

Give us a mulligan on the Gospel Alleluia. We need a do-over on that.

Soon and very soon, we are going to see the king.
 Soon and very soon, we are going to see the king.
 Soon and very soon, we are going to see the king.
 Alleluia. Alleluia. We are going to see the king.

This is great stuff – we are going to see Jesus!

Ferguson Theology – We’re going to talk about race and class. We’re going to talk about privilege and power.

Your bishop talked about this being an uncomfortable conversation. He talked about how some people have come to him saying that they are tired of it. Sandye talked about how it’s probably the thing we like to talk about less than anything – I tend to think that when we really start talking about money and economic justice we will long for the glory days of just talking about race – but the point is that for some of us this is an uncomfortable conversation.

It’s also important to note that for some of us, we have been aching to have this conversation. Some of us have been literally dying to have this conversation. Some of us feel like when we talk about race and class, power and privilege that the church is FINALLY talking about our lives.

So we’re going to start this conversation – or for some of you we’re going to continue this conversation. And for some of us it may be the conversation we’ve been longing for and others it may be the conversation we’ve been dreading, and that’s all OK.

Because I’ve got just a couple questions for us.

Do you love God?
 Do you believe God loves you?
 Do you love Jesus?
 Do you believe Jesus loves you?
 Do you love opening your Bible and learning about how much God and Jesus love you?

Then it’s all good. Because if we love God and Jesus and we believe God in Jesus loves us right back, we can have any conversation, we can go out into the world and face any challenge. There is nothing that can stop us.

So why are we having this conversation?

Open your bibles to 2 Corinthians 6:2 (I love saying that to Episcopalians).

OK ... I'll help us out. (slide change)

2 Corinthians 6:2 – For God said: ‘At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.’ See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!”

Now is the acceptable time! Now is the day of salvation!

Forget soon and very soon – right now we are going to see Jesus!

There is a word that Paul uses here when he says “now is the acceptable time” – and it’s the word Kairos. Kairos does not just mean a date on the calendar. Kairos is a quality of time. A depth of time.

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Kairos is “the perfect, delicate, crucial moment; the fleeting rightness of time and place that creates the opportune atmosphere for action, words or movement.”

Kairos is Jesus standing up in the synagogue in Luke for and saying

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,

to set the oppressed free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”^[f]

^And then saying “TODAY this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

We’re not waiting until the date the year of jubilee comes on the calendar. TODAY is the year of the Lord’s favor. This is Kairos. Justice delayed is justice denied. NOW is the acceptable time.

Kairos moments come unplanned. We need to watch for them. We need to be ready for them. And on August 9, 2014 when Mike Brown was killed and his body lay in the streets for four and a half hours in Ferguson, Missouri. When later that night a candlelight vigil and peaceful march of a community in mourning was met by police with dogs and riot gear and tear gas and rubber bullets and a community that had sat down and taken it for generations decided that NOW was the time – that now was the day of their salvation, a kairos moment came into being.

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In Cleveland, when a police officer drove into a park and in less than two seconds shot and killed 12 year old Tamir Rice, that community decided that NOW was the time, that now was the day of their salvation.

(slide change)

In New York, when Eric Garner was killed for the crime of selling cigarettes.

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In Chicago when LaQuan McDonald was killed by police.

(slide change)

In Minneapolis when Jamar Clark was killed by police.

(slide change)

Across this nation as Sandra Bland,

(slide change)

Tanisha Anderson

(slide change)

And just this month with 16 year old Gynnya McMillen was killed in police custody and more and more were killed, young black women and men across America decided that NOW was the time, that now was the day of their salvation and a national kairos moment came into being.

South African theologian Allan Boesak has this to say about Kairos moments.

“Kairos is not so much a time or a season but a moment, unique, for people of faith to see, understand and act upon.... A Kairos moment reveals the truth about ourselves, strips us of all pseudo-innocence, and as such it is a moment of discernment, repentance, conversion and commitment. In that moment we discover the truth: about the situation with which we are faced, about ourselves and the Other; about the realities of pain and suffering,, about the demands of love and justice, and about the God-given possibilities for real and fundamental change. It is also the truth that sets us free. It is simultaneously a shocking and a liberating moment.”

