

“Tending to The Time”

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Mark 1:9-18

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We came into our worship today with that spectacular unveiling of Jesus’s blazing fullness. His Transfiguration shows us that Jesus is continuing the work God has done through Moses and Elijah. Moses: through him God gave Israel the Torah (instruction, teaching). It shapes what it means to be God’s People. Elijah: he represents all the prophets. They call God’s People back to faithfulness and justice. Jesus continues and fulfills their work. So God the Father celebrates and endorses him: *“This is My Son, My beloved. Listen to him.”*

The Transfiguration happened part-way through Jesus’ ministry. Now, the Scripture will take us back to the beginning, when Jesus publicly launched his mission. The right time had come! And today, Jesus continues his mission with and through us. The right time has come!

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: *“You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”*

At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. *“The time has come,”* he said. *“The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”*

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. *“Come, follow me,”* Jesus said, *“and I will send you out to fish for people.”* At once they left their nets and followed him.

Mark 1:9-18, New International Version (adapted)

II

Zoom in on one part, and listen again for the good news.

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. He said: *“The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”*

What's the good news? "***The kingdom of God!***"

God's Kingdom happens where God reigns, where God's rule is acknowledged and realized. It's where God's ways are followed, where people live as God's People, where God's justice and peace flourish. In those days, people had been waiting for God's Kingdom for a very long time. In our days, folks don't call it that. Still, we have this strong sense that so much is wrong and needs to be made right. When we chase after the wrong solutions, we only make things worse. Yet that yearning only grows.

What's Jesus' good news? God's Kingdom "***has come near.***"

Close. You can almost touch it. That far-off hope is now. That long-awaited morning is breaking the horizon, spilling light into the darkness. There are cracks in the wall. There are raindrops in the desert. There are buds on the trees. The curtain is being pulled back, and prayers answered.¹

God's Kingdom . . . the Reign of God . . . it's right here! So says Jesus.

It's the right time!

III

We can think about time in a couple of ways. They are captured in two Greek words.²

First, ***chronos***. It's "time" in the sense of one minute after another, one day leading to the next, one year following the one before. We keep track of *chronos* on a clock or a calendar. "I've got dinner reservations at 5:30." *Chronos*-time tells me to eat. "My anniversary is July 3." *Chronos*-time tells me to buy flowers.

But there is also ***kairos***. It describes an event, a moment. *Kairos*-time intrudes into *chronos*-time "I'm hungry." My grumbling belly tells me it's *kairos*-time to eat. "I'm so in love with you." My full heart tells me it's *kairos*-time to buy flowers.

A *kairos*-moment can emerge because of something good. Or, a *kairos*-moment can emerge because of something bad. Rarely are *kairos*-moments neutral.

Kairos-moments are speed bumps. They can jar us! They make us slow down.

¹ Mike Breen puts it this way: "In essence, Jesus is saying a great opportunity is available: God's kingdom is within reach for all of us. "The kingdom of God is near" means that if you reach in the right direction, your hand will disappear through the curtain of this world and reappear in the reality of the next world. There is a portal in time that we can't see, and the in-breaking of God's presence is about to take place." Building a Discipling Culture Second Edition (3DM, 2011), 57.

² Breen, 55f.

Chronos-time says it's September 9, time to pick apples. *Kairos*-time sees the apples are ripe, so pick them.

A *kairos*-moment is pregnant. It is full of possibility. God uses a *kairos*-moment to break into our ordinary *chronos*-time, and birth something new in us.

What is the *kairos*-moment in the Bible reading? Other *kairos*-moments led up to it. Jesus was baptized and heard God's stunning affirmation. In the wilderness, Jesus overcame temptations that challenged to his identity and mission. Both were *kairos*-moments. But the one that launched Jesus was what?

John — his cousin who baptised him and proceeded him — John was put in prison.

IV

We can ignore a *kairos*-moment. We can be paralyzed by it. We can try to go back to what it was like before.

Or, we can stop and pay attention to it. A *kairos*-moment is an opportunity God is giving.

Now if it is something bad that has happened, I'm not saying it is suddenly good with a smiley-face. But even in those toughest moments, God works to birth something new.

Mike Breen has an approach that helps us engage our *kairos*-moments. I'm just starting to learn and use it myself. So I'm just going to give you a taste. Breen is big on using shapes to help us follow Jesus. For this, he uses a circle.³

When Jesus announces, "God's Kingdom is near" — a *kairos*-moment, what does he say to do next?

Repent and Believe. In a *kairos*-moment, Jesus invites to enter into a circle of repenting and believing.

Repenting is about changing.⁴ It's changing your heart, habits, priorities, values, thinking, and actions. *What is Jesus showing me, in this kairos-time, that I need to change?* Repenting changes direction. **Believing** lets us go along a new way. *What is Jesus leading me to do now?* Trusting Jesus, we move forward in faith, learning new ways.

Here's the big take-out today: *Kairos*-moments matter. They can be challenging, even painful. But paying attention and tending to these moments, we will see God using them to lead us deeper into God's Kingdom. By the processes of repenting and believing, in community with other disciples, Jesus will teach us to follow him.

³ Breen, chapter 6.

⁴ The word *metanoia* literally means "to change one's mind."

V

This is true for us together as Elora United Church. We heard a bit last week, it's in your Sunday News, there's a lot in the *Annual Finance & Property Report*, and we'll start digging into it at our meeting today. We are in a *kairos*-moment. Financially, as a congregation we are not living within our means.

Remember what we can do with *kairos*-moments? We could ignore this . . . but we won't be able to pay our commitments. We could be paralyzed by this . . . we could turn on each other. We could try to go back to some time when things were better . . . but I don't think that would be faithful. God is calling is to be in this place and *in this time*.

This is a *kairos*-moment. So it is an opportunity for us to grow deeper together as disciples and a disciple-community, into God's Kingdom.

We can repent together. Repentance often has to do with sin, and maybe there are sins we need to attend to, but it doesn't always. Repenting is about changing direction.

We can believe together. We are Jesus' church. Not the only one, but we are one. As we pray and listen, as we pray and talk, as we pray and learn, as we pray and argue, as we pray and explore, as we pray and experiment . . . and as we pray — Jesus will lead us in new ways. Not for yesterday. Not even for today. For tomorrow. Tomorrow can be frightening, because it isn't here yet. But Jesus is leading us. We can trust him.

If we take this *kairos*-moment as an opportunity and enter into this circle together, what will we come out with? I don't have a clue! Do you?

This is a *kairos*-moment. Pregnant moments are scary. It is Jesus' moment. What will he birth in us? I want to see!