

SERMON
“Kairos Living, Not Chronos Thinking”
Exodus 12:1-14
Sunday, September 6, 2020

Did you know that when the American colonists went to bed on the evening of September 2, 1752, they awoke the next morning, only to discover that it was September 14th? That’s right. Since going to bed they had lost eleven days.

At this point you might be scratching your heads wondering what’s the punch line to Tim’s joke?

How could anyone lose eleven days in one night?

There is no punch line?

Because there is no joke?

It all started way back in 45 B.C. when Julius Caesar, emperor of Rome, established what became known as the Julian calendar which began the year on March 25. That calendar was the standard until the Middle Ages, when astronomers and mathematicians noticed that the Julian calendar didn’t jive with the actual solar calendar and, perhaps more importantly, caused Roman Catholic Church holidays to fall on dates that were outside of the traditional seasons for them.

To remedy the problem, Pope Gregory XIII, along with his papal astronomer and mathematician, proclaimed a new “Gregorian” calendar. In order to make the adjustment to the new calendar in 1582, 10 days were eliminated from October of that year. October 4, 1582, was immediately followed by October 15, 1582. Ten days were gone, like they never happened.

Protestants, though, being as obstinate as their name, held on to the old calendar for 170 more years. England and the American colonies finally went Gregorian on September 14, 1752 thus losing eleven days.

Homiletics says of these lost days; *“Is this confusing enough for you? We have enough trouble dealing with leap years, daylight-saving time and figuring out when Easter is, let alone losing 11 days off the calendar. We like to think that chronological time is fixed, but history shows us that it’s fluid and subject to arrangement by humans for their own convenience.”*

For me, the year 2020 has been a lot like 1752; I feel as though days from my calendar have gone missing. It’s like I went to bed on the night of Saturday March 14, 2020 and I still feel as though I have not awoken from the nightmare of pandemics called Covid-19 and racism. Like you I want to get back to normal. I want things the way they used to be. But the more the year 2020 progresses the more I wonder if I will ever see normal again. Someone on Facebook recently posted of 2020: *“Sometimes I wonder if all of this is happening because I didn’t forward the message to 10 other people.”*

The ancient Israelites from our biblical text for this morning were no different from us when it came to getting back to normal. They would soon forget the miracle of their liberation out of Egypt and through the waters of the Red Sea. Once they got to the other side of the Red Sea, they started complaining about the monotony of the desert and the daily diet of manna and quail. They got so bored and distracted that they ditched God, manufactured a golden calf and worshiped it for the sake of change. More than anything they wanted to be back in Egypt where at least they had real food and shelter over their heads.

Homiletics warns; *“Like the Israelites, whenever we fail to see the daily presence of God in our lives, we, too, have a tendency to use our time to construct gods for ourselves.”*

I don’t know about you, but one of the gods I have constructed for myself is the insistence that I must get back to normal. Ever since Covid-19 shut down our lives I have spent more time dreaming about my retirement home than I have been planning out my sermons for the rest of the year. I am counting down my days to retirement: only 3,584 more to go; not because I am so eager to retire, but because I am sick and tired of leading through a pandemic. Tell me; have I not fallen victim to the construction of a golden calf? A calf that the ancient Greeks called Chronos; better known to us as ‘Father Time?’ Though counting time may help mark our place in history; it cannot, warns Homiletics, *“give us meaning.”*

In C.S. Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters*, the devilish Screwtape writes to his demon apprentice, Wormwood: *“The horror of the Same Old Thing is one of the most valuable passions we have produced in the*

human heart The humans live in time, and experience reality successively. To experience much of it, therefore, they must experience many different things; in other words, they must experience change.”

Homiletics says of Lewis’ words: *“That’s the truth of chronos — because time marches on, day after day, regardless of the date, humans will do just about anything to break the monotony, making changes just for the sake of change. If idle hands are the devil’s workshop, as the old saying goes, then boredom provides a warehouse of raw materials for construction. When time holds no meaning for us, we can lose day after day wasted in trivial and, sometimes, destructive pursuits and not even realize that those hours, days and weeks are gone.”*

