

Text: Luke 6.12-19
St Stephen's

Jan 31/Feb 1, 2009
Sun AM

Plus Ultra

The Bible has two words to describe time. One is '**chronos**' – which means linear time, normal time as we experience it. We get the word 'chronological' from this word. The other word is '**kairos**' which means a **life defining moment**, an **urgent time of opportunity**. These are moments where everything shifts... a tipping point in life. Sometimes you don't even know it until afterwards, and you look back. But something significant has happened and everything changes.

Jesus' first words in the gospel of Mark are,

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

His word for time in this sentence is 'kairos'. Kairos moments are times that we experience the intervention of God. **How we respond** to kairos moments is critical.

- You **walk into** them and embrace them. And when you do, life changes.
- You can **walk away** from them. And when you walk away from a God moment, something hardens inside you.
- You can **walk past** them and ignore them. A lot of us do that too. But indifference is really another kind of rejection, and it, too, will harden you and set a course for your future years.

Kairos moments can be profound and **disruptive events** (think 9/11, or the current economic crisis) or they can **arrive quietly**, almost silently.

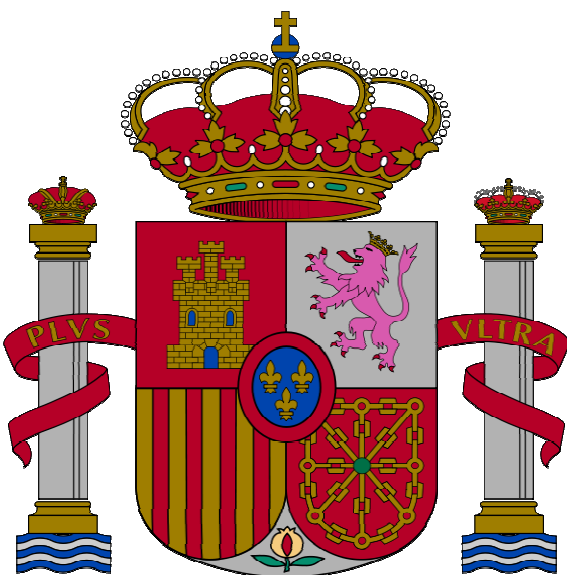
I believe that **our parish is caught in a kairos moment**. It has to do with the world-wide Anglican realignment that has presented us with critical questions of what we believe and how we live. The questions we have faced have been precipitated by issues of sexuality, but it is **not really been about sex**.

- It has been **about the Bible**, about whether the Bible can be trusted by thinking, believing, 21st century people.
- About whether **God has revealed himself** definitively and clearly and wonderfully in the pages of the bible,
- about **whether we can trust** what He says,
- about whether we will have **any authority** in our lives beyond ourselves,
- about whether **Jesus** is who the Bibles says he is and
- about whether **ancient Apostolic writings** are foundational for life in our modern world.

These are big questions, and for two full generations this parish has joined thousands of others inside our denomination and inside our worldwide communion with a **resounding 'yes'** on the trustworthiness of the bible.

As we come to February, the **Primates** of the Anglican Communion will meet this week in Egypt to consider our application to launch a new American Province of the Anglican Communion this year. We are confident that a majority of them favor this dramatic step.

At great risk, at significant personal cost, and in the face of sharp opposition, your Vestry and clergy and diocese and Bishops and Archbishops have joined with Anglicans from all across the global south to open **a new way forward**. It is a kairos moment.



This is the national **shield of Spain**. It has ancient roots that go back to a kairos moment some 500 years ago. I want to draw your attention to the **pillars** on the right and the left. Note that under them are the **seas**, and around them is a **banner** with a single Latin word on the left and a second on the right; together they read, **'Plus Ultra'**.

Before 1500, the known world was boundaried by the Straits of Gibraltar, at the western edge of the Mediterranean Sea. According to ancient mythology, **those straights were opened by Hercules**, who smashed a channel through the rock, connecting the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. On each side of the channel stood ancient rock formations that became known as the Pillars of Hercules. On these pillars were carved a somber warning in Latin, **'Non Plus Ultra'** – 'nothing more beyond'. These Pillars formed **the boundaries** of the ancient world. For centuries sailors heeded those warnings. No one dared sail west beyond them. Nothing was out there. Just monsters and storms and the end of the world.

You remember your grade school rhymes: 'In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue...' and discovered the lands in which we now live. It turned out there was more beyond.

