

St. Andrew's UMC  
January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
Mark 1:14-20  
"The Time Has Fulfilled"

**A** real estate investor in Oakland bought a triplex in a foreclosure sale. The bank decided to put the house on fire sale, rather than going through a drawn-out procedure with the potential buyers. The investor paid barely over 100K for the house that sold for over 500K in 2007. In good time, with a little fix here and there, the house will command a respectable profit, said the buyer confidently.

The key is to find the right or opportune moment to invest. As many people are wailing at the losses, those who have been waiting for the opportune moment know that the moment is coming, and is near. One man sees only the utter failure, while the other sees the great opportunity. The ideal moment is when the market hits the rock bottom. There is time to toil, then there is time to harvest; there is a time to invest, and time to divest.

The trick is, as Kenny Rogers crooned, "You got to know when

to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, Know when to walk away and know when to run." Now that is a simplified version of Investment 101. And investment is a gambling in its core.

**T**he writer of the Ecclesiastes speaks of time. Time for this, and time for that. Now we must understand that there are different concepts of time in ancient Greek. There are two words for time: Kairos (καιρός) and Chronos (χρόνος). Kairos means the right or opportune moment, while Chronos refers to a linear concept of time, a segment of time, a day, or a week, etc. One might visualize and say that Chronos is like a long, horizontal clothes line, while Kairos is like vertical clothespins clamped onto that line.

The writer of Ecclesiastes is not talking about Chronos, but Kairos. He is talking about the proper, opportune time to execute or commit some thing. He is not talking about time of the day or time of the year. He is

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talking about the proper and opportune moment to do each significant thing that matters to life. Sometimes it is a pleasant thing; sometimes it is an offensive thing. Sometimes it is a creative thing; sometimes it is a destructive thing. But each has its proper time for execution.

**H**ow do people look and interpret this recent phenomenon of a black man becoming the President of the United States? Is this a random occurrence in time? Is it like giving a room full of monkeys a typewriter and infinite amount of time, and expecting a Shakespeare to be produced? Or, was it the consequence of a certain desire, a plan, an effort, a prayer, a yearning?

Who can say that it wasn't the consequence of the blood shed 50-odd years ago? I dare say that the bloodshed itself was the consequence of the yearnings that the Negro slaves lifted up in their raw hands hundreds of years ago!

The faithful people look at time and interpret it differently: the faithful believe that God has planned certain things, and at the proper time, God decisively takes action, in order to arrange things in the right places at the right time. In order for this to happen, the historical context, the milieu of the human society, the *Zeitgeist* (the spirit of time), and the specific person(s) must be present in one place and at one time. And then, God calls the right person to be there at the *Kairos*, at the appointed time.

**B**ut *Kairos* is not time for the free lunch, when God hands it over on the platter to the one whom God called. God declares through Prophet Amos (5:24): "...let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

The faithful must work hard to practice justice and righteousness in their daily lives, so that justice and righteousness are practiced at home, at work, at the market

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places, and in the government. There will be blood, sweat, and toil, in order to let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream, indeed.

**G**ay rights activists worked hard to get an openly gay man elected as a mayor in Oregon. But then the mayor admitted that he lied about having sex with a teenager. Another mayor in Maryland is accused of stealing gift cards intended for the poor. A Cabinet appointee to oversee IRS was discovered that he forgot to pay over \$30K of tax. And a governor wanted to put the seat of the U.S. Senate to the highest bidder, and got arrested.

Incidentally, all these are democrats. If the liberals believed that they could do things better than the conservatives, they should wake up and smell the money. If one cannot practice justice and righteousness in private and at home, nor can one practice justice and righteousness

anywhere at work, at the marketplaces, or in the government.

For the faithful, it takes bitter patience and commitment, in order to accomplish what God commanded them to do. There is no waiving of the magic wand to get things done. Peace and justice? There has to be blood that is shed, before peace is achieved. There has to be hardened commitment to the practice of justice, before justice *be* for all. Until the Kairos arrives, the faithful must remain righteous, and continue their struggles. There is no free lunch in God's Kairos. Justice is costly, and righteousness, precious.

**T**he social climate and the perception of the population change, and now the pluralistic perspective has taken hold. The opportunity opens up and equality prevails, and those who have been excluded so far find themselves at the helm now. The power minority finally ascended to the seat of the power.

