

Kairos

Mark 1:9-15

February 26, 2012

It's time.

That's what Jesus said: *πεπληρωται ο καιρος* ... "fulfilled is the time" ... "the decisive moment has arrived" ... "the right time has come."

That's what Jesus said: "It's time." Have you been waiting? It's time! Don't be caught napping! It's time! Drop everything you're doing! It's time!

It's the first thing Jesus said. It's the first thing Jesus said as he began his public ministry in Galilee. It's time! So it makes sense for us as we begin our journey through Lent with Jesus to begin where he began. It's time!

The right time has come! The Kingdom of God is near! Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News!

Our purpose as a church is to proclaim a gospel, to tell good news. And what is the good news? The good news is this: it's time! The Kingdom of God is near! God is coming! Get ready! Repent!

Repent? Turn away from your sins? It's time to get your act together and turn your life around? It's time to point yourself in a completely different direction? That's good news? Sure it is!

If worry or envy or greed or anger or pride or fear cloud your spirit; if you do and say things you really don't want to do or say; if apathy or failure of courage or weakness of will or lack of discipline kill your best intentions; if you don't do or say things you really should do and say, then it is good news that God is coming to change everything!

If you live in a world that is stuck in patterns of greed and envy, suspicion and fear, caring everything about things that don't matter at all and caring nothing about things that really do matter, then it is good news that God is coming to change everything!

It's like this. You get a call that the president of the United States is coming to your house for dinner. What do you do? You get ready! You clean the house and then clean it again! You carefully put together a menu and spare no expense on the food. You clean yourself up and put on your best clothes. You do everything in your power to make everything right.

But what Jesus is talking about is so much bigger than that! It's not just any visitor coming. It's the Lord, the living God, creator and ruler of heaven and earth! And it's not just a visit. It's the advent of a new age, a new kingdom, a new way of being.

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Jesus invites us -- all of us -- into a new way of being. And how do we accept that invitation? By getting ready, by turning around, by leaving old ways, old patterns, old hurts, old failures, old disappointments behind, and by believing the good news -- that God is coming, that God is near, that it's time.

πεπληρωται ο καιρος. It's time!

Our God is a God who comes -- again and again and again -- when it's time, when the time is right.

When the time was right, God said, "Let there be light" and there was light! And a world was brought into being where there was no world.

When the time was right, God said to Abraham, "Leave your country and your relatives and your home and go to a land that I will show you." And a people of God were brought into being where there were no people of God.

When the time was right, God heard the cries of his people groaning under the yoke of slavery in Egypt and he sent them Moses and Aaron and Miriam to lead them out. And God made them his own, the people God rescued, the people God chose.

When the time was right, God sent an angel to Nazareth to a young woman named Mary who told her, "The Lord is with you!" And the word of God, the word that was God, became flesh inside her.

And when the time was right, Jesus went to Galilee and announced: "The right time has come! The Kingdom of God is near!"

Our God is a God of decisive moments, a God of *kairos*. That's an important point to make, because people think about God in very different ways.

Some people think of God as entirely outside time, not subject as we are to the limitations of past and present and future, of being in one moment and not another, not vulnerable as we are to change and decay and loss. In fact, in this view, time and the material universe themselves are the problem, and salvation

comes for us as we are able, finally, to break free from their limitations and be joined to God in the vastness and purity of nothingness, of timelessness. Space and time and individuality are our oppressors and we need to be trained to see beyond the illusion of me and you, of then and now, of here and there. This is the religion of Buddha and of some of the mystics.

Other people think of God as entirely inside time, as part and parcel of the cycle of the seasons and the circle of life. Time doesn't really go anywhere, it just goes, and, if we want to be happy, we need to learn to adjust ourselves to its rhythms. This is one of the oldest of religions, populated with rain gods and sun gods and moon gods and harvest gods and storm gods. But it is also one of the newest religions as more and more people try to find meaning in their connection to the earth itself. It is a religion that makes a god of the earth itself: Gaia, the Goddess, Mother Earth.

Other people, many Christians among them, think of God as eternal, unchangeable, timeless, not quite outside time, but unbound by time. In this view, God is the source of truth, of the timeless and unchanging laws of life and nature. We need to learn wisdom, to see past the deceptions of urgency and need and circumstance, to recognize truths that do not change. We need to rise above time, to be unaffected by circumstance, to live for the sake of a place that has no physical location, and for the sake a time that will be timeless, in other words, heaven. But, you know, this view doesn't seem to me to be all that different from the first! It's all about a God who is out there and all about getting away from here!

But the God of the Bible, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of Moses, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, my God, is a God of *kairos*, a God who acts in time, at the right time, at the decisive moment, to save the people and the creation he loves. God acts in time to save people in time, not to save people from time.

God is a God of movement and change, of becoming and of transformation, of an ever new here and an ever new now, the God who was, the God who is, and the God who will be. In other words, the God who dwells in past and present and future. In other words, the God of time. Time is going somewhere, to the place and to the end that God intends, and God invites us to be a part of it. The Kingdom of God is near!

Of all the views, this, I believe, is the most hopeful, because hope itself implies time! Hope implies change, moving from what is to what will be, moving from where we are to where we will be.

When Jesus proclaims, “The right time has come! The Kingdom of God is near! Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News!,” it means this world can be changed! It means this world can be redeemed!

When Jesus proclaims, “The right time has come! The Kingdom of God is near! Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News!,” it means you can be changed! It means you can be redeemed! It’s time!

It’s time! Isn’t that Good News?

It’s time! When? Now!

Not, “Sorry, you missed your chance,” but “It’s time!”

Not, “It’s too late, you blew it,” but “It’s time!”

Not, “I may come back and check in with you later,” but “It’s time!”

Not, “Maybe someday,” but “It’s time!”

It’s time! The Kingdom of God is near! Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News! You can’t wait! The world can’t wait! It’s time!