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**Church of the Beatitudes United Church of Christ**

Let's Not Get Stuck in One Time Zone

*A Sermon by*

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Scripture: Revelation 21:1-6

May 2, 2010

What do you think of when I say, “What time is it?”

9:25 am. Time for the sermon; I’ve waited all week for this. How much longer until coffee hour?

Where has the time gone? It seems like just yesterday Kelsey Marie and Mary Olivia were babies, and look at them now, about to confirm their baptismal vows. How time flies!

If we are English speakers, we use the word ‘time’ to describe ‘calendar and clock’, a linear progression: time starts here, ends there, everything that happens in between, logical, sequential, beginning and end.

If we were Incan, Mayan, Hopi, Babylonian, Greek, Buddhist, Jainist, we would speak more of time as ‘cyclical’, a ‘wheel of time’, repeating ages happening to all beings of the Universe.<sup>1</sup>

If we were to be Greek speakers, like the writer of Revelation, we would have at least two different words to describe ‘time’. We would use ‘chronos’, chronological time, for ‘time to get up, time to go to work, time for bed.’ In Nicaragua, our ‘time clocks’ got a little confused. People in Santa Emilia were up before the sun. We were awakened every morning at 2:30 am by Maria’s tortilla making in the nearby kitchen. By 5 am, men were walking up the mountain to begin work on the coffee farm. Families were lighting their cook stoves to make their daily rice and beans. Children were preparing for school. Even us Gringos were up and at ‘em. A long day of working on a house or climbing a mountainside to see La Flor’s water filtration system had us, along with the rest of the community, ready for bed soon after sundown. It was dark, we were tired, everyone else was quieted down, and we would say, 8:30, time for bed!

That is ‘chronos’ time. The other word in the Greek language for time is ‘kairos’. Kairos time is the ‘right time’, the ‘opportune time’.

Theologian Paul Tillich wrote about ‘time’. German born in 1886, Tillich became a German Lutheran pastor in 1912. He continued his education, began teaching in the 1920s and 1930s in Germany, where his teaching and lectures brought him into conflict with the Nazi movement. An American theologian Reinhold Niebhur invited Tillich to immigrate to America and teach at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, which he did, learning English and going on to teach at Columbia, Harvard and University of Chicago. I guess immigration was easier in those days. Tillich wrote about ‘time’:

Not everything is possible at every time,  
not everything is true at every time,  
nor is everything demanded at every moment.<sup>2</sup>

Tillich suggests there has to be, stronger yet, there **is** a right time, the opportune time, and will we be ready for that time?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=380&C=91> Paul Tillich

While we generally read today's text from Revelation at celebration of life services, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end (just like in our Advent and Easter season banners), this letter was not the last document of the New Testament to be written, nor did its author know it would someday conclude the Christian bible. The letter was most likely written by a Jewish-Christian believer who had survived and fled the disaster of the Jewish-Roman war in 66-70, a war that had left Jerusalem in ruins and the temple destroyed. Writing to seven specific churches that are about one generation old and who are already straying from their original vision, the writer, exiled and cut off from his people, writes of his dream, expressing the "deepest yearnings of human beings for a sense of place, for sheer physical security. How much more security can we imagine than being at home with God?"<sup>3</sup>, the Kairos time: no more destruction, no more separation, no more loneliness, no more exile no more tears, no death or mourning or crying or pain.

"Relationships grow cold, sour, and end;  
hurt and disappointment come from those we love;  
life seems to be unjust or senseless;  
decisions or answers are not as readily evident as we would hope;  
failure and discouragement accompany our noblest intentions."<sup>4</sup>

Still in the midst of it all, we proclaim a different Gospel from the world's gospel. In the midst of it all, we speak of a new time, a Kairos time, not only the sad state of affairs of our worldly time. In the midst of laws being passed where people are made separate from one another, 'I'm a citizen. You're not. I belong. You don't. I'm in. You're out. I have enough, You never will. I am a child of God. You are an alien.'" In the midst of hard, challenging, often mean-spirited chronological time, we gather to celebrate and usher in the Kairos time. Easter is not just a day we celebrated five weeks ago, (my where does time go), Easter is the message of the Kairos time for which we strive and labor and partner and baptize and confirm and welcome and hope and encourage and dream and dare to build. Every time we break the bread. Every time we lift the cup. Every time we lay hands on. Every time we pray for, or sing, or dig into our wallets and checking accounts. Every time we look beyond our 'time', toward God's Kairos time, we claim our title, our name, "child of God, disciple of Christ, member of Christ's church".

In hardly no time at all, just a few minutes, check your watches, I am almost done, we will be in that Kairos time as we call forward Kelsey Marie Lambertson and Mary Olivia Shannon, adding their names into the company of the saints in light, adding their names as Partners in Christ's service, embracing them as we all continue to learn and grow and commit to discipleship and faithfulness.

So to Kelsey and Mary and all of us:

'You are loved. Act like it.

You are redeemed. Act like it.

You are a saint. Act like it.

Become what you already are and you will be blessed with every breath you take, because blessedness, which means happiness, which means joy, which means fullness of life-blessedness is just what happens when you are who you

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ucc.org/worship/samuel/may-2-2010.html>

<sup>4</sup> Feasting on the Word, p. 465

were created to be, living the life you were created to live. Which is, incidentally, what the realm of God is all about.”<sup>5</sup>

It’s time.

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<sup>5</sup> Mixed Blessings, Barbara Brown Taylor, p. 51.