Psalm 90:1-4, John 7:1-9

“Time is on my side”

This kind of feels like the first normal Sunday we’ve had in a while. Advent is behind us and the covenant renewal service is done and now, liturgically and as Presbyterians, we like our liturgical calendar, we find ourselves in what is called ordinary time. Ordinary, have you ever felt like you’ve lived an ordinary day in your life? Our whole concept of time is so skewed from what Scripture wants it to be.

I remember when we were in Italy and Stacy and I were rushing to see a family that was going to take us to their home in the hillsides and we got there an hour and a half late for a whole variety of reasons. I wanted them to know how sorry I was so when we got there I said, I thought, I’m so sorry that we are so late, which is scusate il nostro ritardo, but instead I said, scusate perche siamo ritardati, which means I’m sorry, but we have a very serious mental illness.

We canceled the trip. But time is so important to us. Bring on time or being late in our culture here in the US is a reflection of your character and your reliability. All around the world time is viewed so differently. Here we are slaves to it, along the Mediterranean like Italy, Spain, Greece, Israel time is relative. If you have a 5pm meeting you don’t start getting ready until then.

I remember one of my first weddings that I did in Italy. The service was supposed to start at 2pm so I got there around 1 to get things ready and at 2 there was absolutely no one there. We didn’t have cell phones back then, so I called the home and no one was there, so at 2:30 I went home, which was in the same complex. At 4:30 the groom came to my house to tell me that the bride was getting ready to come to the church, could I come? We got there and the bride didn’t show up until 5:30. So I preached a 3 hour sermon.

But even here we are sensitive to time and when this service goes late then coffee hour goes late and then the teachers that have prepared so hard during the week don’t the time that they need to get through their lesson. This is very important to us and it all revolves around time. So much of our lives are is interpreted through this prism of time. We have become slaves to time and that is such a foreign concept to our Savior.

Today we will read in both Psalm 90 and back in our beloved John, a very different approach to time than what we normally experience and quite frankly what we are living. Let’s see what our Savior has to say about time.

**READ**

We are going to look at Psalm 90 an specifically verse 4 which is a great verse to have in your arsenal if you want to understand God’s concept of time as reflected in the Scripture. You see time is all about God being in control. So many of our themes have focused on this one concept that we call the Providence of God.

We’ve talked about God’s timing and how so often it is so off and out of whack with our timing. I constantly rejoice that First Presbyterian had to wait 3 years for a pastor, for otherwise the timing would have had me someplace else. Just this week something amazing happened that everything to do with God’s timing. At our last session meeting our incredibly reliable and my right hand woman here in the church, our trustworthy Clerk of Session Lori Herr formally informed session that she was hoping to transition off as Clerk of Session. How do you replace Lori? You don’t, you don’t even try. For the past 3 years an elder of this church has been trying to figure out how God might be using him, he turned down serving on session a year ago and wasn’t asked this year, and so he didn’t really know what God might have in store. Well, he is now available for Clerk with session’s approval, which would not have been the case if he had served on session. It all makes sense now. But it didn’t before.

Hindsight in discerning God’s plans is so much easier than when you are in the middle of a storm. We can figure out God’s intentions once the crisis has passed, but while we are in it time becomes our enemy because we want an answer now, we want a sign now, we want a solution now. While we are in it time becomes our enemy, and our understanding of God’s control of time, and control in general, seems to disappear.

Time does not seem to be on our side then, no it doesn’t, no it doesn’t. But vs. 4 in Psalm 90 tells us that time is on our side, yes it is, yes it is. You see for God 1,000 years is like a day or even 6 years. Even before the mountains were born his understanding of time differs so greatly from ours. I pulled out the directory from 30 years ago, 1982, and boy, some of you look really different. I mean time has really changed you. Time affects all of us. But not God. Vs. 2 tells us that from everlasting to everlasting you are God. The God who was present when you had your baby baptized her 30 years ago is the same God who watches over your grandchild born from that very same baby. Time is not our enemy because it is in the hands of God. It becomes an enemy when we make it one. God’s plan is that time be at our disposal and not vice-versa.

Let’s turn to John and see Jesus address this issue of time. Now for this, it can be a little confusing and mind-boggling. I mean when he was 12 did he know everything that was going to happen? Today in our Scripture we certainly sense that he knows how time will march on and what will happen when it does.

