

"A Matter of Time" – based on Ephesians 5:15-20
Aspen Community UMC
August 16, 2009

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*(The Bible gives us four perspectives on time -
past, present, future and eternity and encourages us to be most attentive to the present.)*

When I was a little girl – summer was so long that I forgot there was winter.
And when it was winter – it was so long that I did not remember there was a summer.

I am sure that as I got older I remembered the two –
but as a little kid those seasons stretched out all around me.
Now they fly by – I am amazed at how fast this summer is going by.
Does this ring true for anyone here?

Anyone ever heard of time compression?
For the last 20 years or so – it's been taking place on your television screen -
without your even being aware of it.

When a movie made for the big screen is adapted for television -
there's usually some editing necessary.

First they have to eliminate certain R or X rated scenes -
and there's often some cleanup of the language.

There's also editing for time – to fit it into a two-hour TV slot -
which minus commercials – may not even be quite 90 minutes.

To shorten the film – the editor eliminates parts of scenes
but only so much of that can be done without hurting the storyline.

Let's say that after editing – the movie is still 93 minutes long.
The time compression process electronically slices milliseconds out of the film -
about twelve hundred times every minute.
This shortens the film to 90 minutes – without losing even one word of dialog.



Does it feel like somebody is doing this to your days – shortening your hours
so that you can't accomplish what you had planned to do?

And there is the time traveler.

Did anyone see the movie – *The Time Travelers Wife*?

The storyline is the life of Henry – who has a rare genetic condition -
that causes him to dissolve from time to time (literally time to time) in his life.

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He then wakes up in another time period of his life – sometimes in the past -
and sometimes in the future.

I won't say any more about the movie – but it does get you thinking about time itself.



The Bible helps us think about time.

The writers speak of four dimensions:

past – present – future and eternity.

There are some statements about eternity –
but generally as something that belongs uniquely to God – as God is everlasting -
- something above and beyond time.

When Jesus says something about eternal life
it is in the context of this everlasting presence of God.



As for the past -

we read about the manna the people were given in the wilderness.

This is certainly a story from the past –
and the past is important as the framework of that story.

Time and time again people recall how God had been with them or with their ancestors.

The events of the exodus from Egypt – were retold from generation to generation.

"As God was with us then – so God will be with us now."



Surprisingly – the Bible does not say very much about the future
in its meaning of the time ahead on earth.

The word "future" does not even occur in early translations.
When it is used in more modern versions –it usually had to do with
God's covenant being made – not only with the people at the time -
but also with future generations.

But – that is about it.

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Think about it – the things that cause us to think about the future – didn't exist.

When we think about the future we think about
things like pensions and IRA's and Social Security.

People did not think about things like next summer's vacation -
or what they would do after graduation.

There was someone who did try to plan ahead. Remember who it was?

He is known as the wealthy landowner.

This landowner has a bumper crop and so he tears down his barns to build bigger ones.

He said to himself that

he can now take it easy because he's got it made.

And then – Jesus calls him a fool and says that that very night -
the man's soul would be required of him.

He had not done anything about his soul's future.

"So do not worry about tomorrow – for tomorrow will bring worries of its own.

Today's trouble is enough for today."

So that is about it for future.



Now for the present -

there are two words normally translated as "time" – and you know this.

One is clock time – chronos -

the steady progression of seconds, minutes, hours, and days.

Our watches and calendars refer to chronos time.

The other word is what? Kairos time

Kairos time means "the time of opportunity."

This is the kind of time filled with possibilities.

Every moment of time – is one of God's gifts to us.

Every moment comes with the potential of being used

to respond to God and being spent for good.

An example of this is where Paul says,

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"Be careful then how you live – not as unwise people but as wise -
making the most of the time – because the days are evil."

This is what we read today.

These words – which call the days "evil" are more understandable
when we consider that Paul was talking *kairos* time – time of opportunity.
Don't waste your days – be aware of the opportunity of the present.

Kairos time – examples of Kairos time.

We might think of a couple who have been dating seriously for some time –
let's say a year or so – chronos time.

Finally – one of them brings up the topic of marriage.

Within moments – they are in kairos time – because depending on the reply the other gives -
their relationship will either move to a greater level of commitment -
or it will begin to stagnate.

Regardless of what they decide – chronos time will continue to move along -
but kairos time will be gone.

Or – think of a student attending college.

He gets up morning after morning and goes to chemistry class -
and the instructor announces that a major exam will be given the following Tuesday.

That's chronos time.

Suddenly the 50 minutes allotted to this class becomes something more than chronos time.

It becomes kairos time – the time when the student's fate in the course will be decided.

While time itself may not be compressed -
a lot of importance is compressed into them.

"A matter of time" can have double aspects.

A decisive moment of some kind is involved.

God's call on our lives – think of that as decisive moments.

Kairos moments are when God has our attention.

They may be moments of inspiration.

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We look more deeply into ourselves –
perhaps to see some purposes for which we may be here – at this time and place.



We don't have room to do that if we are focused on the past or the future.

The past unrolls behind us – is gone and cannot be changed.

We learn from it – but we cannot really make a life on memory.

The future is full of possibilities.

The future is certainly worth making arrangements for and setting goals for.

But to focus primarily on the future - leaves us in a state of anxiety or anticipation -
and leaves us with an emptiness in the now.

Surely if Paul were talking to us now –
he would be sharing with us that the Christ moments are the now moments -
the moments of awareness – the moments of aliveness.

It may be to bear a present cross – a defeat or disappointment.

Or it may be to receive a grace – or give thanks for a present gift.

Giving thanks for present gifts – like listening to the amazing music -
that has graced this church these past weeks

.

If we stay too much in the past or in the future – we miss the now.

If we are waiting for the postlude we miss the prelude.

If this afternoon – you are at the tent for the concert
and you have your mind on the final movement of the Mozart concerto
you will miss the joy of the first movement – the first allegro.

If you know the Bruckner finale and are waiting for it -
you'll miss the allegro and the adagio and the scherzo.

Each part has its genius – its art – its inspiration.

So does your life.



Well – I know I am talking to myself – about being aware of the now – the moment at hand.

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But - perhaps you also find yourself thinking of past or future -
when the now is right in front of you.

The call of God – you might call it the Christ moments –
or eternity - or kairos moments – are always in the present.
They are opportunities to make subtle changes in our lives – or big changes.

Let's think about the kairos moments in our lives - and be ready for them?

Open ourselves to the gift you are – we are -
and the gifts we have to give the world.

Let us pray:

God – may we be open – may we be alive – may we hear your call.
May we respond in the way we live – in the ways we give ourselves to the world.