

“Time, Time, Time,”
Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Luke 13:31-35

Rev. Kenneth M. Locke
Interim Pastor/Head of Staff
First Presbyterian Church, Fond du Lac, WI
March 13, 2022; Second Sunday of Lent

Imagine a straight line. Nothing fancy, just a straight line. Not too long, not too short, with a definite beginning and end. A straight line.

When I was a young soldier, that’s how I was taught to think about time. Time was finite and you had to get things done in the time you had. There was no extra time available. If you didn’t use it, tough luck for you.

That was also the case when I was working for the freight company. Trucks had to arrive on time, be unloaded and reloaded on time, packages had to be delivered on time. You worked within the time you had, no more and no less.

Does that sound familiar? Maybe you think of time that way? You have to get to work on time. Finish work on time. Reports can’t be late, no time for exceptions. Time is finite and has to be used well. When it’s gone, it’s gone.

This is Abraham’s view. Time is short and he’s in a hurry. ‘Where’s my heir? Who’s going to get all my stuff? I don’t have children, my wife is old, and a slave is going to take my place someday. God – hurry up!’

God responds by telling Abraham not to worry. “I’ve got this. I’m in control. I lead you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, didn’t I? I watched over you in Egypt, didn’t I? Don’t worry about your future. Focus on what I’ve done for you. There is plenty of time.”

God’s attitude towards time reminds me of when I was a teenager. Back then, time was different. Maybe it was different when you were a teenager. It seemed like time was elastic. Time was fluid. Time stopped and started and had no beginning and no end. There was plenty of time. Sure, I can go out with my friends and do my chores and finish my homework. Lots of time for everything. No problem. Time is fluid.

Maybe God has a teenager's perception of time. God has all the time in the world. Time is fluid and there's plenty of it. God makes a covenant with Abraham to calm his anxiety but God's not worried. With God there is plenty of time. With God, there is always plenty of time. It's never too late.

We see the same thing in our New Testament Lesson. Jesus is up in Galilee in the NE part of the country. He's making his way towards Jerusalem and along the way he's doing what Jesus does: healing and feeding and teaching and preaching.

This upsets the local ruler, Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. Herod ruled the Galilee area and was widely hated. Nobody liked Herod and he would have felt very threatened by someone as popular as Jesus.

Some Pharisees come and warn Jesus to get out while he can. Not all Pharisees are against Jesus. Some of them, at least, admire him enough to warn him to be careful.

Jesus then sets up this nice contrast. Herod is a fox. Foxes are sly, devious creatures who prey on animals smaller than themselves – like baby chicks.

Jesus, on the other hand, is a mother hen. And what does a hen do when the chicks are endangered? She gathers them under her wings to protect them. Herod is pure evil, out to devour the chicks. Jesus is the mother hen protecting them.

The problem is the timing is off. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. Remember, this is Luke's gospel and in Luke's gospel Jesus only goes to Jerusalem once. But it sounds like he's been there before! "Jerusalem, Jerusalem. How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not."

How does that work? He can't have done this before; he hasn't been to Jerusalem yet. And he won't be there until Palm Sunday when the crowd chants, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" Jesus hasn't arrived in Jerusalem yet, but he's already been trying to take them under his wings.

The point is, Jesus is the Lord of time. Jesus is always reaching out. It's not too late. There is still time. Jesus is telling them, and telling us, there is still time. It is not too late. With God there is still time to change, time to be closer to God.

Our church can change. We don't have to be the church we've always been. If we want to, we can change. We can reinvent ourselves. We can be new. We don't have to, but if we want to, we can. The God who protected Abraham is the God who is protecting us. In God's good time, we have time to decide who we want to be.

We, ourselves, can change. We don't have to be stuck. We don't have to be prey to the sin around us.

Jesus is offering us shelter. Jesus is offering us the shelter of loving wings in the past, in the present and in the future.

Foxes don't have to bring us down. The foxes of anger. The foxes of addiction. The foxes of things and busyness, of peer pressure and social pressure and FOMO (fear of missing out). The foxes of doubt, discouragement, or boredom. The foxes of righteous indignation and always having to have our own way.

The foxes don't have to bring us down. There is still time. We can still escape. Jesus has been, is, and will be offering us his divine wings.

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, and we are going with him. In a few weeks we'll be joining with the crowd, chanting "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord."

Before then, before then, let's get away from the foxes. Let's turn our backs on those devouring foxes and nestle together under those holy wings.

It's not too late. God does not measure time like Abraham, or even like you and me. God measures time more like a teenager. And that's good news. There's still time. Time for us to turn from the foxes and seek shelter with Jesus. Time to be the people God wants us to be. Because friends, this is how much God loves us. Thanks be to God. Amen!