



THE TIME HAS COME



2021
LENT
JOURNEY
Sunday February 21st

Prelude

Introduction

Invitation

Call to Worship:

The time has come: time to pray, time to listen, time to hear the word, time to be together with each other. The time has come to take the Lenten journey of reflection and renewal. The time has come to worship our God!

Hymn: “Gather Us In,” vv. 1,4 (FWS #2236)

Reading the Word: Mark 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

Ministry of Music

Message: “The Time Has Come”

My dad loved to tell the story about when my oldest brother was born. Dad had arrived home from work, and Mom was sitting at the kitchen table looking worried. When Dad asked her what was wrong, she said, “The baby is coming.” Dad jumped into action, saying, “Let’s go to the hospital, then.” Mom shook her head and said, “But it isn’t time yet! We still have two weeks to go!” Needless to say, they went to the hospital, and my brother was born a little early. Being a new mother, Mom wasn’t sure what to expect, but she went on to have three more children, so I guess she figured it out. For my brother, it was time. For Jesus, it was time.

For us, the time has come, too. The time has come for Lent to begin, for us to take a journey of reflection, repentance, and restoration with God, with each other, with our own selves. The time has come to walk with Jesus as he enters the final days of his earthly life. Taking this journey wasn't easy for Jesus, but as he realizes that his time on earth was short, he spent it to help build the kingdom of God on earth. He taught, healed, loved, and cared for many people, and he brought the very presence of God to them.

In today's passage, we are in Galilee at the Jordan River where John baptized Jesus, where he was then driven into the wilderness to wrestle with temptation and there prevail. He began his ministry with the message to repent and believe the Good News! He said that the time was fulfilled and God's kingdom was near. The time had come for him to call disciples, heal, and teach a new way of interacting with God and understanding God's love for humanity.

Jesus is the answer; Jesus is the fulfillment. Jesus was human and divine, and he was the Son of God. We, too, are children of God who are loved and cherished. And, we are called to grow in faith and share our faith with others. The time has come, and it continues to come as we learn to pray, trust, and listen to God.

In the Bible, we often read about fasting as a way to concentrate more fully on God's presence in our lives. The belief is that, when we abstain from food for a period of time, we put aside our own needs and turn ourselves completely over to God's care while we enter into time with God, seeking guidance and direction in our lives. With what do we struggle? What stands in the way of growing in faith? What keeps us from a full relationship with God and others?

That is what Jesus was doing in the wilderness while he encountered the temptations of the world. Throughout his ministry, we see this pattern when he regularly went to a quiet place, often up a mountain, to pray, to regroup, to reinvest himself in the work he was sent to earth to do. Ultimately, that work would end with his death on a cross, but that really wasn't the end. God raised him from the dead so we could have life, not only life eternal, but a full, whole life now. The time has come for us to do a sort of "check-in" to see how we are doing.

Lent provides us with the opportunities to discover what we would like to change in our lives, our thoughts, our behaviors. Many people give something up for Lent, which can be helpful depending on how we learn from the experience. I suggest that instead of giving up something, let's add a new thing, such as more prayer time, increasing our connections with family, making it a practice to give to a worthy cause, adding exercise and eating healthy to our life styles, or any number of things we could do.

If giving something up for Lent teaches us something, that's great, and I think that is the intention. What can we learn about ourselves? How can we change the things that keep us from hearing God's guidance in our lives? This week, someone posted a suggestion from Pope Francis who shared his list of things from which we can fast:

- *Fast from hurting words and say kind words.
- *Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
- *Fast from anger and be filled with patience.
- *Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.
- *Fast from worries and have trust in God.
- *Fast from complaints; contemplate simplicity.
- *Fast from pressures and be prayerful.
- *Fast from bitterness; fill your hearts with joy.
- *Fast from selfishness and be compassionate.
- *Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
- *Fast from words; be silent and listen.

If we could practice even one of these, we would be on our way to continuing to growing in God's grace and changing our lives for the better, as well as the lives of those around us. It is a list that is well worth reviewing regularly and working on often. The time has come for all of us to take this opportunity that Lent offers us to clean out the negatives and fill ourselves with positives. It's a spiritual house cleaning that can build us toward that wholeness that God wants for us.

The time has come. How will you take this journey of Lent? How will you invite God to work in and through you as you grow in faith? May we all take time to fast from the things that keep us from being fully who God intends for us to be. Amen.

Prayer:

Loving God, you claimed Jesus as your precious and beloved child at his baptism. Then you sent him into the wilderness to be tempted, but you were with him even during that challenging time. When he came out of the wilderness, it was his time. He began his ministry; he began to share the message of the Good News of your love for all your children. That Good News is ours to share, too, because you have claimed us as your beloved children. We pray for the words, actions, insights, and ability to continue to share your message of love with others, because the time is now, in the present, and in the times to come. Thank you for your assurances and for sending your Holy Spirit to guide us. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Hymn: "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me," vv. 1,3 (UMH #521)

Blessing



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We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



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