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Once found themselves in the seat of power, however, the power minority tends to become drunken with power. They turn out to negate all previous work of justice and righteousness, by failing to embody justice and righteousness. The power minority who is entrusted with the opportunity to make a difference is lacking in the personal holiness, no matter how long they have endured injustice. They might have struggled for justice, but they have not struggled to embody righteousness within themselves.

All these force God to postpone the arrival of Kairos, because the ones whom God called are too preoccupied with their own immediate personal gains to cooperate with God's Kairos.

**J**esus showed up at the scene of ancient Judea, and declared: "The *time* has fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." The writer of Mark took it to mean, rightfully, that Kairos has

fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. To our blessing, Jesus did not flinch at the face of death, but followed through his calling unto his death. Jesus made sure that God's Kairos carries through his obedience.

Jesus has fulfilled his calling, and he also wanted to let us know that each one of us has one's own calling to fulfill. But there is the first thing that we must make sure to do: "Repent, and believe in the good news." Before we enter into the covenant with God and participate in God's Kairos, we must make a clean break from the way things are. It is difficult to keep the room clean, if we do not take off the muddy boots first. We must embody righteousness.

**I** bought a bag of tangerines last week. I left it in the refrigerator, but I found that one of them sprung molds. So I took out the damaged one, and inspected the rest. They were okay. So I enjoyed them. But I looked at them yesterday, and I found a few more damaged ones. So I

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removed them, and threw them out.

Life is like a bag of tangerines. Once in a while, we discover that one of the tangerines has turned moldy. If we let it stay in the bag, it will spread to others, spoiling the rest. If we discover it early, and remove it from the bag, the rest is fine, and we continue to enjoy the fruit of life. But life is not spoil-proof. Unwanted things do happen, things go wrong, and we tend to mess up, intentionally or unintentionally: life requires our vigilant attention.

Unless personal holiness is embodied, all our efforts are susceptible to corruption, and that causes postponement of God's Kairos. The personal holiness follows the embodiment of righteousness, and it begins with repentance. Repentance first deals with personal and private things that no one else knows. And the lack of personal holiness interferes with the movement of the Spirit in the personal life. It stifles the

prayers. It darkens the discernment. It quenches the healing presence of the Spirit.

**T**here is a new revelation of a tryst for the disgraced evangelist, Ted Haggard, just when he is working with HBO for the release of a documentary about him. We must allow, however, that no one is perfect, and every one is subject to failure. I believe that God can work with the ones who make mistakes, who fail. God cannot work, however, with the ones who persist in failures, whether it be private or public.

The reverend obviously received his calling, and had been blessed in his ministries. He failed, however, to accept who he is. Imagine a different way of God's grace working through him—if he accepted who he is, and actually outed himself on one Sunday in front of ten thousand members of his church and the viewers in front of the TV sets nationwide, what would have been the consequence?

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Is it possible that that was the reason why God called him to be a star evangelist—to be crucified in front of millions of the witnesses? What would have been the consequence of that outing for the lives and rights of gay and lesbian people and their families throughout the world, including himself and his family? What would have been his ministry like from that moment on, as an authentic human being?

**T**here is time to stay put, and there is time to walk away. If God called the reverend to walk away from where he was, he wanted to stay put. Apparently, what he had going was just too good to drop and walk away—fame, connection, mingling with the powerful... They were far more precious than the fishermen's stinky nets.

Was it what his calling was all about—to keep the good thing going and having it, too? I am not certain which would be better: what he is about to go

though now, or the alternative scenario I explored. I hope that God still has plans for the reverend, and he has not missed out on God's Kairos.

As the direct consequence of the failure to accept who he is, the reverend broke his marital covenant and failed to maintain the personal holiness. As for God's plan through Ted Haggard, we now know, God's Kairos has been forced to be postponed.

**P**ersonal holiness is possible, only when we accept ourselves as who we are. As long as we maintain the false façade and denial, our repentance is hollow. Only when we are willing to be authentic to who we are, then, the genuine repentance takes place, and it may lead to the genuine righteousness.

There will be consequences to that acceptance of who we are, of course. Rosa Parks knew who she wasn't, although the whole society told her who she was supposed to be, and where she

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was supposed to belong. There is time to stay put, and there is time to walk away. She embraced who she was, instead, and she stayed put. And there were consequences—we are the witnesses at least to one of them: Barack Hussein Obama happened.

Throughout the human history, God has been forced to postpone God's Kairos, always waiting for the next person to rise up and drop their nets and go, in order to fulfill God's calling. Nevertheless, God remains faithful, and will continue to call us to fulfill our own calling.

May you also rise up and fulfill your calling, as God calls you today.