

**Calvary Baptist Church**  
**Sunday Sermon**  
**Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Geoffrion**  
**January 10, 2021**

**“What Time Is It?”**

**Scripture Reading: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity under the heavens:  
a time to be born and a time to die,  
a time to plant and a time to uproot,  
a time to kill and a time to heal,  
a time to tear down and a time to build,  
a time to weep and a time to laugh,  
a time to mourn and a time to dance,  
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,  
a time to search and a time to give up,  
a time to keep and a time to throw away,  
a time to tear and a time to mend,  
a time to be silent and a time to speak,  
a time to love and a time to hate,  
a time for war and a time for peace.

**Sermon**

Today, I have a very important question for you: What time is it?

Now, some of you may think I'm joking, but I'm quite serious. Others of you may be looking at your watches or phones, but that's not what I mean. The time on the clock would be what biblical writers call, "chronos" time. Chronos is the time of day, the hour.

But when I asked you, what time it is, I had in mind another kind of time that we find in the Greek NT. That word is "Kairos." As some of you may already know, Kairos time refers to an important moment in time, perhaps a time of significant change, or of an important decision or action that was taken. Kairos time could also be a special opportunity that suddenly becomes available.

The NY Times ran a quiz last weekend, testing our knowledge of key events in 2020. I didn't do very well on two thirds of the questions, but I actually got this one right. They asked, what are the three most influential years in US history? It was multiple choice, and the options were tough. But the correct answer, according to this one expert, was 1865, 1945, and 1968.... We could say, in retrospect, that these were Kairos times in US history, because they were so significant. The context for the quiz question was the year we just experienced. Will 2020 go down in history as one of the most significant Kairos times we've ever known?

From a global perspective, of course, Jesus coming into the world was a true Kairos moment. His life, death, and resurrection have given hope to billions of people throughout the world over the past 2000 years. His teaching and the Gospel message have been hugely important for western civilization. But Kairos moments are not just for Jesus and big names in society.

In our Scripture reading today, read by Jill, we saw that Kairos moments apply to normal human experience. King Solomon doesn't use the Greek word Kairos, of course. Yet, he talks about the same idea, when he describes life as a collection of different times and seasons. In other words, **not all moments in life are the same. Not every season has the same purpose. Not every situation calls for the same kind of response, or offers the same opportunity. So, it's important that we know what time it is in our lives, and how we can best respond to it.**

In the book of Nehemiah, a huge Kairos moment emerged when he found out that the walls of Jerusalem were torn down and the people left behind were suffering. He was living in exile in Babylonia, with all the other Israelites who had been captured after Babylonia had destroyed the Temple in 586 B.C. But, there were some people left behind in Jerusalem. They were called “the remnant.”

While I was in Susa the capital, <sup>2</sup> one of my brothers, Hanani, came with certain men from Judah; and I asked them about the Jews that survived, those who had escaped the captivity, and about Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> They replied, “The survivors there in the province who escaped captivity are in great trouble and shame; the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been destroyed by fire.” When I heard these words I sat down and wept, and mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven. (Nehemiah 1:2-4, NRSV).

Now, we can learn a lot from Nehemiah's example. There may have been one big Kairos situation (the crisis in Jerusalem), but there were also a series of at least six smaller Kairos moments, or “times”, that called different responses from him.

- 1) There was a time for asking questions (Nehemiah knew something was wrong, but he didn't know what exactly. So, he did some research. This reminds of me of the time last summer, after George Floyd was killed, and the riots and protests started. Everyone knew there was a big problem, but many of us did not know what to do. Some of us took to the streets, but for many of us it was a time for learning, researching, and gathering information, so that we know how to best respond.
- 2) A time for grieving (Sometimes, when you and I are facing political, social, relational, or some other kind of tragedy, we may be tempted to spiritualize the suffering and rush past the horror and sadness. But Nehemiah didn't do anything like that. Nehemiah let himself feel the overwhelming sadness and distress of the situation. His heart overflowed with tears. He let himself weep, and he “mourned for days.”)
- 3) A time for prayer and fasting (When we're in grief, we may or may not understand the reasons for whatever just happened. In fact, there may not be any good answers. But we can reach out to God for comfort and for help. In the

ancient Hebrew tradition, praying and fasting was their way of sitting with their grief and sitting with God.)

- 4) In Nehemiah’s case, his prayer included confession, intercession, and supplication. (Sometimes when we’re in pain, we don’t know what to pray, or can’t. Sometimes, we are the victims of mistreatment, abuse, or exploitation by others. However, at other times, our suffering comes from our poor choices or sin. When that’s the case, prayers of confession are really important. From my own experience in my marriage and with my sons, I have had to confess my failures many times to God, sometimes with a broken heart for how I’ve treated my wife or failed to be the kind of father I wanted to be to my sons. It’s no fun to have to humble yourself before God and others, but it’s very important part of the process of healing and change. And so is intercession and supplication. Every day, I intercede for my family members, asking God to work in their lives for good. And I ask God to provide for their needs, needs I wish I could provide for, but can’t in my own strength.)
- 5) A time for taking risks (When Nehemiah got up from praying, he started planning. He knew he would have to take some risks, such as asking the King for help to get back to Judah so that he and others could rebuild the walls and strengthen the remnant there. If the King didn’t like his request, he could be killed on the spot. So, he had to wait and be ready for the right opportunity to ask the King for help. One day, the opportunity came.

In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was served him, I carried the wine and gave it to the king. Now, I had never been sad in his presence before. <sup>2</sup> So the king said to me, “Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This can only be sadness of the heart.” Then I was very much afraid. <sup>3</sup> I said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my ancestors’ graves, lies waste, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?” <sup>4</sup> Then the king said to me, “What do you request?” So I prayed to the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup> Then I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor with you, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my ancestors’ graves, so that I may rebuild it.” (Nehemiah 2:1-5, NRSV)

- 6) A time for taking action (By God’s grace, the King granted Nehemiah’s request, and the rest of the book of Nehemiah describes his journey to Jerusalem, the obstacles he had to overcome, and God’s ongoing help to fulfill his mission. All the way along, Nehemiah needed to rely on God’s help; and, at the same time, he had to take risks and take action himself in order for things to change.)

Well, those were Nehemiah’s Kairos moments. What are yours? What time is it in your life?

There is so much that is needed now. The current crisis is far from over. We have no idea when the vaccine will be available to most of us, or when the health crisis will subside. We do not know when jobs will come back, or how many will manage paying for their rent or other needs. Some are dying, or have or will lose loved ones still. This is a time for rallying together, caring

for one another, standing up and shining the light and love of Christ in our families and communities, of sharing the Gospel, of serving God’s purposes.

What time is it for you?

1. Is it time for asking questions? If so, then do your research.
2. For grieving? If so, then give yourself permission to feel your feelings and your sorrow.
3. For praying and fasting? If so, then sit with God. You have to sit somewhere. You can sit alone. You can go to the bar. You can roam the streets. Or, you can sit with God while you try to absorb what has happened or is happening, and where you are going to go from here.
4. For confessing and asking God for help? If so, face it. Do it.
5. For making a plan and taking risks?
6. Or, is it finally time for action? If so, what is your plan? When will you act?

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes, “Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the [Kairos] time, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” (5:15-17, NRSV).