

Good Sunday morning from a sunny hill in Rockport.....

It is Memorial Day weekend! This is a holiday weekend like we've never had before – with precautions about gathering for barbeques and other summertime fun with too many people, and with some anxiety about how the Summer is going to progress with restrictions we've never had before in our country. This holiday weekend begins the season of warmer weather, vacations, and the opportunity to get outdoors and away from the enclosures of winter, the enclosures of pandemic warnings, the enclosures of too much togetherness in our homes for some of us....

Let's be honest – this isn't fun – all these restrictions and warnings and details each day of how many cases of covid-19 have been added and how many have recovered and how many have died. This is NOT fun! But it is our reality in this moment. Some of us are doing our best to make the most of it with as much good humor, cooperation (i.e., wearing masks, etc.) and understanding as we can muster. Others of us are grouchy, uncooperative (i.e., nobody's going to tell ME I have to wear a mask!, etc.) and disbelieving that there really is a worldwide pandemic going on that is affecting millions of people. We have a choice – to get with the program and help one another through this time OR refuse to participate with the program and behave in meanspirited and sometimes vicious ways towards one's neighbors and strangers.

Memorial Day “is observed on the last Monday of May to honor the men and women who have died while serving in the military. On both Memorial Day and Veterans Day, it's customary to spend time remembering and honoring the countless veterans who have served the United States throughout the country's history. However, there is a distinction between the two holidays:

Memorial Day commemorates the men and women who died while in the military service of their country, particularly those who died in battle or as a result of wounds sustained in battle. In other words, the purpose of Memorial Day is to memorialize the veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. We spend time remembering those who lost their lives and why we have the luxury and freedom that we enjoy.

Veterans Day is the day set aside to thank and honor ALL who served – in wartime or peacetime – regardless of whether they died or survived. Veterans Day is always observed officially on November 11, regardless of the day of the week on which it falls.

Traditionally, on Memorial Day (U.S.), people visit cemeteries and memorials, and volunteers often place American flags on each grave site at national cemeteries. A national moment of remembrance takes place at 3 p.m. local time. The custom of honoring ancestors by cleaning cemeteries and decorating graves is an ancient and worldwide tradition, but the specific origin of Memorial Day – or Decoration Day, as it was first known – is unclear.” (taken from *The Old Farmer’s Almanac*)

On this Memorial Day weekend, may we find comfort in honoring an American tradition and give thanks by remembering those who have given their lives that we might be able to have a Memorial Day weekend. May we find patience in ourselves and encourage it in others as we continue to face this pandemic time. May we find compassion within ourselves and for one another in these challenging summer months to come.....

Blessings to all this fine Spring day in Maine..... Susan

p.s. You will note the sermon below is not single-spaced! I had one of my readers tell me this week they liked the double-spacing of the sermon – made it easier to read! So, here below again, the sermon double-spaced!

p.s.s. I have downloaded this morning’s scripture reading and sermon to my facebook page: freerangepastor for anyone who wants to tune in.....

p.s.s.s. A few of you have taken me up on my offer to come chat with you in your yard or open garage, on your porch or deck, etc..... wearing one of my many masks, bringing my own libation, and carrying my own lawn chair.... and maybe bug net, too! Be in touch if you’re interested – call me at 207-322-1948 or send me an e-mail to freerangepastor@gmail.com.....

**A simple online worship service for Sunday, May 24, 2020**  
**The 7th Sunday of Easter**  
**as prepared by Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet**  
**Pastor of the Federated Church of Thomaston**

**Opening Prayer**

Fashion us, O God, with divine imagination!

Mold us with sacred intention.

Change us with your compassion.

Transform us with joy!

Birth us again, anew.

Live through us this day.

Amen.

### **A Prayer of Questions\***

Is this the time to begin again, as if for the first time?

Begin what? How will we know if we're on the right track?

Don't worry about right or wrong,  
think grace and calm, acceptance and forgiveness.

But how do we know if we are worthy?

You ARE worthy, no matter your past sins, your past indiscretions,  
your past harsh thoughts and words.

So, it IS the time – the time to let go, to take up, to receive, to give, and  
to accept our humanness AND our holiness.

This IS the time, this IS the day the Lord has made to be made new!

We come hungry, and receive the bread of God's holy making.

We come thirsty, and receive the cup flowing from God's holy fountain.

