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Redwoods Presbyterian Church  
Larkspur, California  
September 7, 2014

Matthew 16:1-4  
"Kairos"

This sermon is not an explication of a biblical text as are most, if not all, my other sermons. It makes a passing glance of the signs of the times, Jesus's interpretation of "a sign from heaven" in Matthew's gospel. Jesus says the only sign given to his enquirers is the sign of Jonah, which is a call to repentance. More importantly, it is a sign for the church to share the wideness of God's mercy and forgiveness and to affirm God's gospel of inclusivity where all are accepted into the household of God.

Time is a theme of this sermon. This week began my seventh year with you as your pastor. It has been a good journey. Our relationship as pastor and congregation has deepened over the years.

I have supervised a number of San Francisco Theological Seminary students who have been kind of adjunct pastors of the church, albeit in their development and growth. Together with you, we have nurtured and supported them into ministry.

The spirit of God saw fit within the circumstances of this church's forward movement and our most recent intern, Stephanie Ryder's circumstances, to call Stephanie into quarter time ministry with us beginning this month. No one expected that when Stephanie came onboard a year ago.

It is a wonderful surprise, serendipity, and *Kairos* (God's moment). God shone on this church and us. God altered Stephanie's and my life in the move.

In the macro sense, I am in the sunset years of my ministry and Stephanie is in the sunrise years of hers but right now, we are ministering with you in the full light of day. In the micro sense, every day for me begins with the rise of the sun, blazes through the day, and ends after the sun has set. Each day is a blessed day of God.

At this moment in time, God has told us that God wants ministry to continue and thrive at Redwoods. I have no doubt, as to why I think this is so. It is because, if you do not mind my saying so, you have been and are an extremely faithful community of faith. You have chartered this ship through calm and rough waters.

You have personed the sails, scrubbed the decks, fed each other, taken people onboard to join you in the enterprise, supported each other and people in local and foreign lands, and most of all, you have discerned the wind of the Spirit and gone where God has led you. I am grateful to have been a co-captain with the the session (our governing body) these past six years. I am grateful for the officers, support staff, interns, and the crew (you all) of this ship of faith.

*Kairos* is a very important word in the Barnett lexicon. We first became aware of it during the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa. Suellen was teaching pastoral and practical psychology with the best liberation theologians in the country at the leading theological seminary for black students outside Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, where both Anna and David were born, when the South African Council of Churches published the Kairos Document which stated that it was God's opportune moment for change and newness in South Africa. Now is the time for the liberation of South Africa. Now is the time to name clearly and forthrightly the injustices of racism and oppression and to call and usher in a new liberated South Africa.

It was a powerful rallying cry for the church to embrace the struggle for freedom and to collaborate with all communities seeking the same. The church came alive and was in the forefront of the change that saw a free, democratic South Africa come into being.

With this auspicious background, it might seem strange that I have used the word, *Kairos*, to energize us into our new church year. Our situation is different from that of South Africa during apartheid. However, God uses God's words in different contexts, for different reasons. God's principles are the same.

In our case, we are moving from one form of ministry into another. One could say that it was *Kairos* for Redwoods when I came onboard six years ago. Your ministry continued and some things changed for the better.

We spruced up our facilities, we stably continued and introduced new educational and spiritual events, and we reconfigured our ministry team and support staff. Pastor and session engineered this together. The latest to join the dance is Stephanie. The staff is Office Administrator, Mari Robinson, Parish Associate, the Rev Dan White, Pastoral Associate (soon to be Reverend), Stephanie Ryder, and me as Pastor Head of Staff. With our bylaws revised, we changed the sizes of our session and board of deacons.

The minor miracle is that we have grown our staff and reduced our budget, which is probably fitting considering the size of the church right now. We shall live this way for now and evaluate where we are year by year but the important thing now is the turning of ministry. I believe we are alive and vital and God will give the growth.

It is *Kairos* at Redwoods, in other words, God's opportune moment for this church because of the few programs we have put in place to affirm growth for adults and children. It is primarily growth in faith and perhaps in numbers. Stephanie will continue to lead the Bible Study of Tuesday morning and I will lead at 9:00 am the first two Sundays of the month nourishing spiritual and theological formation sessions, starting in October with two newcomer classes. Stephanie and her support crew will invite children to participate in a one-hour Friday afternoon Bible and music gathering. I will continue my pastoral and administrative duties as usual albeit with less working hours. Excitement and energy will build during the next two years as Stephanie and her group plans a summer mission trip. All this will take place in, around, and with the wonderful ministries of the church already in motion. Stephanie and Dan will be in the wings for pastoral support and I support them.

It is *Kairos* at Redwoods, God's opportune moment for this church because new tenants, REAL School, knocked on our door at the beginning of summer urgently looking for space for their school of 9 to 12 students. Their needs and our space fitted hand in glove and they want to form student/congregation partnerships. We are creatively looking to ways we can interface with the other users of our space. Mari has climbed mountains in this respect.

It is *Kairos* at Redwoods, God's opportune moment for this church because God has given us a new lease on life. I have no doubt, and never had doubt, that God was working in and through us and that God would see this church through many "dangers, toils and snares." Stephanie's joining us is symbolic of this faith and a sign of God's approval of this church and our ministry into the future.

It is *Kairos* at Redwoods, God's opportune moment for this church because the hearts of our members, small in number, are huge for upsurge and revival. God is palpably present in everything we do. God has not left us alone.

I asked five people to share in a sentence how they see *Kairos*, God's opportune moment for the church at this time. They are clerk of the session, Ani Lelea; treasurer, Jim Gorder; moderator of the board of deacons, Polly Gorder; Stephanie Ryder; and the Rev. Dan White.

Stephanie Ryder

"It is Kairos at Redwoods, God's opportune moment for this church, because space is being created for revitalization and new life!"

Ani Lelea

"It is Kairos, God's opportune moment for Redwoods at this time – providing a diverse, accomplished and innovative pastoral and office staff in leading us to energetically continue to spread the Word, by our faith and action, throughout the community!"

Jim and Polly Gorder

"It is Kairos at Redwoods, God's opportune moment for this church because RealSchool is a win-win for them and for the church's finances and the arrival of Stephanie is providing the youthful enthusiasm and energy to keep Redwoods moving forward. God is looking out for us!"

Dan White

"Proverbs 29 declares, 'Where there is no vision, the people perish'----

Redwoods Church is fulfilling their 'Kairos moment' by embracing the power of the Holy Spirit and living out this new and bold vision of ministry and mission for the next generation of our church."

It is Kairos for Redwoods. Please keep the church in your thoughts and prayers. Ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys, fasten your seat belts, the next act is about to begin. Amen.