

Series: **BREATHING ROOM** - February 7, 2010

WHAT TIME IS IT? (Time Margin)
Luke 10:38-42

1. Our culture **loves** speed! We continually create cars and boats and computers and planes and...**lives**—that are faster and faster. I have to confess—**I love speed!** When I went to the Toronto Boat Show a few weeks ago, the highlight for me was the really **fast** stuff. Like this offshore racer with two 1075 hp engines—top speed-- 138 mph!
 - a. The problem with going that fast is that water—which is usually quite soft and forgiving--gets **very** hard at that speed. Hit a tiny wave—and good times can go bad **very** quickly. If you've ever watched someone driving a boat or a car at high speed—they're quite exhilarated by the whole thing; but it's not like they notice anything else going on.
 - b. Here's the question: Speed can be pretty exciting when it comes in short bursts--but is this any way to live? When it comes to life, a **lot** of people—some of you, in fact—are hydroplaning. Barely touching the surface of life; running on coffee and adrenaline. It's certainly not healthy for our **any** part of our lives—especially our relational world. Bill Hybels, a pastor in Chicago, talks about someone who gave him a ride to the airport in Germany on the autobahn in a very fast expensive car. He said, "When the speedometer went over 250 kph, all conversation stuttered—then totally stopped!
-And that happens to us. It's hard to have a meaningful conversation when you're flying through life at Mach 3, hair on fire.
 - c. The most tragic loss when it comes to high speed living, though, is in the **soul** department. According to Jesus, our calling in life is **love**. You can't do love at a Drive Thru window. To love and be loved—you have to slow down.
-I proved this last Monday. I had taken the lock from our front door to a locksmith to get fixed earlier in the day. And I was hurrying back to pick it up at 4:40--knowing they closed at 5. I pressed all the limits to get there—only to find he had closed **early**. And as I thought about it, it was only **then** that I realized how rude of a driver I'd been all the way there. I checked on how the Bible defines love:

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. (1 Corinthians 13:4-5 NLT)

-There was **none** of that coming from me on that trip! In fact the crush of time makes us irritable and rude—sometimes with the people we **say** we love!
3. So, today—rather than try to talk about how to slow down to sub-sonic speeds in three easy lessons, I want to talk about **time**. See, God—the creator of time--sees it **very** differently than we do. In the West, we think of time primarily as something to be hacked up into pieces and used efficiently. We **live** in that time—and it's **important**—

but is apparently the **least** important form of time in God's economy. The Bible talks about 3 different ways God works in time.

- a. When **we** use the word time, the corresponding biblical word would be

Chronos: A sequential view of time measured in hours, days, years and centuries.

We see this in the word **chronological**. This kind of time flashes on your DVD player as **12:00...12:00**. It's last week, 7 years from now, the day after tomorrow. It's this kind of time that gets hacked up into and marked off. It's what will make all the difference between a gold medal and a silver medal—and no medal at the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver!

-This kind of time **dominates** our culture. We feel **stuck** in this kind of time. It's in this kind of time where we panic—because it's flying by—and we don't have everything done. In our world, we're **always** doing, running, cleaning, twittering or waiting on the DVP in **this** kind of time.

- b. But there's another more profound word for time used in the Bible.

Kairos: An opportune moment, a defining moment, an opportunity where God steps into the seconds, minutes, and days and works.

We don't have an English equivalent—but you could see it as maybe where, as a parent, you're just hanging out with one of your children—and you suddenly have this profound moment where they open their lives—and you pour love into them. It's the unforgettable opportunities of life.

-For instance, the Old Testament records scores of prophecies about how the Jewish Messiah would step into history and save God's people. And yet—decade after decade passed—and nothing seemed to be happening. People **waited**. Then one day as an old priest named Zechariah was offering incense, an angel came and told him **it was time! Waiting was over!** He and his wife would bear a son—even though they were old—and that this would crescendo into the coming of the long-awaited Messiah.