Our scripture passage for this morning stands as a stark reminder that we were not created to simply mark time; to count down how many days it has been since we crossed the Red Sea; we were created to be in relationship with God Himself. Homiletics commenting upon the purpose of our creation says: *“God created chronos time by marking out the seven-day week at creation, but God’s set calendar for humanity wouldn’t be primarily marked by hours, dates and minutes. Instead, God would give human time meaning by inserting the divine Presence into time itself. Biblically speaking, this is kairos time — the appointed time for God’s purpose and activity, the moment of God’s visitation and intervention. A kairos moment may take place at a chronos point in history, but its meaning would extend beyond chronos time and be celebrated again and again as not only a past event but a present reality.”*

The Passover as described in our biblical passage for this morning is one of these kairos moments breaking in on chronos time. In Exodus 12, God instructs the Israelites through Moses and Aaron to prepare themselves for liberation, but to do so with some very specific and repeatable procedures. The liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt through God’s intervention would be the event that marked a new beginning, a new relationship between God and God’s people marked on the calendar as the ‘beginning of months’ and ‘the first month of the year.’ While the Egyptians marked their calendars by the appearance of the sun and moon, the Israelites were to mark their calendars forever with a story — a foundational narrative that would interpret their past, preserve their present, and shape their future as a covenant people chosen and preserved by God. The Passover was not to be just a one-off deal, but “a day of remembrance” to be celebrated as a “festival to the Lord” as a “perpetual ordinance” throughout all generations. It was, and is, the Passover that marked God’s people and gave them meaning and purpose in the world.

Homiletics commenting upon the books of the New Testament says of its writers; *“they certainly understood this and saw the coming of Jesus as the quintessential kairos moment that fulfilled the ultimate liberation of all of God’s people from slavery to sin and death. It’s that kairos time that we enter every time we break the bread and drink the cup of the Eucharist, every time we participate in the baptism of a new believer, every time we do or say something in the name of Jesus. The early Christians changed the day of worship from Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, to Sunday as a way of celebrating the reality of Easter again and again — a constant reminder that the resurrection wasn’t a mere historical event but a living and present reality; the beginning of a new age that looks forward to completion when Christ establishes the kingdom, making life ‘on earth as it is in heaven.’ Time has meaning because God has entered into it and has called us to use our chronos [that is; our time today and throughout the whole pandemic] to look for, celebrate, and proclaim God’s kairos.”*

Still confused? As believers... disciples...followers of Christ, even though we may live in chronos time (that is; the here and now in the midst of the pandemics of Covid-19 and racism) we do not look for that which will bring us some sense of normalcy (what C. S. Lewis called “the Same Old Thing”); but instead, to recognize and celebrate God’s purpose and activity in our lives and in the world around us. It’s time my friends for us to move from chronos thinking to kairos living.

Want to know if your moving towards kairos living? You may want to ask yourself these questions:

- How does my calendar reflect time spent cultivating my relationship with God?
- Does my daily rhythm include time dedicated solely to prayer, and doing what the Apostle Paul advises us to do in his letter to the Ephesians: *“giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ?”*

- Do I search the Scriptures to "understand what the will of the Lord is"?
- Am I participating in weekly worship where I can be filled with the Spirit and make "melody to the Lord" in my heart?
- In what parts of my life am I currently reflecting God's love?
- Where in my life must I further invite Christ in?

A man is casually strolling down the street when he suddenly remembers an important meeting.

Unfortunately, his watch has stopped, and he cannot tell if he is late or not. He notices another pedestrian strolling down the street and calls out to him, "Pardon me, sir, but do you have the time?"

The man calls back, "One moment!" and throws himself on the ground, pulling out a short stick. He pushes the stick into the ground, and, pulling out a carpenter's level, assures himself that the stick is vertical.

With a compass, the man locates north and, with a steel ruler, measures the precise length of the shadow cast by the stick.

Withdrawing a slide rule from his pocket, he calculates rapidly, then swiftly packs up all his tools and turns back to the other pedestrian, saying, "It is now precisely 3:29 p.m., provided today is August 16, which I believe it is."

The man can't help but be impressed by this demonstration and sets his watch accordingly.

Before he leaves, he says to the man who gave him the time; "That was really quite remarkable. But tell me, what do you do on a cloudy day, or at night, when the stick casts no shadow?"

The man holds up his wrist and says, "I suppose I'd just look at my watch."

Kairos living is the willingness to do the hard work of seeking after God; of dropping to ground, pulling out the carpenter's level and using everything at our disposal to discern the will and love of God. To simply look to our watches is not kairos living; it's chronos thinking.