

Based on \*Ephesians 5:15-20. Paul Jr, urges the Ephesians to Make the Most of The Time.

*\*Incarnational translation below*

Making the most of the time, while living through the end of the world as we knew it. That, too, has been our task these past eighteen months.

So what have we been up to?

Catching up on our reading, for some of us. Snuggling in delight with a book in bed, for a great many of us.

Gardening! “Getting grounded” in the earth from which we have come, for so many of us. My own husband, for example, has put your tax dollars to work from the COVID stimulus checks to create what we are calling our “Coronavirus Garden.” A source of beauty – and sanity! – to be sure.

Cleaning house, for some us, Marie Kondo style. Dumping what we no longer need, clearing out space to think, to breathe, to welcome “the new.”

Some of us have gotten in shape! (And then fallen quickly out of shape/)

Some of us have fallen in love. Gotten married. Moved to a new city to start a new life as husband and wife.

Talk about “making the most of the time”!

But we have aged through this time, haven’t we? The first words one of our members said to me when we returned to in-person outdoor worship were, “Wow, everyone has gotten so much more gray since we’ve been in lockdown.” (To which I self-consciously tapped my temples and laughed.)

Some of us have declined in our health. Some of us have died. Some of us are still grieving those who have died.

The impetus to “make the most of the time,” to “redeem this potential Kairos moment” is surely within us, but so is fear. Despair. The need to escape the downward spiral of each news cycle.

So we have also spent our time binge-watching Netflix. Praying for our democracy. Doom-scrolling the news, which just this week, with the United Nations Report on Climate Change tells us the truth: We Are OUT Of Time.

There is an urgency to our time, an increasing acknowledgement that this past eighteen months have been not just a “blip” in time, but a fundamental “re-setting” of time. A time that portends a fundamentally different outcome than the time we left behind eighteen months ago. A time that calls upon us to channel the spirit of the Ephesians in rising up from our lethargy, in The Way of Jesus, with radical openness to the world-changing potential of *this* time.

Radical openness, Radical Hospitality, isn't that one of our fundamental commitments here at SPC? "Everyone and everything," we say, "and every part of ourselves is included in the circle of God's love." Everyone *and everything*, we say. Could that possibly include the coronavirus?

What would it look like for us to "welcome" COVID-19 with radical hospitality? And no, I don't mean abandon our masks and refuse the vaccines. I mean what would it look like for us to take a step back from centering only the *human* condition in the circle of God's love and imagine that God's love for *all* of creation might actually *include* the very thing we are afraid of? For certain, God loves the human creation, which is feared by almost all of *the rest* of creation these days. By logic, the inverse must also be true.

And isn't that, in the end, what epidemiologists are telling us must emerge from this global pandemic? That we have passed the window of opportunity to eradicate or even eliminate the virus. We must now *learn how to live with it*.

The same is true for climate change. We have decided, as a species, to force our low-lying island nation siblings off their homes. If we think immigration and refugee concerns are dramatic now, just wait until they increase tenfold. *We have already decided upon this future by failing to meet the goals of the Paris Climate Accords*. The question is, with this potential Kairos moment upon us, can we redeem it?

We are not too late to stem the tide of even worse climate change. We are not too late to stem the tide of even worse outbreaks of even worse variants of COVID-19. We are not too late to stem the tide of declining democracy, and we are not too late to stem the tide of our own sense of helplessness and despair and distrust and isolation.

*We have one another!* And together we already *have been* redeeming this time from its day-to-day malice.

We have been mask-making and building a food pantry from scratch and supporting immigrant families in this country while funding mission partners around the world who do not have the same access to treatments and vaccinations for COVID-19 that we do.

We have been serenading one another in song, we have been zooming our liturgies into one another's living rooms, even as we tentatively dip our toes back into our beloved building.

We have been rooted in anti-racism work and environmental justice work and strengthening our LGBTQIA+ affirming witness.

And behind the scenes, we have been strengthening the foundation of our spiritual leadership, shoring up our new staffing model, and just plain collectively getting our house in order so we can be ready to respond to the needs of the community at a moment's notice.

It may feel, my friends, as if we are sliding backward. It may feel as if everything we have come to depend upon is slipping away.

But *God* is not slipping away! And neither are we.

The good news, friends, is that even in this potential Kairos moment, even as we are called to “make the most” of this time we find ourselves in, the good news, friends, is that God is not actually asking us to be “successful.” At least not in the way you and I like to imagine success. God is simply asking us to be faithful. And we are.

As long as you and I keep coming back to God and one another, leaning on the leading of the Spirit, in a posture of prayer, speaking the truth from the depths of our souls, *in community*, this time *can* be redeemed.

In fact, because of the faithfulness of this congregation, it has already been!

Let the church say, Amen.

*\*"Incarnational translation for preaching seeks to recontextualize biblical texts so that they say and do in new times and places something like what they said and did in ancient times and places" (Cosgrove and Edgerton, **In Other Words: Incarnational Translation for Preaching**, 62).*

Ephesians 5:15-20

I urge you to  
redeem this potential Kairos moment  
from its day-to-day malice  
by comporting yourselves carefully,  
with discernment.  
not as unwise people but as wise,

Instead of sinking into lethargy,  
embrace The Way of Jesus for *this* season,  
not with wanton wastefulness  
but Spirit-led,  
speaking to one another  
– in a posture of prayer –  
from the depths of your soul,  
giving thanks  
– even so –  
for all of it.

Peace be to the entire community,  
Pastor Gusti