

"Today decides tomorrow"
A Reflection for "vespers with a free range pastor"
Sunday, August 26, 2018
Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet

Scriptures: Mark 1:14-15, Luke 12:54-56, Romans 13:11-13, 2 Corinthians 6:1-2

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

Mark 1:14-15

[Jesus] also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, 'It is going to rain'; and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be a scorching heat'; and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"

Luke 12:54-56

[Paul said,] "Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy."

Romans 13:11-13

[Paul said,] "As we work together with him [Jesus], we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, 'At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.' See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!"

2 Corinthians 6:1-2

Be with me in the spirit of prayer. Wise God, teach us about timeliness in these moments. Remind us that it is the *season* of our lives, not the *hour of the day* that will make the difference in all our tomorrows. Help us to envision the *bigger* picture of our future rather than the *smallness* of our daily "to do" lists. Amen.

"Today decides tomorrow." Those words don't come specifically from the Bible. They don't come from any self help book I've read. I've never seen them on a bumper sticker. I read them etched on a stone on the campus of Chico State University in northern California several months ago. For some reason, they struck a cord in my mind. I pulled out my little "smart phone" and wrote them down on my iPhone "note pad."

"Today decides tomorrow." Well, does it? Does today decide tomorrow? Or does yesterday decide tomorrow in some way -- either because of some negative thing that happened, or some positive event, or some birth, or death, or departure? I think the question is timely -- "does today decide tomorrow"? How shall we move forward?

After retiring a year ago this past June, and spending eighteen and a half years as the pastor of United Christian Church in Lincolnville, I've learned a few things. I've learned that personal agendas, past hurts, and many errors and omissions can take their toll on a congregation's, or any group's, movement into the future. Will there be progress and positive cooperation all around? Or will there be more of the past, both positive and sometimes not so positive, determining how the months and years ahead will go?

I'm pretty sure there are a variety of opinions floating around amongst you as to how to move forward in your various communities -- be they church, or the LIA, or some other group. The challenge is to move beyond our daily "to do" lists and our individual opinions about what

should come next and into honestly and openly envisioning a bigger picture of our future together.

Knowing full well how churches exist as living entities, when change of pastor is in the air, I know some folks stay and some folks go. And new folks come. This has been the messy, untidy and totally human reality of "church life" for the past two thousand years.... Just read the Bible to find that out!

To put a lighter note, but still a serious one, on this point of today determining tomorrow, I always remember the Peanuts cartoon strip where in the first frame, Lucy proclaims, "Timeliness is next to Godliness." In the next frame, Charlie Brown is quietly looking inquisitive. And in the third frame, he says, "I thought cleanliness was next to Godliness." And in the final frame, Lucy responds, "What good is it to be clean if you're not on time!"

Hm.... cleanliness, timeliness, Godliness.... so many connotations and interpretations of those three words, eh? Cleanliness, timeliness, Godliness. As I've been pondering all of this in preparation for this evening, I've been reading about kronos time and kairos time. Sure I learned about those terms in seminary, but that was a while ago. It was "time" to remind myself, and you, too, of the *difference* between them and the importance of *both* of them as we think about today deciding tomorrow.

"Kronos (chronos) is the ancient Greek word which refers to sequential or linear time.... We know kronos time as chronology; tick-tock time. It is measured, or chronicled, by clocks, hours, minutes and seconds.... We schedule our lives by it. Most people speak of never having enough of it as we race around the clock to make sure we maximize the time. Some even refer to much of life as 'putting in the time.'.... [Andy talked about this kind of time at our last vespers gathering. It IS important time because it calls us to organize our daily time so it is more productive, and less stressful, more enjoyable and less frantic as we measure how we move from one day to the next.]

Kairos refers to the right time, opportune time or seasonable time. It cannot be measured. It is the perfect time, the qualitative time, the perfect moment, the 'now.' Kairos time brings transcending value to kronos time."¹

From Mark Freier who writes about both kinds of time, "Kairos is the right moment of opportunity which requires proactivity to achieve success. It is significant and decisive. These moments transcend kronos, stirring emotions and realities to cause decisive action. It is not an understatement to say that kairos moments alter destiny. To miscalculate kronos time is inconvenient ["Gosh, I missed my appointment because I had the wrong time in my calendar!"] To miscalculate kairos is lamentable."² "Gosh, we could have used this transition time -- kairos time -- to rediscover who we are as a church community, as the LIA, as 'you fill in the group or family name' and what we have to offer to one another and to the larger community, but we were too focused on kronos time, just getting from day to day, from meeting to meeting."

It's easy to get stuck in kronos time every day, isn't it? I have certainly fallen into that time trap over and over! And then I/we miss the kairos moments and seasons of life that could change everything for the better.

"In the New Testament, kairos time is mentioned eighty-five times, and thirty of these are by the apostle Paul.... The New Testament writers reflect the evolution of the word by referring

¹Mark R. Freier, "Kairos, turning potential into reality," markfreier.files.wordpress.com, p. 2-3.

²Ibid., p. 3.

to kairos time as the present moment, the defining moment, and even the God-ordained moments. Kairos is the time-frame for divine interaction and occurrences."³

The four New Testament passages I read this evening use kairos as the word for time, not kronos.

From Mark, "The time [kairos time] is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

From Luke, "You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time [kairos time]?"

From Romans, "Besides this, you know what time [kairos time] it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near."

And from 2 Corinthians, "For [Jesus] says, 'At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.' See, now is the acceptable time [kairos time]; see, now is the day of salvation!"

So eighty-one more times in the New Testament the word kairos is used to denote time, not kronos. Kairos times are transcending times, holy times. What time is it in your life -- kairos time or kronos time? Or both?

I put a quote from Mark Freier in your programs for this evening. I'll read it to you -- no need to pull it out. "The span of time that measures a person's life is referred to as a lifetime. Each person has a limited span of time to live. Yet each person is given the opportunity to leave a legacy which is about contribution, significance, and things that really matter. Could there be two spans of time, whether recognized or not, which actually intersect?"⁴

"Today decides tomorrow." So goes a saying on a stone at Chico State University which leads me to much reflection time. Charlie Brown and Lucy remind us that cleanliness, timeliness and Godliness are all important.... Kairos time is legacy making decision time.

Here's a few questions I'll leave with you for this evening -- What legacy do each one of you want to leave.... in the church, in the LIA, in other groups, in your families? What contribution do you want to make to ensure the strength and vibrancy of any of the communities that are important to you into the decades to come? We each have a role to play in the sacred future we will all inhabit. What shall your role be in this kairos moment in your life?

Let the people say, "Amen."

³Ibid., p. 4-5.

⁴Ibid., p. 2.