

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
August 21, 2016  
The Rev. Jamie Samilio

## No Bad Days

**There is never a wrong time to do the right thing.  
There is never a bad time to do a good thing.**

Each of the four lessons for today had a theme that jumped out at me. Taken alone, they are each good news to us, but take them together and I think we have a picture of the kind of life and relationship we dream of having with God and each other.

### **The four concepts are:**

**Jeremiah:** God knew us before we were born.  
It is not our age or social position, but our call that is important.

**Psalms:** God is our refuge.  
When we are anxious over the cares of the world, turn to God.

**Hebrews:** God is making all things new and unshakable.  
Focus on what is really important.

**Luke:** There is never a wrong time to do the right thing.  
There is never a bad time to do a good thing.

I want to explore each of these just a little, and just to mix things up a bit—as I tend to do—I will do this in order.

### **Jeremiah: God knew us before we were born.**

This concept of God knowing us before we came into this world, in this time and place, is where my faith that there is a kingdom that awaits us after death is seeded. This is where my faith sprouts, then grows and blooms. The idea that I prior to my birth, I somehow existed outside of this reality, and that God knew me before I was born is exciting, and gives me hope for the future. It also makes trusting God a lot easier. Especially when God went on to tell Jeremiah, that it is not about our age or position in life that makes what we say important. It is our ability to open ourselves to God and allow God's message to come through us that matters. As for putting ourselves out there in the name of God, Jeremiah is told that God will deliver him and, "...deliver us from evil..." is something we pray all the time.

### **Psalms: God is our refuge.**

"In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge; let me never be ashamed. Save me, keep me safe, and deliver me from the wicked..." To me, this is a clear call to trust in God. To know that God will be there for us in our time of need.

If I have learned anything, it is this: while God may be there for us when we need Him, it does not mean that we should not intentionally invite God into our lives, especially when we face adversity.

How often do we "*Pack up all our cares and woes,*" and take refuge in the things of this world and not God? Things like food, alcohol, gossip, busywork, and of course sex, drugs, and rock-n-roll -- I am sure you have a personal list of favorites, I know I do. Sometimes when you are afraid or frustrated you just need to run, and the fight or flight response is in our DNA. And, we tend to run to the first thing we think of or the closest thing to us and most often, it is not God we run toward. The reprieve we get from our anxiety is temporary when we take refuge in earthly things—and then of course, we run toward the next thing.

Next time, you are anxious, fearful, upset and just need a break, try stopping, taking an intentional breath and saying the easiest prayer that I know, that will open the door to the refuge God has to offer, "*God, help me.*"

### **Hebrews: God is making all things new and unshakable.**

"*Who wants change? Who wants to change?*" I reposted this on Facebook on Friday.

If God is making all things new, that is—God is continually creating—then we need to embrace God’s new creations, accept new knowledge inspired by the Holy Spirit, and change ourselves to meet the needs of God’s new creation.

**Luke: There is no bad time to be set free from what holds us back.**

What is really important here is to keep a Sabbath day, but not to keep it so strictly that we miss the point of taking the day in the first place. To rest, to worship, to renew our bodies, minds and souls—we need to do that—it keeps us spiritually sane.

Here is a question for you: Am I working today?

Is Nick working today, or Jaime, or Bob?

I do not think we are hypocrites, I think we are here doing what God has called us to do. With increasing globalization, we realize that some people celebrate their Sabbath day on a different day than we do. Somewhere on this earth, someone is working everyday, and I think God created the earth to work that way—it is not a mistake.

What is a mistake is not taking time out of your week to rest, recharge, and to give thanks to God for all we have. The woman in the Gospel today had suffered for eighteen years. Jesus made the point that she had suffered enough, and that if there was an opportunity to cure her then, that is what should be done, now.

**There is never a bad time to do a good thing, even on the Sabbath.**

A few weeks ago we celebrated the feast of the Transfiguration. The figures of Moses and Elijah who appeared and talked with Jesus about His death that was rapidly approaching is significant, because they represented the Law and the Prophets. God’s voice came from heaven and said, “*Listen to Him!*” This clearly showed that the Law and the Prophets must give way to Jesus. Jesus is the new and living “Way” and He is replacing the old. Jesus is the fulfillment of the law and prophecies from the Old Testament. Jesus gave us a new commandment: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, and love your neighbor as yourself—every day, even on the Sabbath.

**There is never a wrong time to do the right thing.**

**There is never a bad time to do a good thing.**

I spent many years working for American Airlines, and it is a 24/7 industry. It is the only job I ever had where on a Tuesday, people would say they were happy, because Tuesday was their Friday—that is, Wednesday and Thursday were their days off in the work week. I worked almost ever Sunday—I managed to go to church, because I worked the afternoon and evening shift, but still I worked on Sunday.

One Sunday in particular, I was in Pittsburgh, filling in for the general manager who was on vacation for a few weeks. I had a seasoned crew of agents working for me, and it was a busy, but manageable day. You may not realize this, but many aircraft and crews spend their days going back and forth between the same cities. One particular flight was making laps between Pittsburgh and Dallas. As we were deplaning the passengers, they were filing into the terminal as usual, half walking and looking at their cell phones, trying to navigate their way out.

One woman stopped in her tracks and she was walking past us and burst into tears. She moved to the side and made a phone call—you could see on her face that something was very wrong. She came directly to the agents at the gate and said that she was a retired employee, and that she needed to return to Dallas on this the next flight. How odd to have just come from there and want to return.

She said her name was Terry, and she explained that her husband was found on the ground of the parking lot of his work, having suffered a major heart attack, and was in the hospital awaiting surgery at that very minute. She needed on that flight right now.

The lead agent went to check the flight details and see what we could do while I sat with Terry—the airlines were good training for me to be a priest.

The thing about flying as an employee or retired employee, is that you are the last to get on, and only then if there is room. The flight she needed to get on, was booked, and there were already other employees listed for any potential open seats.

The agents and I looked at the list of employees who were ahead of her on the flight, and paged them to the gate—there were five of them, a single flyer and two couples. The list is sacred and it is in violation of company policy to tamper with the list—we needed permission or Terry had no hope of getting on the return flight.

The single rider said she was sorry, but she had to go. We moved on. Both of the couples said they would give way, and let Terry return home. While this sounds simple, they put their jobs on the line for her—each of the coupled employees, had to be at work the next day, and missing a shift because you are flying is grounds for dismissal. I told them both that I would call their managers and go to bat for them if they were stuck in Pittsburgh, but even that was no guarantee of safety. Terry would make the flight. It was the right thing to do, even if it meant they could face disciplinary action, they did the right thing, on a Sunday.

The good news is that several people did not show up for the flight, and both couples also made the go on. Terry texted me a few hours later—the surgery was successful and her husband would be ok.

If you remember anything when you leave here today, make it this:

**There is never a wrong time to do the right thing.**

**There is never a bad time to do a good thing.**

**Amen**

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Psalm 71:1-6

Hebrews 12:18-29

Luke 13:10-17