

“SCHEDULING PROBLEMS”

**A SERMON BASED ON THE NEW TESTAMENT
BOOK OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES (ACTS
1:6-14) AND PRESENTED FOR ORLEAN UMC ON
MAY 24, 2020----- (THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF THE
EASTER SEASON, 2020)**

**LOVE IT OR HATE IT, WE LIVE BY OUR
CALENDARS.**

**THERE WAS A TIME WHEN MANY OF US CARRIED
THEM IN OUR POCKETS, BRIEFCASES OR
PURSES..... PAPER CALENDARS SHOWED US
WHEN WE HAD TO BE WHERE.....**

**THEN CAME THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION, AND
MANY OF US TRADED IN OUR LEATHER-BOUND
PLANNERS FOR PDAS....SHORT FOR PERSONAL
DIGITAL ASSISTANTS..... WE LEARNED A NEW
WAY OF WRITING THE ALPHABET SO THAT WE
COULD QUICKLY ADD NEW APPOINTMENTS TO
OUR PALM PILOTS USING THE STYLUS.**

**THEN STEVE JOBS AND THE PEOPLE AT APPLE
COMBINED OUR PDAS, PHONES AND MP3
PLAYERS INTO SMARTPHONES..... WHILE WE
MIGHT HAVE LEFT OUR PLANNERS OR PDAS AT
HOME ON A SUNDAY MORNING, TODAY MOST OF
US HAVE OUR CALENDARS WITH US EVEN IN
WORSHIP.**

**DIGITAL CALENDARS CAN DO THINGS OUR
PAPER CALENDARS NEVER COULD. THEY
REMINDE US OF THINGS WE NEED TO DO BASED
ON OUR TIME AND / OR LOCATION.**

**"SIRI/CORTANA/ALEXA/GOOGLE----OR MAYBE
EVEN OTHERS ---- REMIND US WHEN IT IS TIME
TO LEAVE FOR OUR DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT."
THEN, BASED ON OUR LOCATION AND THE
TRAFFIC, OUR PHONE CAN TELL US WHEN IT IS
TIME TO LEAVE.**

ONCE WE PUT AN APPOINTMENT INTO OUR PHONES, WE NEVER HAVE TO LOOK AT IT AGAIN. WE CAN SIMPLY WAIT FOR THAT LITTLE BUZZ TO INTERRUPT US, SOMETIMES DURING WORSHIP, TO REMIND US OF WHAT WE NEED TO ATTEND TO LATER IN THE DAY.

WHETHER DIGITAL, PAPER OR IN OUR HEADS, OUR CALENDARS TEND TO DRIVE LARGE PORTIONS OF OUR LIVES.

IN OUR MONDAY-THROUGH-FRIDAY LIVES, MANY ARE REQUIRED TO BE CONNECTED TO THEIR COMPANY'S CALENDARS THROUGH OUTLOOK OR SOME OTHER CALENDAR / PLANNING APP.

SUPERVISORS AND COLLEAGUES CAN PUT THINGS ON OUR CALENDARS, AND EXPECT US TO BE IN THE APPROPRIATE PLACE AT THE APPOINTED TIME.

TRUTH IS, WE RELY ON OUR CALENDARS TO ORGANIZE OUR LIVES..... FROM THE BOARDROOM TO THE CLASSROOM, IT IS HARD TO GET BY WITHOUT SOME IDEA OF WHAT WILL BE HAPPENING -- AND WHEN.

SO IMAGINE HOW THE VERY FIRST FOLLOWERS OF JESUS MUST HAVE FELT ABOUT HIS ANSWER WHEN THEY ASKED ABOUT WHAT WAS NEXT.

**THIS IS THE NATURE OF THE CONVERSATION IN
OUR TEXT FOR TODAY FROM THE BOOK OF THE
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES –**

**BASICALLY, JESUS IS HAVING A FINAL
DEBRIEFING BEFORE LEAVING ON A TRIP -- A
VERTICAL AND HEAVENLY ONE..... AND, OF
COURSE, THERE ARE QUESTIONS.....PROBABLY
MANY QUESTIONS.**

**"LORD, IS THIS THE TIME WHEN YOU WILL
RESTORE THE KINGDOM TO ISRAEL?" THE
DISCIPLES ASKED (V. 6).**

THE QUESTION MAKES SENSE.