He continues: “Crucially, however, a kairos consciousness knows that the discovery of that moment of truth is not a moment of triumphalist gloating, confirming and

celebrating our own spiritual superiority, but rather of profound and humble joy for the gift of discernment, discontent and dissent (let me say that again – the GIFT of discernment, discontent and dissent).

“Discernment of what is wrong in a situation and the crisis it creates for the most vulnerable.

“Discontent with that situation of injustice, and a refusal to leave things as they are;

“Dissent from the dominant judgment that the status quo is acceptable, unchangeable or irreversible.”

“The discovery of a moment of truth in history is not the result of our intelligence and extraordinary cleverness. It is revelation, the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are not the truth: the truth has found, recovered and reclaimed us. We are not the light: the light illumines and leads us. We are not the voice: we speak and act because we heard the Voice that calls us to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God.”

We are in a Kairos moment. And a kairos moment is a moment of deep listening – particularly for those of us who have not heard the voices that this Kairos moment are lifting up.

As the Body of Christ in a kairos moment our first task is to listen and trust. Listen and trust. Listen deeply to the voices that are emerging and not fall immediately into defensiveness but to allow for the fact that there is truth here – lived truth of fellow images of God and members of the body of Christ. Listen with our hearts and also through the ears of our scripture.

Some of you in this room might have been watching the protests on TV and wondering “why is this happening?” It’s a perfectly reasonable question. So we took a Sunday afternoon and gathered some of the protest leaders inside Christ Church Cathedral and asked them that question: “Why do you protest?”

One of them, the Rev. Traci Blackmon, gave this response.

(slide change – Why protest video)

We are in a kairos moment. As the Body of Christ in a kairos moment our first task is to listen and trust. Listen and trust. Listen deeply to the voices like Traci’s that are emerging and not fall immediately into defensiveness but to allow for the fact that there is truth here – lived truth of fellow images of God and members of the body of Christ. Listen with our hearts and also through the ears of our scripture.

Tomorrow we're going to hear some more of these voices and try to listen to what they might be saying to us. But for the rest of today, we're going to hone our scriptural hearing. Sandye used that wonderful word "hermeneutic" this morning. Well we're going to look at five passages of scripture that for me have formed a hermeutic for hearing and interpreting these voices of this kairos moment through the ears of our faith. To provide as your bishop so rightly said, the context for this conversation in our shared love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Creation – Genesis 1:26-27, 31 – lets read it together.

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

So God created humankind in God's image, in the image of God they were created; male and female God created them... God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good."

God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good.

The very first chapter of our scripture tells us that we are created in God's image – all of us – and that we are good. We are created out of love for love. And we are created in God's image and good and God loves us without bounds.

When someone comes up to at communion and asks for a blessing, the blessing I give is "the blessing of God is upon you this day and always, and may you always know how deeply God delights in you."

Let's do an exercise. (change slide)

Close your eyes. Remember a time when you felt loved. What was it like? Other than "loved" how did it make you feel? I mean, in your body? Feel that feeling in your body. Feel how that felt.

After about 20 seconds.

What did you remember? Shout it out!

How does that feel? Shout it out!

That's how God created us. That's living into the reality of us being images of God.

Now we know the rest of the story. We're not in Eden anymore. There was the fall.

But in the fall we didn't stop being images of God. The fall didn't change the fact that we were made in God's image and created good. NOTHING can change that. The fall is about forgetting. The fall is us acting like we are NOT created in God's image and created good.

Sandye talked about the problem white folks like me have about falling into shame when we talk about race. It's a huge problem, but the answer is right here in the Bible.

How many of you have heard of Brene Brown?

Brene Brown has the best job title – she is a shame researcher. And she draws an incredibly helpful distinction between guilt and shame.

Guilt = I have done something bad.

Shame = I have bad.

Guilt can be incredibly helpful. Guilt is that feeling of realizing that we have sinned. That's OK! That's post-fall human! In fact, we've got an app for that! It's called reconciliation of a penitent. Self examination, confession, repentance, amendment of life and absolution! Guilt is a part of growing toward God and as far as our sin is concerned, Jesus has got us covered there. We can admit our guilt and grow from it knowing that it doesn't change the only thing that really matters – that we are created in God's image, that we are good and that we are loved beyond measure.