There are two words fairly interchangeable in the Greek for time. Interestingly enough in the OT there is no word for time, just when things endure a certain period of time, but no specific word for time. But in the Greek we have two words, chromos from which we get the word chronological. This whole concept of time was important in Jesus’ day because the Julian Calendar has just come into existence a few decades before Jesus’ birth. So people are thinking a lot about time and how this new fangled calendar is messing up everyone’s life.

There is another word for time which is used and it is Kairos. Kairos means the time of an event that is leading to an opportunity. We see it as a Kairos moment, or a God moment, or God’s time.

We have three references to time here and each one uses the term kairos, God moment. Let’s set the stage. Jesus has been very popular, but also polarizing and controversial. In chapter 5 he healed a man on the Sabbath and that breech of the law was still plaguing him, people were still really upset about that, well, the religious leaders were really upset about that. They were more upset about the time of when the miracle happened than amazed and uplifted in their faith that a miracle had actually happened.

See, even back then time had enslaved them and made them miss a God event because they were focused on time as ruling even God. So Jesus’ brothers approach him and say, hey, you better hurry up if you want to be famous and go to Jerusalem because all these people will be there and they are expecting you to be there. Jesus’ family, what about it? He had at least 4 brothers: James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude and also sisters according to Mark 6:3.

But he knew when it would be time for him to be arrested and condemned and killed and resurrected and frankly now was not the time. My kairos, my God time had not come yet. Your time, when you are supposed to be in God time and acting as such is always here, but since I know time, and control time, I’m not going to Jerusalem.

Later in a few years when it is his time and before he rides into Jerusalem triumphantly on Palm Sunday he knew it was time. In Matthew 26:18 he states to his disciples to prepare a room for the Passover with these words: “Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, “The teacher says, My time is near.” Jesus was in charge of time. He doesn’t go in these verses because the final redemptive act needs to wait. Time does not control our Savior, our Savior has complete control over time.

That’s the approach we are told to take. When he says our time is always here it means that we are to live our lives as if time is on our side. If you are at witts end because you can’t squeeze another activity into your life is that really healthy for your kids or for your marriage? Does God want you to fill your life with events that the only time you have with him is now? That’s not using time as an ally, as a gift from God. Your time is always here, so use it to benefit your relationship, your family, your life.

As I’ve traveled I’ve seen cultures and societies look over their history and see it as one of oppression and hardship and so as a result we have to get ours now, because tomorrow may never come. Southern Italy was conquered by just about every known civilization and so time is not their friend. Every day is just an opportunity to see how do we survive the present. The recent past of Russia has been so tragic that every day you have an entire culture defined by the citizens of Moscow trying to amass and get over by hook or crook and those around them are enemies regardless of who they are. It is like the wild west and you don’t know if you’ll be around another day. Time is not a friend.

Psalm 90 vs. 12 tells us: “Teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.” If you feel like you are living day by day you need to step back and offer you time to God. Or else we will be found unwise and so shortsighted. The same is true of the church. We can’t live day by day and jump on every fad and every idea that comes our way without analyzing how God has been faithful, is faithful, and always will be faithful.

You never see Jesus and his disciples seeking to get to a meeting because they were running late. No, he spends an extra day on a mountain praying to God, he comes to see his already dead friend Lazarus and is accused of delaying and that he could have made a difference if he had come earlier. Time did not dictate Jesus’ life. Time was on his side.

The speed of our world has increased dramatically, and with technology it has become even worse. I remember in college sending cassette tapes to my parents while they were living in Honduras and I was here in Pennsylvania. It would take one month for my tape to get to them and another month for their tape to get to me. Two months to hear my parents.

The immediacy of everything creates a false sense of time that goes contrary to Scripture. Hey, I’m a part of it, I’m as guilty as anyone. But so much of Scripture is written in a mentality that assumes that the readers see how God is in control of time. But we cram so much into our days that the end result is that we become slaves to time. That is such a foreign concept for our Savior.

He wants us as his children, but we turn into servants of time. Time is on my side, we need to remember. We can’t squeeze our Savior out as a result of wanting more time. Amen.