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Trinity Episcopal Church
The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost – Proper 16
Sunday, August 23, 2026
Isaiah 51:1-6

I like to think about time. For most of us, time is a ubiquitous but unseen organizing force – one so baked into our understanding of our lives and the world around us that we tend to take it for granted. I recall my mental stagger when I first really understood that time, like everything else in creation, is not some fixed or absolute physical force but something *created, relative, and mutable*.

I am someone who truly lives and breathes immersed in time. Time is something tangible to me – I can touch it; feel it; stretch it. I understand time's elasticity as well as its brittleness. I intuitively know how long something will take and what dependencies will affect the timeline. This makes me a great project planner and manager, for time is not *theoretical* to me – it is *sensorial*.

I have learned, however, that this is not a universal orientation. Both my daughter and husband process time very differently than I do. To grossly over-simplify things, they are prone to experience time as **now or not-now**. If it is now, then they are on it! The problem comes when something is coded not-now, for they tend to forget about it because it is never not-now. What seems to me to be procrastination is more like they inhabit a liminal space in which there is plenty of time... because it is always now.

This often frustrates me because I simply cannot understand how they don't know how long 10 minutes is, yet I have come to realize there are benefits to their perennial focus on the present. They experience a certain fullness of the current moment that I often miss because I am always thinking ahead and reflecting back.

There are advantages and disadvantages of each time orientation, of course. I am super-efficient and productive, but I can miss out on possibilities for something better, richer, more beneficial if only I had the patience to stay in the present for a few more moments. They live in a world of rich possibilities that I may have already filtered out without significant consideration, but they also are frequently distracted by all the possibilities and find themselves running from behind in our hyper-scheduled culture.

The ancient Greeks described time as having two distinct principles – that of *Chronos* and *Kairos*. *Chronos* is the quantitative time measured by clocks, calendars, and ticking seconds. This is the relentlessly sequential time of cause and effect, of progression, that is experienced within creation. *Chronos* time tends to be where I live – my slogan might be: *it is what it is*.

But *Kairos* is qualitative time – it is the appointed time pregnant with possibility. It cannot be manipulated, hurried, or scheduled by human effort. It is the fullness of time within which we understand God to operate. Simply put, *Kairos* is the eternal Now. *Kairos* doesn't care about your project plans or your family calendars with its daily schedules. While *Chronos* tends to see the present as the consequence of the past that then constrains the future, *Kairos* operates in a dynamically ever-informing interplay of past, present, and future. God lives here, and frequently so do my husband and daughter. Their slogan might be: *it might become what is already present*.

Another way of thinking of this is that *Kairos* is more like the eternal Big Bang of universe creation that eternally starts and ends with generative possibility, while *Chronos* is the evolutionary unfolding of the created order.

So, why this musing on time this morning? Well, our lesson from the prophet Isaiah captured my attention because the people of God are bid to enter *Kairos* time. In this passage, Isaiah is speaking to the faithful and persecuted remnant exiled in Babylonia, offering messages of comfort, hope, and their upcoming return. In this poetic passage, Isaiah asks them to move from the current suffering in this *Chronos* moment to the potential of the fullness promised in *Kairos* time.

No fewer than seven times in these six verses listeners are invited to join the prophet in remembering the past and imagining the future. But this “remembering” and “imagining” are not passive states, but rather generative actions filled with potential.

*Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness,
you that seek the Lord.
Look to the rock from which you were hewn,
and to the quarry from which you were dug.
Look to Abraham your father
and to Sarah who bore you;
for he was but one when I called him,
but I blessed him and made him many.
For the Lord will comfort Zion;
he will comfort all her waste places,
and will make her wilderness like Eden,
her desert like the garden of the Lord;
joy and gladness will be found in her,
thanksgiving and the voice of song.*

“Listen to me...” The prophet speaks God’s call to his people to enter the present moment of Kairos – God’s time. “Look to the rock from which you were hewn....” Isaiah voices God’s summons to remember the past and God’s faithfulness in producing a nation of people from an old and infertile couple in fulfillment of his promise to Abraham. Remember God’s promises and how he fulfills them at the appointed time. But also remember that God’s time is not our time. God’s time comes only at the right time – the fullness of time – and does not necessarily align with human desires.

But when God’s time does come, and if we are present, his promises are fulfilled in ways that defy expectations and produce abundance that is unimaginable to us. “For the Lord will comfort Zion... and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord.” It is there, in the unbounded possibility of God’s Kairos, that our “joy and gladness will be found”.

Listen to me now...

Look to the past and re-member my faithfulness to my beloved creatures...

Receive and inhabit the comfort of my salvation when present in the fullness of my time...

This formula provides three important actions that build upon each other. Listen to me now – this is the precondition. If we wish to listen to God’s voice, we must root ourselves in the present moment... because it is only in the present that we may directly experience God, for that is where God is.

From this place, God calls us to remember his past acts of faithfulness and fulfillment of promise. But this call to remembrance is more than mere recall – more than simply keeping a past event in mind. It is nothing less than bringing the past into the present moment – a re-membering in such a way that what “was” now also “is”.

This is what we do together at the altar. In theological language, we call this anamnesis: an active, making-present remembrance of God’s saving acts. Rather than a mere mental recollection of a past historical event, liturgical anamnesis bridges the gap of time so that the worshipping congregation truly enters into and participates in Christ’s Paschal Mystery.

We don’t just recall that Jesus once said the words over the bread and wine, rather the past and future are connected and brought into this present moment. And then we proclaim this to be true when we say together the Memorial Acclamation:

*we remember his death;
we proclaim his resurrection;
we await his coming in glory.*

Another way to put this is that when we are at the altar, God's eternal time – *Kairos* – pierces our temporal, linear time – *Chronos*. And when that happens, we may truly inhabit the fullness of God's eternal presence and receive the comfort of his promised salvation.

What comfort may be found in Isaiah's words. And not only for the broken and suffering Israelite exiles, but also for us... the broken and suffering pilgrims of this age. This morning, let us go to the altar, to God's table. And there, let us listen to God's voice; remember God's past acts of faithfulness; and receive and inhabit God's promised salvific comfort.

In the Eternal Now of *Kairos*, God turns the waste lands of the desert into Edenic gardens where we may rest and refresh our spirits. This is the promised land to which Isaiah points us. And there we will find the comfort that our hearts long for... there, joy and gladness will be found... thanksgiving and the voice of song. There, we will sing with the angels and archangels in their eternal song of praise to God: "*heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest!*"

Amen.