Shame is incredibly unhelpful. Shame is a lie. Shame says "I am bad." Shame lies to us that we are no longer created in God's image, that we are no longer good, and that we are not worthy of love. When we get into what Brene Brown calls "shame spirals" our task is to pull each other out of them.

Shame is the one immediately named consequence of the fall.

We are told that before the fall Adam and Eve were both naked and unashamed. Think about that. They were "WOO HOO" Here I am. Created in the image of God and awesome and worth celebrating!

After the fall when God came walking in the garden in the cool of the evening, they hid themselves because they knew that they were naked and they were ashamed. They forget that they were beautiful. They thought their bodies, created in God's image were worthy not of glory but of shame. And so it has been ever since. We are so good at shaming.

But if we are looking for a context to have this conversation as Christians, it has to start here – there is no shame. And because there is no shame, we can talk honestly about guilt, knowing that our goodness, our belovedness and our creation in the image of God is never and will never be in doubt.

Second passage – Oppression. Exodus 3:7-8. Let's read it together.

Then the Lord said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey.'

One of the consequences of the forgetfulness of the fall is that we not only forgot that we were created in God's image and beloved, we forgot that each other were. We forgot that God would provide for all our needs and we started acting as if we had to hoard from others so we would have enough. And oppression was born.

This passage is when God is talking to Moses out of the burning bush. And it shows us God's attitude toward the people. The people of Israel are in slavery. They are under oppression. Their lives are not their own. And God is not content – in fact God is angry. God is that angry that Sandye talked about this morning – that anger that can be healing and restorative.

God is angry because God is not separate from the sufferings of God's people. God has observed them. God has heard the cries on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, God says, "I know" their sufferings – and I'm going to do something about it.

That word "know," is one of the most powerful words in scripture. It's the Hebrew word "yada" ... only when God says "yada, yada, yada" here, it really means something.

Yada doesn't just mean "Hey -- I know that guy." *Yada* means to know deeply ... intimately ... fully.

We read *yada* in Genesis when we hear that Adam knew Eve -- wink, wink, nudge, nudge, know what I mean? That kind of know. In "the biblical sense."

This is deep, intimate, vulnerable, personal and utterly complete knowledge. All hearts open. All desires known. No secrets hid.

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There is a difference between knowing about something and knowing it in this intimate sense. Think of something that you knew about in the *intellectual* sense but then knew about in an *intimate* sense. How did that change your desire to act? How did that change how you feel.

Over the past several years, I am becoming more tuned in to how often we use “us and them” language. We white people use it all the time about race. “Why are *those people* protesting?” “What do *they* want. At Christ Church Cathedral we are working on this language all the time. How can we say “those among us struggling with homelessness” instead of “the homeless” – as if those struggling with homelessness are outside the community only related to the body by being recipients of charity.

In Exodus God shows us that “our people” are everyone – and particularly those who are most oppressed.

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Our conversations about race are about dismantling us/them structures. About breaking our habit of “othering.” It is about intentionally building relationships across all the things that divide us – race and class included. It is about building relationships of what are called *fictive kinship* – that’s a term used by anthropologists to describe ties that are neither by blood relationship or by marriage but are every bit as binding.

Why do I speak so passionately about race and class, about privilege power and protest, not because I read a book or even ten. But because my life has been graced by people of color like Traci Blackmon whom I can not just call sister but genuinely feel that kinship relationship to her. And for me to leave her anything less than free, for me not to work to dismantle her oppression would be a betrayal of family as much as if by own brother Ian were unjustly arrested and I just let him sit in jail.

And that starts by listening and believing. By standing with and by intimately knowing the sufferings, if we do not know them already.

I knew I was part of the protest movement in Ferguson when one of the young women walked up to me one night, gave me a hug and said “Hey, family.” The three words that bind us together are Family. Solidarity. Love.

