

January 21, 2018 Epiphany 3

## **Gospel: Mark 1:14-20**

*Before Jesus calls his first disciples, he proclaims a message that becomes known as "the gospel" or good news from God. God is ready to rule our lives. Those who realize this will respond with repentance and faith.*

<sup>14</sup>Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

<sup>16</sup>As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup>And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." <sup>18</sup>And immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>19</sup>As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup>Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

A former bishop of the Lutheran Church once told the story of his owning of a Cadillac. Now Lutheran bishops do not by virtue of their office get Cadillac, but this bishop bought one while he was still a pastor in the parish. He bought it many years ago from one of his parishioners. It had 155,000 miles on it. He said that the parishioner who sold it to him for less than what it was worth, and in fact gave him back five hundred dollars, because he said that it might cover the cost of the next repair when it needed one, and he didn't want that on his conscience. The bishop said he drove and drove that Cadillac. He said both of his sons learn to drive in that car. At the time, now several years ago, it had 241,000 miles on it. He said he tries not to let anyone see him in the car anymore, as it has been sort of beat up over the years, with a number of scratches, bumps, and dents; but he still likes to drive it. He can park it anywhere and doesn't worry about anybody stealing it, bumping into it, or banging it with their car doors. Then one day, he and his wife went driving a couple of hours away from his home. On top of a high mountain, the hot light gauge came on. This was it, he thought. But beings they were on a high mountain, he thought if he would just wait a little while for it to cool down, he could just coast it down the mountainous road. Which he did, and the hot light didn't come on until he was a little ways past the base of the mountain. There they stopped to let it cool down, and to get some water to put into it. He thought just maybe they could attempt to make it the rest of the way back home. As he pulled into his driveway, the light came on again, but they had made it. After some thought, he decided that he would finally give it up, but it was a tough decision. He called around to see what he could get out of it - to junk it. Some garage offered him a couple of hundred dollars for it, but told them they would have to take a look at it first. He dropped it

off and went home. A couple of hours later the phone rang. It was the garage. They said the car was fixed and he could come and pick it up. "Fixed," he said, what do you mean by fixed, I told you to just look at it for junking." The garage attendant said, "Well, we looked at it and decided to fix it instead of junk it." "How much?" he asked. The reply came back: "\$48.66." All they did was to put a new set of fan belts on. Now the alternator would work again, the fan, and even the air conditioner which hadn't worked for thousands of miles would go again. The time had not come for the Cadillac, it now had a type of new start to life again.

What is the right time for things? When is the right time to repair a car or buy new? When is the right time to stay in your job or search and possibly leave for another? When is the moment to make a major direction change in your life? When is the time right to date again, to separate, to get engaged or get married? What is the proper moment to say enough is enough, or to say "yes" to a new outlook on life? When is it time to march? When is it time to compromise? When is it time to let things shutdown?

We set times for certain things in our lives. We are into a new year, a time when new year resolutions are made, a time when society says you are given permission to start something new, start over again, to re-boot; maybe for some of us that time for the new year resolution has already passed, or perhaps we are still sticking to that promise or goal that we have made.

What parameters, what markers have we set, when we say now is the time? Is it the ones regarding societal rites, including things like graduations, a death in the family, a new arrival or the change of seasons? Is it when the Steelers season is over? When do we give ourselves the greenlight, the permission, to say now is the moment, now is when I make

that choice, now is when the stars have aligned, or my ducks are in a row? Last weekend at the congregational retreat getaway in our worship, on the calling of the disciples, we talked about when is the time to follow?

In the original Greek language of the New Testament, there are two major words concerning time. They are 'chronos' and 'kairos'. Chronos is a word, that is the root word of how we measure time today – chronology, chronological, and so on. Much of our measuring of time works like chronologically; how we mark time from minute to minute, today is January 21, 2018, at 8:20/10:50 in the morning. Kairos, on the other hand is the appointed time, it is the time when things seem right to move, to change, to happen, and in the Scripture when things are on God's timetable for action. John the Baptist talks about the time is a hand, the time is coming, the prophets of the Old Testament talk about the time of God's reign. When Jesus announces that the Kingdom of God is at hand he is using kairos language, the appointed time.

There is a famous passage from scripture from Ecclesiastes 3 that says there is a time for everything under the sun. This passage is often read at funerals and weddings because it is the appointed time that something has occurred. You have heard those words before. A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time keep and a time to lose, and so on. But what is the appointed time for us as a community of faith? What is the appointed time for you individually?

For Jesus an important time, an appointed time, was when John the Baptist baptized him and his mission was affirmed by the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. However today, in Mark's Gospel, we also hear of another important mark, another important time, that results in Jesus launching his ministry and preaching. We are told in the scripture that it is the arrest of

John the Baptist that signals to Jesus that now is the moment. John is no longer baptizing in the wilderness or preaching, and it is with this arrest that Jesus announces that Kingdom of God has come near and he immediately moves into calling his own disciples. Then, in the rest of the text, we hear the famous passage of how a kairos moment comes to Simon, Andrew, James and John. How they immediately left their boats to follow him. It was the kairos moment of their lives.

So when we examine our lives, when we look at our faith journey, when we challenge ourselves to see God at work in our lives, when was the last appointed kairos moment of your life? What happened in that moment? Did you see the God the Holy Spirit in it? Did we bother to look? And how do you know when the next one is coming?

In the movies, we always get a hint of when a kairos moment is about to occur because in the soundtrack to the movie, the music begins to build and suddenly there is a sense that it's going to happen. However, in our own lives that music doesn't occur that way at all, we know from experience that such defining moments of our lives are not easily known and discovered in the moment they occur.

So how do you seek to understand those moments in your life? Is it a matter of reading your horoscope, checking the stars, or even waiting for someone else? Do you have certain markers that you are looking for? When is your time? How do you know when to act? How do you seek God to be a part of that, how do you invite God in so that you are more aware, how do you open your eyes to see that God is already present in them? Part of life's discernment, part of life's confusion, if you will, part of the faith journey is knowing when things are not simply a chronos moment - when we need a time on the clock, but rather a kairos moment for action on our

part. Perhaps for many of us, it is only when we look back on our lives, that we can point to those moments, where it felt like a kairos moment.

Sometimes it's easy to look at other people's lives, especially those who seem to accomplish great things, and it is though they acted perfectly on their moments in time, their 'y's" in the road, there crossroads of life, but I'm guessing it wasn't always that clear to them. So I invite you to look at your faith journey, look for the epiphany's of your life, seek to discover God at work in your daily decisions, outlook, and wrestling. Where is God prodding and poking you? Where in your discipleship, is the time at hand? Amen.