

Sermon - 01-24-21
Ps 62:5-12; Jonah 3:1-5, 10;
1 Cor 7:29-41; Mk 1:14-20
When Time Is Fulfilled

Time is a dimension of our world, our universe. You have to deal with it, and it weighs differently depending upon your and my circumstances – for not only are we spiritual beings and intellectual beings – but we are very much emotional beings.

A man was taking it easy, lying on the grass and looking up at the clouds. He was identifying shapes when he decided to talk to God. “God”, he said, “how long is a million years?”

God answered, “In my frame of reference, it’s about a minute.”

The man asked, “God, how much is a million dollars?”

God answered, “To Me, it’s a penny.”

The man then asked, “God, can I have a penny?”

God said, “In a minute.” (christiansunite.com)

The weight – the heaviness of time – is easy to bear when you are at the beach on a sunny day walking in the warm sand, feeling the soothing rhythm of the tide. It may be vacation time. Or a special time with family or friends. That’s one picture. Compare this with doing time in a prison, where you are permitted outside for very brief periods each day. You wear a drab uniform like every other prisoner. You know how many days, months or years you have served – and how many you have remaining. We call this serving time. You are eager to go before the parole board to ask for time off. The two pictures bring on different emotions.

We use the term “time” frequently – and very emotionally. Time is not really about the clock, unless you are baking a pie or going to a meeting.

Today, we are taking up the weight or preponderance of divine time – God’s time. We call this kairos -- a special, designated time by God’s sovereignty – God’s will in action. Clock time is kronos: minutes, hours, days and years. The two are easily confused, because we perceive them with different faculties. Clock time can be measured – so we can know what time it is very exactly. But God’s time is not perceived except by faith and trust in the Lord.

God’s time is embedded in God’s Word – the Holy Scriptures – written by the prophets, poets and the authors of the histories – and inspired by God Himself.

The Prophet Jonah was sent to the great Assyrian city of Nineveh. He didn’t want to go. He hated the Assyrians as all good Hebrews did. They had lived under the cruel occupation of that tyrant Sennacherib (sun a’ krib). Scholars have a hard time with this little book of prophecy, because it is a narrative about the man Jonah, narrated in the third person. It is not a list of prophetic proclamations. The story has many versions in ancient literature and is included in the Bible as a teaching about the grace and power of God.

Jonah was told to give the Ninevites forty days to repent of their idolatry and wickedness. So, he announced, “Forty days more and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (v 4) That is a stark lesson in God’s timing, isn’t it? The ruler and all the people put on sackcloth and bowed down in repentance to the God of Israel.

There is real urgency in Jonah’s message. He gives the message God instructed him to give. And, the Bible says God changed His mind about the calamity he was about to bring upon Nineveh, and He did not do it. What a wonder! And what a teaching for you and me today! First of all, repentance is very pleasing to God – but pride and hard-heartedness is not.

Second, our God is a God of compassion. The Scripture says God changed His mind about the calamity He had said He

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would bring upon them, and He did not do it. Grace and power meet in our God's great character.

Seven hundred years later, Jesus came echoing the message the Lord gave many prophets, right down to John Baptist. He said: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (v 15) The years of Jesus' earthly ministry are kairos years. The will of God the Father is fulfilled at times not marked on human calendars, not part of our planning process. We are often surprised to see how God is working through events and persons.

What the Apostle Paul declared still stands: "The present form of this world is passing away." (v 31)

The last days began when Jesus was born to a virgin in Bethlehem. The time was fulfilled. We do well to heed Paul's teaching – deal with the world as though you had no dealings with it. That means do not absorb the values and distractions of a godless culture. Keep watching and praying for the Lord's coming. Soon the time will be fulfilled. Amen.