

I have a very serious and profound sermon for you today, and I will get to that in a minute. But first, I want to tell you my favorite pig joke. I'm sure you all have a favorite pig joke, and this is mine: There is a city man, who is driving out into the country and admiring all of the sights. He passes an apple orchard. In the apple orchard he sees a farmer who has a very large pig. The man is picking up this huge pig and lifting it over his head so that the pig can bite an apple off of the tree. Then the farmer puts the pig down and the pig eats the apple. When the pig is done eating the apple, the farmer picks up the pig again and lifts it over his head and the pig bites another apple. Then he puts the pig down and the pig eats another apple. The man from the city is just fascinated by this and he pulls off the road, stands by the fence and watches fascinated. After a while he's just too curious and he shouts at the farmer, "Excuse me sir, what are you doing?" To which the farmer replied, "Well, I'm feeding my pig." The man from the city said, "Well, I may not know what I am talking about here, but wouldn't it save some time if you went over to the tree and shook the tree until the apples fell. Then, you could put the pig on the ground and the pig could eat as many apples as it wants. Wouldn't that save a lot of time?" And the farmer replies, "What's time to a pig?"

I'm not sure that pigs have any concept of time, but I do know that time is very important to us. Now I am going to go out on a bit of a limb here, but if I ask most of the adult parishioners if they would rather have more money or more time, they would tell me that they would rather have more time. That's an interesting desire, the desire to have more time. I am one of those who wish I had more time. So let's talk about time for a moment.

When we say that we want more time, what exactly are we saying? Are we saying that we wish there were 25 hours in a day, or that there were 100 minutes in an hour? I've got to tell you, no offense to the attorneys in our congregation, but I spent five days on jury duty once where I had to listen over and over again to the same evidence. Let me tell you, I wish that those days had 12 hours and that those hours had only 30 minutes. More time does not mean just more time. You've all heard it said that nobody on their death bed wishes they spent more time at the office. Time is not just seconds and minutes and hours and days and years. Time is also moments and circumstances and opportunities and moments of decision.

In his Gospel, the Evangelist John writes about time in the life of Jesus. It starts very early, in the second chapter, in the Gospel of

John. There we have a situation where Jesus goes to a wedding feast at Cana. You all know the story. The wedding runs out of wine and Mary, the mother of Jesus, goes to him and tells him that the wedding feast has run out of wine. Jesus replies to his mother, "Oh woman, what would you have me do? My hour has not yet come." And, you know the rest of the story. Jesus tells the waiters to fill six jars with water; take some of the water to the wine steward; the wine steward tastes it the water become wine and the marriage feast continues. Later, in the seventh chapter of John's Gospel, we hear a story where Jesus is encouraged to go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. His followers are trying to get him to go, "...so that your disciples may see the works that you are doing. . . if you do these things, show yourself to the world." And Jesus replies, "My time has not yet come." Another time Jesus proclaims, "I am the light of the world." This happens in Chapter 8 of the Gospel of John. That proclamation, "I am the light of the world," provokes an argument with the Pharisees. The Evangelist John writes this: "These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple, but no one arrested him because his hour had not yet come." Then we get to the twelfth chapter, the one that we read today. By this time Jesus' fame and teachings had reached beyond the confines of the Jewish people so that some Greeks approach Phillip and say: "Sir, we would see Jesus." When Jesus is notified that he is being sought by these people he answers, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour?' No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name." The hour that Jesus has arrived at is not a period of 60 minutes made up of 60 seconds. The hour for Jesus is the moment of decision, the moment of grace. It is a time of anxiety and trouble, a time of fear, pain and suffering. But, it is also a time of faith and a time of resolve. It is the moment when human temporality meets divine eternity.

Have any of you read Stephen Hawking's book, *A Brief History of Time*? I read *A Brief History of Time*. Hawking is arguably the greatest living physicist, one of the all time greatest physicists. It has been said of his book that everybody talks about it, few have read it, and even fewer understand it. I am amongst that last group. I understood maybe less than a third of what I read in that book.

