

WELCOME 1st January 2023 – 1st Sunday in Christmas '23 A

Isaiah 43:18-21 & Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! **Bible Study Qs** are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & so you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups** on Friday @ 1p.m. Which will resume THIS Friday!

As we move into this week...

Time flies. **Time** waits for no one. **Time** keeps on slippin' slippin' slippin into the future... Like holding water in your hand; times passes quickly. Time simply does not stand still.

2022 is gone, 2023 is here...in the blink of an eye. Time shapes every aspect of our lives. We wake & sleep to clockwork rhythms. We work to deadlines. We make appointments. We look at our watch to see how long to go, or how long it's been. That's time as we know it. **Chronos**. Chronological measurable unreclaimable... Chronos time.

The Bible knows that "time" too...but offers a different one: **Kairos** – when significant moments that alter our life occur...when we experience a moment that is never neutral but leaves an impression. To say "I do." To stand by a loved one's grave. To welcome a new child. That's *Kairos*.

Jesus was born in *kairos* time, at the appointed time, when the time was fully right, so our names can be written into the story of salvation. **We** live Kairos amidst chronos. So as we begin 2023, God wants us to live our lives in a *Kairos* way even as our lives unfold in *chronos* order; to be a part of his Kairos plan to reveal his kingdom in the world. 2023 is your Kairos...your moment...in Christ...to take hold...to believe...to own...to live...and to make an impact for eternity. It's Kingdom Time!

For *I am doing a new thing. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it?*

We'll experience & trust that together today...
Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God our Father, you come to share our sorrows & replace them with the oil of gladness. You come among us in the midst of the darkness with your Son the true light for all people. Teach us to wait & live those whose hopes will be fulfilled. Shape our live by the transforming grace that comes in Jesus. Help us remember the first act of worship offered to the newborn baby was that of giving. Lead us to give ourselves to Christ & to the world in his name. Come Lord Jesus! We turn to you, in readiness for all things to be made new! Amen

Let's Sing and then hear God's word...

1st Sunday in Christmas '23 A – It's TIME! KINGDOM TIME

History tells us the philosophers cursed the scientists who invented the **sundial**. 3500 years ago, the ancients scoffed at the very idea that a day could be broken down into measurable passing segments. It was offensive to the sensibilities of cultures where it was obvious: you lived & worked in the day & slept at night...where darkness & light were the smallest units of “time” and “seasons” were the real measure of the cycles of life...planting & harvest...youth & old age...life & death... It was folly to subdivide time & view it like beads on a string...tiny individual units.

Imagine how those philosophers would react to how today's Australians **USE** time: about 23 million Australians online on any given day spending about 40 hours/week online [that's 5 ½ hours/day (1/3 of that is social media)] or that the Avg Australian looks at their phone 221 times/day. Now that may not be **you**...but it **is** highly likely someone you know. Add in the stats from a few years back: most of us will spend 8 months of our lives sitting at stoplights, 6 months sorting junk mail, 1 year looking for lost things, 2 years unsuccessfully returning phone calls, 5 years waiting in line, & 6 years eating. If the preacher of Ecclesiastes (most likely Solomon) is right & there is a “time for every activity or purpose under heaven,” **What** are we doing with our time? now measured by the 1000th of a second.

But let's remember what the Bible says about time...that's a huge piece of what Solomon wants us to remember. 1st...**God** ordained time. God created it from the beginning. Genesis demonstrates God's creative work in time separating light from dark. God marks the days according to evening & morning. Days & seasons all fall under God's sovereignty. God ordained & manages time. God can do with time as he chooses. He can make it stand still or go backwards according to **HIS** purposes.

More importantly, God places **US** inside time. We are captive to time. We can't fast forward through unpleasant times; neither can we hit pause or rewind to linger over & replay more enjoyable times. More than that though, our own lives are temporary. Our time here is limited: we don't get to do this forever. We are born & a time will come when we die. Between those extremes there's **everything** in between. Time for us is in constant motion...unstoppable...just as Solomon in Ecclesiastes says.

And so far...I'm still talking about **Chronos**. Chronological measurable unreclaimable time. But here Ecclesiastes also points us to a different understanding: **Kairos**.

Kairos is best understood as “**right** or essential time...appointed or appropriate time”

2nd ...There is, Solomon says, a time/season/specific moment for everything under heaven because **God's** hand is at work in us in **ALL** our “times.” If you've ever read Ecclesiastes, you're familiar with the repeated expression that much of life, or

trying to figure out the reasons for what happens “under the sun” is “futile....vanity...meaningless...like trying to catch the wind.” Ecclesiastes 1 makes the observation...

