

# Today is a gift

IMAGINE that your bank credits your account each day with US\$86,400. A nice thought isn't it, except for the fact that each day it subtracts the balance you have not used? But this bank is not your normal bank back home. It is universal and goes by the name of time. Every morning it credits you with the same number of seconds as the dollars mentioned above. Every night it writes off as lost whatever amount of this you have failed to invest to good purpose. It carries over no balance. It allows no overdraft. Each day it opens a new account for you. Each night it burns whatever is left. If you fail to use the day's deposit, the loss is yours. There is no going back. There is no drawing against tomorrow. You must live in the present on today's deposits.

Today, with precise

atomic clocks, we can measure time with incredible precision to the nanosecond. In our digital age, we monitor time's incremental click, click, in ways not available to earlier generations who watched it flow as hands circling the face of a wrist-watch or grandfather clock. However, in spite of the wonders of modern technology, no one can stop time.

In the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible you can read a lot about time: a time to be born, a time to weep and a time to laugh, and so on. The idea of time is depicted like a wheel which keeps on turning, almost as if it rolls over us, controlling us in some way, but there is, nevertheless, something very calming about the words.

In the New Testament we read of the Greek word "chronos" from which we get the term chronology,

which denotes time that can be measured by a clock, or the yearly movements of the sun, moon and stars. But there is another Greek word, "kairos", which means a different type of time – a moment of time when we can choose to change: the moment of truth, which, like the spinning wheel on the flag of India, talks not of fatalism but of peaceful revolution.

On board a ship today there is so little time for that run ashore, or time to see new places and new faces. But on your ship, even if life seems to be manic at times, God (and no, that's not the master) gives you enough time to be the people he calls you to be, people who are willing to share the joys and sorrows of those who work with you.

Yes, of course it's nice to watch a DVD in your cabin

after a hard day's work, but remember, you are part of a community and each one of you has a story to tell, a problem to share, and a joke or two to crack as well.

And thinking about a time for laughter: there is a story of a chaplain who always read every word of his sermons which were long and often tedious. One Sunday, one of the congregation slipped into the pulpit and removed one of the pages at random. The chaplain got to a point in the sermon where he read out: "And Adam said unto Eve..." He paused and then continued: "And Adam said unto Eve ...er...er...there seems to be a leaf missing."

So let's remind ourselves that we can't buy God, we can't buy love and we can't buy time, let alone eternal life. Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift – God's gift of life.