**THEY HAD BEEN ON AN EMOTIONAL ROLLER
COASTER WITH JESUS IN RECENT DAYS.**

**FOR THREE YEARS, THEY FOLLOWED HIM. THEY
HEARD HIM TALK FREQUENTLY ABOUT A
SPECIAL TIME TO COME..... HE STARTED HIS
MINISTRY TELLING THEM THAT THE KINGDOM OF
GOD, THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN WAS AT HAND.**

**THEY LISTENED AS HE TOLD STORIES ABOUT
BANQUETS, MUSTARD SEEDS AND TREASURE
BURIED IN A FIELD THAT HE SAID WERE WAYS
OF DESCRIBING THIS NEW REALITY TO COME.**

**THEY WERE WITH HIM WHEN HE ENTERED
JERUSALEM SEVERAL WEEKS EARLIER. THEY
SAW THE CROWD WAVING PALM BRANCHES
AND SHOUTING THEIR PRAISES..... BY RIDING A
DONKEY INTO THE CITY, JESUS WAS FULFILLING
A PROPHECY THAT ANNOUNCED GOD'S RULE
AND REIGN..... IT WAS A HUGE STATEMENT.**

***SURELY, THEY THOUGHT, THIS MUST BE THE
TIME.***

**AT THE LAST SUPPER, HE SEEMED TO CONFIRM
IT. "I WILL NOT DRINK THE FRUIT OF THE VINE
AGAIN UNTIL I DRINK IT WITH YOU IN MY
FATHER'S KINGDOM."**

**NEXT STOP, THE KINGDOM OF GOD, THEY MUST
HAVE THOUGHT.**

***INSTEAD OF A CORONATION, HOWEVER, THERE
WAS A CRUCIFIXION.***

**AND SO IT ALL APPEARED TO BE OVER.... THEIR
HOPES WERE DASHED..... THE DREAM OF THE
RESTORATION OF THE KINGDOM SEEMED TO
VANISH..... *WHAT NOW?***

***THEN, AS QUICKLY AS IT WAS OVER, IT WAS
BACK ON..... JESUS IS ALIVE. HOPE IS NOT LOST.
CERTAINLY, THE KINGDOM MUST BE COMING.***

**AFTER 40 DAYS OF BEING WITH A POST-
RESURRECTION JESUS DURING WHICH HE
CONTINUED TO TEACH THEM ABOUT GOD'S
KINGDOM, HE CALLS A SPECIAL MEETING.
EXPECTATIONS MUST HAVE BEEN HIGH.....
*WHAT WAS HE GOING TO DO? WHAT WAS HE
GOING TO SAY?***

***NOW IT HAD TO BE TIME FOR HIM TO ANNOUNCE
HOW THE KINGDOM OF GOD WILL COME ON
EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN, JUST AS HE TAUGHT
THEM TO PRAY.***

**THE QUESTION MUST HAVE HUNG IN THE AIR
THAT DAY, LIKE QUESTIONS SATURATE THE
SPACE AMONG AND BETWEEN US IN SOME OF
OUR INTERACTIONS.**

**+ WHEN THE COMPANY CALLS AN ALL-STAFF
MEETING DURING A DOWN ECONOMY,
EVERYONE WANTS TO KNOW, "ARE THERE
GOING TO BE LAYOFFS?"**

**+ WHEN THE PERSON YOU ARE DATING SAYS,
"WE NEED TO TALK," YOU WANT TO KNOW, "ARE
WE BREAKING UP?"**

**+ WHEN A TEENAGE CHILD ENTERS A ROOM,
HEAD DOWN, AND SAYS, "MOM? DAD?" OUR
HEART RATE ACCELERATES. WE WANT TO
KNOW, "IS SOMETHING WRONG?"**

**+WHEN THE DOCTOR CALLS AND WITH A PAUSE
IN HIS OR HER VOICE BEGINS TO SPEAK TO US
ABOUT OUR RECENT TEST RESULTS WE WANT
TO KNOW....."IS SOMETHING WRONG?"**

**FOR THE CROWD THAT DAY, THE TENSION IS
ALMOST PALPABLE. "NOW? WE WANT TO GET
THIS ON OUR CALENDARS, SO IF NOT NOW,
WHEN?"**

THEY WANT TO PENCIL IN THE KINGDOM DAY.

THEY WANT TO KNOW WHICH WEEK THEY NEED

TO CLEAR FOR THIS WORLD-ALTERING EVENT.

THEY WANT TO KNOW THE DEADLINE SO THEY

CAN BE SURE TO BE READY.

**TO THESE QUESTIONS, JESUS GIVES A
BEWILDERING ANSWER. "THAT'S NONE OF YOUR
CONCERN."**

***HE ACTUALLY SAYS IT MORE POLITELY, BUT
THAT'S THE GIST OF IT. "LET ME WORRY ABOUT
THE TIMING," HE SEEMS TO SAY. "YOU JUST GET
TO WORK ON WHAT YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO
DO."***

THEN HE'S GONE.

