

"Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?"

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January 2, 2010

Ecclesiastes 3:1-9

Tradition has it that King Solomon, David's Son, wrote 3 books included in the Hebrew Scriptures, the OT. It's said he wrote Song of Solomon as a young man, Proverbs at the height of his power, and Ecclesiastes as an old man, reflecting back upon his life.

Let's take a look at Ecclesiastes 3:

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

I'd like to speak to you this morning on the subject: "*Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?*" Does anybody really care? Of course we do! *What time is it?* It's a question we ask ourselves numerous times throughout the day. Keeping track of time is a cultural obsession. but it's also necessary. You're here for worship at the right time this morning, not because the church bells rang out throughout the village and called you to worship (though we do honor that tradition). You're here because you

really know what time the services start & you set your alarm clock properly & allowed yourself the proper time to get ready, as well as the proper travel time required.

Time is such a big part of modern life.

Time can be our friend - you can have the time of your life sometimes, if you have the time. Time can be our enemy - I am running out of time. My time is short. Time can stand still. Time can fly. Time can be wasted. Time can be spent wisely. You can make time, sort of - "We're making up for lost time." You can lose time. You can save time. You can be out of time. You can be just in the nick of time. Sometimes time can be borrowed-- "living on borrowed time."

Time can be magnified. I think back to the days my children were born. Like most parents I can remember so many details about those days, so many emotions, so many "my cup runneth over" moments. Those weren't just any old days. The minutes and the hours were filled to overflowing, magnified compared with other days. Some days are bigger than others. Some time is more important than other times.

Talking about time gives me the chance to tell one of my favorite stories. A little Protestant Boy became friends with a Little Roman Catholic Boy. They got to know each other, had play dates at each others houses, and one day they decided they wanted to learn about each other's churches. The Protestant boy went with his friend to the Catholic Church. He had a lot of questions for his friend. The Priest raised the host - "What does that mean?" , the Protestant Boy asked. ("It represents the Body of Jesus," replied the Catholic boy.) A bell rang. "What does that mean?" ("That represents the bread actually turning into the body of Christ.") And so on and so on. The following week, the Little Catholic boy went to the Protestant church. There was much less to explain. "Why isn't Jesus on the Cross?" ("Because of the Resurrection") "Why do you take communion in the pews?" (We eat together as a church family") When it came time for the sermon the preacher took off his watch and set it on the pulpit. The Little Catholic boys then said, "What does that mean?" The Little Protestant Boy replied, "Absolutely nothing."

Some time is longer than other time! In the New Testament there are two words for time - *Kairos* and *Chronos*. Chronos relates to a period of time - a day, an hour, a minute. It's where we get the word, "chronology."

It's a length, a measurement of time Kairos relates not to a measurement of time but to the content and quality of time. Kairos is about the timing of God, the activity of God.

Romans 5:6 - *"For while we were still weak, at just the right time (Kairos), Christ died for the ungodly."*

Ephesians 1 says, Christ has *"made known to us the mystery of God's will . . . as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and thing on earth."*

The life of Jesus Christ is more than just the 33 Chronos years upon this earth. The life of Jesus Christ is about the eternal Kairos of God - the plan, the will, the timing, the fullness of God's kingdom. It's not normal time as we think of it. It's God's time.

II Cor. 6:2 - *"At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on the day of salvation I have helped you. See now is the acceptable time. See now is the day of salvation."* It's not the right time because of the hour on the clock. It's the right time because God is alive, God is active!

I love that line in the movie, "Narnia" - "Aslan is on the move." Aslan, the Christ figure, is on the move. That's Kairos time. God's time. That's the real time we want to live in. That's the time that really matters - Kairos time.

And I'd like to share with you a teaching I heard once that I found very helpful and that I believe points us in the right direction regarding time. This teaching was given by Pam Driesell, a Presbyterian minister from Athens, GA.

Pam Driesell says that modern life is marked by the demands on our time. We all hoped that such innovations as the computer and the microwave oven would save us time, but instead our lives have gotten busier, with more and more demands upon our time. We live in "crunch time" most days. The solution most of us seek for dealing with time is balance. We try to find balance for our lives - balancing work and family, outside commitments, exercise, friendship, church, rest and play. That's a lot to balance.

