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1 Cor 7:29-31; Mark 1:14-20

January 21, 2024

**1 Corinthians 7:29-31**

***29I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, 30and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, 31and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.***

**Mark 1:14-20**

***14Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” 16As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. 17And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” 18And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.***

What comes to mind for you, when I say the word “time?”

We can think of time as a *quantity*. A week. 45 minutes. Three days. Or maybe something that’s never enough, or plenty, or extra. The kind of time that is measured and judged. Is it productive or wasted?

Or maybe you think of time as *a moment* – the time on a clock – we will meet at 4pm. Or the beginning of a race; the downbeat of a concert; the end of a timed exercise. Right “now.”

These kinds of time are called “chronos” time. Chronos time is measured, ticking, quantitative time. Minutes, hours, days, weeks, etc.

Then there’s a way to think of time in a general sense. “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” This way of thinking about time is a little abstract. It has more to do with the *quality* of a *general period* of time. It’s a little like sensing that something is coming, something is changing, something is headed in a certain direction.

This kind of time is “kairos” time. It’s what is used when circumstances meet opportunity. It’s the kind of time we think of when we hear someone refer to meeting the moment.

Can you feel the difference? Each of our texts today use both Chronos and Kairos versions of time.

The gospel of Mark begins with the appearance of John the Baptist, and quickly marks some important times: Verses 1-13, coming before the text Chris read for us today, marks *the time when* prophets words are fulfilled with the coming of John, *the time of* the coming of the new Elijah, *the time when* the heavens are torn open when Jesus is baptized, and the spirit descends and a voice sounds from the heavens. Immediately after his baptism, Jesus is thrust into the wilderness to wrestle with the devil, the Adversary. It is *the time when* the person of God, and the Adversary are both in the world at the same time. All these markers of actual time, even before we get to today’s text, are all examples of Chronos time. When we begin the text for today, we have jumped all the way up to another specific time – after John the Baptist was arrested. And then, a bit of Kairos time when Jesus says, “The time is fulfilled.” The setting is right, the conditions are right, I (Jesus) am here. Because I have come, “The kingdom of God has come near.”

The sentiment of Kairos time is what we feel when we read our text from 1 Corinthians. “The appointed time,” that Paul refers to in his letter, is like Jesus saying “The time is fulfilled.” Paul wrote this letter to his followers in the city of Corinth, after he had heard from a few sources that there were arguments and dissention among some of his apostles there, and they had questions about things like eating meat offered to idols, who is worthy to take communion, marriage, celibacy, the quality and nature of spiritual gifts. Today’s reading is just one small portion of Paul’s discussion of these things. When Paul writes, “The present form of this world is passing away,” he is definitely using the idea of Kairos time. Paul exhorts people not to change because there is this impending crisis, Jesus is about to return and the world as we know it will be different. Remain as you are. Business as usual won’t work. Paul lived with a sense of urgency. If you’re mourning or rejoicing, act as if you are not, because it won’t matter soon. If you have dealings in the world, act as if you do not, because it won’t matter soon. Paul was in the upper room with Jesus when he appeared to the twelve and told them he was coming back soon. Why wouldn’t Paul preach that? As Paul spread the gospel to new cities, he tried to gather as many in, to share in this new way of the world that was just around the corner. The time is right, the current world is passing away. These are examples of Kairos time – there was a general belief among followers of Jesus, and followers of apostles like Paul, that Jesus was going to come back soon.

Maybe each of the four disciples Jesus called immediately left their nets because they too felt the same urgency. Unlike Paul’s audience 50 years after Christ, who Paul hoped people would stay as they were because Jesus was coming soon, fishermen living at the same time as Jesus’ early ministry would have loved a call to *change*. Any alternative would have been better than the subsistence life of a fisherman. Fishermen of the time, wouldn’t have been like small business owners. They would have been renting a boat, maybe with others, and all of their catch would have gone to Rome first. Any fish they were able to get, would only be after the largest fish went to the highest and richest officials. Any others left would have been sold under high taxation. The life of a fisherman would have been easy to leave “immediately” at the call of someone promising to improve your life.

What are you and I supposed to do with this information? Should we all be greatly disappointed? Here we are 2,000+ years on the other side of that statement, and we are still waiting.

I think rather than be disappointed, we can look at those past 2,000+ years and find all the periods of time that were so much like our current world view. Maybe humans have been witnessing the present ways of our world passing away, over and over again. Just like Paul tried to help usher his people across the threshold of the new world that was coming, we have had our own thresholds to cross. There was the time before great wars, when certainly the times were changing. The time between wars, when no one thought it could ever happen again. The periods of angst in different countries in turn. These were all thresholds of the current ways of the world passing away and becoming the next thing. Paul’s words to us are still relevant. By asking everyone to remain as they were, he was asking them to put themselves in service of Christ rather than the ways of the world. Act in the service of Christ as if that is the only thing that matters – because for Paul, then, it was the only thing that mattered. Most of us do not believe that we need to put our lives on pause because Jesus is coming back this afternoon. But there’s nothing wrong with the quest to act in the service of Christ as we interact with the world we are given, in the times in which we are living.

We have learned to see through examples of love and charity that the kingdom of God has arrived, even as we are still waiting. We see through examples of protest and persistence against injustices that the kingdom of God is ready to break through, even as we are still waiting. The coming of Christ again in glory, has happened, even as we are still waiting. The paradox of celebrating an event even as we work for it’s coming, is a lot like that Kairos time. The time and place is right for Christ to break through into our world. Those are the times when miracles happen. People come together en masse for good, all the time.

Sadly, we also witness terrible breakdowns in society when poverty runs rampant; when we continue to hurt the planet; when wars and hunger are everywhere, when divisions and distrust flow deep into the places inside us where our fears are the greatest so we lose control and cause harm. For those times we can only say, “Come, Lord Jesus.”

I read somewhere this week, that to “To grow is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often.”1 Maybe Jesus coming in glory is like being perfect. It’s something we have not achieved yet, but we something we hope for and work for, helping the ways of the world pass away, again and again. This is the change we must do often, to be a part of ushering in the kingdom of God. Whenever that is.

Let’s pray,

1Deep within every life, no matter how dull or ineffectual it may seem from the outside, there is something eternal happening. This is the secret way that change and possibility conspire with growth. **John Henry Newman summed this up beautifully when he said, "****To grow is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often."**Change, therefore, need not be threatening; it can in fact bring our lives to perfection. Perfection is not cold completion. Neither is it avoidance of risk and danger in order to keep the soul pure or the conscience unclouded. When you are faithful to the risk and ambivalence of growth, you are engaging your life. The soul loves risk; it is only through the door of risk that growth can enter.

(JOHN O'DONOHUE, Excerpt from his book, Anam Cara, 25th Anniversary Edition.)