

You may well have heard in previous sermons preachers talk about four words in Greek that we translate as love. I tried to remember them, and I couldn't remember. One's eros. One's philia. You can tell me afterwards; I could only get to two. But anyway, there are four, which is nothing compared to how many words Eskimos have for snow, 53. And that isn't as many as the English have for rain. But going back to the Greeks, they have two words for time, and I do know what they are, the two. There's Kairos and Chronos. Two different words with different meanings, but we translate them both with the English word time.

So, something is very definitely lost in translation when it comes to the Greek words for time. And both feature in the readings that we've had for today. The first word in Greek for time is Chronos, from which we get the word chronology. If we want to make a chronological list, then we put the oldest and first event first, and we work through in chronological order till we get to the present time. That's the meaning of the word Chronos. It's that sense of time moving forward, the clock ticking. We sing a hymn sometimes, which refers to time as an ever-rolling stream, and we have a hint of the relentlessness of that sense of time in the Gospels as Jesus calls these four fishermen.

When he sees Simon and Andrew, it says they're casting their nets. Then when he sees James and John, we're told they're mending their nets. Well, casting and mending, that was the lot of a Galilean fisherman. They casted their nets, they mended their nets. They casted them, they mended them. They went out fishing. That's how they acknowledged the passing of time. That's how they filled their time, casting and mending. And there's a reference to that Chronos understanding of time in the Old Testament reading too from the book of Jonah. Jonah issues the people of Nineveh with an ultimatum, "40 days you have to repent and then your great city will be destroyed." Jonah starts the clock ticking.

And we're all familiar with that device. It's in every single James Bond film. The baddie sets a bomb somewhere and you see the detonator with the time and the camera keeps going back every now and again and you see the clock ticking to disaster. And every second counts. Every moment is precious.

Chronos time is a resource, and some people are more aware of this than others. There was a great naturalist at Harvard in the 19th century called Louis Agassiz, and he was approached by a very distinguished society and invited to give them some lectures and he said, "No." He said, "That takes a lot of work and time to prepare lectures like that, so I don't want to do it." Well, this society wasn't used to being rebuffed it was so prestigious, so they sent someone to him and said, "Look, please, will you do these lectures?"

And Mr. Agassiz replied. Well, they offered him a lot of money. They said, "We'll pay you very handsomely for this." And Mr. Agassiz said, "I can't afford to waste my time making money." There's something about Mr. Agassiz's attitude to time there which I admire. You can make more money, but you can't make more time. Time's a resource that's non-renewable and non-transferable. You can't store it, slow it up, divide it, or give it up. You can't hoard it and save it for a rainy day. When it's lost, it's unrecoverable. And when you kill time, remember that there's no resurrection of time. We need to recognize that time is limited and that leads to a sense of urgency that we can detect in our readings.

We see it in the Gospel. The word immediately comes twice to give that sense of time rushing forward. "Immediately they left their nets and immediately they left their father," it says. The prophet Zephaniah said, "The great day of the Lord is hastening fast." And St. Paul, in his characteristically blunt way simply says, "Time is short." Or to be more precise, Chronos is short.

The second word for time in Greek features prominently in our readings for today. And the word is Kairos. It has a different meaning. This word Kairos is used to describe a particular moment, a significant moment in time, a time of decision. In the Epistle, St. Paul says, "Brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short." He's echoing Jesus here who says in the Gospel, and these are the first recorded words of Jesus, this is what he said, "The time is fulfilled." The Kairos time is fulfilled.

And what he means by this is that a critical moment, a critical time has come. This is the moment in which a decisive choice needs to be made. Chronos may

drift. Kairos always demands a response. Now is the time. Kairos describes the occasions that we sometimes have of time standing still. It's a timeless moment outside of the ever-rolling stream of time. That late great philosopher cum singer Whitney Houston sung about "wanting one moment in time when I feel eternity." And the disciples have that one moment in time, that encounter with eternity in our Gospel reading today. This is the Kairos moment for the disciples. Jesus says to them, "Follow me." And their response to that invitation shaped the rest of their lives. It could be said shaped and had an impact on the rest of history.

They could presumably have said something different. "Not today, Jesus." But they didn't. In that Kairos moment, they made a decision of enormous consequence. I wonder if at the time they knew how consequential their decision would be. I'm not sure they did. They certainly would at the end of their lives looking back. I'm sure their minds went to that moment on the beach, that moment of encounter, that moment of decision, and realized how that Kairos moment shaped the rest of their lives. And we do have those Kairos moments. I recall one in a doctor's surgery, where they often happen, with Laura a few years ago. I remember just sitting there thinking, after all these tests, the doctor could come in at any moment and give us news that would completely affect the rest of our lives. Now, thankfully, he didn't. But I remember thinking, this is a moment. This is a moment when things could change forever for us.

And I'm sure all of us can identify significant Kairos moments which have made our lives turn in a different way. I've heard them called pivot points. Michael Jordan, the basketball player, had a pivot point. This is hard to believe, but he actually wasn't selected for his high school basketball team. And he's talked about how looking back, that was a significant moment for him because he says actually that gave him the motivation and the persistence to go up a gear, to carry on. But it could have had the opposite effect. He could have thought, well, forget that I'll start playing more computer games. But he didn't. And often it's those Kairos moments, the pivot points, which reveal who we truly are, that reveal what we value. And there's a value in looking back over our

lives and thinking, well, what are the Kairos moments? What are the pivot points for us? What do they say about who we are? What do they say about God's presence in our lives?

I'm mindful that Lent is approaching fast. Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, is on Valentine's Day this year. Maybe that's an opportunity, a season to pause and to reflect, to step out of our usual routines, the casting and the mending, the mending and the casting, to seek timeless Kairos moments. If we, like Whitney, can feel eternity in our lives, then our lives might look different. We might reorganize our priorities, the things we value. That's the point of the Epistle that we read with Paul writing to the Corinthians. "Now the appointed time has come," he's saying. You need to live differently. He even suggests making drastic changes. And look at the disciples, in their Kairos moment, they responded to Jesus and left their nets behind.

The invitation to "follow me" from Jesus is always an invitation to leave behind, to leave behind our nets, our boats, or whatever the equivalent is for us. And that's the hard part for us. We're all pretty good at accumulating and clinging on, but we're not so good at letting go. And more often than not, our spiritual life and development involves some kind of letting go. We never get anywhere if we're unwilling to leave where we are. We accept Jesus's invitation to "follow me", not by packing up, but by letting go. "Follow me" is both the invitation to and a promise of new life. So what are the nets that entangle us? What are the little boats that contain our lives? What do we need to leave behind that we might follow Jesus? These are the questions that we're forced to consider in life's Kairos moments. So as time rolls on, let us seek out those significant timeless moments. Amen.