Illustration. I was at a pastor's convention once, and a juggler of sorts began the convention. He spun a plate on a wooden dowel.
"This plate here in your Sunday sermon - gotta keep coming up with 'em. Be creative. Keep it going."

"This plate is the homebound member you needed to visit yesterday.
"This plate is your son's soccer game.
"This plate is that issue you & your spouse need to talk about.
"This plate is the budget. (Then he'd go back - how's that sermon coming?)
"This plate is your Uncle whose wife just died.
"This plate is your need for exercise.
Pretty soon the stage was full with plates all spinning and almost falling. It was an incredible image for what most of us try to juggle. You could fill up a stage with your plates too.

Pam Driesell does workshops on the issue of time. She has participants try to balance things in their hand and carry on conversations with each other. It's hard to do. It's hard to balance stuff and it's hard to connect with people when we're working hard to achieve balance. Then she has the participants put down the objects they're balancing, and she has them take a break and she plays some upbeat music. Pretty soon people begin to move with the music, and dance to the music, and dance with each other a little bit. Moving the beat comes naturally, in contrast with trying to balance things. Balancing is hard work. Moving to the beat is pretty easy.

Driesell says, maybe that should be our new image for time - a sense of rhythm. Dancing to God's Holy Rhythm. Dancing to the song that God is singing in this world and in my life.

Let me illustrate this image of rhythm. When my youngest son was in First Grade he wanted to play soccer. In the town where we lived the soccer program for Kindergartners and First Graders is Saturday morning at 8:00 am. Now, we could balance that with the other activities of the weekend. But it didn't fit with the rhythm of our lives. First grade was his first experience of going to school all day. And Saturday morning is a great day to sleep in a little bit, to catch up. Getting him up at 7:00 am didn't work with the rhythm of our lives. It felt off beat for us all. It put us out of step for the rest of the day.

So, the next time someone asks you to do something, don't just ask - "Can I fit this into my schedule?" Instead ask - "Does it fit with the rhythm of my life?" And as people of faith - "Does it fit with God's rhythm, with the song of faith that God is calling me to sing?" Does it help me hear Kairos time, God's song?

There's a rhythm to God's music. You could hear it in our text this morning from Ecclesiastes.

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;"

Timing is everything. But do you hear the rhythm in that passage? It's more than poetry. I think it's suggestive of the holy rhythm of God. It's suggesting that God's timing is everything. And we need to lean back into God and into God's timing.

Rhythm or Balance - these are two very different images for handling our time. Pam Driesell says, "Balance is something I strive to achieve. I have to work at it. It's all about me and my choices. Rhythm is something I listen for. It's something I allow myself to be drawn into."

We as Christians have rituals, disciplines, that help us listen. Prayer. Worship. The Sacraments. Sacred Texts. An important part of God's rhythm is Sabbath. Commandment #4 - "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy." We were created by God to need a sabbath. That's why it's one of the Ten Commandments. It's that essential. It's part of the rhythm we were created for - to refrain from work and from most of the activities of our lives to make room for God, so that we can hear God's song and dance to the beat of God. "Worship is central to hearing God's rhythm."

In The Screwtape Letters C.S. Lewis says there are two things that the Devil hates the most - music and silence. It's because both make room for God, both help us hear God's music for our lives. Pam Driesell says, "When we honor holy rhythm in our lives we begin to dance, and we dance with joy." We exhibit what St. Paul calls the Fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness and self-control. When we get out of sync, out of step with God's rhythm, we simply get tired, exhausted, frenetic and grumpy. It's like Lily Tomlin famous line - "Even if you win the rat race, you're still a rat." I'd rather be a Christian who knows how to dance to God's song, than be the rat who wins the rat race.

A quote from St. Augustine helps me draw this to a close: *"What is it that we talk more about in our lives than time? Yet who of us really knows what it is? Who of us can define it? None of us. Is it not at this point, O God, that your truth mocks humanity?"*

Does anybody really know what time it is? You see, time is not a commodity to apportioned out with some reasonable, logical formula. As Driesell says, *"Time is not something you save, create or control. Time is a mystery. Time is a gift. You can't save time. All you can do is spend it."*

Annie Dilliard reminds us, *"How we spend our days is how we spend our lives."* So spend it wisely. And why not dance? Dance to the beat of God's love. Sing the melody of the Gospel. Sing in harmony with your sisters and brothers, and create a beautiful song for God!

Amen.

Time's up! Go & Dance!"