

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” ¹⁶As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Sometimes in life we just know that “It’s time.” It’s time to make that change. It’s time to move ahead with that goal. It’s time to make our move. That is what is at play in our gospel lesson today. We are told that John the Baptist was arrested -- without being told yet why or how -- and that event seemingly kickstarts Jesus’ recorded ministry. Upon hearing that news, he says, “The time is fulfilled.”

“It’s time.”

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” That is the entirety of Jesus’ first sermon; nineteen words. (If only preachers like myself took Jesus’ brevity to heart.) The story intentionally moves quickly from here. Simon and Andrew drop everything and follow Jesus when he extends his invitation, and James and John leave their father Zebedee with the boat

when it is their turn. Four disciples in as many sentences. Things are moving. In fact, Mark uses the word “immediately” forty-two times in his gospel because things are suddenly moving. In comparison, the rest of the New Testament uses “immediately” a combined total of twelve times. Things are moving rapidly in Mark’s gospel because it’s time.

Our English language has one word for time, but their culture had two words to describe different concepts of time. *Chronos* is the time that is specific: 10am sharp / Sundown /Tuesday. But then there is *Kairos* time, which is best understood as “God’s time.” It is that special moment we experience, the memorable event, the suspension of the normal. When we study the signs and our hearts know it is time for a change in our lives, that is kairos time. When Jesus begins today’s lesson with “The time is fulfilled,” that is kairos time. For generations the people had been longing for God to do something. There was a weariness in the waiting, but there was also a growing sense of anticipation. John the Baptist was arrested, and somehow that is the final sign for Jesus to know that it was the long awaited kairos moment. “It’s time,” he declares, and his ministry to spread God’s reign immediately begins with the calling of his first disciples.

Often this passage is read and then we ask ourselves whether or not we’d act like these disciples; whether we would drop everything at a moment’s notice to follow this man named Jesus we’ve never met before. That’s a permissible takeaway from this passage, but there are two things that interpretation overlooks. First, it is possible that these four fishermen already knew Jesus. After all, the region of Galilee is not large. It is possible that they had been longing for Jesus to begin his ministry. So when he says “Follow me,” their hearts might have said, “Finally. It’s time,” and that’s why they

drop everything. The second problem with using this passage to ask whether we would drop everything is that the question places the focus on us. That misses the point Mark is trying to make with this passage: the time for the reign of God was at hand. It was specific to the initiation of Jesus' earthly ministry. There was suddenly a kairos energy in the air surrounding Jesus. Whether or not the disciples already knew Jesus, their hearts were telling them that this is the kairos moment generations have been waiting for. God was acting, and it was time for them to follow.

Lately, we've all had our minds on time. These past ten months have simultaneously been the longest ten months of our lives as well as somehow the fastest. Future time is also on our minds. We are longing to receive a vaccine: the Fauci Ouchie, as some kids are calling it. We are longing for an end to this nightmare. We are longing to safely be with family and friends. So time is on our minds, but note those are all examples of chronos time. What our lesson today begs us to be mindful of is kairos time. The beginning of Christ's ministry was a kairos moment; it is the epitome of a kairos moment. Yet kairos moments still take place in our midst. It is a matter of reading the signs to know that God is acting. To be clear on this: there aren't hidden clues that we must decipher or decode to grasp a kairos moment. It is not some hidden knowledge that only a few people can grasp. The signs are all right in front of us, we simply must discern the bigger picture. It is seeing the forest for the trees.

In all seriousness, I'm excited for today's congregational meeting, because I believe our congregation is experiencing a kairos moment. I see the sign that is the people of this congregation coming together and doing meaningful ministry in the midst of a pandemic. I see the positive trends in attendance and giving that make my

jaw drop, to be honest. I see our lay leadership being intentional, faithful, and dedicated, and they are doing phenomenal work. You will see that today, as well. Certainly not everything at All Saints is perfect -- words I speak not upon a pulpit but from beneath a retractable awning -- but we can see all these details and discern that something is unfolding here. Something in God's time is happening at All Saints. What is happening is more than just positive news on a few different fronts. It feels like a new chapter is opening.

Pray for this congregation and all the people associated with the ministries here. Pray for the broader community and how this congregation is a force for our neighbors' good. Many great things are happening here. God is active here and God is active in you. It feels like "it's time." Indeed, it is. Amen.