-The priest, Zechariah's response, was, "It's **too late**. We're **too old**." Too old for **whom?** He's talking **chronos** time. And then the angel uses this word:

**For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time.
(Luke 1:20b NLT)**

-**Kairos** is when we have opportunities—right in the middle of clock time—to make a difference. It's when, as a parent, you're hanging with one of your kids—and there's this amazing opportunity to speak into their hearts. It's when, as the minutes and hours click by, you suddenly see this opportunity to show love, to save life, to give help.

Or simply to slow down and absorb truth when everyone else is going at a frenetic pace.

4. There is a brilliant story from Jesus' life that I think will help clarify things on these two different views of time. It's a story of how Jesus got dragged into a situation where two sisters had a disagreement over how a single unit of time should be handled. Luke tells the story:

As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught.

But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me."

But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42 NLT)

- a. Anyone here who has a friend—or friends—where you could pretty much show up at any time at their house—and it would not get weird? Well, Mary, Martha and Lazarus seem to be those kind of friends to Jesus.

We aren't told how they met—but they were **very** close. Well, one day Jesus drops in with 12 hungry men in tow—and probably a few strays.

-While everyone's just chilling. Jesus teaches—and **then** there's this awkward moment between Martha and Mary. Now, this was Martha's house—and she felt responsible for feeding this crew. And it wasn't like she could go to No Frills and pick up 6 frozen lasagnas on sale. In a hospitality driven culture—feeding your guests was a **big deal**.

-To put it bluntly, Martha is **totally** stressed out. Rushing around. Trying to make sure that everything is **just right** for the Teacher. And she's running out of time. So—I can imagine her with a piece of moist hair hanging over her face, trying to catch Mary's eye. Humpfing. Glaring. Clearing her throat. But Mary's not picking up the clue phone. So finally, Martha calls in the big guns. Jesus. The **Teacher**—expecting that **He** will confront Mary and tell her to help.

"Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me." (Luke 10:40 NLT)

- b. Now, that seems fair, right? But Jesus **shocks** Martha. **"My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details!"** You can almost hear Martha say, "Details? **Details?!!** I'm feeding the crowd **you** brought here!"

And if Martha was like us, she would likely lay the blame for the stress on everyone else—but herself. Which is where Jesus puts it.

-Notice that what Martha was worried and upset about weren't **bad** things at all. Buying, cooking and serving a nice meal for Jesus and his friends? But in the middle of the **chronos** time that Martha was stressed over, Mary had had found

kairos—this incredible moment to hear Jesus—to be **His** Follower. And Jesus says, **There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her.**”

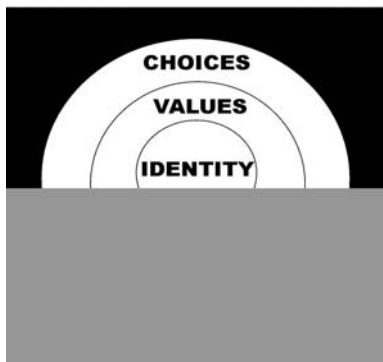
- c. This, friends, is **way** more profound than a disagreement between sisters—and a correction by Jesus. One of the most profound things happening here has to do with **identity**. How Mary apparently saw herself. The phrase describing Mary: that she... **sat at the Lord’s feet, listening to what he taught**, is a technical phrase that described a role only **men** were allowed to have in that culture—that of a **disciple**.

-Martha’s reaction to what Mary was doing may have actually been **more** about the identity Mary was assuming; that she was a disciple, too. And that her **identity** as a disciple certainly didn’t prevent her from preparing food and helping—but it came first. And what Jesus taught was the **kairos**—the opportune moment to stop and hear God—right in the middle of a time crunch. Mary made the right choice. Martha was too distracted by doing **good things**. Jesus’ word? **Details!**

5. What happened here illustrates the core of our struggle. We are inundated by an **avalanche** of what Jesus would describe as **details**. Deadlines. Communications. Cellphones beeping—that someone has texted us. The computer, **You’ve got mail!** And we can get so caught up in—stuck in—the web of details and the minutes ticking by—that we **miss** the opportunity right in front of us. All we see, like Martha, is lamb roasting, bread baking, vegetables that need stirred—baklava that needs mixed.

