

Time to Go Home Luke 21:25-36

Time Flies!

Time flies. It's already the last week of November. We feel the change of seasons. Most leaves have fallen from the trees and hopefully you don't have to wrestle with removing them from your property anymore. Some of you may miss your yard work but don't worry, we live in New England so snow is on the way and will give you plenty to do.

There is still one more month on our 2021 calendar, but according to the church calendar today is New Year's Day. The first Sunday of Advent is the beginning of New Christian year. Time flies and we cannot catch the passing time. We normally begin the New Year with expectation and hope for a better future. So the traditional theme of the first week of Advent is hope. Of course, what we have read today does not sound like a hopeful sign for the future. I will read vs 25-26 from the Message Bible Version. Jesus said, "It will seem like all hell has broken loose—sun, moon, stars, earth, sea, in an uproar and everyone all over the world in a panic, the wind knocked out of them by the threat of doom, the powers-that-be quaking." Jesus' words don't sound particularly promising or hopeful. Why does the lectionary place this apocalyptic message on the first day of the church's new calendar year and what is such good news for us in this doom's day prophecy?

Chronos and Kairos

For a better understanding of Jesus' teaching, we need to understand the different concepts of time. In ancient Greek, there are two words for time. One is Chronos and the other is Kairos. Chronos refers to chronological time. What does a clock sound like in the United States? Tick-tock... Tick-tock. Do you know how Korean clock sound like? "똑딱똑딱" In U.S. clock goes Tick-tock. No matter whether the clock goes 똑딱똑딱 or tick-tock, tick-tock... time goes. Tick-tock, tick-tock... that may be the sound of Chronos passing. Tick-tock... tick-tock... time flies even now. Chronos is time that we cannot catch.

[ppt] In Greek mythology, Chronos is the King of the Titans and the god of time, that devours all things. We experience how time devours all things. About a month ago, I went hiking on Mt. Monadnock, one of my favorite mountains in New Hampshire. Mt. Monadnock is not a high mountain but the view from the top is spectacular. I first hiked this mountain in 2013 with a young adult group and since then, I have hiked that mountain more than ten times. I have never considered it a difficult hike. On my first hike up, I took only one short break on my way to the top. I was almost running on my way down. The mountain is the same now as then but after 8 years, my body is not. For the first in my life, I felt that hiking was difficult. I had to stop many times to catch my breath and I even felt nausea. On my way down, I used trekking poles to protect my knees. I know I am still considered a young pastor in our church, and even told I look like a teenager, but "time waits for no one." Chronos devours all things. Tick-tock, tick-tock... time flies and we cannot catch its passing.

The other word for time in ancient Greek is Kairos. Kairos does not refer to chronological time. It signifies a proper, critical or opportune moment. I believe you have heard the expression, "Fortune knocks once at every man's door." [ppt] In Greek mythology, Kairos is god of opportune time. He is always running and moving quickly. As you can see in this picture, Kairos is depicted as a youth with a long lock of hair hanging down from his forehead while the back of his head is bald. It means Kairos (Caerus) can easily be seized by the hair hanging over his face

when he is arriving. But once he has passed by, no one can grasp him. Ancient mythology captured the truth of life. Kairos is an opportune moment for action and we need to seize the opportunity. In the New Testament, kairos means "the appointed time in the purpose of God." It is the time when God speaks or acts. Kairos is a moment of God revealing God's self to God's people and moving the wheels of history. When Moses saw the burning bush in the wilderness after 40 years of being nobody. That was a kairos moment for him and it changed his life completely. We, Christians, need to seize the Kairos moment. While we cannot catch Chronos, we are meant to catch the Kairos moments in our lives. Does this make sense?

Look at the tree!

These two main concepts of time are represented in the Bible. However, we are more familiar with the concept of chronos than Kairos when we think of time. So we tend to read today's text within a sequential time framework and understand that what Jesus said is about the very distant future, and maybe the end times. Frankly, we are not really interested in this odd message, regarding the distant future. We already have enough things to wrestle with so why bother with a distant future? But if we read this text from a Kairos perspective, we will discover a life-giving message for us today.

Kairos is the present moment of God speaking to us. God is doing something for us now and we need to pay attention. In this preaching moment, we look back to what God has done for us in the scripture. But at the same time, Jesus reminds us that there is still something coming on the horizon. God is doing something for our salvation. What Jesus said was not about a distant future but he reminds us that God is walking even now for our salvation and God's kingdom is coming. Jesus is not trying to scare us but instill hope for the future that is a ground of our present joy. When we hear God's word that is spoken to us now through Jesus word, we are catching a kairos moment.

Jesus says, "Look at the trees" to discern the change of a season. What do you see in the oak tree in our church yard? At this time of year, we see busy squirrels collecting acorns. We also see the change of season as its leaves turned yellow and fell to the ground. What else do you see? We also see the signs of growth and life even in a dying season. The oak tree in our yard has been there more than 90 years. It sprouted leaves and changed its color. The tree might look dead during winter, but we know that it will sprout leaves again when spring comes. A tree is a sign of life and growth. So Jesus is telling us, "Stand up and raise your heads!" (21:28) and look for signs of life and growth even in the midst of your suffering and struggle because God's not done with you!" Let me share a beautiful song, "God's Not Done With You." [ppt]

It is an encouraging and comforting song. Isn't it? It is our natural instinct when things do not go well, when there is a difficult moment, to keep our heads down. But Jesus tells us to raise our heads, to look up! Look up and trust God and have confidence because God's not done with you yet. There's still light and there's a strength that's growing even in the darkest moments because God is not done with you.

Covid-19 variants continues to threaten the recovery of the world. The division of our society has made us worried about the future of our nation. Ongoing impact of racism continue to threaten and destroy many lives of people of color. An arms race between powerful nations continues while the global ecosystems are collapsing. We don't see a light of hope in the world.

But Jesus says, "to raise our heads, to look up! And trust God!" God's kingdom is coming. God is still working for our salvation. So stand up and raise your heads and look up. "When we glimpse what God is doing for our salvation in the midst of our lives... when we catch that

moment, a Kairos moment..., it changes us and empowers us to join God's work of salvation for the whole creation.

We don't have to look for something huge or great. We just need to pay attention to the small and mundane things in which God works. Having a small thanksgiving meal with your family or sharing hot soup with those in need. Sending or receiving a Christmas greeting card...pay attention to those moments because God is still working for us.

Time to Go Home

Advent is a multilayered time. During this season, we remember the birth of baby Jesus again and want to hear angels singing. We believed that even for a moment, there was true peace on earth on that night Jesus was born. So, during this season of Advent, we remember the story of Jesus' birth and it gives us hope. So I strongly encourage you to re-read the gospel story and remember what God has done for us through Jesus Christ and give thanks to God during this season of Advent.

At the same time, we look forward at this time of Advent. We look for hope for thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. We long for the true home that we live for. God's kingdom is coming. God's not done with us but still loves us and works for our salvation. So, pay attention to God. Catch a Kairos moment. It's time to go home in joyful celebration. Make ready to go our true home. Amen.