

¹ There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under heaven:
² a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
³ a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
⁴ a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
⁵ a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain,
⁶ a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
⁷ a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
⁸ a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.
⁹ What does the worker gain from his toil? ¹⁰ I have
seen the burden God has laid on people. ¹¹ He has
made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set
eternity in the hearts of people; yet they cannot fathom

what God has done from beginning to end. ¹² I know
that there is nothing better for people than to be happy
and do good while they live. ¹³ That everyone may eat
and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is
the gift of God. ¹⁴ I know that everything God does
will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and
nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will
revere him.

¹⁵ Whatever is has already been,
and what will be has been before;
and God will call the past to account.

¹⁶ And I saw something else under the sun:
In the place of judgment—wickedness was there,
in the place of justice—wickedness was there.

¹⁷ I thought in my heart,
"God will bring to judgment
both the righteous and the wicked,
for there will be a time for every activity,
a time for every deed."

What were you doing in 1981? If you remember correctly, you will realize that was the longest year in recorded history. I was in Miss Short's first grade class and believe she bore a grudge against me simply because of my last name. Those interminable days were filled with math speed tests, endless stories about those insipid children Dick and Jane, and ridiculous "learning games" that bored us to tears. One weekend when I was visiting with my grandma, complaining about the dire circumstances of my six-year-old life, she told me that as I got older the time would go faster and I hoped she was right. And now, here I am, the mother of a soon-to-be kindergartner. Unfortunately, Grandma was right.

Time is such a strange thing. There are times when we watch eagerly for the hands of the clock to journey to the end of the day, the end of the night, or in some cases, the end of a minute. When I was waiting with Carolyn Faught before her surgery on Monday, I prayed for the hands to move around the clock at the speed of light. The surgeon was delayed, Carolyn was ready and I felt like I was back in first grade again, time stood still. But then on Thursday evening, as I was prepared to take Nathan to kindergarten round-up, I wanted time to stand still. And yet, before I knew it, there we were in the elementary library, filling out the registration forms for school.

It seems that when it comes to time, we're all about "making it" do things. We try to make it go slower or make it go faster. We try to manipulate time, like when we try to "make time" in a car, driving like idiots, passing folks right and left and yet, miles down the highway, when we stop at a red light, the car we passed so long ago is directly behind us. Indeed, studies reveal that if a person drives 10 miles at 55 miles an hour while another drives 10 miles at 65 miles an hour, the difference in their arrival time is only 19 seconds.¹ It's hardly worth it. Or, in my case, I buy Nathan's clothes a size too big because when I dress him in size 6 clothes when he really wears a 5, his clothes are too big on him which makes me think that he's younger than he is.

It's ridiculous really, all the things we do to save time, make time, and try to control time. It's like we forget that Jesus said, "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" (Luke 12:25) The truth of the matter is that time cannot be saved, it cannot be made, it can only be spent, and it's up to us how we spend it. And speaking of how we spend our time, let's move from our tendency spend time trying to make time to explore the idea of those who take time, or, to be more accurate, those we allow to take our time.

¹ <http://personal.denison.edu/~silveira/speeding.html>

These are the people who are like corgi dogs—the thing about a corgi dog is that you can feed them and pet them and as soon as you turn around to do something else, the corgi is right back looking at you like it's not been fed in weeks and no one loves it. No matter how much you give a corgi, it's never enough. The same can be said for some people—no matter how much of your time you give them, they'll never be satisfied, enough is never enough. For decades, Christianity has had a strange relationship with folks like this. It's why people in OTHER congregations say that 80% of a minister's time is spent on 20% of the people in a congregation—and it's almost always the 20% for whom there will never be enough—there will never be enough adult education classes although the person making the complaint has never come to an adult education class but still, to keep that person happy, the minister spends hours creating a new class to which no one comes, including the person who complained about not having enough classes in the first place. The temptation for folks in churches, not just the minister, is to take a bunch of time to keep these folks happy, to keep them in the church, to keep them content and yet, these types of people will never be content and will just continue to take time. And so it is that Christians, who are just trying to be nice, forget that being nice wasn't always Jesus top priority—think tables in the temple over turning or the rejection of his family here—and that he said to his disciples, “If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town.” (Matthew 10:14) And why did he say it, because he realized that the disciples' time was precious, their resources were few, and whatever time they had must be spent on folks who were receptive to their ministry, folks who were willing to make a change and be changed—not folks who were just argumentative and difficult and eager to bend the ear of anyone who would listen. These are the folks who are bent on taking time, while we're working hard at making time and in spite of all of us, God, who neither makes time or takes time, is breaking time.

God said, “My ways are not your ways and my thoughts are not your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8) It can also be said that God's time is not our time. In our western culture, time is linear and measurable. But for God, for the one who is “the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” (Rev. 21:6), for this god, our concepts of time, our measures of time, are just that—*our* concepts of time, *our* measures of time. As it says in Ecclesiastes, “He has also set eternity in the hearts of people; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will revere God. Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before” (Ecc. 3:14-15) And so it is that eternity is in the hearts of God's people—we live as we die and we die as we live, in the face of the Eternal Now, the Great I Am, in whose presence we can be nothing but in awe. As God says to Job “Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?” “Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? “Have you entered the storehouses of the snow or seen the storehouses of the hail?” (Job 38) God is greater than the time we make or the time we take—God is greater than all we seek to know and understand and therefore we might ask of ourselves, who among us can describe the sunrise over the bay? Who among us can describe how we feel when we see our child sleeping peacefully? Who among us can describe that feeling we get right about here (gesture to top of chest) when we see a little puppy, a little bitty puppy, that makes us talk like this? Who among us can describe the smell of an infant's head? Who among us can describe the beauty of rows upon rows of blossoming cherry trees? Who among us can describe Mozart's Fifth Symphony? Who among us can describe what it's like to be loved? Who among us can describe what it's like to sit here, Sunday after Sunday, in rather uncomfortable pews, that we keep coming back to because God's pull on us is stronger than anything, stronger than the desire to sleep in or play golf or work in the garden or do the crossword with a steaming cup of coffee in our hand, stronger than the desire to make time or take time. There simply aren't words because these are the experiences in life when we're not making time, when we're not taking time, but rather, these are the times in life when God is breaking time—when God makes our reality God's reality—when we recognize that what was before and what was to come are also what IS right now—the Eternal Now—the presence of God—here, among us, breaking through our obsessions with time, place, security, acceptance, wealth, success, breaking through all of it—to access the deepest parts of us—the parts that know and pray that when God's kingdom comes, God's will be done, on earth as it is in heaven—the final breaking through for which we hope and pray and on which we bet our lives because Christ bet his life on us. Breaking through, **God does it so that people will revere God.** Breaking through, breaking in, breaking open—Thanks be to God for breaking time.