Yes, this is the time to receive and be received  
by the Holy One in our midst, dressed as Holy Spirit.

Amen.

### **A Reading of Scripture – Acts 1:1-14**

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

So when they had come together, they asked [Jesus], "**Lord, is this the time** when you will restore the kingdom of Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

Acts 1:1-14

### **A sermon based on Acts 1:1-14** **"Lord, is this the time?"**

Will you pray with me. Wondrous God, you seem to come and go in our lives, yet in truth, it is *we* who come and go while you remain constant. Help us to envision Jesus going and then coming and then going again before the eyes of his baffled and clueless disciples. Help us to keep our eyes on Jesus, even when *we* feel baffled and clueless. Amen.

Time marches on.... Time stands still.... It's about time!.... It's the wrong time.... In the meantime.... At the same time.... It's a good time.... Time to go!.... One more time!.... Father Time is creeping up on us!.... What time is it?.... "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom of Israel?" (Acts 1:7)

Time.... Some days it seems there's never enough of it – to get everything done, I mean. Other days, time seems to stand still, when pain won't go away or when flights are delayed and I'm still thousands of miles away from home. (Although that's not the case right now, is it?!) I know when I find myself saying to myself, "I don't have time" for this or that or whatever, I try to remind myself that I have the same amount of time in each day as does everybody else. The choices we *all* have determine what we'll do with the time we have. What time do *you* have?

The disciples asked of the risen Jesus, who came back to haunt, I mean convince, them that he was on the move, but not gone, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom of Israel?" (Acts 1:7) I have to believe Jesus was shaking a holy head and thinking under his breath, "Oh, Lord! Do they *still* not get it.... after all that's happened, after all they and I have been through?! They're still thinking in *chronos* time and I'm trying to tell them of *kairos* time. O.K., one more time.... I'll try to get this through their thick heads."

I've talked about chronos time and kairos time before. And now seems a very GOOD time to talk about them again – in the midst of this pandemic storm we are all in! To review, there are two words for “time” in Greek. Chronos time is “watch time,” as in “Timex time,” or nowadays, “smart phone time.” For those first disciples of Jesus, they were thinking in chronos time – as in, “Jesus, when are you going to overthrow the Emperor and the Roman army and get in control here? When are you going to take over the world in chronos time?”

Kairos time is “watch time,” too, but as in “God’s time,” not Timex time or smart phone time. Jesus was trying to get the disciples to wrap their minds, and hearts, around the reality of *God’s* time, not the *Emperor’s* time.... the kingdom of *God*, not the kingdom of the *Roman empire*. If you’re on line, just google “chronos time versus kairos time,” and you’ll have a fine time discovering the difference between them!

*Before* church on Sunday mornings, I’m on chronos time. (This is when we are able to HAVE “in church” worship!) If you call me at 8:15 a.m. and say, “Susan, I need to talk with you...” unless it’s an emergency, I’m going to tell you we need to have this conversation another time because I have to finish getting ready for church! But once we’re *in church*, I’m on kairos time, and my role from the pulpit is to invite *you* into kairos time, too.... God’s time, not what time is lunch, or the ball game, or some other chronos time in the here and now, but what time are we going to acknowledge God in our midst, what time are we going to admit that chronos time may *seem* to govern our *days*, but *kairos* time governs our *lives*.

It’s a curious thing, though, about kairos time.... because kairos time is also in the here and now, like chronos time. We just don’t often pay attention to it because we’re so busy, or frantic, or stuck in chronos time. “I’ve got to get my work done.... by Sunday morning, by Monday, by next week, by.... I don’t have time to sit around thinking about kairos time, God’s time!”

But here’s the rub – especially now in this pandemic time.... we really don’t have time to NOT think about kairos time. It seems to me one of the greatest challenges we have is not being able, or willing, to think in kairos time terms. The question the startled and frightened disciples ask of Jesus on his return engagement to earth, “Lord, is this the time...?” is possibly one of the most important questions asked in the entire Bible. “Lord is this the time....?”

**Is this the time** when human frailties and faults, human errors and omissions, human sins and missteps fall away?

**Is this the time** when God's gracious presence fills us all with compassion for others, with patience for ourselves and everyone around us, with love for our neighbor, no matter who our neighbor might be, with acceptance for ourselves in the midst of all our human "stuff" that weighs us down?

