

Notes on Ephesians 3:5–7, Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 ‘In Jesus, the time is right.’

This week our King went on a state visit to the United States and though there were lots of reservations about his doing so, his visit has been an unbridled success. His speeches before Congress and throughout his State Visit have hit social media in an amazing and incredible way – especially when he spoke about the need for there to be checks and balances for the executive office. The irony of this is that it was an unelected Monarch who spoke like this, unlike the elected President. Paul has a similar clarity of vision about his ‘office’ as the Apostle to the Gentiles. Here in verses 1 – 13, which seem almost to be like an aside, a ‘by the way’ sort of speech, Paul is not being self-indulgent but in his description of his call and vocation we have a glimpse of Paul’s passion, vision, enthusiasm as this Apostle who is always keeping in step with Jesus and he writes this that we may do the same as those who are also servants of the Gospel, who seek to live out God’s gift in our lives and know his power. In this sermon and others which will follow it, I will refer again and again to our being part of a Growth Collective because our being part of this Collective will shape and mould our hearing and responding to the voice of Jesus.

Thank you all ever so much for your prayers for me while I’ve been away at Okehampton College this week. I have had a really good time, a right time, an opportune time, a valued time, a challenging time and a worthwhile time as I spoke about Easter to years 7, 8 and 9. Another way of describing my time in Okehampton is to speak of it as a Kairos Moment. What I mean by this, is that it was a time when I saw God clearly at work fulfilling his plans and purposes which Paul describes using the wonderful phrase ‘the ‘mystery of Christ’. To help make myself as crystal clear as possible, let me give you another example – Isaiah 52 and 53.

When we read these chapters, we see them clearly describing why Jesus died as the Suffering Servant and why his resurrection is his vindication by God. But this was not how Jesus’ contemporaries understood these chapters. They were never applied to the Messiah or to how he would fulfil God’s plans and purposes. It was only Jesus who independently discerned that this was the way in which his Father’s plans and purposes would be fulfilled, through his being the Suffering Servant. It was only Jesus who understood this to be a Kairos Moment, a time when Jesus would see God clearly at work and when his Father’s plans and purposes would be fulfilled. After Jesus had been raised from the dead he spent the next 40 days opening the Scriptures to the Apostles so that they may understand all who Jesus was and all that he had done. Another way of saying this is that he taught them a ‘Christological Hermeneutic’, or how to understand their Bibles and lives through the lens of Jesus. But there is more to understanding what a Kairos Moment is than this and this is where the Holy Spirit comes in. By the gift of the Spirit, we know in our hearts, as well as in our minds, what the Bible is saying to us is true and we are led to respond by the Spirit. We see this in Acts with both Peter and Paul’s missionary journeys and Paul’s discerning his call to be the Apostle to the Gentiles which we read of in verse 7.

The biggest proof of a Kairos Moment is verse 6 and this very familiar description of this church in Ephesus where Paul picks up yet again themes from chapters 1 and 2. But there is a sting in the tail for Paul, and for us. To follow in the steps of the Suffering

Servant is for us to be willing ourselves to endure suffering as Jesus did. This is what Paul is experiencing as a prisoner for the sake of Jesus which he describes in verse 1.

This week I wrote the thought for the week about our being part of a YBA Growth Collective and ever since last July and in subsequent meetings I have thought of it as being a Kairos Moment for us as a church. It strikes me that being part of this Growth Collective will be a brilliant way for us as a church to grow in our '3 F's'. These '3 F's' are the framework for our leadership and church meeting agendas – they stand for Faith, Family and Function. I know I am particularly weak in my skill set in the whole area of Function which is why I really appreciate the meetings the leadership team and I are and will be having with Graham Ensor to guide and lead us in this through the next 20 months and into our time of Pastoral Vacancy. My heart is that we will learn to be more loving, confident, stronger and mission focussed which is the aspiration of our '3 E's' where we Engage deeper with Jesus, Enable all to meet Jesus and Enrich our community. Over the next 20 months my prayer is that we will all know these 'Yes' moments when we will be clearly led by the Spirit to echo what it says in Acts 15 verse 28 which says 'it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us' and the 'us' is us as a Church saying yes to Jesus as we follow his lead.

I find the whole language of Kairos Moment to be incredibly exciting for us as a church. I have just begun to read Pete Grieg's book 'How to hear from God' and this book was the inspiration for our last Lent course where we looked at the discipline of Lectio Divina. In reading the book Pete Grieg is keen for us to realise that Lectio Divina is not just about us hearing from God in a private, devotional sort of way but how we also hear Jesus speaking into our life as a church, or in other words a Kairos Moment for today and beyond. May we all be those who seek to hear the voice of Jesus in our lives and in our life as a church that we may all grow more in our love for Jesus and in our following his voice.