

“The Time Has Come”

- I. God wants His people growing in His Word.
- II. God wants His people going with His Word.

Dear Christian friends,

Time – what a precious creation of God. We have different ways to MARK time – seconds, minutes, hours, etc. **At times** it can seem as if time FLIES. We’re so enjoying whatever that we don’t notice the **hours** going by. **At other times** it seems as if time just DRAGS on – waiting for a **loved one** who’s having surgery. **Sometimes** we can be SO PRESSED for time. We have so much to do that we feel as if we just don’t HAVE ENOUGH time. But for those stuck in their homes over winter they have ALL KINDS of time on their hands.

Like God’s **other blessings** God’s gift of time can be TAKEN FOR GRANTED. We just assume their will be a **tomorrow** – next month – this summer, etc. The truth is NOBODY KNOWS **how much** time they have left in this world – OR **how much time is left** for this world.

“The time has come,” Jesus preached in the gospel reading. In this reading **“the time had come”** for Paul and Barnabas to move on. We look closer at these verses guided by that thought – **“The time has come.”** As God wants it **“the time has come”** for His people 1)to be growing in His Word and 2)to be going with His Word.

I. Growing in God’s Word.

Antioch was a **city** some 300 miles north of Jerusalem. There in Antioch was a **“church.”** In the NT the word **“church”** never refers to a building. The **early Christians** didn’t have beautiful churches as we do. The first Christians usually met in **homes** or **rented** places.

In the NT the word **“church”** always refers to people – people united by a **common faith** in Jesus – people gathered around God’s Word and Sacraments. The **“church”** is GOD’S PEOPLE. Here in Antioch there was a “church” – a group of Christians – GOD’S people.

Here in Fox Lake we are a **“church”** – people united by a **common faith** in Jesus – people gathered around God’s Word and Sacraments – GOD’S people! What grace! What a blessing! Think of Peter’s familiar words, **“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the people who are God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. At one time you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. At one time you were not shown mercy, but now you have been shown mercy.”**

You know the KIND OF LIFE you lived last week – so does God. You know how stubborn and demanding your sinful nature can be. Look how often last week God had to take the BACK SEAT to your sinful nature. We are NOT **God’s people** because we’re SUCH GREAT, wonderful Christians. We are God’s people **only because** God is SO GREAT and **gracious** – so forgiving and **faithful**.

THROUGH His Word God makes people Christians and gathers them into His Church. **“The time has come,”** Jesus preached, **“repent and believe the good news.”** With His LAW God has confronted us with our sin and guilt and led us to **“repent”** – to be sorry for our sins. With His GOSPEL God has led us to trust in Jesus as our Savior. The gospel points us to Jesus and **says**, “He’s the Son of God – your personal Savior from sin and death.” The gospel shows us Jesus **living** a holy life and explains that Jesus lived that life for us. The gospel takes us to the cross and **says**, **“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”** The gospel assures us that that shed blood of God’s Son **“cleanses us from all sin.”** The gospel shows us Jesus’ **empty grave** and lets us hear Jesus

promise, ***“Because I live, you shall live also.”*** The gospel is the ***“good news”*** of forgiveness and eternal life in heaven **simply by trusting** in Jesus as our Savior.

THROUGH His Word God made us His people and now God wants us GROWING in His Word. Imagine stopping school at first grade. I know 1+1=2 – that’s ALL THE MATH I need to know. I know c-a-t spells cat – I don’t need anything more. Baloney! **Sadly** many take that attitude toward God’s Word. I KNOW ENOUGH I don’t need to know more.

God wants His people GROWING in His Word – using it every day at home. God is so concerned about our **growing** in His Word that He also provides His people with pastors and teachers. ***“In the church at Antioch there were some prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, Saul.”*** JUST WHICH of these men were ***“prophets or teachers”*** OR BOTH we’re not told – but they were there to help God’s people GROW in God’s Word.

“The time has come” to GROW in God’s Word. We may think we’re already TOO BUSY. God says, “No, that’s **not true**.” We may need to shuffle our **schedule** – rearrange our **priorities**. **If something is important** to us we FIND – we MAKE – time for it. These Christians in Antioch even ***“fasted”*** – gave up eating a meal – just to HAVE TIME for God’s **Word** and **prayer**.

