

When Someday Becomes Today

Luke 4:14-21

September 9, 2018

By

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To the extent possible, effort has been made to preserve the quality of the spoken word in this written adaptation.

Every once in a while something happens in life that really gets your attention and tells you, in no uncertain terms, life is changing. We can all imagine our future when someday we will get our driver's license, or go off to college, or get married and become a parent, but then the day arrives and we learn to drive, or begin college, or become a spouse, or a birth happens and that someday becomes today. Thank God there is a period of preparation! We all know that health doesn't last forever but that 'someday' gets pushed off from our consciousness, until one day we find ourselves in a doctor's office hearing that someday has become today.

We can imagine a day when we will be older but then one day, something happens and we actually are older. Maybe it's the day you retired. We imagine that day and then someday finally becomes today and we may wish we were better prepared for it financially or emotionally. Sometimes we look in the mirror and realize others no longer see us as we see ourselves, eternally at age 32. Because we're actually now well over 50 but our internal image hasn't caught up to reality.

I had that experience this summer. I always thought that one day I was going to change my diet and try to lose this extra weight. I'm the kind of guy that eats cold pizza over the sink for a meal – even breakfast. I don't look in the refrigerator for ingredients, I look for something I can eat right now and quickly. Doesn't always lead to great nutrition. So when I found myself in the doctor's office, and then referred to a dietician who told me, "You have to be gluten-free for the rest of your life," I was stunned. It got my attention. That one day that I intended to get around to someday, giving up my adolescent approach to eating, actually arrived rather surprisingly. I had to make some dietary changes right now. My 'someday' realization has an impact on all of you as well. It's one of the reasons we are serving gluten-free communion elements in all three services starting last week.

At the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, the 'someday' of the coming kingdom of God became today. "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." The scripture is from Isaiah 61, a vision of the future when there will be reconciliation of the past, and justice, and a time of jubilee. A new period of growth and opportunity will be ushered in and it will include comfort for those who mourn, and new gladness and righteousness in our living. Jesus proclaimed at the beginning of his ministry that that "someday" has arrived "today."

Unlike Mark and Matthew, Luke has the ministry of Jesus beginning in his own hometown, with his own people, in the synagogues of Galilee. He is praised generally by all reports. Mark and Matthew place the hometown response later in the chronology. Luke begins the ministry of Jesus more concisely. All that Jesus says and does is within the context of Judaism and the historical beliefs found in the prophets and Torah. He not only attends synagogue, he reads scripture and comments upon it. Jesus is at home in the context of the Jewish faith. He announces the fulfillment of prophecy and defines his messianic role. He is bringing to reality the longings of the poor, the oppressed, and the imprisoned. Christ will usher in the amnesty, the liberation, and the restoration associated with the proclamation of the year of Jubilee described in the Levitical law. The age of God's reign is here today!

And according to Luke, the opposition begins right in his own hometown. Their fascination with the local boy turns quickly to contempt and he escapes, but only barely, with his life. The response to Jesus is going to be mixed; admiration from some, wondering from others, and doubt and contempt from yet others. Resentment builds because Jesus extends God's grace well beyond the bounds of those who have earned it. He eats with sinners, and cares for the unclean, and includes the broken within the circle of God's grace and love. It leads to violence, all prefigured in this beginning of the ministry as Luke tells it. This text foreshadows what will come at his trial and death, and what his followers will experience, and also the rejection of Israel's religious leaders, and the taking of the message to the Gentiles. For Luke, the Gospel is universal. But Jesus does not go elsewhere (to the Gentiles) because he is rejected at home. It is the other way around. He is rejected at home because he goes elsewhere. Old rivalries and tribalisms have a way of getting in the way of the future.

This week, in an article by Tom Friedman of *The New York Times*, he compares and contrasts what is happening in the far east with what is happening in the middle east.¹ Friedman apparently enjoyed the current movie at the theaters, "Crazy Rich Asians." He writes, "Rich Asia has gotten really rich – not because it doesn't have political, tribal, ethnic, and religious differences like other regions, but because in more places on more days it learned to set those differences aside and focus on building the real foundations of sustainable wealth; education, trade, infrastructure, human capital, and, in the most successful places, the rule of law. The region of the world that should be naturally rich has made itself poor by *repeatedly letting the past bury the future and the*

1 Friedman, Thomas L. "Crazy Poor Middle Easterners" (*New York Times* Op-Ed September 5, 2018 p.A23)

region that is naturally poor has made itself rich by letting the future bury the past." (Italics mine) Asia has become rich by tapping its human resources, men and women, and giving them the tools to realize their potential. Rival sects and tribalisms of the past continue to divide and destroy throughout the Middle-East. The same thing in Africa. It's possible to miss our potential by letting the past bury the future, rather than allowing the future to bury the past.

What if that 'someday' that you have been putting off, like when you're going to get healthier, or finally taking care of some important business you've been putting off, or make that phone call to an estranged family member, arrived and became today? There is no time like the present! What in your past is burying the future? Maybe it's time to let the past go and realize your potential so that "in more places on more days" you learn to set aside differences and focus on building real foundations for sustainable living to attend to matters of physical, mental, and spiritual health. What if the 'someday' of righteousness and justice became today, and the political divisions of the past became the unity of the present in our national life? Is there a way to let the vision of the future direct the present rather than allowing the past to bury our future?

"This is the day the Lord has made – let us rejoice and be glad in it!" Today is the day of the coming of the Lord. Every day presents us with the possibility of a creating a different future – and making someday a reality now - today. Don't miss your opportunity. God is present in Christ now, through the power of the Holy Spirit and today is the first day of the rest of your life. Make it count.

O Lord, who alone knows what lies before us this day, grant that in every hour of it we may stay close to you. Let us be in the world, yet not of it. Let us use this world without abusing it. If we buy, let us be as though we possessed not. If we have nothing, let us be as though we possess all things. Let us not embark on any undertaking that is not in line with your will, nor shrink from any sacrifice that you may demand. Suggest, direct, control every movement of our minds, for Christ's sake we pray. Amen.

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