



2018 Grove City College Opening Convocation
by
President Paul J. McNulty '80

Thank you. Good morning everyone. It is my privilege to officially welcome you to the beginning of this new academic year. I especially want to welcome our newest members of the community: our new faculty and staff and of course the class of 2022.

This morning I want to talk about time. I spent a lot of time over the summer thinking and praying about our community. One question that comes to my mind regularly is this: How do we encourage each other to make the most of this experience? How should we spend our time? The choices we make about how we use our time will determine in a very real way the direction of our lives, what we learn, how we grow, what we experience, who we love. And students, the use of your time and the limitations on your time will have a major impact on your college experience: your friendships, the skills you develop, and the memories that you make. But it's also true that the way we think about time will affect the choices that we make. Is it just a matter of running as hard as we can, squeezing as much as we can into a day, being as efficient as we can, or is there another way to look at the use of our time?

I remember when I was a student I was very busy running from thing to thing all the time. One afternoon in my senior year while hurrying from one matter of business to another and running short on time, I was rushing up the stairs in Crawford and ran into Dr. MacKenzie, our president at the time, coming the other way. As we passed on the steps, he stopped me and said "Paul,



when are you going to slow down and focus on just a few things?" And I thought to myself "I don't have time actually to talk about that right now!"

I don't know if I ever learned that lesson from Dr. MacKenzie, but I do believe that the more we understand of time, the more it will affect our use of it, which of course will lead to various consequences in our lives.

Some sports feel like a constant race against the clock, against time. You've got the play clocks, the shot clocks and the game clocks always running and dictating the action. Players and fans learn to keep one eye on the action and one eye on the clock. College life often feels that way. Even though we are removed in this rural location from the faster pace of urban life, the demands of time seem to be at the core of our existence. Chapel this morning has a firm *time limit* because we need 15 minutes to get to classes, which are to begin at 10:05, and those classes must finish by 11:20 so that there is enough *time* to get to the next classes which start promptly at 11:30. Yet the classes must be long enough to satisfy the *time requirements* within the *time limits* of a semester so that students can graduate *on time*. Whew. And that's just the academic schedule. The extracurricular activities are also on the clock: rehearsal time, practice time, performance time, and game time. In the midst of it all we need to find time for preparation, advising, mentoring. We struggle to find time for family and friends, and even sleep. Well, I could go on, but I need to keep my eye on the time.

Is it any wonder why so many of us are experiencing stress and anxiety? We have a high expectation about our productivity but very limited amounts of time actually to get things done.



A Biblical Perspective

What is the biblical perspective on time? The scriptures unquestionably confirm that our time in this life is limited. Therefore, as with anything of value that is limited, our time is quite precious. James says, "yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes." The Psalmist says, "my days pass away like smoke." Job described his life as "merely a breath." The writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us that our limited time must be appropriately allocated for every matter under heaven.

Our time – our hours, days and years – are part of God's created order. But God is not bound or limited by time. He stands outside of creation and time, existing in eternity where there is no yesterday, today or tomorrow. From Psalm 90, we read, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God." "A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night." Paul, speaking to the people of Athens, said, "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of Heaven and Earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything: rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole Earth, and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands." (Acts 17: 24-26)

Likewise, Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, is also not bound by or limited by time. John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning, through Him all things were made." Paul says in Colossians 1:15-



17, "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, for in Him all things were created, things in Heaven and on Earth, visible and invisible. All things have been created through Him and for Him, he is before all things and in Him all things hold together." The writer of Hebrews says, "Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever." And Peter adds, "But do not forget this one thing, dear friends, with the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day." Jesus, God, outside of creation, outside of time.

But then came the incarnation. "The Word became flesh and dwelled among us. And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) Paul says in Philippians 2, "Though he was in the form of God he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but made himself nothing taking the form of a servant." Christ entered time and space to fulfill his Father's plan of redemption. When? What time? Well Paul answers that question in Romans 5. He says, "You see at just the right time when we were still powerless Christ died for the ungodly." Mark says this, "After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God. The time has come, he said, the Kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe the good news." (Mark 1:14)

The Greek word translated as time in both of these verses and in other passages is the word "kairos". It refers not to the measurement of time but to an opportunity, or an opportune moment. Christ, having come from the Father, understood what existed beyond this world in eternity, beyond time. Christ says in his high priestly prayer, "Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed." As Jesus prays for his Disciples, he says "Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me



where I am to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.” (John 17:24) It's interesting that Christ is praying that his followers could be with him in eternity and not in this world. It reminds us of the Apostle Paul who says that to die is gain. Christ looked at time in this world as connected to calling and eternity, and therefore as an opportunity, a kairos moment, a series of kairos moments to serve eternal purposes.

Consider the story in Luke 10 about Mary and Martha hosting Christ in their home. Martha wants to be hospitable, and we've all been there. We've all felt the pressure of time to pull together the food, get it ready in the proper order. It's stressful. “Where is Mary my helper?” She's with the Lord; she is sitting at his feet; she's listening to him teach. Martha says to Jesus: “Can you get her to help me? We've got to watch the time. I'm trying to get everything together.” Jesus doesn't dismiss Martha's work as though it doesn't matter, but he says Mary has made the better choice. She has taken advantage of an extraordinary and a unique opportunity in her life, a kairos moment.

