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St. James', Mt. Airy
3/25/18

Palm/Passion Sunday
Zechariah 9:9-12
Philippians 2:5-11
Mark 11:1-11
Mark's Passion - scripted

Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

We're doing Palm/Passion Sunday a bit different this year, as I wrote about in The Shell a few weeks ago. Instead of a brief Palm celebration outside and turning immediately to the Passion inside, we're holding on to the triumphant entry longer and moving into the passion through communion – closing today with the reading of Jesus' Passion.

It's all about timing.

Time can be funny, shifting gears in seemingly random ways. Life, in its unfolding, has a way of slowing down and speeding up, and there is little to nothing we can do to change it.

Except, that we have the ability to make meaning from the variability we experience, and in doing so we can begin to divine God's presence in our lives and the world around us.

This gets to the heart of the historical and theological understanding of two different strands of time – *chronos* and *kairos*.

Chronos is the daily flow of time. It is always moving forward, and though it may seem to speed up or slow down when we are looking back, or as we anticipate or dread what is coming, it is quite simply the ongoing steady current of time that frames our lives.

It's meaning derives from how we mark it – birthdays, anniversaries, holidays and holy days. It can be heard in the tick of the second hand on a watch. It can be seen in the seamless transition from one number to another on the digital clocks on our phones. It can be felt in the turning of one day into another, one season into the next, year after year.

Chronos is the water we swim in and the air we breathe, and it is easy to become enslaved to it – letting it not just mark our time, but to delineate it in such a way as to control us. We call this the disease of busyness. It is therefore something we must always be mindful of.

But then there's *kairos*. *Kairos* can be understood as God's time. In theological terms it is 'the appointed time in the purpose of God – or, when time is fulfilled.' *Kairos* is different because when we enter it, time doesn't just *seem* to change speed, it actually *does*.

Who here remembers the movie the Matrix? At the time, the visual effects in that film were revolutionary – especially the visual of “bullet time.” It was a combination of regular speed, slow motion, time-lapse and a constantly changing perspective of a scene – all overlapped – that served to slow down, expand, and speed up time at crucial times – the iconic image being the ability to see the energy trails of bullets as speed through the fight scenes, the viewer backing in and out of the scene and seeing it from several angles.

This is an apt visual description of *kairos* – showing us the possibilities of how time and perspective can shift, and how we can enter and leave those shifts.

When we experience *kairos*, we **know it**, because whether big or small, what we are doing has a **timelessness** to it that expands, and makes life both slow down and speed up – giving us all the time we need.

Sometimes I feel this when I get lost in a good book, or enjoy a relaxing meal with friends. I've felt it when I've been on retreat or even vacation, both of which by their very nature serve to help us step back from our daily *chronos* routine. I've experienced it when I've sat and prayed with people who are dying, and I've known it was real when I listened to someone offer confession in the Rite of Reconciliation.

If you take a few moments to reflect this week, I know that you too will begin to see the strands of *kairos* that weave in and out of your life.

And today, this week, we enter something special. A time like no other that knits together and merges these two strands. Holy Week.

Chronos, in our journey from the Palm procession to the Passion, and then through the 'three great days,' from Maundy Thursday to Good Friday and then The Great Vigil. And yet *kairos*, in perhaps its most pure form, as God's purpose and time overflow through these days, signs of God's unconditional love leading us toward the mystery of Easter.

Our Gospel readings from Mark today pull us into this powerful double flow of time. We just read chapter 11, and the prophetic entry Jesus made into Jerusalem. The way Jesus told his friends what would happen when they went into the village to find a colt, and that it then did, another way in which time seemed to flow forward and back on itself mystically.

But it only took five days for the shouts of "Hosanna" to turn to cries of "Crucify him." Shortly we will read Mark's Passion Gospel, with Jesus' anointing, the Last Supper and the garden of Gethsemane, the courtyard of the high priest before going before Pilate, followed by the march to Golgotha and the cross, and finally the tomb as the women bore witness. Hearing it is undiluted *kairos*.

We stride every year through these events; they are marked and lived as *chronos* for us as surely as they were for Jesus and his friends. But *kairos* is just as surely at work, because here, in the approach to Jesus' death, the narrative time slows and shifts, expands and becomes something more.

Because if we were to read the entirety of the Gospel of Mark out loud together straight through, we could mark the minutes it takes, about ninety. But *kairos* is there too, because Jesus' yearlong Galilean ministry (chapters 1-10) would take about an hour to read. But the final week of Jesus' life (chapters 11-16), would take half an hour.¹

This shows us why Holy Week is something more. **Always more**, not simply marked in minutes and hours, instead also lived in the moments that we encounter the holy, and find time slowing and speeding within and around us, making meaning as God's time becomes ours also.

And so, this week I invite you to gather on this holy days. Make time and space in your *chronos* for some transforming *kairos*. To step back from the dailyness of *chronos*, even as we walk the days of the Triduum, and to savor the feel, the tastes-sights-sounds, of *kairos* as God's time saturates the story we hold most sacred, the story that is still going on, and that we are a part of over 2000 years later.

~ AMEN ~

¹ *Feasting on the Word, Year B, Volume 2*, pg. 179.