

The St. John's Pulpit

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THE COLOR AND SHAPE OF TIME

A Pastoral Homily Based Upon Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 and Galatians 4:4-6
Summer Series – “STORIES TO HELP US GROW: For the Bible Tells Us So”

Sunday, June 10, 2018
The Rev. Dennis W. Foust, PhD, Senior Minister



Time is more than ticks and tocks and watches and clocks.

Tom Peacock writes in his memoir the story of Ali Baba, a middle eastern giant of a man. Tom met Ali when he was a young flier practicing take offs and landings. The dirt strip was carved out among Ali's 1,000 acres of vineyards near Visalia, California. Reflecting on Ali's story, Tom described that moment in his life: “*It was a time of unity, a time of helping like none other I have experienced.*”¹

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The Pakistani activist, Malala Yousafzai, tells of the date of her birth. When boys are born in her culture, celebrations break forth. But, when girls are born, they are hidden behind curtains and nobody congratulates the father. When Malala was born, a cousin came to their home and showed her father a family tree with only sons naming the branches. Malala's father drew a new line from his name writing the name, Malala. Therefore, Malala describes the moment of her birth with these words: “*I arrived at dawn as the last star blinked out.*” For Malala, her birth was connected to the heavens.²

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After 27 years in prison for working to end apartheid in South Africa, Nelson Mandela wrote of February 11, 1990, “*I AWOKE ON THE DAY of my release after only a few hours' sleep at 4:30 A.M. February 11 was a cloudless, end-of-summer Cape Town day. I did a shortened version of my usual exercise regimen, washed, and ate breakfast. I then telephoned a number of people...to come to the cottage to prepare for my release and work on my speech. The prison doctor came by to give me a brief checkup. I did not dwell on the prospect of my release, but on all the many things I had to do before then. As so often happens in life, the momentousness of an occasion is lost in the welter of a thousand details.*”³

The ancient Greeks used two words to speak of time: Chronos and Kairos. Chronos, from which we form the word, chronological, describes ticks and tocks. Kairos describes the meaning which is experienced in time and through time that transcends ticks and tocks. Kairos was experienced by Tom, Malala and Mandela. Kairos is described by the Preacher in Ecclesiastes with the concept of “*For everything, there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.*” This was Paul's concept when he wrote, “*But when the fulness of time had come, God sent his Son...*” Kairos describes our openness to experience God in each moment.

Life pushes us to measure time by ticks and tocks. Yet, we are writing our life stories in conversation with the Story of Christ's Church, shaped by the STORY of God's mission. Beloved, the colors of the Christian Year remind us of Kairos time. And, the shape of the Christian Year is more than a circle; it is a spiraling circle relating us with God as we discover new dimensions of God's love and mission year by year. Because God is at work within us and through us, we listen for more than ticks and tocks.

¹ Tom Peacock, *The Way It Was*, Mint Hill Books, Charlotte, NC, 2017, p 197.

² Malala Yousafzai, *I Am Malala*, Orion Publishing, London, UK, 2013, p 13.

³ Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Little, Brown and Company, NY, NY, 2013, p 489.