

Timing Is Everything Last Epiphany B

As one church season comes to an end and another begins we might observe that time has once again, slipped through our fingers.

Timing is critical and it involves so many aspects of our lives. Whether it is getting a job, applying for scholarships or how much a person gets to spend on a visit or vacation – timing is crucial. I remember missing a connecting flight on my way to Janesville, while reading a book at the gate. Was there a time in your life when you missed out on an opportunity because you were not available? Was there a time you left an important task for the last minute and then ran out of time?

Elisha was running out of time. He was told time and again by his fellow prophets that his mentor Elijah was about to depart this world. In travelling to each city with Elijah, prophets kept reminding Elisha to get ready to say goodbye. Elisha's response was to tell these prophets to be silent or "Mind your own business!" There is a curious thing at the end of this lesson – the timing of Elisha's request for a blessing from his mentor. Why did he wait so long, not knowing when Elijah would depart? Was Elisha dreading his departure? He almost ran out of time by ignoring the inevitable. Perhaps Elisha was enjoying his "last days" with Elijah and wanted to savor their time together. However, the prophets that keep reminding Elisha that time was short, are like the nagging conscience that warns us it is time to act!

Another example of crucial timing was that of Jesus' transfiguration. The timing of the transfiguration that would reveal Jesus' relationship to the Father and to the great prophets was upon them. For Jesus and His disciples the revealing of Jesus identity on the mountaintop was necessary to move their ministry forward.

For sure, none of the three disciples were ready to hear of Jesus' departure and what waited for Him in Jerusalem. Peter, dumbfounded, could only respond by suggesting that they build a camp for Jesus and the prophets to stay. Peter, James and John were unprepared for what they saw. Fear drove their response. The voice of God revealed more than they could understand. Yet for Jesus, it was the right time to show them who He was.

Jesus timing with His disciples was critical. The Book of Common Prayer helps us see how timing in our lives is just as important.

In our confession each Sunday we pray for forgiveness for things left undone. Are these not the things of high priority that beg our attention? The "things left undone" should activate our conscience concerning matters that can not wait. God may be calling us to consider the consequences of our waiting and putting things off for another day. A thank you note, scheduling time with a loved one, helping a neighbor, befriending a visitor at Trinity, volunteering for a need, are some things that should not wait -- for tomorrow may be too late.

"Procrastination" means to postpone doing something, especially as a regular practice. It is doing tomorrow what you know needs to be done today.

Some things will get lost in the busy-ness of life. Other “must do’s” get put off because we simply would rather not be troubled now. This is the case for many people where issues on the “front burner” get cold within the heart.

I admire those who get lots of stuff done months in advance. I wish I could be more like them; though in the back of my mind, sometimes I wonder what they are missing in life by being so “organized”.

As I look into the future as far as a schedule can take me, I am grateful that perfect timing is not always in my grasp. Like many I am torn between what I should do and what I would rather do. If I planed everything in my life I would miss out on the joy of just being spontaneous. The woman, who decided to postpone her flight on the fated Continental commuter plane to Buffalo, NY last week, realized the joy and blessing of another chance at life. The timing of her decision was incredible.

I have discovered that God's timing is just as important as God's will. In fact, the Bible talks a lot about timing. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven" (NKJV).

How many things have been missed during this last season, what opportunities have been lost because we did not give ourselves permission to listen to our conscience and plan to use our time differently? How might God be calling you to use your time differently? What things have been left undone that might have been?

God has given us 24 hours to accomplish everything that comes our way. The power to choose what we should do with that time is ours as well. The gift of time is precious and is worth more than any material thing because only our Heavenly Father can give us time. Someone this week said to me she will miss the mornings with her husband because they were so special. God help us all to savor those moments.

A favorite song by Jim Croce is “Time in a Bottle,” for it expresses the desire to just give one another the time that we need for relationships, to hear the stories and the journeys that time has given us.

Time in a Bottle

If I could save Time in a bottle
The first thing that I'd like to do
Is to save every day
'Til Eternity passes away
Just to spend them with you

If I could make days last forever
If words could make wishes come true
I'd save every day like a treasure and then,
Again, I would spend them with you.

What a blessing that we have been given a gift by God, to see with eyes of faith the value of time with each other and with Him. May we cherish these moments that we have and make the most of the time we have left on earth. I would rather preach this sermon to you and myself now than to have it preached at a funeral. It is a message by which we all can benefit and live by. Amen