-Martha doesn’t see the opportunity—God talking to people in her living room; but **Mary** does--and **seizes** it. Even though it initially makes her look bad. Lazy. Negligent. And she seizes it because Jesus changed her identity. Yes, she’s a woman—but she’s also a **disciple of Jesus**. And when the opportunity—the **kairos** comes to live out this incredible identity as a disciple of the Son of God, there’s a whole new value system based on what He’s taught.

-A couple of months ago, a friend showed me something called a **time onion**. I thought it was pretty profound:



-Our **identity**—how we see ourselves—moves outward and determines our **values**; and without even realizing it—our **values** determine our **choices** in how we use our time. This **identity** part brings up a **third** word the Bible uses for time. It's the Greek word aion: **age; eon; the indefinite—but time-bound part of history** for **age**. When the Bible uses the **singular** form of that word, **eon**—it's referring to this **age**—the time bound part of history we live in—where hundreds of civilizations have risen and fallen.

-The Bible calls it, “this **age**.” But it's clear from how the word is used that it represents the whole broken world system. We are told, as followers of Jesus, to not allow our hearts and lives to be **conformed** to the way this **age**—the **world** thinks and acts.

-You could ask the question, “Why **not?** We're part of its history, right?” The problem is that it has defected from God and totally lost its moorings. But the word is used another way in the plural form

Aionos: ages or eons—eternal life.

This is **only** used to refer to God—and the eternal life that He gives to people who place their faith in His Son—and join His purposes. When His Spirit comes to live in us—we time-bound people become people **of the ages**.

-And **that's** precisely where we feel the conflict. If we find our identity in this age—which is focused on **making it, making things happen, doing well**—we will likely miss our identity as people of the **ages**. Who we **are** has a profound impact on where we place our **values**—and, therefore, the choices we make in terms of how we use our **time**.

- a. In the world system, human identity is very much tied to what we **do**. How good we are at performing, doing, working, producing--**something**. How many times have you had someone say to you, “So, what do you **do?**” And when we tell them, people are either somewhat impressed—or totally underwhelmed. -And in this age—this **eon**—making and spending money is a big deal—as is entertainment. And preparing your children for life has to do with **giving** them lots of things, experiences and advantages—which all cost money. Which can only be earned by working a **lot**, right?

-And the pressure in this **eon**—this age—is to have kids who are trained to perform. The implication is that their esteem will be based on how well they **do**. So, we try to give them every opportunity to **do well—tons** of opportunities—which helps us parents feel like **we're** doing well. See, to do well—well, that takes time, training, lessons, practices...

-And it can get to the point where, like Martha, we are distracted by **all we have to do**—crabbing at others, feeling like we've gotten the shaft, resentful that the people around us, including our kids and our spouse, don't **appreciate** the van time, the drive-through McDonalds, keeping the whole family busting their

collective humps to do the **schedule**, make the money, keep everything going in the right direction.

-See, this **eon**—this age is not neutral; it has a value system that goes with it that involves speed, production, do, performance, schedule, over-schedule, hurry, impress, time compression, out of time and overtime. This is not abnormal, it's all just part of the deal. And you will just have to find ways to cope with the speed of life and not whine too much about it—because life will be a **blur**. Slowing down is not even on the radar screen. And the Bible calls this **conforming to the world/eon/age**.

-The problem is that this way of living, by definition, pretty much operates as if **chronos**—sequential time—is all there is. And if we **choose** to live like this—rushing to make a name for ourselves or help our kids be successful in this system—we will probably be **too** impatient to wait for **kairos**—the opportunities God offers to **live for the ages**.

