



**THE ANGLICAN ARCHBISHOP OF ADELAIDE
SERMON DELIVERED AT THE OPENING
EUCHARIST SERVICE OF THE 2010 SYNOD
FRIDAY 22 OCTOBER 2010**

Grasping Kairos by the forelock

There is a moment,
when I was romancing and dating a certain lady
known to a few of us here,
and to our children as Mum.

An amorous moment it was;
parking for a kiss and a cuddle on the way home!
Somewhat distracted by the comely young thing in the car with me,
and reaching over gearstick and centre consol,
to embrace all the better;
totally absorbed and feeling just a little frisky,
I managed quite unawares,
to both bump the “on” button of the car radio with my knee,
and turn the volume up very loud at the same time.

A very religious voice boomed into the car:

“This is the Hour of Decision!”

It was a Sunday night evangelising program;
the introduction with dramatic voice and music,
and quite an ardour deflating moment it was indeed.
I remember it well!

“This is the Hour of Decision!”

In a quite different sense,
this is the theme of the Gospel reading tonight:

When you see a cloud rising in the West; you immediately say, “It is going to rain; and so it happens. And when you see the sound wind blowing (in the Southern hemisphere and places like Adelaide, read North), you say there will be scorching heat; and it happens. Hypocrites, you know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?”

The accusation of Jesus is that the religious leaders of his time have not discerned, have not judged, have not “dokimazowed”, have not engaged critically with the moment that is there before them.

They can understand trends in the weather,
but cannot recognise or understand the *kairos* moment
in which they live.

I do have some sympathy for the Pharisees here,
because I am a fisherman with a small boat,
and I take some great pains to read the trends in the weather,
not just looking to the skies,
but to my computer screen, and to satellite imaging,
and meteorological modelling to determine
if I can venture forth after a few whiting.

But still I come home occasionally with a wet tail
and a bumpy ride, courtesy of some Spencer Gulf
weather surprise.

Still its fair to say that a cloud bank on the western horizon
signals the possibility of a change,
and a northerly in places like South Australia signals a scorcher.

Generally we can understand the signs of wind and weather.

Our challenge as the Church,
as the people of Jesus,
as the Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide meeting this weekend,
is to understand the *kairos*,
to understand and grasp the particular time in which we find ourselves as the People of God.

Kairos is the decisive moment,
and we are called to understand and grasp it.

In the ancient Greek world, *Kairos* was not just a word to describe a quality of time; *Kairos* was one of the minor gods.

There was a bronze statue of *Kairos* made by the sculptor Lysippos. An epigram by Poseidippos was carved on the Statue:

Who and whence was the sculptor? From Sikyon.

And his name? Lysippos.

And who are you? Time who subdues all things.

Why do you stand on tip-toe? I am ever running.

And why you have a pair of wings on your feet? I fly with the wind.

And why do you hold a razor in your right hand? As a sign to men that I am sharper than any sharp edge.

And why does your hair hang over your face? For him who meets me to take me by the forelock.

And why, in Heaven's name, is the back of your head bald?

Because none whom I have once raced by on my winged feet will now, though he wishes it sore, take hold of me from behind.

Kairos is to be grasped by the forelock only as it approaches.

That's the sense of the following verses in our Gospel passage, where Jesus talks about making peace with your accuser while still on the way to the Magistrate. Take the opportunity, even on the way.

Grasping Kairos by the forelock as it approaches.

The judgement of Jesus is that the religious leaders in Jerusalem did not grasp the kairos, the definitive moment, in which they were placed.

And it is all gathered up in the great lament that Jesus utters over the holy City later in this Gospel of Luke:

*Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
if you, even you, had recognised the things that make for your peace...but now, not
one stone will be left upon another,
because you did not recognise your kairos
visitation from God. (Lk 19.41-44)*

To fail to grasp the *kairos*,
is inevitably to see the city of God in ruins;
then ... and perhaps now.

For Luke, placing all these exchanges as he does,
in the context of the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem and the Cross,
the sign of visitation and the kairos itself is nothing other than Jesus coming in his suffering way.

My brothers and sisters,
these are determining times for our Church and for our diocese.
This weekend we meet together to do many things;
engaging with business, legislation,
reports, standing orders,
processes procedures, motions and elections.

But beyond and above and through all these things
in the first session of the 40th triennial Synod
of the Dioceses of Adelaide,
may we be a people gathered to engage with interpreting the present time, the determining time, the kairos,
in which our Lord Jesus can visit us again.

Grasping Kairos by the forelock as it approaches:
Lord, may we have the courage of the moment!
Amen.