**Is this the time** when we get over our chronos-time-selves and the mistaken notion that tries to convince us we don't have enough TIME to get everything done!!! We'd have the time, if only we took the time to think about this, to pray about it, to live it, to love it.

Kairos time *beckons* us. Chronos time *holds us back*... from acknowledging and living into God's time, not our time that comes with all its stresses and stifling blocks.

But wait, there's more! In our text for this morning, Jesus tells the disciples that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them, and then they will be Jesus' witnesses to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8) We don't have to make this leap from chronos time to kairos time on our own. Help is on the way. Help is available right now, right here. Can you feel it? Can you sense it in the people around you who live their faith day in and day out, whether they're sitting next to you in church pews, or running into you at the grocery store? We have role models to follow. We have Holy Spirit galore sitting right here in our midst in this pandemic time. The question is.... the charge is.... the invitation is.... to follow the movements of the Spirit, wherever it may lead us, through whomever spreads it.

Henri Nouwen, "the world-renowned spiritual guide and counselor, who understood the spiritual life as a journey of faith and transformation that is deepened by accountability, community, and relationships,"<sup>[1]</sup> wrote, "Spiritual formation is not about steps or stages on the way to perfection. It's about the *movements* from the mind to the heart through prayer in its many forms that reunite us with God, each other, and our truest selves."<sup>[2]</sup> Nouwen's words can help us experience *kairos time* in new ways, not just chronos time this summer.... As we move through this unprecedented time of "sheltering in place," and returning to more public venues in cautious and careful ways, can we hear the beckoning call of kairos time, not the stifling restrictions of chronos time?

You see, as Jesus' first disciples came to experience the Holy Spirit in new ways, I do believe the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, works in many strange and wondrous ways even now. The Holy Spirit will show us the way into kairos time from chronos time as we move forward, just as Jesus promised his first surprised and

frightened disciples. The question is.... do *we* have the time, are we willing to *take the time*, to be open to being shown the way?

Let the people say, "Amen."

### **To hold in our prayers this day.....**

From our most recent bulletin and more....

Ann Foster, Carol Moss, Fred Bagnall, Harriet Williams, Julie Pollitt, Zeke Bryant, Sally Harjula, Elliot, Trish Perry, April DeVarney, Helmut Steger, John Flaherty, George Ng, Eve Anderson, Doug and BJ Thomson, Heather Van Buskirk, Muriel's grandson Jared, and Jackie's 92 year old friend Genevieve Micali.... and all those affected by the coronavirus and the families of those who have died from the virus. *Please send me the names of those you would like for me to add to this list next Sunday!*

### **A Benediction \***

*Life is short, no matter the length of our days.  
We do not have much time to gladden the hearts  
of those who make the way with us.  
So be swift to love. Make haste to be kind.  
And believe that God, the creator,  
Jesus, the redeemer, and  
the Holy Spirit, the sustainer,  
will be with us no matter the length of our days.  
Amen.*

\*adapted from the words of Henri Auriel

### **Readings from the RCL (Revised Common Lectionary)**

#### **for Sunday, May 31, 2020 -- Pentecost**

Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13; John 20:19-23

### **Words to ponder today.....**

*"On the Seventh Sunday of Easter, with Pentecost on the horizon, the church can take its cue from [the text for today]. Are we in charge of our own destiny as the church,*

*or are we anticipating God's Spirit to show us the way? Do we really expect God's Spirit to come into our midst?"* f

~ Rick Mixon, *Feasting on the Word*, Vol. 3, Year A

*"If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other."* ~ Mother Teresa of Calcutta, 20th century

*"The hunger to belong is not merely a desire to be attached to something. It is rather sensing that great transformation and discovery become possible when belonging is sheltered and true."* ~ John O'Donohue, 20th century

*"Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads."*

~ Henry David Thoreau, 19th century

*"Earth's crammed with heaven...But only he who sees, takes off his shoes."*

~ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 19th century

*"The connections we make in the course of a life - maybe that's what heaven is."* ~ Fred Rogers, 20th century

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<sup>[1]</sup>Henri Nouwen, with Michael J. Christensen and Rebecca J. Laird, *Spiritual Formation, Following the Movements of the Spirit*, New York: HarperOne, 2010, dust cover/book jacket.

<sup>[2]</sup>*Ibid.*, p. xvi.