- b. But there **is** another way—and it gets right down into the place where Mary found herself; her identity as a **disciple of Jesus**. To the point where that identity was more important than her identity as a sister and a woman in 30 AD Palestine. See, she understood that being at Jesus' feet was a **kairos** moment—and that she would **miss** it if she caved to the pressure her sister was putting on her.

-So, here's the question **I** have to answer and **you** are faced with—and it's a hard one. **Where do you find your primary identity?** See, **who you are—really--**affects **every form of margin there is**—health, emotional energy, money and time. Paul, an early leader in the Jesus' movement said we have to **confront** this system. He said that the first part of this is presenting your body—your living, breathing, moving everyday self to God. Totally. As a **living sacrifice**. It's in that context that he says;

Do not conform to the pattern of this world,

that is, don't find your identity in this **eon** of time, cause **that's not who Jesus redeemed you to be!** You have the Spirit of God in you; this age is just a dot in the **eons** of eternity!! And then these words:

...but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2 TNIV)

-There is some **renewing** that needs to be done. We have to think in new ways. We have to think in new ways about money; that it's not a score card—it's a tool to make a difference. We have to think differently about people; they're not obstacles keeping us from where we need to go; they're people made in the image of God—**worthy of our time and attention**.

-We need to think differently about the point of life; it's not about living safely and happily and collecting enough to retire on; it's about being a part of what God is up to, redeeming and renewing everything—and we're on call wherever we are! And to top it off—**every** moment is a gift—not to be blasted through, but to use wisely. We are **people of the ages**—with **God Himself** living in us!

-We aren't zapped into this—it comes as we grow to know and hear and **follow** how Jesus said to live. This is what Jesus is getting at with these words we used a couple of weeks ago:

Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30 NLT)

-It's very simple; Jesus is saying, “Let **me** teach you how to live! Don't worry! I won't shame you and kick you around. I'm humble and gentle of heart!” Our **calling** is simply to cooperate—and let His Spirit grow fruit in us; love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness—and transform our value system.

-Do you understand how important that is? See, Jesus, the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Son of God—was the very One in whom all **kairos** exists; all the opportunities; all the moments we have in life to see what matters—and do what matters. It's fascinating: If you watch Jesus' life—he **never** hurried—even with only 3 years to complete His mission. Pressed by crowds? Yep. Sometimes missed a meal? Of course. But He seemed to thrive on interruptions.

-Maybe that's where we need remedial training most. To see kairos—opportunities—in the interruptions of life. The times when we are forced to slow down. I'm convinced that it's only with some re-training and renewing of our minds that we'll learn to use one of God's most important and most powerful gifts well: **Choice**. The gift of being able to discern what counts and what doesn't. The ability, while we're stuck in chronos—sequential time—that just keeps ticking away, ticking away, ticking away...the places where the God who makes all things new—is at work and waits for us to join Him!

6. Friends, we are confronted by two **very** different identities—which produce two **very** different value systems—which lead to **very** different choices. Jesus called one the **broad way**. And in our world, this would be the **production mindset**. It works from the outside in; we make **choices** that show how efficient we are; and that proves our **value** to the world—which is where we find our identity. We call it...**success**. Jesus said that it leads to death—because that's the ultimate fate of this age. It will simply **end**—and to the extent that you or I have based our identity, value system and choices on it—it will all end.

-And with that life and value system and choices, margin will decrease and stress will increase. And because this life is quite money intensive, financial margin decreases—and conflict increases. And as time margin decreases, relational intimacy decreases. And the worst part of it is that our relational intimacy with God decreases too—and instead of our soul being a source of life, it shrivels. This system feeds on the souls of people.

- a. Sometimes we shrug our shoulders when it comes to the pace of life we live—as if we're just along for the ride. Like we have absolutely no control over the craziness. But we **do!** Remember, the most powerful gift we have—is **choice**. And our choices are based on our value system. And our value system is ultimately spawned by our identity. Our sense of who we really are at the core of everything.