God wants us GROWING in His Word so we can stand strong in our faith. God wants us ready for when we’re ASSAULTED by **temptations** and **troubles**. Think of your BODY. **If I’ve been taking care** of my body – keeping it in good shape – then I’m in BETTER SHAPE to fight off an illness or recover from surgery.

These Christians in Antioch are a **good example**. Many of them were originally from Jerusalem. They had fled to Antioch because of a ***“great persecution”*** in Jerusalem. They had GIVEN UP their homes, jobs, etc. – rather than GIVE UP their Savior. **Where** did they find the strength to do that? In God’s Word!

We won’t be forced to **flee** Fox Lake but every day our faith is UNDER ATTACK. Shall I LIVE my faith our hide it? Shall I GO WITH the **flow** and do what everybody else is doing or follow GOD and do what God wants me to do? Shall I GIVE IN to my **sinful nature** or ***“deny and crucify”*** it? ***“The time has come”*** for us as God’s people to GROW in God’s Word. God wants us GROWING in His Word **because** He also wants...

II. His people going with His Word.

Put yourself as a **member** in Antioch. You’ve quickly moved your family there. You’ve literally moved to ANOTHER COUNTRY! You’re the stranger in town. You need to find a **place** to stay, a **job**, etc. Your new neighbors ALREADY HAVE their own temples, religions. **You know they’re worshiping worthless** idols. WHAT do you do? Your faith got you INTO TROUBLE back home. Do you know keep quiet so you can enjoy SOME PEACE and quiet? NOT these Christians! They had fled to Antioch but they kept telling others about Jesus.

God wants His people GOING with His Word RIGHT WHERE they are. God wants parents teaching and MODELING His Word to their children. **Parents** should use the help the church offers but the church can’t replace the parents. What the children learn at school and Sunday School **needs to be re-enforced** by their parents’ own word AND EXAMPLE at home.

God wants His people GOING with His Word beyond their **homes** and INTO their **communities**. That’s what these Christians in Antioch did. They ***“let their lights shine.”*** They knew where THEY’D BE if they **didn’t have** Jesus – going to hell instead of heaven. They just couldn’t keep Jesus to themselves. They still ran into **ridicule** and **rejection**. NOT ALL listened but some did.

“The time has come” for us to be GOING with God’s Word. We don’t have to LOOK FAR or **hard** to find some who DON’T GO to church – who have fallen away from Jesus – who have fallen for the **world’s mixed-up** morals and priorities. ***“The time has come”*** to not just talk sport or the weather but JESUS!

“The Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work I have called them to.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off” – off on their first missionary journey. There was still work to **do in Antioch** but there was ALSO WORK to be done in **other places**. God didn’t want them DOING ONE or the other but BOTH. God enabled them to **do both**.

We have plenty of work RIGHT HERE in Fox Lake – but there’s also beyond here. God doesn’t tell us to DO ONE or the other but BOTH. We are not to pit one against the other – LOCAL work **versus mission** work – supporting our schools **versus supporting** mission. God wants – God ENABLES – us to DO BOTH.

These Christians in Antioch couldn’t all pack up and move to a mission field. God called Paul and Barnabas to do that. ALL Christians are called by God to GO with His Word – to share Jesus with others. God also calls some Christians into **what we call** the PUBLIC MINISTRY of the Word – working ON BEHALF of and **in the name** of their fellow Christians – pastors, teachers, missionaries, etc. Jesus tells us, ***“The fields are white unto harvest. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest fields.”***

Paul and Barnabas headed off to the **island** of Cyrus – their mission to ***“proclaim the Word of God.”*** ***“John was with them as their helper.”*** John was Barnabas’ COUSIN. He helped however he could. NOT ALL Christians are **called to be missionaries** but we can ALL HELP the missionaries we send. Never underestimate your **prayers** for missionaries, their families, their work. It costs money to TRAIN and then send and **support** them. **Just as** IT’S WRONG for the individual Christian to give God/church what’s LEFT OVER after taking care of HIMSELF FIRST – it’s **also wrong** for a congregation to give to **missions** what’s LEFT OVER after taking care of itself first. As an individual GOD TELLS ME to take care of BOTH my **family** and **church**. As a congregation GOD TELLS us to take care of BOTH our **congregation** and **missions**. God enables us **as individuals** and as a congregation to DO BOTH.

“The time has come.” We honestly don’t know HOW MUCH time **we have** so NOW is the time for us to be both growing and going with God’s Word. Amen.

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