

January 22, 2023
Sermon Manuscript

Mark 1:14-20 (NIV)

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ “The time* has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

**Greek: Kairos*

Detecting where God is at Work in our Lives

This morning I have the privilege of proclaiming the good news that God wants to help us learn to detect ways He is already at work in our lives, and (He wants us to) come to see how our ordinary lives are chocked full of opportunities to enter into more of the life of His kingdom.

Our gospel passage this morning opened by revealing the first sermon Jesus ever preached. And it was only a few sentences long. Mark says “Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!’” And this morning I want to focus on this first part: “The time has come; the kingdom of God has come near,” and wrestle with some of the implications of this, continuing with the help of teachings from Fathers Matt Tebbe & Ben Sternke of Gravity Leadership.

Many scholars have noted that when Jesus says “The time has come” he uses a particular Greek word for ‘time’. The word most often used for time was *chronos*, where we get the word chronology. Chronos referred to the minute-by-minute sense of time, like if one said “this is taking a long time” or “What time is dinner?” But another word for time was *kairos*, which referred to a particular occasion that was pregnant with possibility. For example, there are occasions when we might say “this is crunch time” or “now is your time to shine”. So where chronos referred to lengths of time - in seconds, minutes, hours - kairos referred to times of significance without respect to duration; they could be short or long. And kairos is the word Jesus uses when he begins his public ministry by proclaiming, “The time has come; the kingdom of God has come near.” Because in Jesus God had come to earth to be with humankind and live among us, His kingdom had drawn near. The kingdom of God refers to any area of our lives where God’s grace & truth reigns and where his best - what He wants to happen - happens. And during Jesus’ earthly ministry, every time someone encountered Him and He loved them in grace & truth, as he always did, they would have an opportunity to respond in the direction he was calling them and have the Kingdom of God increase in their life. (WC)

And we see this happen in the rest of our passage today. Jesus approaches fishermen Simon Peter & Andrew, and then James & John, while they’re at work and says, ¹⁷ “Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people.” Here these four are, living in chronos time - just another day at work - when Jesus encounters them with a kairos - a Kingdom of God opportunity - to not merely fish (to work) for their own benefit & survival, but to learn to fish for people - to work to bring others into life with God. And, of course, this wouldn’t be at the expense of their physical needs, Jesus would teach just a little bit later that if we “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,” He will ensure that all of the physical things we need are provided as well. But the opportunity before these would-be disciples to follow Jesus is for their lives to take on eternal significance, become infinitely more fulfilling, for their lives to be a much greater blessing to the world around, and to be lived in intimate relationship with the God of the universe.

But as wonderful an opportunity - a kairos - as that was for these four men, the good news is that God wants to help us learn to detect ways He is already at work in our lives, and come to see how our ordinary lives are chocked full of opportunities to enter into more of the life of His kingdom. You see, the difference between Simon, Andrew, James, & John at the time of Jesus calling them around 30 A.D. and us living in 2023 is that we live in a different age, on the far side of Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension, when human encounters with God are

not limited to just one place at any given moment. In the age of Jesus' earthly ministry, he could only be one place at a time, but after Jesus ascended into heaven and sent His Holy Spirit to live in & among all believers, this means God is always present with us wherever we are. Indeed, Jesus promised in Matthew 28 that he would "be with us" until the end of the age. And one cannot overstate what a game-changer this is; the implications are enormous.

The Gravity Guys cite a story about the famous British writer G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936), when he was approached on a London street corner by a newspaper reporter who said to Chesterton, "Sir, I understand that you recently became a Christian. May I ask you one question?" "Certainly," replied Chesterton. And the reporter said, "If the risen Christ suddenly appeared at this very moment and stood behind you, what would you do?" And Chesterton looked the reporter squarely in the eye and said, "He is." In the age of the Holy Spirit we live in now, God is present with us all the time, which means that we do not have to wait for God to show up or meet Him somewhere.¹ Certainly God can be found in reading the Holy Scriptures or in church services or in times of worship or prayer, but God has also still with us everywhere else - in the car on our drive home from work, while we're doing chores, or watching a movie. There is no division between our spiritual lives and the *rest* of our lives. All of it is life with God. He is always present and at work² to bring more of His kingdom into our lives. And if we can begin learning to detect them, our daily lives are actually chocked full moments where we're given glimpses of what God is up to in our lives and we can choose to seize them or not.³ And the gravity guys call these moments "kairoses". But (while) most of us tend to think that awareness of God being at work in our lives coming through special times and events - whether in cataclysmic mountaintop experiences or only at church or during a spiritual exercise like we did during last week's sermon, most kairos moments occur in the everyday, ordinary events of our lives.