According to Hawkings, time is the measure of the disorder of the universe. He gives the example that a teacup will fall off the table and shatter. He says that we never see a shattered teacup jumping up on the table and coming together. Time moves in one direction, from order to disorder. Hawkings tells us that time is the measurement of that movement to disorder. Well, that's about as much as I know about physics. I understand very little about physics, but it does have something in common with our philosophical understanding of time. Our understanding of time comes from Greek philosophy. Our understanding is that time is a movement continuing in a line from one time to another. Our concept of time is one of a frame in which things happen. That frame in which things are happening could be a day, or a year, or a lifetime or a century. But the frame exists independent of us. Things happen within the frame. The Greek word for frame is *chronos*, from which we get the word *chronology*.

When we say we want more time, what we are saying is that we wish the frame was bigger. I wish I had more time today. I wish that today frame was bigger. I wish I had more years in my life. I wish that life frame was bigger. But, there is another concept of time that is quite different than *chronos*. This is the one that is found in the Bible. In Scripture, time is not a frame in which things happen. Time is different moments. The Greek word for this type of time is *kairos*. Time, *kairos*, is now; it is a moment; it is a circumstance; it is an opportunity. What lies between the different "nows", the different *kairos*, is time -- *chronos*.

Given this understanding of time, this understanding of *kairos*, when we say we want more time we mean not just a longer day longer year, or a bigger frame, but more meaningful times. We want more "nows." Nobody wants more time on jury duty. Nobody wants more time sitting in a car line at the drive-in window at the bank. Nobody wants more time waiting for a waiter to bring you a check. What we want are "nows", "nows" that make memories, "nows" that make life interesting. What we want are "nows" that make life pleasant. Ultimately, what we want are "nows" with meaning and purpose. Time in the biblical sense is a "now", a *kairos* that has meaning and purpose because God has touched the stream of time and made it a "now." "The hour has come..." when God gives you a chance to do something meaningful.

Let me give you an example of the type of thing I am talking about when I say, "The hour has come when there is that chance to do something meaningful that has been given to you by God." I want to tell you a story that I heard years ago at a Lenten program. A woman in the congregation volunteered to tell

about her times as a scout leader. She tells us that she got involved with scouting through her boys. She is a single mother with two boys, and at one time she ran a daycare out of her house. She signed up her sons for scouting because she wanted them to have positive male role models which they didn't have at home. She got drawn into helping with the scouts until she found herself in the role of a scout leader. She said that she could talk about the hundreds of wonderful boys that she met through scouting, but this time she talked about one particular scout named Joshua. And here I quote her: "When I first met Joshua, he was a cocky little black kid on a bike about ten years old smoking cigarettes and riding with the toughest pack of little kids that you ever saw, and telling me the biggest pile of whoppers I have ever heard in my life. He happened to show up in my yard one day when I was giving an Easter party for the little children in my daycare. They were basically looking for food. So I gave him and his friends a cupcake and I thought I would never see them again." She goes on to explain that because of her kindness of giving Joshua a cupcake on that day, he returned to her house just to talk to her. And then he returned again. And then he returned again. And in their conversations she convinced Joshua to become a scout. For Joshua being a scout was not easy. He did not have that male role model. He never knew his father. His mother worked in a kitchen in a nursing home. Joshua had to take odd jobs in order to buy the camping equipment and to pay for the overnights that he went on with the scouts. As he went through scouting, Joshua took up leadership roles in the scouts. He eventually moved away from town but she says that this child who had failed two grades at his old school, had been placed in an honors program when he moved to his new school. There is more to say about this story, but I think I have said enough to make my point, which is a *kairos* is a moment, a time of decision, when a cocky, lying, cigarette smoking ten year old is offered a cupcake. That one act of grace and kindness had an effect on a boy's entire life. That moment of offering a cupcake is a moment of eternity touching the stream of time. It is a moment of grace.

When the time comes, I hope, I pray it will be your time. I hope that what you say or do will glorify your Heavenly Father. When your hour comes, you may not know it at the time. Any time may be the hour of judgment. Any time may be a time entering into eternity. If you follow our Lord's example, if you are his disciple, then your life will be lived awaiting the moment of grace, and you won't miss your hour, and your hour will be all the time you need.

Amen.