I’ve been talking about the Body of Christ my whole life. I had to go out to the streets to really learn what it meant. Family. Solidarity. Love. Literally being willing to put your bodies and lives on the line for each other.

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Incarnation – Philippians 2:5-8. Lets’ read it together.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, Who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.

Let the same mind be in you as Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself.

(change slide)

We talk a lot about privilege when we talk about race. Privilege is advantages or immunities that people benefit beyond those common to all others. Because we are so accustomed to our own lives, we are often unaware of our privilege.

We all have privilege. As Americans, we have the privilege of being able to travel unimpeded in and out of most countries in the world. People from many other countries can't do that.

As a white person, I have unique privilege. It can be an advantage. In the mid-20th century, white people in America had access to three major escalators of wealth that almost all black people did not – the GI bill, FHA home loan and social security. My family was able to build wealth while black families didn't have that advantage. That's privilege.

When I go running in my neighborhood, I have never been stopped by police, but my neighbor who is black has been stopped multiple times because he "looked suspicious." It never occurs to me when I run be a police car that I might get stopped. That's privilege.

Christ has the best privilege imaginable – equality with God. Come on – you can't get better than that. And he sees it not as something to be exploited but empties himself. He doesn't stop being God, he just doesn't exploit it for his own end.

The Christ hymn in Philippians shows us what to do with our privilege. To recognize that we have it, not exploit it and empty ourselves for the life of the world. If you are white and male and heterosexual and American and educated like me it means not using our privilege to get more for ourselves but giving up all its benefits so that those who are most oppressed, those among us who are most imprisoned can be free.

We white folks need not be afraid when people talk about white privilege and we certainly need not be ashamed. We can have the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus – and just as Jesus emptied himself to make us all the Body of Christ, we can

empty ourselves to dismantle structures of privilege so all can share in the joys and fruits of being made in God's image in the midst of God's creation.

(slide change)

Two more.

Reconciliation – 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 Let's read it together.

If anyone is in Christ they are a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Godself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Godself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making God's appeal through us.

We have done our best to cut the guts out of the word reconciliation.

Tell story of TRC and deKlerk – Truth and Reconciliation Commission was originally the Truth Commission, but deKlerk insisted “and reconciliation be added” so white people would feel safer – like if it was about reconciliation everyone would have to be nice to them.

But Tutu knew what reconciliation was. He knew the Gospel power of reconciliation and he knew what Paul and Timothy were talking about in 2 Corinthians.

The word Paul uses here for reconciliation is (change slide) *Katallasso*. It means to change or exchange' to effect a change.

South African theologian John de Gruchy says this:

“when we are reconciled, we exchange places with the other and are in solidarity with rather than against the other. Reconciliation is a process that causes us to overcome alienation with identification and in solidarity with the other, thus making peace and restoring relationships.”

Think of where the incarnation was. Not in a palace but to an internally displaced mother of an occupied people. God reconciled us to Godself through Jesus, standing with the most oppressed. Knowing intimately.

We have this mission of reconciliation? We are to stand with those who are most oppressed. Always. Because that's where Jesus is. Jesus is already there and we have to join Jesus.

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Finally, Consummation – Revelation 22: 1-5

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.

We need to recapture our eschatology.

Story of Desmond Tutu in the cathedral in cape town.

Since you have already lost, we invite you to join the winning side.

Stand up and repeat after me.

I

I know

I know that we

I know that we will

I know that we will win.

You just protested.

Why is this important? At least two reasons.

(change slide)

Black lives Matter vs. All lives matter

And – we are people of a sure and certain hope. We know that we will win. Our job is not to defeat and enemy but to invite everyone to join the winning side.

Sum up:

- God loves us without bounds. We need not fear, be defensive or be ashamed.
- God always hears the cries of the oppressed, knows them intimately and is about deliverance. We can look at all life on the spectrum of God and Pharaoh.

- Life in Christ is kenotic -- self-emptying. Not exploiting privilege but recognizing it and dismantling it.
- We embody Christ when we are reconciled – in intimate solidarity with “the other.” We are ambassadors of *katallasso*.
- The end of the story has already been written. We know that we will win. Hold onto that – but don’t pretend we’re there yet.