

Jim Young
Good Friday Reflection, 2019

1) Today is Friday. I know it is Friday because, well, yesterday was Thursday and tomorrow is Saturday so today must be Friday. I also know that this day started at midnight and will end tonight at midnight.

We know this kind of time-keeping as “Chronos or clock time” - time that is easily defined and measured by a definitive beginning and ending. We could all look at our watches or phones now and agree... yes, it is now (name the time).

2) However, Chronos or clock time does not tell the whole story because there is another way of “telling time”. This other way is named “Kairos time” or God’s time - it is this kind of time that pays no attention to the duration of time. Scripture describes this kind of time-accountability using the words “in the fullness of time” or as “an appointed time”. There are many familiar examples of this type of time: In the book of Genesis we read, “In the beginning God created...and in the Gospel of John, “In the beginning was the Word.” and in Galatians, “But when the time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman...”

3) I remember many years ago, when my wife, Linda, and I were expecting our first child. After seeing her physician who confirmed our suspicions, there was a date that we marked on our calendars and began counting the days. That date on the calendar came and went and we continued to count the days past that “due date”. Finally, our baby was born at the appointed time, without regard for the circled date on the calendar.

4) For about the last three weeks, we see lots of evidence that Spring has finally arrived, with the spectacular beauty of flowering trees, bushes and plants. The calendar said Spring officially arrived with the vernal equinox, March 20 at 5:58 p.m. However, since that date there have been days and nights when the weather was more like the dead of winter rather than Spring. Indeed, creation and new life occur in the fullness of time.

5) Yes, today is Friday and if we measure this day’s duration chronologically, today is just like any other Friday that happens every week following Thursdays. But for Christians, today, Good Friday is not observed as a chronological event but as a Kairos event - an event that was so significant it did not end on that day more than 2000 years ago.

However, what we know about this Friday – today - was not known by the followers of Jesus’ day. Those who loved Jesus and followed him were caught up in the horror of the day, grieving with all their hearts that the One in whom they had placed all their trust and belief, had died a cruel and public death. For certain, they did not know then, what we know now – Yes, It’s Friday but we know Sunday’s coming. They did not know, on THAT Friday, that in the fullness of time, on the third day, Jesus would be resurrected.

6) Just as the earliest disciples did not know the significance of the following Sunday, neither do

the incarcerated residents at Lebanon Correctional and Southern Ohio Correctional penitentiaries. These two Ohio State prisons are humbly served by men from Bellarmine Parish who join other men to form a team for two weekends each year to participate in a program named "Kairos Prison Ministry International. Many of you here prayerfully participate in this ministry with your financial gifts and baking 1000s of dozens of cookies for each weekend. During the last Kairos weekend at LeCI, we distributed approximately 11,500 dozen cookies to the residents attending the weekend as well as the other residents in the blocks. God's love truly made edible. In the 29 years that Kairos Prison Ministry has been active at LeCI, approximately 2500 incarcerated residents have participated. That number equals the current population of residents at LeCI.

7) For men who have given up, who have lived a life of "Good Fridays", who have lost all hope and are figuratively "dead to life", this transformative weekend provides the possibility of a lifetime of Easter Sundays. Most of the men on the weekend hear for the first time ever that they are unconditionally loved and are worthy of God's love, forgiveness and reconciliation regardless of their past. For a man who is broken and who has been "entombed" chronologically for many years, his chronological sentence – the "time" he is serving - takes on a Kairos-time reality. While their "sentence" still exists, their newly acquired Kairos-time is not measured in days, months and years. These men now have a new realization of how to live their lives as participants in the Body of the Risen Christ.

8) How can transformations of this magnitude occur over just a short weekend – **every weekend without fail**? It is because each Kairos volunteer humbly surrenders and allows himself to be emptied and to be used as a witness for what the love of God has meant in each of our lives. In sharing our own stories of failures, wrong choices, addictions, and incarcerations and by adhering to the Kairos motto for the weekend, Listen Listen Love Love, we listen intently to them as they begin to get comfortable sharing their stories. In doing so, we very soon become a community of equals. The residents soon understand that we as volunteers are there for them - unconditionally. The significance of this transformation is that the residents now see themselves included in a community that they can trust. They learn that the Kairos weekend is not a one and done event, since there is a Prayer and Share event every Saturday morning within the institution that is a continuation of the mountain-top experience they have shared together. There are usually between 60-70 residents at these Prayer and Shares. Being included in a community of loving individuals and having an event to look forward to brings about Hope for those who for many years had no Hope. And indeed, their sentence takes on a Kairos reality. At that point, very tall fences and miles of razor wire are no match for the work of the Holy Spirit.

9) This is the heart of Jesus' own teaching. His core teachings are "Whoever would save his life shall lose it, and whoever shall lose his life for my sake will save it. These teachings are born out in the essential gesture of his life, his willingness to empty himself and die on the cross to all he had known and loved... not only on that first Good Friday, but all Good Fridays to come. As followers of Jesus we are challenged to empty ourselves as we serve our brothers and sisters. The view of a resurrected life is never murkier than through the haze of Good Friday -

for anyone - incarcerated or those of us “outside the walls”.

It’s Friday ... but Sunday’s coming.

Hallelujah. Thanks be to God.