In 1519, the same years that the Reformation was shaking northern Europe, **Charles V of Spain** became the **Holy Roman Emperor**. An ambitious man from an ambitious dynasty, he adopted his own personal motto from this carving on the gates of Hercules. He simply **dropped the first word, 'Non'**. Instead of 'Nothing More Beyond', his motto became **'More Beyond'**. His motto shook the world. It was under his leadership that Magellan circumnavigated the globe. His motto became a **kairos moment** for all of Europe. A whole new world had opened up. There was indeed, 'More Beyond'.

I want to say with everything in me that I believe there is 'More Beyond' for our diocese, for our parish, and for you. To that future I call you.

To help us with this, in Feb we want to touch bases with **our vision** again. In a kairos moment, it is important to **remember who** we are and **whose** we are and **why** we are. To get a start, we want to look

today at one of the key moments in the ministry of Jesus. We **always take our key from Jesus...**

Jesus has just launched his ministry. At one point in those early months, **three distinct groups** have formed.

First there are **The Crowds**.

a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

Luke 6.17-19

By this time word was out, and people came from everywhere. Luke tells us that they came to hear him and to be healed. I think that means they came because **they were suffering**. Life was hard and many of them were broken and their bodies and families were broken. The things that Jesus was saying and the things he did had reached their ears, and it was electric. So they came to hear him and be healed... and lots of them came, hundreds and hundreds. **They were 'more beyond' people.**

The **second group** that had formed was **His Disciples**.

when day came, he called his disciples... and a great crowd of his disciples... came

Luke 6.13,17

'Disciple' means 'learner' or 'student'. It was a common thing in ancient Israel to be a disciple of someone. John the Baptist had his disciples and the Pharisees had theirs. The Jews considered themselves disciples of Moses. And Jesus had his – quite a large crowd of them. A disciple of Jesus is someone who comes to Jesus to learn how to live his life, someone who wants to become like Jesus on the inside and the outside. And lots of people were in this group. **They also were 'more beyond' people.**

By the way, **everyone is a disciple**. Everyone learns how to live their lives from someone. It just depends who you are a disciple of. I was a disciple of John Lennon for a long time, a classic case of one fool following another. When I met Jesus, John Lennon just faded away.

The **third group** is called here **His Apostles**.

And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles...

Luke 6.13

He had been up in the mountains praying all night about this, and when he came down he chose these 12: Andrew and Peter and James and John and all the rest... including Judas. After praying all night he chose Judas, too.

The name '**Apostle**' means '**sent one**' or '**messenger**'. These would be the men who would leave their jobs and homes and travel everywhere with Jesus. They became his closest friends, and they were the ones he turned to when it was time to expand the mission. They would be the itinerant preachers and eventually the first ambassadors and witnesses of his death and resurrection. **"More beyond" was their life.**

So you have these three. Everyone who has been attracted to Jesus is **in one** of those three groups. And actually, I think it is **God's work to draw us from one group to another** to another. From the suffering and interested **crowd** who is looking for mercy – to the **learners** who want to have him teach us how to live life – to the **sent ones**, the messengers, who always have good news on their lips. There is 'more beyond'.

I want to finish my message today with a thought about **how this happens – how people move** into the crowd, and from the crowd into the disciples and from the disciples out to the world. I will have more to say about this next week – but today I want to put it in one clear sentence.

It happens because the real God steps in, because the real God shows up. And right then and there you know there is 'more beyond.'
They came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

Luke 6.18-19

People joined the crowd because power came out from him.

The crowd became disciples because they had never heard anyone teach like this before and they wanted to learn from him how to live their lives. So they came to hear him.

And **disciples became apostles** because he prayed all night and came down from the hills and he chose them, asked them to join his team.

In every case **the initiative was his**. The **power** was his, the **mercy** was his, the **healing** was his, the **teaching** was his, the **prayer** was his, the **choosing** was his... and people heard and sensed and knew deep inside them that all these years where I thought **there must be more**, I was **right**.

There is '**more beyond**' – there is

- more power to put our broken lives back together... and **there he is**.
- more mercy to forgive – more than your wildest dreams; you have hardly begun to probe the depths of his mercy.
- More teaching that is true, and a way of life that is sane and good and godly and transforming,
- and a message to take to the world – there are people, more people, near and far who are desperate for what He gives.

And he's been praying all night and he's looking at you and speaking your name and this is the moment you have been waiting for all your life!

I want to ask you today to **take this little phrase, Plus Ultra, and make it your own motto** this year, and press on into Jesus, into his mercy and into his way of life, into his teaching and into his mission.