

Acts 1:6-14

Timing

Easter 7A

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Did you ever see one of those old Mission Impossible TV shows, where the good guys, before heading off on their mission against the bad guys stop to synchronize their watches? When they pause to do that, make sure that everyone's watch has the exact same time, then you know that the real action is just about to begin. It's no longer talk, now it's time for action.

I think we should synchronize our watches at the beginning of worship each Sunday. In this way, everyone will know how serious we are when we come together to worship. We're not just wishing and dreaming, we're ready for action. OK, let's practice. *"Let us worship God, synchronize your watches"*. On my mark, 10:15! How many have 10:15 on your watch, 10:16?, 10:17? Oh no! Our timing is off! We better fix this! You won't want to be late for worship next Sunday, you don't want to be late for your next doctor's appointment, or your next tee time at the golf course.

The difference between a great golfer who wins million dollar tournaments and an average one who never wins anything comes down to timing. The great golfer's muscles move in a highly coordinated harmony to strike the ball just so and send it 300 yards straight down the fairway. By my left knee bows out a quarter inch too far, and then my right should dips just a tenth of a second too slow and I thwack the ball in such a way that it goes straight into the pond. You can have a good grip, good strength and conditioning, good eyesight, good aim, but if your timing is off, you'll end up in the drink.

My friend Gary, when he was alive, often expanded this concept from a simple golf swing to a philosophy of life. "It's all about timing", he would say. Skill, personality, looks, intelligence – it doesn't matter, if your timing is off you'll strike out when life's opportunities are tossed your way.

So if I messed up such an opportunity, Gary would say one word while shaking his head, "timing". And if I managed to exceed his expectations, Gary would give the praise phrase: "good timing!"

The story we have heard this morning is the final installment of the Easter Story. It's time for Jesus to go. But there seems to be some misunderstanding about his timing. It turns out that the disciples are eager to move on quickly to what they think will happen next, which consists of some huge reward for their faithfulness, but Jesus gives some hints that God's timing is not at all the same as theirs.

My cousin Bill Renfrew recently showed me the rudiments of playing blues on my mandolin. For those who know about this, a blues song is one that flats the third note in a particular way, turning a happy tune into one with a hint

of sadness. As I was practicing a blues scale I thought of a name for a song. I haven't created that song yet, I haven't worked out the notes and I haven't even penned the words, but when I do I want to call it "The Resurrection Blues". Sounds like an oxymoron, two opposite words paired together, but I think that song title captures the immediacy and power of the resurrection as well as some of the uncertainty of it. Maybe the song I haven't written would refer to these sad disciples having their hopes dashed about an immediate payoff for their faithfulness. Resurrection is a wonderful thing – a world changing thing – but it's always more of a seed than the harvested fruit. Resurrection starts things, it doesn't end them.

So we sing about the resurrection – the happiest of happy moments – but by the seventh week of Easter we sing it in a bluesy way because of the sadness we feel that the message hasn't done all that we thought it would. People are still getting sick and dying, including our closest friends; millions are hungry – did you see the report from Haiti where starving people mix dirt with butter to fill their stomachs?; violence and war keep us afraid – 5 years in Iraq with no end in sight under current policies? Yes, I am happy about the resurrection, but it sure seems like our timing is way off when it comes to injecting resurrection into the world.

Resurrection is the start, not the finish, the seed not the fruit, the splash not the ripples. So what has resurrection begun in you this Easter season?

During this resurrection season we have saved lives – yes, at Cameron Community Ministries and Mission Madness. Just one of our volunteers may have made the one gesture with a smile, a friendly word or gift of help that kept someone alive who might have otherwise be dead. Maybe it was your stitches on that shawl that gave a dying woman the touch of eternity. Maybe it was that prayer concern that filtered down the prayer chain, and it was your prayer that made the difference. It gives me a lift to think that my day may include a moment when another resurrection seed has been planted.

Those life-saving, life-changing moments happen when we synchronize our lives with God's planning ... that's timing!

In the Muppet Babies movie Gonzo says, *"Let's synchronize our watches."* Scooter responds, *"We don't have any watches."* To which Gonzo answers, *"That's okay, I don't know what synchronize means anyway."*

So I'm not really concerned about our watches all matching the exact second and minute. What I'm very interested in is synchronizing our lives with God.