What's our conclusion? Here it is: ***Followers of Christ should have a different perspective on the limits of time and the brevity of life.*** Knowing, like Christ, that this is not our home and confident in the hope of heaven, we should look at our time as kairos time - moments of opportunity - for fulfilling our calling in this world.

How should this transform our view of time here at Grove City College? First, we should understand ***the opportunity our time presents.*** We should appreciate the preciousness of time and be good stewards of it. Jonathan Edwards preached an extraordinary sermon called



“The Preciousness of Time and the Importance of Redeeming It.” He said that the most important use of time is to figure out how we are going to improve it with regard to the next life. There are a lot of things we can do with our time, but nothing is more valuable than to figure out where we are going, I mean where we are really going.

Psalms 90:12 says, "Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom." In Ephesians 5:15-16 we read, "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the most of your time (kairos – opportunity), because the days are evil." King James Version says, "Redeem the time." This means purchasing it back in the same sense of redeeming a slave out of captivity. Similarly, our time has been captured by the sin in our lives. How much of our time has been captured by social media where we are just keeping up with what's going on in other people's lives. Now don't get me wrong, social media can be good for knowing how to pray for others. But, if you are like me, you can get sidetracked checking it all out and much of that time needs to be redeemed. Paul says in Colossians, "Walk in wisdom towards outsiders, making the best use of your time, redeeming it."

Secondly, seeing time as kairos opportunity to pursue our Christian calling helps us to **reorder our priorities**. Are we prepared to submit to God's plan for our time, to redeem our time Jesus' way? Or do we look at time as that rich fool in Jesus' parable, who had a lot of grain and goods and rather than perhaps sharing it with others, he said “This is great, I'm going to build bigger barns and I'm going to load them up, and then I'm just going to sit back and enjoy; I'm going to eat, drink, be merry.” And Jesus said that very night his soul was required of him.



How should we look at our time, our priorities, the use of our time? How should we look at rest, especially on the Lord's day? Are we willing to say that time is for the Lord because I see it as a kairos opportunity to grow? Or is it just more time that I have to run around and use to get things done? How should we look at using our time of leisure for enriching the soul? How should we look at using our time for extended prayer? Remember Jesus left the crowds to go off to a solitary place and pray, even though they were looking for him, because they wanted him to do more. He could have said, as so many of us say, "Father, I'm sorry I haven't been in prayer much. I've just been really busy doing your work." Jesus didn't let that happen because he understood eternity and calling and time. How should we look at our relationships with others? Are we willing to put aside our schedules and spend time talking to someone in need?

It's interesting to see in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan how disruptive that episode was to the one who was offering help. He really went out of his way to be helpful. I'm sure he had better things to do. But a look at time from eternity and opportunity is also a source of comfort, knowing that the limitations of time and on life itself are according to God's perfect plan in this world and that a glorious eternity beyond limits of time awaits us. This can be a tremendous source of comfort and encouragement.

When we've suffered a painful loss there may be a temptation to become bitter or envious of what others have and we've lost. Understanding time in this way helps us to look at what lies ahead and not behind. It's also a source of peace to know that Christ intervened in just the right time to save us from the punishment we deserve, and that should give us great encouragement regarding his love for us in the midst of our struggles with time. He's a loving Father. The



scarcity of time in relation to enormous academic challenges and important opportunities outside the classroom is undoubtedly a source of considerable stress for us. But Jesus says, "Seek first the Kingdom." Seek first the Kingdom of God in the use of our time and He'll take care of what we need.

In sports there is another idea, referred to as "slowing the game down." Perhaps you've heard of it. It doesn't really mean, of course, that the game literally slows down. It just means that you have a sense of where you are, what's happening, so that you are more conscious about your response in the midst of the action. That's a little bit like what we are talking about here. Let's look at our time not as a source of frustration or a mad dash from one thing to another, which may be unavoidable at times. We will run out of here and get to class, and that's a part of academic life. But let's try to look at time as a God-ordained opportunity, a kairos moment to serve eternal purposes.

There was a student here when I was in my first year as President who was maybe one of the busiest people on campus, running from thing to thing. And at the end of the year I had a conversation with one of his friends and he said something which really struck me. He said, "You know what I love about him is that he always has time to stop and talk and be there for me and for others." I was surprised. I was really encouraged, but I was surprised, and I was inspired. Yes he was busy, yes he was trying to take full advantage of the many rewarding things to do here at Grove City College, but he understood the kairos moments of his day. Our faculty has this calling. And I'm so thankful for the fact that, so often, in the midst of busy schedules, they stop and talk to students about what's on their minds. Thank you for that. I'm thankful for



that sense of calling and recognition of the kairos moments. And may we all be more committed to that sense of how to use our time for eternity and not just for ourselves.

Well, I see that my time is up. May God graciously work in our hearts to redeem the time for his glory this year. Amen. Thank you.