

Title: "The Opportunity of the Moment"

Series: The Transformed Life

Scripture: Mark 1:14-20.

Date Used: February 5, 2023

Focus: All too often we go through life wanting to put off important decisions. Or wanting to think something over when the decision needs to be made right now. Sometimes we have to take quick action without a lot of time to process things, lest we miss the opportunity present in the moment.

There are moments in our lives and there are experiences in our lives that most of us can point to and say, "That changed my life."

- It could have been the first time you met the person you would eventually marry. I'm amazed at the number of people that tell me the first time they met that special someone they would eventually marry; they knew there was something special there. That encounter changed them.
- It could be the first day on a new job and you realize, "This is for me. This is what I have been waiting for."

Not all life changing circumstances are positive. I've had people tell me how the death of a loved one – a child, the loss of a parent at a young age, the death of a spouse – was life-changing. The loss of a job, a divorce, a move to a new location, moving away from one's family, all these experiences can be life-changing for people.

The gospel writer Mark realized that life changing events all share a significant moment. In Greek, time is viewed in two ways, one way is as "Chronos," which is chronological time. Chronological time is the time ticking away on a clock. It is the alarm going off reminding us that it is time to get ready for school or work. It is the time clock counting down how many days, hours and minutes are left until the Super Bowl begins. It is the time noted on your watch reminding a teenager out on a date how much time he has left to get his date home if he ever hopes to see her again.

But time can also be understood as "Kairos." Kairos is time that is filled with meaning. It is time that is filled with divine possibilities. It encompasses those moment that people refer to as life changing moments.

Jesus begins his public ministry with the realization that every moment of his ministry, everything he does will be filled with divine possibilities.

The theme of Mark's Gospel, his summary of Jesus' ministry is captured in the 15th verse of the first chapter: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

When Jesus says “the time is fulfilled” he is not talking about some random chronological moment in history, he’s talking about time that is filled with the activity of God. He is saying, the time is now when God is at work in the world. And at this time God is at work in the person of Jesus. Mark understands that each chronological moment with Christ is filled with life changing possibilities. Each moment is a Kairos moment. Each encounter with Jesus can be life transforming. Every moment is an opportunity to repent, to allow one’s life to be turned in a new direction. Each encounter with Jesus is an opportunity to celebrate the “good news” that in Christ a new life is possible. Each encounter with Jesus has the potential to radically alter one’s life.

In these Kairos moments God is inviting people to realize that their lives can be turned in a new direction and God is inviting people to be open to the life transformation that Jesus can bring about.

- How many people do we know that are looking for a different life? How many of us are looking for a different life?

- Most of us know of people that have lost jobs, who have had to go back to school to be trained to work in a new field, who have had to relocate to take a new job somewhere else. They didn’t want it, but life forced them to make some radical change. And for some of them, once they got past the initial shock, they said it was one of the best things that could have happened to them.

- God can use the worst circumstances of life and in those Kairos moments offer people new life.

- Do you believe it is possible for people to change?

- How many times have you heard someone else say or even said to yourself, “Well, that’s just the way I am.” Or “That’s the way I’ve always been and I’m probably not going to change now.”

- When Jesus says, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news,” He is saying that the definition of who we are as individuals is not limited to what we have been, but it can be expanded to include what can be in God’s time.

Jesus is walking by the Sea of Galilee one day and he sees some fisherman. The first two he sees are Simon and his brother Andrew, a little later he sees James and John the sons of a fisherman named Zebedee. These four men were fisherman. That is who they were.

Their lives were all about fishing. They got into boats every night. They went out into the deep, they cast out their nets and tried to catch fish. In the morning they would come back to shore, sort the fish, fix their nets if they needed to be repaired and get ready for the next night’s work. That is what fishermen did.

Imagine what it was like to grow up in the house of James and John. Every day their father Zebedee would tell them stories about fishing the night before or about some great fishing expedition he had been on. They grew up hearing about how one day they would work with their father on his fishing boat. From a young age they defined themselves as the sons of a fisherman and that they would themselves become fishermen one day. Years ago, I had a parishioner who was the second generation to run a family business. It was a good business that had provided a very good income for two generations of their family. This parishioner had three children. The oldest two children were in high school at the time and the youngest of the three was in junior high. One day as we talked after church as his oldest daughter prepared to graduate from high school, he told me what positions each of his children would probably hold in the family business one day. He had their lives all planned out for them.

As we spoke, I said to him something to the effect of, "It's nice that you have plans for your children's lives, but as your pastor and their pastor I need to ask you, is that God's plan for their lives or your plan for their lives?" The business owner was talking about a chronological moment in time when his children would begin to work for the family company. But he failed to be open to the possibility that as a parent, that maybe it was his primary job to help his children be open to a Kairos moment, a God defining moment, that would change them and define their lives.

As Jesus walks along the Sea of Galilee he is about to redefine what it means to be a fisherman. He says to Peter, Andrew, James, and John, "Do you know what time it is?... It is time to picture a different future; not a picture of the future that you have created for yourselves, not one that is based on what everyone around you thinks your life should be about, not the future that has been defined for you by your parents." Jesus is saying, "I want you to catch God's vision about who you are! And all I can tell you right now is that it has nothing to do with these boats. It has nothing to do with those nets! Absolutely nothing! Come and follow me and I'll lead you into God's future of who and what God created you to be."

We know that there is a feeling of security that comes with staying in the boat. It's safe. In the boat I know who I am. As long as I stay in the boat, I know what my life is all about. I can see it all very clearly, there are clear parameters for my life. But as soon as I get out of that boat and follow this guy named Jesus, I lose control of everything. My life is no longer as easy to understand. The future is kind of cloudy. It's no longer safe and predictable.

To get out of the boat means that I believe God can make me into something other than what I have been. To get out of the boat means I am not limited to what others say my life is about, I am no longer limited by the expectations of others. To get out of the boat means I am not limited by my own self-perceptions, but that I am open to what God can do in and through my life.

Do you have a limited perspective of what you can be?

Have you placed limits on yourself or allowed others to limit you?

And most important, are you willing to get out of the boat and discover what you can be?

Because, as long as we cling to the safety of that boat, we will never become what we can be. Life transformation can only begin when we are willing to get out of the boat!

Jesus invites us to realize that this is a Kairos moment. This is a chronological moment in history that is filled with divine possibilities. Jesus is inviting us into the process of life transformation. It can't happen as long as we cling to the safety of the boat. We have to realize that this instant is the moment when God is inviting us to get out of the boat and to realize what we can be as God takes us and makes us and molds us into God's vision of what our lives can be.

Let us pray:

Jesus, you have brought us to this moment. You are offering us the invitation to get out of the boat and come with you.

- Forgive us for the times we have bought into a limited perception of ourselves.
- Forgive us for the times we have limited ourselves, defining ourselves by our past and not by what you can make us into.
- Forgive us for the times we have clung to the glorious days of old and failed to catch a vision of your future.

Lord Jesus, make us Yours. Through the power of Your Spirit, move us out of the boat and into the future You envision for our lives. Take us, make us, and mold us into the people, the servants You want us to be.

Amen.