What do people get for all their hard work under the sun? *Generations come & generations go, but the earth never changes. The sun rises & the sun sets, then hurries around to rise again. The wind blows south & then turns north. Around & around it goes, blowing in circles. Rivers run into the sea, but the sea is never full. Then the water returns again to the rivers & flows out again to the sea. Everything is wearisome beyond description. No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content. History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new ...We don't remember what happened in the past, & in future generations, no one will remember what we are doing now.* In its repetitiveness, life is boringly meaningless. All things beyond human control seem wearisome & without purpose. He looks at the cycles of nature which are outside of his control & then the shifting of seasons & waters & winds which are all out of his control & beyond his explanation & it is puzzling & wearisome...It doesn't make sense so it's...meaningless. It's all random chance & impersonal natural forces & understanding it all is “*trying to catch the wind.*”

But here in Chap 3...light begins to dawn...Look at the “times”: born/die kill/heal sow/uproot build/tear down...Again many of these times & seasons are beyond our control. No one **chooses** a time to mourn or weep or hate? But rather than consign life to the random meaningless impersonal pile again, Solomon remembers we are not alone in the universe subject to or victimized by chance or random naturalistic forces. We live in a universe ruled by the benevolent sovereignty of God, & in relationship with that living God, there are no meaningless events & there are no events where we are simply victims of the “slings & arrows of outrageous fortune.” *Every event filters through the hands of our heavenly Father. And our response to things we cannot comprehend in this life, to things which grieve us hurt us kill us in this life; reveals how deeply we trust that God has a purposeful, personal, good, providential intent & desire for us in this world & beyond. We're invited to trust God's hand is at work in us in **ALL** our “times.” All our times are from God. But even more* 3rd...**God** joins us in time. From the first chapters of Genesis to the final vision of Revelation we are made to dwell in God's presence. God Adam & Eve walked together in the Garden enjoying one another's companionship & the final joy of the last day is “*Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, & they will be his people. God himself will be with them.*” – **Rev 21:3** The very purpose of human life is to live with the Father...to abide in relationship with him.

Exodus tells us God travelled with his people in the wilderness having “come down” to deliver them from slavery in Egypt (Ex 3:8). He provides for & cares for & responds to his people as he journeys *with* them shaping them into a nation for himself. Ultimately, God is born as a man in time constrained by it in Jesus. *“When the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. And because you are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, & now you can call God your dear Father. Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, everything he has belongs to you.”* – Gal 4:4-7 From child to adult, subject to the vagaries of time...hunger, fatigue, thirst, grief, joy...& finally death, God joins us in time...Kairos in the midst of chronos so that **ALL TIME** can be experienced as a moment when God is working in us for his purposes.

In Christ **ALL TIME** is Kairos time. Paul would write... *“We know that **in all things** God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”* – Rom 8:28 God not only created & commands time, but in Christ through the work of his Spirit, God actively moves in our time making all time now Kairos time...Every day is filled with those moments (the right time the appropriate time) when confronted by grief you can offer a word of comfort – when confronted by captivity you can speak a word of freedom & release – confronted by despair you can speak a word of hope – in the face of worry & gloom you can speak a word of encouragement – confronted by need you can serve – confronted by lack you can be generous – confronted by the lies of the world you can speak the truth of the kingdom...of a world being remade by the risen ruling Jesus...of a Father who loves & forgives & restores...of life as God intended & will bring to fullness. And in all times point to Jesus as the hope within you and the only hope for the world.

“Do not remember the past events, pay no attention to things of old. For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun!

“Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new creation. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him.” – **2 Cor 5:17-18**

Jesus was born at the appointed time, when the time was fully right, so our names can be written into the story of salvation & so we now we live Kairos all the time. 2023 stands as an open invitation...a call from God...God calls us to live our lives in a *Kairos* way even as our lives unfold in *chronos* order; to be a part of his Kairos plan to reveal his kingdom in the world. 2023 is your Kairos...your moment...in Christ...to take hold...to believe... to own...to live...to share in such a way as to make an impact for eternity. It’s Kingdom Time!

TAKE IT HOME –

How will you intentionally use this first week of 2023 to live the new creation you are in Jesus Christ?

Where & with whom will that prove the biggest challenge or greatest opportunity?

Let’s pray..

Lord Jesus your kingdom will come without our help and without our prayer, but we do pray that it would come among us and that you would use our feeble efforts to widen your kingdom’s embrace among the people of this city. By your unconquerable kingdom conquer us and make our lives worthy of your call. Through your holy name we pray...Amen