**THE DISCIPLES AND THE REST OF THE
FOLLOWERS ARE LEFT BEWILDERED, STARING
INTO THE SKY.**

THE DISCIPLES HAVE A SCHEDULING PROBLEM,

**AND FOR THEM, AND FOR THOSE OF US WHO
LIVE BY OUR CALENDARS, JESUS' ATTITUDE IS
FRUSTRATING.**

**+ IT'S HARD TO LEAVE THINGS IN THE HAND OF
GOD;**

**+ HARD TO LET GO AND LET GOD TAKE CARE OF
DETAILS;**

**+ HARD TO TRUST IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE TO BE
FAITHFUL TO PROMISES MADE.**

**HOW ARE WE TO RESPOND TO THIS? IT'S NOT
FOR ME TO KNOW THE "TIMES AND SEASONS"?**

REALLY?!

**HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO FUNCTION WITH SO
LITTLE INFORMATION?**

THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD
DOESN'T FIT INTO OUR CALENDARS. JESUS
DOESN'T GIVE US A LIST OF TASKS WE CAN PUT
IN OUR PHONES.

INSTEAD, HE CALLS HIS FOLLOWERS TO BE HIS
WITNESSES IN JERUSALEM, JUDEA AND
SAMARIA AND TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH. THE
TIMING CONCERNING ANY ULTIMATE PHYSICAL
EXPRESSION OF THE REIGN OF GOD ON EARTH,
HE SAYS, IS FOR HIM TO WORRY ABOUT AND, IN
ANY EVENT, HE HIMSELF DOESN'T KNOW!

HE HAD ALREADY TOLD HIS DISCIPLES (MAYBE THEY FORGOT) THAT "ABOUT THAT DAY AND HOUR NO ONE KNOWS, NEITHER THE ANGELS OF HEAVEN, NOR THE SON, BUT ONLY THE FATHER" (MATTHEW 24:26).

OUR CONCERN IS TO LIVE INTO THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH AND THE CALL OF GOD TODAY. IT IS NOT ABOUT GETTING READY FOR SOME LATER DATE. OUR ROLE IS TO BE THE PEOPLE OF GOD EVERY DAY, AND DO WHAT GOD WANTS US TO DO RIGHT NOW.

**WE AREN'T CRAMMING FOR A FINAL EXAM. WE
AREN'T TRYING TO MEET A DEADLINE BEFORE
THE SUPERVISOR IN THE SKY CALLS US IN FOR
OUR PERFORMANCE REVIEW. THIS IS A HERE-
AND-NOW, EVERYDAY ISSUE.**

**JESUS CALLS HIS FOLLOWERS, BOTH THOSE ON
THE HILL THAT DAY AND THOSE IN OUR PEWS
TODAY, TO LIVE FOR HIM AT HOME, WORK AND
SCHOOL, IN OUR TRAVELING, WHILE RUNNING
ERRANDS AND WHEREVER ELSE LIFE TAKES US-
-----YES-----EVEN IN THE MIDDLE OF A PANDEMIC**

THIS INCLUDES OUR CALENDARS AND OUR SCHEDULES. IT'S TIME TO TAKE OUR CALENDARS *AND BLESS THEM, SPRINKLE THEM WITH HOLY WATER, SAY A PRAYER OVER THEM, BUT DO SOMETHING TO SANCTIFY OUR TIME AND PUT IT WHOLLY IN THE SERVICE OF GOD AND FOR GOD'S WORK.*

THIS MEANS, OF COURSE, PENCILING IN TIME FOR WORSHIP, PRAYER, BIBLE STUDY, PERFORMING RANDOM ACTS OF CHARITY, BEING FAITHFUL TO YOUR RELATIONSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES AND BEING FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO RESPOND WHEN GOD INTERRUPTS YOU,

MESSES WITH YOUR CALENDAR AND LIFTS YOU,
LIKE PHILIP IN A WHIRLWIND, TO MINISTER IN
SOME WHOLLY UNEXPECTED WAY.

THING IS, WHEN YOU SIGN UP TO FOLLOW
JESUS, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE A TON OF
SCHEDULING PROBLEMS. GET USED TO IT. GET
OVER IT. IT IS PART OF THE THRILL AND
CHALLENGE THAT WE CALL ... DISCIPLESHIP!

PRAISE GOD AND MAY IT BE SO FOR YOU AND
FOR ME.....AMEN