

Congregational Church of South Glastonbury
New Years Day 2017

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Psa 8, Ecc 3:1-13, Mt 25:31-46

What Time Is It?

How many of us have had this experience, either as a kid, or as an adult? And yes, I'm looking for a show of hands. Do you know this story?? Everybody jumps in the car to go somewhere. The grocery store or Timbuktu. You're successfully and safely out of the driveway and rolling merrily along, then THE question appears very shortly after leaving your driveway in the dust. "Are we there yet? Are we there yet?" How many of us know that question and that experience? Xxxxx Very familiar.

Would someone please check your watch or phone and answer this very common question. "What time is it?" xxxxyTY

We have just received the briefest, barest factual answer to the sermon title, which is the common question, "What Time Is It?"

As our sermon title, this question, "What Time Is It?" is of course inspired by the this ancient text which begins, "*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.*" When this text was written, the question, "what time is it?" would have been answered very differently. Someone might have guessed, "it's about the 3rd hour," or said "it is the season of the grape harvest", or "today is the twenty fourth day of the reign of Josiah." There were no ways of measuring time with the kind of precision that we take for granted today.

We hear a very different sense of time in these "reflections by a royal philosopher," i.e. reflections by someone who pondered deeply on what is life all about. Of course, he tells us what we all know, and sometimes wish was otherwise, namely, that life is filled with forces and events that lead us in sharply opposing spiritual and emotional directions,

Life and death, planting and harvest, mourning and dancing, speaking and silence, building up and breaking down, seeking and losing, weeping and laughing. It's all in there, it's all necessary and it's all good, both the pain and the joy. As we live with this text, an appropriate answer to our

title question, "What Time Is It?" might well begin like this. "Now is a time "for" ... whatever is happening in our respective worlds, and how those happenings are affecting our lives and spirits.

I was discussing this sermon text and title with my spiritual director this past week, and wise woman that she is, she let me run on and on a bit, then asked me, "So Alice, 'What time is it for you, right now?'" I want to continue this personal note to say, that right now for our family, it is a time for gratitude, rejoicing and hope. Some of you are aware that our newest grandson, born in Vermont, had some amazing cardiac surgery at Boston Children's Hospital when he was all of one week old. Now at 5 weeks of age, he's growing well, putting on weight, and doing all the normal, important things that babies do.

I invite you to take a moment now, maybe close your eyes, breathe – settle, reflect on your own life, ask "what time is it for me right now?" Is it more a time for keeping or more a time for throwing away? More a time for seeking or losing? More a time for speaking or for keeping silence? A time for planting or more a time for harvest?

Friends, asking "What time is it?" is a very solid prayer practice for our daily living – a way of taking stock, knowing that God is as always, with us, beside us, within us. It's a way of honestly discerning and entering into the realities of our lives, discovering strength and weakness; a way of counting blessings, of giving thanks, of seeking wisdom, courage, patience when we are most in need. It's an especially good prayer practice as we walk into a new year and new possibilities, or a new year and needing renewed energy for coping with on-going needs and concerns.

I find myself wondering is there a way for you as the Congregational Church of South Glastonbury to come together and ask "What Time Is It?" of yourselves as you seek to discern the ways of faithful ministry that God is inviting you to undertake this year, and in the next 5 years? How are you feeding the hungry and the hungry in spirit, clothing the naked, serving the poor, liberating those in prison, welcoming the stranger, caring for the least among us? Is it time to ask how you can do it better?

What time is it now? — Is it time for this community of faith to be

standing with and speaking out in new and bold ways for the strangers, the hungry, the prisoners, the earth?

Is it time to widen perspective, to hear good news about what is happening? Try a website known as Future Crunch, to find it's most recent information regarding the best news of what is happening across the globe and around the world.

What Time Is It?

Friends, an ancient preacher, an ancient philosopher put before us this truth, which in the nature of Truth, in the nature of Wisdom has not changed. It is steadfast and true that

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

- 2 a time to be born, and a time to die;
- a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
- 3 a time to kill, and a time to heal;
- a time to break down, and a time to build up;
- 4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
- a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
- 5 a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
- a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
- 6 a time to seek, and a time to lose;
- a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
- 7 a time to tear, and a time to sew;
- a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
- 8 a time to love, and a time to hate;
- a time for war, and a time for peace.

Let us with trust, confidence, and joy ask our God "What time is it?"

and with *equal trust confidence and joy*
set our feet on the paths he sets
before us that we may faithfully
walk the paths ~~this~~ ~~the~~ time our
world most need to know the
goodness of God to love