For example,

- a kairos moment could be in a song lyric or a scene in a movie that particularly captures you
- A kairos could be noticing that you consistently feel irritated when you get home from work
- A kairos could be when a conversation with your child reminds you of something you'd promised but forgotten to do

A kairos can be either a positive or negative experience

- It could be when you have an a-ha or an uh-oh moment.
- It *could be* in a passage of scripture speaks to you or jumps off the page
- It could be having a fight with your spouse where you 'blow it'
- It could be noticing a pattern that you get anxious every time you talk about money with your spouse
- A kairos could be finding yourself avoiding, or seeking to impress, a coworker

Well, all of these are examples of areas where God *can and is* interested in bringing more of his kingdom into our lives.

Now, we probably already take note of kairoses like some of these moments in our lives. But the problem is that most of the time, we don't typically interpret them as instances where God might be at work in our lives. "For example," the gravity guys explain, "If you notice that you get really annoyed at

¹ You may recall that in the Old Testament, God was only present on occasion. So there were times when God would show up, like when He came to Abraham as three travelers, or he appeared as a burning bush to Moses, he would speak to various people through his angels or his prophets, or there was an instance where He filled the temple with His presence. But ever since the sending of His Holy Spirit at Pentecost, God has been perpetually present in the lives of believers; not just occasionally. And so, this means that it doesn't make a lot of sense when some of us Christians say things like "God showed up" in this worship service or that situation. What we really mean is that we believe we felt God's presence or detected some way He was at work. But this also means that when we feel like God is absent, we can know such a feeling is not trustworthy. Faith believes that God is present with us whether we feel Him or not.

² God is always at work, as Jesus said, "...My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working." (John 5:17 - NIV)

³ Eugene Peterson: "The assumption of spirituality is that God is always doing something before I know it. So the task is not to get God to do something I think needs to be done, but to become aware of what God is doing so that I can respond to it and participate and 'take delight in it.'"

other people's incompetence (a kairos), you may just chalk it up to your personality or to low blood sugar. Or you may think you're justified in being annoyed the problem really is them (their incompetence)." And so, without any recognition by us that it is a situation where God might be at work, by explaining it away, we continue on unchanged. Or rather than explaining it away, we might try to fix the kairos so it doesn't happen again. So if we get in an argument with our spouse and lash out by saying something really unkind, we may respond by then trying to do things to get on their good side or try to memorize some Bible verses about anger, to keep from ever doing it again. But none of that requires Jesus; and none of those approaches open us up to the transformation God would have for us. And so, for the kairoses in our lives to bear any (kingdom) fruit, it is critical that we identify them *as kairoses* - not that we have to use that specific word, but as places where God might be at work. The good news is that God wants to help us learn to detect ways He is already at work in our lives, and come to see how our ordinary lives are chocked full of opportunities to enter into more of the life of His kingdom.

So this week, I want to encourage us to just practice identifying Kairoses in our lives - rather than explaining them away, assuming God is present and at work in our lives and that these kairoses are glimpses as to how. So there are four different sort of types of Kairoses you might notice...

1. The first type of Kairoses are called **Brick Walls**, because they *are* big moment that bring everything in life to a sudden stop - like having a baby, getting a divorce, getting married, or the death of a loved one. One of these could happen this week, but are obviously less frequent than the next category
2. Which are **Speed Bumps**. A Speed Bump kairos is a little even that seems to happen repeatedly, a pattern or habit that sticks out to you, like noticing you're irritable when you get home from work, noticing that doing a particular hobby is really life-giving or refreshing for you, or noticing that you consistently hide in the bedroom when your inlaws are over at your house.
3. The third type are **Mirrors**. A Mirror kairos is an experience that helps us to see ourselves more clearly. This could be from a comment someone makes - positive or negative - or a way of viewing yourself in a new way.
4. And then a final type of Kairos is a **Vision** kairos. These are pictures or descriptions of where you'd like to go in the kingdom - a good future God is pulling you into - like if you see someone parenting in a way that you'd like to adopt or if God gives you a glimpse of where He might want to take you.

So this week I want to encourage us to just practice identifying Kairoses in our lives, beginning to get in the habit of assuming God is present and at work in our ordinary lives and learning to notice how. And next week, we'll talk about what to do with kairos once we become aware of it. The good news is that God wants to help us learn to detect ways He is already at work in our lives, and come to see how our ordinary lives are chocked full of opportunities to enter into more of the life of His kingdom.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.

Sources used:

<https://gravityleadership.com/gla1/discipleship-wheel/detect/>
<https://gravityleadership.com/gla1/discipleship-wheel/examen/>

Examen Exercise

At the end of each day, take 5-10 minutes to prayerfully reflect on the day, looking for kairos moments. Go through the events and conversations of the day, using the following questions as a lens to help you notice your kairos moments.

- What were the high points of the day? What were the low points?
- Where did you experience stress, anxiety, or irritation?
- Where did you experience peace, inspiration, or beauty?
- Were there moments of success or breakthrough?
- Were there moments of failure or struggle?
- Did you experience conflict or tension in relationships?
- Did you experience harmony or joy in relationships?
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Simply write down the concrete moments that come to mind as you prayerfully reflect on your day.

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