, that drive us to density? How honest are we really willing to be about the density of our lives, and how willing are we to think about how dense a life do you want to live, I mean, because the truth of the matter is the train has pulled out of the station and we're on that train, and we've got our iPhones and we're texting like crazy and we're answering email as we drive, and we're doing all, right. I mean, the train has already left. We can't go live in a cave, that's not the suggestion. I'm not a Luddite. I'm not anti technology, but the question has to really become at some point in time. Is technology serving us or are



we slaves to it, right, and it's not just a question of technology. It's about life density. Technology is just one piece of that.

What does that look like for you and me? What does it mean for you and I to, with Solomon, say you know what, I've tried it all, man. I've done the pretty garden and I've done the let's get a cool car, and I've done the... climbed the corporate ladder, and I've... you know, I've done all those things, but, you know what, I'm with Solomon. At the end of the day it's meaningless and futile. There's no life in it. There's no long term payout in that, and that's why Solomon, with repetition, throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, and he says, you know what I've concluded?

When everything is said and done, what I've concluded is, you know, enjoyment in the now, that's the gift of God, man. If you can enjoy right now, whatever the space, recognising that right now is no different than over there, over there is going to feel like just here, right. Over there feels just like here, that's what you and I have determined. Every time we get over there we go, gosh, yes, there another over there I need to get to now. Is technology serving you or are you a slave to it?

And then I wonder about this: will you surrender control and experience enjoyment now to say, you know what, I don't have to have everything buttoned up and known and sorted and figured out and... I can do that. Are you willing to do that, and maybe ask this question: are you willing to build some sabbatical space into your life? You know, sabbaticals, I mean, academic institutions every few years give academics time to go create and write. Business executives get sabbatical time, but oh, that's right, that's what God told us to do. Take a Sabbath, build some space. Build some sponge into the system. Build some space in the density. Create an air pocket in the honey.

So can I invite you to take out this piece of paper, because the truth of the matter is, gang, unless you and I conscientiously say, do you know what, I know I've got to be on the train that's pulled out the station, but there are going to be times I get off the train, and there are actually going to be times I travel lighter on the train, and there are going to be times that I make a conscious effort to say I need to really let go of that because that causes me to skim, that causes my heart to shrivel. That causes me to be a poor lover of other humans. So would you take a moment and would you begin to write down what are those things you need to let go of? What are those things you need to let go of?

And then, what I want to do is in a moment I'm going to have you stand with me and we are going to say a prayer for slowing down together, and then I'm going to invite you to bring your paper and to make your way to one of these stations and let go of this piece of paper at the foot of these crosses as a symbol and as an act of commitment and faith that you are going to make some changes to slow down and let go of life at the speed of blur, which is actually life at the speed of numb.

So would you write? Would you take 30 seconds? What are going put on this paper, or what are you mentally attaching to this paper right now? We're only going to give you a few seconds. I want to invite you, as you've written something on that piece of paper, I'd like to invite you to stand with me. I'd like you to take your piece of paper and I'd like you to wind [?] it up, and I'd like you to, with your hand in the air, with me, I would like you to read this prayer that was written by Peter Marshall. Read it with me.

In the name of Jesus Christ, who is never in a hurry, we pray, oh God, that Thou will slow us down, for we know that we live too fast. With all of eternity before us, make us take time to live, time to get acquainted with Thee, time of enjoy Thy blessings, and time to know each other.

You're dismissed, and as you go, would you just be respectful of those that want to linger in this space, but as you leave, would you please come forward and take and let go? Amen.

for hands with heart

