

25. September 2020

“Everything has its time!”

Eccl 3,1-11

There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven: A time for giving birth, a time for dying; a time for planting, a time for uprooting what has been planted. A time for killing, a time for healing; a time for knocking down, a time for building. A time for tears, a time for laughter; a time for mourning, a time for dancing. A time for throwing stones away, a time for gathering them; a time for embracing, a time to refrain from embracing. A time for searching, a time for losing; a time for keeping, a time for discarding. A time for tearing, a time for sewing; a time for keeping silent, a time for speaking. A time for loving, a time for hating; a time for war, a time for peace. What do people gain from the efforts they make? I contemplate the task that God gives humanity to labour at. All that he does is apt for its time; but although he has given us an awareness of the passage of time, we can grasp neither the beginning nor the end of what God does.

The great wisdom of this text is summarised in the word: *“There is a season for everything”*.

We know two different Greek expressions in relation to time: “chronos” and “kairos”!

“Chronos” means the general time, which is repeated for example in the months, in the course of the years, in the return of the seasons etc.

“Kairos”, on the other hand, means the moment for action!

In the Christian context we can understand it that way: *“Now is the real time of favour, now the day of salvation is here.” (2 Cor 6,2b)!*

Since the act of redemption of our Lord, the hour of salvation has come for all people! While here a great period of time is meant, which God alone knows, and in which salvation is offered to people, the “kairos” can also be understood in a narrower sense: Now is the moment to take up my calling to do certain things; now the Lord wants this and that from me!

So when I act now, when I take this step or that step, I am acting in accordance with the grace of God for this very specific moment!

While in the above text we look more at the wisdom for general life, that the right time is set for the right action, and therefore a balance of life is achieved, we can be even more precise in the following of Christ!

Let us take an example: *“there is a time for keeping silent, a time for speaking”*. As disciples of the Lord, we have a fundamental missionary mandate, i.e. to bear witness to the faith, regardless of whether or not we have been given a special gift of speech! This mission spans our whole life! It is the mission commissioned by the Lord, not only to seize the hour of salvation ourselves, but also to help other people to come into contact with the grace of salvation, or even to help them to grasp it more deeply!

If we take the given terminology of “kairos” and “chronos”, then we Christians basically live in “kairos”! We may assume that when we proclaim the Word, we are acting in fundamental agreement with the will of God! But within the great structure of grace of “kairos” there may be certain moments which are particularly suitable for passing on the Word or for keeping silent! To recognise this means to listen very finely to the Holy Spirit, who comes to our aid especially through the gift of the Council!

To recall some aspects of the gift of the Council: the Holy Spirit reminds us of all that Jesus said and did (*cf. Jn 14,26*) - he dwells in us and advises us how to apply it to the concrete cases of life. Through the gift of the Council, we become able to perceive the inner silent voice of the Holy Spirit and distinguish it from the other voices. It completes the virtue of Christian wisdom. Wisdom teaches us to see everything from God's perspective, but there remains the uncertainty due to the imperfection of our nature. We need an inner light, the enlightenment from within that allows us to grasp the will of God in an instant:

“Speak, Yahweh; for your servant is listening.” (1 Sam 3,10).

So the Holy Spirit can advise us very well when the moment of speaking and when the moment of silence has come! If we act in this way in accordance with the more precise instructions of the Holy Spirit, then we are right in the centre of “kairos”! The question in this context is, how can we pay closer attention to the voice and the instructions of the Holy Spirit?

But this subject would go beyond the scope of meditation for today!

That is why we are taking with us: We act in “kairos” when we listen closely to the Holy Spirit in the state of grace and thus grasp the grace that God has provided for right action!