

WD September 20, 2021

Pastor Matthew Woods

“Time vs. Opportunity”

Recently, in preparation for my Sunday morning Bible class I finished book called, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*. On pages 137-155 the authors talked about Time (Greek-Chronos) verses Kairos (Opportunity). Usually time is very linear; clocks, appointments, deadlines etc. Kairos is opportunity within the chronos of things.

The Author once lived in Indonesia spoke of needing a carpenter to do some work. The author had to travel to a nearby island, a two-day boat ride away just to try and find a woodworker. He found one. About a month later he showed up with his apprentice. Not your usual, “I’ll be there between the hours of 8Am Monday and 5:00 on Friday. The carpenter arrived about a month later. He says, they moved into the carport and cooked breakfast. “He and his apprentice would sit there for an hour or two sharpening their tools, including a hand saw, one tooth at a time....” It too long enough to lose track of time. “After he finished my project, various neighbors in the area also arranged for him to do projects for them. After all, a carpenter was in town! Take advantage of the opportunity (Kairos).” After a year all the projects were finished. Page 144

The author goes on to suggest that this may have been the case with Joseph as a carpenter in Bethlehem. He may have stayed in Bethlehem after the birth of Jesus because opportunity allowed for him to find plenty of work to keep them busy. After all, by the time the Wisemen show up we are told that they found Jesus in a house by then (Matt 2:11). And Jesus is described as a child (paidon-toddler) and not Brephos (Newborn or infant). The point in all of this is that Joseph did not hurry back but essentially stayed where the work was. When he returns to Nazareth Dr. Paul Maier of Western Michigan University has said that Nazareth was a short walk from the Roman city of Sepphoris which had a long string of major renovations that would have kept Joseph securely employed.

So let’s consider our text from Ecclesiastes 3.

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
2 a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
3 a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
4 a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
6 a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
7 a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
8 a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.
9 What do workers gain from their toil? 10 I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet^[a] no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

Ecclesiastes is talking about Kairos-opportunities. What defines those opportunities depends on the context of that “time”. Last year may not have been a time to build because of prices. Maybe next year will be the right time. In the spring one may plant and in the fall one may reap and so on.

The Author points out that Jesus speaks of the end of time (chronos) in Matthew 22:1-3 in the parable of the wedding Banquet. Weddings back then were not set for a certain day necessarily. So, an invitation would

usually mean be ready for that day when the king decided that the wedding was perfect, when it was time to kill the fattened calf. If everything was just right the opportunity (Kairos) for a wedding would be seized upon. The idea of Matt 24:36 when Jesus says, “no one knows when except the father” is in direct relation to this wedding language of the previous parable. Be ready and don’t miss the opportunity to be part of the wedding feast of the Lamb.

For a young family time and opportunity is always a balancing act. There are only 24 hours in a day right. There is a time for everything and every activity under our roof. There is a time for getting up and a time for bed. There is a time to change the baby and a time to buy diapers. There is a time to take the dog out and a time to feed the dog. There is a time for dance class and a time for soccer practice. There is a time for school and a time for a nap (maybe). There is a time for supper and a time to go to bed. There is a time to get up for a trip to the bathroom and a time to start all over again. Time is filled with things to do.

Kairos is the word for seizing on those most significant of things. Time with the kids, a teachable moment, a chance to say, ‘I love you.’; or a chance to catch up. As I get older and my time (Chronos) gets shorter I find myself craving more Kairos, more opportunities for the things that count. And isn’t that the way it works with most of us. When time feels short, we tend to pay attention to or reflect on the important things, the opportunities that have made life so meaningful.

Beware of the “somedays.” This year as many of you know Tricia and I celebrated our 25th anniversary by going to Alaska. It was on our someday list and then it was on our priority list. I’ve often heard the comment, “I’d like to visit Alaska someday.” However, lots of things often come before Someday: Life happens--weddings, graduations, retirement, replacing the furnace, or too many projects at work. For us, we finally decided that someday would never come if we didn’t decide to get one with it and go. So, we did and we are grateful to have experienced everything about that trip. Likewise, any chance we get to be with family is something that we try to take advantage of. When we were young, we had all the time in the world. Not so much right! Where does all the time go. Along with that how many opportunities for family, friends, good stuff are we potentially missing. How much time with the Lord is lost because we were going to read the Bible someday, get our kids into Bible class someday, take advantage of that invitation to go with a friend to church someday.

Life is like the flowers of the field, here one minute and gone the next. In truth, everything has its time and season. But when opportunities come, we will do well to take the time to dance, mourn, laugh, mend, speak, listen and so on. Especially, when it comes to our faith, we here in America we have loads of opportunities to worship and fellowship. We probably own at least two Bibles with all kinds of information in the footnotes. We can pray to the Lord early and often without being imprisoned for it. We have lots of opportunity to know the Lord. The opportunities are many, actually. We will do well to turn our time into something sacred and even eternal.

Isn’t this what the Law of God was all about. Love the Lord your God with your whole self and love your neighbor as yourself. The Law is dripping with a Kairos mindset. So is the Gospel. I can’t find a single place in scripture where Jesus turned down an invitation to be with someone. Jesus never passed on an opportunity to bring the Gospel to a sinner, tax collector, or pharisee, or someone who needed healing. Look at how much He accomplished in just three years of public ministry. The Lord has promised us an eternal life. Let’s make the most of the time we have in Christ to make every grace filled opportunity count in our own lives.

And now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look on you with His favor and give you His peace in Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Matt Woods
John 3:30