-If you are a follower of Jesus, you have eternal life—the life of the ages! You have eyes to see—not just the blur of time on a life that's hooked up to a supercharged engine—but the opportunities where God is interesting ordinary time. And He needs **someone**—like you—someone who lives by a different value system—hooked up to a different way of telling time--to make a difference. But, like Mary, you will have to **reach** for those opportunities. . Whether we're just a part of the world system—this age—destined to go down with it. Or whether we have **eternal life**—and are destined for the ages. Where life offers, not just **chronos**—the blur of time, but **kairos**—God moments within that time where, **if we will grasp them**, God shows up, eternity intersects time, and both **life** and **lives** are changed.

- b. If you watch Jesus' life, it's like he's always looking for an opportunity. An intersection. That **kairos** moment where, right in the middle of ordinary time—God shows up and changes a life. A short little scoundrel in a tree—who is transformed and gives away half his money. A sleazy Samaritan woman who is so unpopular in town, she has to wait to use the well when everyone else is done. But she meets Jesus at that intersection of the well she dreaded going to—and ends up being a missionary to her whole town.

-Person after person after person come to this moment when life slows down, and it's just God and them—and in an awful situation where someone is stuck in the cycle of time—there's this **kairos moment**. God does something amazing...something **eternal**.

- c. All this comes down to one incredible gift God has given to everyone. It's **choice**. We either choose to follow Jesus. Or not. It's up to us. We either choose to slow down and make space in our lives to actually live the life He taught. Or not. We are time bound people. Everyone gets the same amount of time; 24 hours in a day. But it's **possible** in our crazy busy lives to **miss kairos**—to miss the opportune moments—because we're going too fast to see them—or we're too impatient to wait for them.

7. See, the deal is that there comes a moment at the end of life when **everything** slows down—and we **all** have to actually **face** ourselves. There is kind of this final

accounting for how we've used one of life's most precious gifts; our time and our opportunities.

-The closest I ever came to seeing and feeling that was in what would be one of my final moments I had with my Dad. He had retired a week before his 80th birthday. For the first time—he and Mom bought their own home. Two months later, he fell in the hospital and suffered a head injury—which began a slow journey back to health that he would never finish.

-I found out that my Mom had cancer—and so I left here after a service and drove to Pittsburgh; visited her, and then went upstairs in the same hospital to see my Dad. He didn't hear me walk in—and he was sitting in a wheelchair in this darkened room—looking out the window. As we talked I was **totally** surprised to hear the edge of regret in his voice. He said something like, “Ken, I feel like I've accomplished so **little** with my life.”

-I was blown away. Here was a man who had spent 55 years—giving his life to others, listening to people, loving them, helping them, teaching them, praying for them—on call 24/7. I bawled like a little kid as I told him that he was my hero; that he had made a profound difference in my life—by **being** there, loving as he did. That **anything** I ever accomplished or anyone I ever touched—He was a part of that. And that brought comfort, I think. I will never, **ever** forget that moment.

-I'm not trying to create drama this morning. It's just that **I** need to understand—and **you** need to understand—that we've all got **one** life—it's a gift from God--and it **flies** by. When it's me sitting in the wheelchair staring out the window, waiting for the dinner bell to ring—I want to **know** the I've lived out my true identity--**slowly** enough to see—and grasp the opportunities—disguised as interruptions—that God has sent my way. You'll want to know that too.

HOMEWORK:

1. **Do a personal/family review of your schedule. Ask, “What is *good*, and what is *best*?” Eliminate something *good*.**
2. **Read Jesus' ground-breaking teaching on this, Matthew 5-7; read Paul's teaching on love, 1 Corinthians 13 and the fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5:22-23. Personally invite God to *renew your mind on how you think about life*.**
3. **Intentionally slow down your life. Take the slow lane, the longer line—*think* about the people around you. Ask God to step into ordinary time—and give you *kairos*.**