

The TIME is NOW

Luke 8 and Esther 4

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When someone ask, “How old are you?” we are really asking, “What time are you?” Tell us how old you are and we know what time you fit into. When I know your age I know your memories. Depending on your age you may know about World War 2, Jackie O, Neil Armstrong, disco, 8 tracks, ipods, or facebook. When I know your time I know are you a product of the 60’s or a conformist from the 80’s. If I can discover your time then I’m not seeing you exactly as you are NOW. I’m measuring you by the sum of your experiences. We all do it. It’s a social shortcut.

Yet there are exceptions. The other day there was this man running next to me on the treadmill, he looked to be in his 60’s. He even had a t-shirt “World’s greatest Grandpa.” He could have been mid-40’s but everything said mid-60’s. We were making small talk when we had enough breath from our running. As we slowed to a walk I ask what he was listening to, I could see he was wearing headphones. Musical taste is formed between the age of 12-25, so doing the math, in my head of course, 65 years of age minus 40 years, for him this was 1957-1970. Thus I was suspecting,

depending on his taste anyone from Sam Cooke and the Drifters to Ray Charles, Jonny Cash, Roger Miller, or the Temptations. His answer to “what are you listening to” was “Mariah Carey and Michael Bolton.” Now he’s thrown me off. Who are you man. See in “his time” this man should get his coffee at Hardees and complain about overpriced Starbucks, further he should have a bumper sticker saying “These colors don’t run” but I bet he has a bumper sticker that reads 26.2. Who is this 60 year old marathon running, Mariah Carey loving, ipod carrying man. It’s not as easy as it once was to measure time.

Yet it can be liberating to step away from these perceptions. We’ve all heard lines like, “You don’t look forty.” And the reply is, “This is what forty looks like on me.” The first person is saying you don’t fit my perception. The second person is saying don’t define me by your expectations.

Loss is something that happens to us all. Relationships are a part of our history. Time also bears down on all of us. Time stops for no one. Two weeks ago we had a basketball game between the youth and the adults. The youth won. The other winner that Sunday was time. We wanted to play well, we tried Scott, Tim, Darren, and others we played hard but it didn’t matter. Brad shot better than I have ever seen him but now his time is spent working for Fluor, he doesn’t have time to run, unless running with his children to games and practice counts. I did ok, but my mind was writing checks my body could not cash, and the next morning it was apparent I was overdrawn. This is what time does, it moves on. We better move on as well or we will get left behind.

When we reach middle age we have a better understanding of what life is about. We begin to throw out the nonsense. Who cares who did what or who said what. In middle age we don't have it all together but we have at least figured out what doesn't matter. We begin to know who we are and what makes us happy. We trade our youthful energy and good looks for the privilege of at least feeling comfortable in our own skin, and most of us think this is a great trade. Surgery can correct exterior problems but only time makes us comfortable with ourselves.

Once we have learned these lessons we would not trade it for our youth again. Youth has its advantages, but so does middle age, and even senior adulthood has its advantages. Each age has marvelous sights to behold but each age has its own mountains to climb. Our failure with time is living out of the now, not appreciating the present, by either holding on to the past or looking past today for tomorrow. It is when we lose now that time becomes our enemy.

Brent took his mother back to her hometown of Dallas. He and she thought it would be a good idea to return home. She was 92 and had not seen Dallas since she was 71. The trip did not go so well. Brent watched his mother and this is what he reported. "On the plane mother had difficulty with the handle to the bathroom. She was use to knobs not flush handle against the door. At the hotel she did not understand why we had a card instead of a key to get into the room. The next day we went to the street where she grew up. Afterwards we stopped for lunch, she turned to me and said, „I don't belong here anymore." I said, „she had a new home and Dallas must seem strange to her it even seemed strange to me." She said, „No I don't mean Dallas, I mean HERE. I push a button on my remote by

accident and my TV goes off and I can't fix it, you give me a portable phone but the buttons are too small to see. I can't even find a movie with an actor I know in it. The faces have all changed, my friends are gone, I don't belong here anymore I am a foreigner in my own life. Time has moved on and I'm left behind." Brent was bothered by his mothers sentiments but they were all true. It happens to all of us, it is no sin to age. Yet we still have the now.

Which brings me to the NOW. Now is what we have, not yesterday or tomorrow but now. You may be 10, 24, 43, or 72 but you still have NOW. The thing to do is not waste the NOW. Truthfully most of us are not fully present in the now. We don't soak up the now, we plan for tomorrow or regret yesterday.

Now (at this moment) when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying.

As Jesus went with him now, the crowds almost crushed him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

"Who touched me?" Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you."

But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, it happened right now; I know that power has gone out from me."

Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. Then Jesus gave her his complete attention and said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

As Jesus was giving her attention, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher any more."

Hearing this, Jesus turned his attention to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."

When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep."

They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But Jesus took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up.¹

When you were with Jesus he was with you. He was not planning tomorrow or lamenting yesterday, he was in the moment. To the woman and to the father and to the girl, Jesus was a master of time. He was quick but never in a hurry. He was timely but never late. Jesus, did not operate by a clock or a calendar, instead he felt time. It was time to go to Lazarus, time to fill the water pots, time to retreat and pray, and time to go Jerusalem. He did not say “let’s leave on the 10th.” Jesus said, “it is time to leave.” He felt it—he lived in the now. Why don’t we join him?

Maybe this is your time is what Mordecai said to Esther. Live in the now. We must make peace with time, and more importantly we must see NOW as God’s plan for us. Stop letting the past rob you. “I wish I felt as good as I did when I was 70. I should have never retired. I should have married someone else. I wish I had gone to college.” The past is the prelude to NOW. The future is as deadly, some dream about it others dread it, you can’t predict the future. “Our marriage will be better when the kids leave home. Next year business will be better. I’ll be so much happier when I retire.” The future is the enemy of the NOW. The NOW is the future in work clothes. Prepare for tomorrow but live NOW.

He gave Mordecai a copy of the text of the edict for the Jews annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told Hathach to urge her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

Hathach went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said.⁰ Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai,¹¹ "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or

woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter to him and spare his life. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king."

When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent NOW, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as NOW?"ⁱⁱ

What is in front of you to be done? Do it. Build those cabinets. Volunteer at the Eastside Crisis Center NOW. Take the new job. Do your job with gusto. Use your gift to serve God NOW. Learn that musical instrument. Your NOW may be to recover from a stroke. Your NOW may be to raise the grandkids. Your NOW may be to take a second job. Don't complain or lament--- put your hand to the plow and go forward.

As Mordecai might say maybe for such a time like this God has been preparing you. God doesn't prepare us for the past or for tomorrow, he prepares us for NOW.

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- ⁱ Luke 8:40-53 NIV, with interior notes from me
 - ⁱⁱ Esther 4:8-14 NIV