

Sermon preached at Gisborne, 16 August 2020

Lord God, let the words of your servant's mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer, Through Christ Jesus Amen.

Genesis 45:1-15; Matthew 15:21-28

God's time and human time

There are two types of time in scripture. One is God's time, and the other is human time. They are expressed mainly in Greek, *Kairos* and *Chronos*. Human time – *Chronos* is clock time. It flows linearly/chronologically – like, yesterday, today and tomorrow. God's time *Kairos* is like time from a bird's eye view. For God, everything exists today. When asked about life after resurrection, Jesus refers to the verse in Exodus 3:6 - 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,' concluding 'He is God not of the dead, but of the living.'¹

Today we'll talk about time concerning faith in God and Jesus. In Genesis 45 1-15, we'll see that God's time is interwoven with human time through the faith of Joseph. Next, in Matthew, we'll see that faith in Jesus enables the Canaanite woman to see healings of her daughter and herself. Lastly, our faith in Christ and living in God's time will be explored.

Genesis 45:1-15 is part of the climax of the Joseph stories. But it also shows how God prepares Joseph to be means of a lifesaver for his family and others. Joseph has suffered from many things after he was sold to traders by his brothers.² We hear that the trials of the past are over, and his trembling brothers are now in his power. But instead of showing resentments at their attempts to do him harm, Joseph acknowledges God's hand in the events of his life. Finally, his brothers are to be at peace because of Joseph's words - 'God sent me before you to preserve life' (v5). The phrase 'God sent me' is repeated in v7, and 8. In doing so, Joseph reassures his astonished brothers. But it also tells us of the whole point of the story: behind all the events of Joseph's life, God was at work to bring good out of evil. In short, the whole event just chronologically unfolds, which is already completed in God's time.

Reading what Joseph has to undergo after he was being sold to Egyptians as a slave, it may be difficult for post modern people that God is at work even in the dark and destructive moments of life. One of the significant obstacles to faith is that, no matter how hard one tries, it is merely not possible to identify grace or redemption in so many human experiences. But we see that it is his faith that makes him endure the hardship even in the darkest moment in prison.³ During his prison time, God's blessings on Joseph is continuing.

¹ Matthew 22:32

² Genesis 37:28 - When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

³ In Genesis 39:21 – 23, it read, 'But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love; he gave him favour in the sight of the chief jailer;' In v 23, 'The chief jailer paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph's care because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.'

The role of faith in living God's time is also found in Matthew. The woman is a Canaanite, but she is seeking help from Jesus by addressing him as 'Son of David.' Jesus does not answer her, but when the disciples, annoyed by her persistence, want him to send her away, he says to them, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Even so, the Canaanite woman wrenches from Jesus the blessing that she, as a non-Jewish mother, needs. She is persistent. She refuses to be deterred either by Jesus' reluctance or by the disciples' irritation. She perseveres in her conviction that Jesus can do for her what she desperately needs. Jesus finally comments, 'Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.' In her single-minded pursuit of Jesus, she presents a contrast to the scribes and Pharisees who were always seeking ways to accuse Jesus of his work (15:1-9).

But it is not only the daughter of the Canaanite woman who is healed but also herself. The word 'to heal' is in Greek *iaomai* (ἰάομαι heal, make well), which involves in divine power. In the story of the woman with the issue of blood in Mark 5:25-34, it is said that Jesus noticed that power went out from him at the touch of his garment.⁴ In this case, faith is necessary because what is involved is not magic, but the reception of divine salvation. In another story of the young demoniac in Mark 9:14-29, the disciples attempted to cast out the evil spirit but failed because of their lack of faith. Canaanite woman's faith in Jesus enables her to overcome fear, shame and rejection and ethnic discrimination so that she can live in the promised God's time where reconciliation, forgiveness, acceptance, healings and peace are present always.

In our story time, we heard a story about a girl, namely Momo, and her adventure to fight against the Men in Grey to restore people's lives back. The question was that 'what did time mean for people, and for Momo?' The biggest difference between people and Momo is their perception of time. For people, time is one of the commodities that they can save or use as they wish. For Momo, time is for others – to listen to their stories so that they are healed, forgiven, restored as a whole. As the story reveals in the beginning, she doesn't know when she was born. It symbolically shows us that for Momo, time doesn't flow chronologically as people's time does. Her time is directly connected to the eternal so no matter what amount of time she spends on listening to people, it is always there. Momo's time also multiplies people's time, which is figuratively described through her fighting against the Men in Grey to return the stolen time from them to people.

We – Christians' time is not different. We have God's time to listen, to forgive, to love and to console others and it never decreases as the source of our time is from God who exists in the eternal. May God help us understand the mystery of God's time so that we are able to use our time to love one other evermore. Amen.

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⁴ (cf. Mark 6:56; Luke 6:19; Acts 19:12).

⁵ In 'Mere Christianity,' C S Lewis describes what God's time is like. Chapter 3 – *Time and beyond time* "I write 'Mary laid down her work; next moment came a knock at the door!' For Mary, who has to live in the imaginary time of my story, there is no interval between putting down the work and hearing the knock. But I, who am Mary's maker, do not live in that imaginary time at all. Between writing the first half of that sentence and the second, I might sit for three hours and think steadily about Mary...the hours I spent in doing so would not appear in Mary's time (the time inside the story) at all."