

Time Out. A sermon preached on October 30, 2016
at St. Giles' Presbyterian Church, Prince George, BC
by Rev. Herb Hilder.

Lessons; PSALM 119:25-32

I JOHN 2:12-14

MATTHEW 7:9-11

The crowds roar,

The air horns let go

Mascots and cheerleaders do what they do to stir up
the crowd

The jumbo Tron camera scans the crowd and
displayed 10x life size is a spectator or a group of
spectators bedecked in team colours, faces painted
in team colours waving team colour flags

On the court or the field next to the players'
benches

A man in a sport jacket and tie or a bomber jacket
and ball hat signals the referee with this hand signal
TIME OUT.

The ref's whistle blows – time out is called

And the team in play gathers around their coach.

Last minute instructions,

Word of encouragement

Prayer

One for the gipper, a Hail Mary

As spectators, we are not privy to the
conversation.

Ref blows his whistle again – the clock starts up and the ball is in play again!

TIME OUT – a moment to regroup, to pause, to consider, recalling something coach said....

Kids know ‘time out’ means other things as well.

Often it means they have crossed a line in terms in behavior.

They have become too loud, too saucy, too aggressive, too rough, too wired.

They need to take a break, stand down, be calm, and settle

And parents know they need a bread from the too loud and too active, too opinionated little person or little people.

I have come to believe that all of us need to call time,

To be told, time out by others if we cannot do it for ourselves with ourselves

My family and close friends are good at doing this for me – Herb or Dad,

You really are becoming a bit too aggressive and strident.

Stop spinning...

Just sit and breathe slowly.

How about you – does your family, do your family have your ear if they say such things...

For we all need “time outs”

This morning's reading from I John is essentially John saying to his readers – then and now – TIME OUT!

The appeals and the exhortations we have looked at and that will follow-
Stop for a moment.

Last week, we considered verses in which John tells his readers that they must keep that commandment of love for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

A commandment that is essential to maintaining and deepening **our fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (1:3)**

In the verses that follow this morning's, John will make another great and striking and to some a very startling exhortation

¹⁵**Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; (2:15)**

But in this morning's reading, there is this break,
This time out

End of verse 11, John pauses in his letter and says

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven on account of his name (vs.12) and so on

I wonder why John does what is essentially a "time out"

I wonder why John does not just continue to drive home his appeals and exhortations.

I wonder why this break, this parenthesis.

I think it is a reflection of *John's pastoral concern for his readers – then and now.*

I think John is very much aware that he has been giving some very blunt and heavy instruction – no nonsense teaching.

I think John is also aware that there is more no nonsense teaching and counsel to come

However,

John's object is *not simply to lay down Christian doctrine so heavily that his readers cannot absorb what he is saying.*

I remember a history professor at Brock University in St. Catharines who knew her material and was great on one to one,

But when she got in front of a group of students, her nickname of Machine Gun was accurate.

Crusades – 30 minutes

Monastic movement – 25 minutes

Protestant Reformation – 20 minutes

Counter Reformation – 20 minutes

Facts and ideas came at us in rapid fire –but after about 15 minutes, few of us could process what was said and we knew that night we'd be reading 5-6 chapters of the text to fill in the gaps of what we had been able to take down – and gaps were many and large

What “Machine Gun Styron” said was important in terms of course content and historical process,
 But our minds were not allowed to absorb what was said

In a similar way,
 What John has been and will be writing about is really, really important in living out the Christian life day to day.
 But John, unlike my undergrad history professor, makes time,
 Gives his readers time to refocus, regroup, reorient and process.

John puts it like this – this is not in the text, so don’t look for it
 But I cannot help but believe it is in the back of his mind by the end of verse 11 of chapter 2

I have been writing to you some of the basic principles
 I have been reminding you of some of the demands which the Christian life makes upon every one of you.

I want to make sure that you are following and paying attention to what I am saying.

Am I making myself clear?

Let me remind you again, my readers of that upon which I am basing my whole appeal and exhortation.

These verses read this morning are not empty filler.

John is a loving and concerned pastor and as a wise teacher, he repeats what he has said – I am not going to proceed with my line of argument until I am satisfied with we're all agreed about the basics.

Time out

Time to regroup and refocus

Time to hear some encouragement.

For remember, as John writes this first letter, *he is anxious to give his readers some comfort as they seek to live out an active life based upon the teachings and life of Jesus*

I wonder if John thought by this point that perhaps maybe he was holding so high a standard that no one but one of the inner circle of disciples

Or even the Lord himself could attain it

Would what he has already written them feel even greater sinners with no hope?

Time out decides John

As well, I think John wants to ensure that his readers – then and now – that what he says is to be practical

This is not all just talk

His readers are expected to do that which he says – in the power and strength and by the Guidance of the Holy Spirit – most definitely – but his readers--

US are expected to do the stuff about which he speaks.

So to come back to John's letter and this morning's reading –

What are these things John wants his readers to process, refocus and regroup around?

Key word in these verses is the word "because"

1) *Your sins are forgiven on account of his name.*

That is an elementary thing that can be said about a Christian, his/her sins are forgiven.

Matching this faith basic with the word 'children' is well chosen.

For forgiveness of sins, like the things we learn in childhood is basic

Like reading, tying shoes, your numbers, colours, simple words, *forgiveness of sins* in the Christian faith in elementary, basic, ground level.

It undergirds everything else in the faith

We are in the hands of a God and Father who loves us and has an intense concern for our welfare and development

Forgiveness of sins – we have come to God through the only way one can come to know the Father
Neither a Father who is not a stern and austere Judge nor a senile, sentimental Grandpa who gives us everything we want.

But living in the light that we are forgiven of our sins people through the action of Jesus means we have come under the care of a strong tender true Father, with a Father's heart

Listen to how St. Paul phrases it in his letter to the Galatians

And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba! Father' (Gal 4:6)

Abba is a Hebrew word of endearment and affection.

The equivalent of DaDa or Daddy.

Forgiveness of sins absorbed into our lives means that we begin to work toward seeing and practicing that God in Christ is everything.

We are forgiven because of the perfect, The finished,

The full work of the Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf.

Are YOU clear about that?

Are you relying utterly and absolutely upon Him?

2) you have conquered the evil one) vs.13), you have overcome

When we are new in the faith – children – often it is all we can absorb to say, we have learned and know that our sins are forgiven by the action of God in Christ.

But as we grow or mature in the faith, we learn more, our field of vision becomes broader and as in growing up we become *young people* don't we? We build on life lessons and experiences

We come more attune to the world around us – that
 which we can see,
 And that which we cannot see – the spiritual world,
 The mystery

John uses the image of ‘young people’ to
 address a second truth or given in living daily, as
 Jesus lived

*The existence of evil and the authority we have in Christ
 to come against it and its source*

It does not take long as you live out the Christian
 life or life in general to realize that the world is out
 of joint,

Things happen that are not supposed to happen
 and things do not happen that are supposed to
 happen.

Evil is real.

I have mentioned more than once C. S. Lewis’ The
 Screwtape Letters as a must read – particularly if
 you think evil is some sort of dated behavior and
 term. It most certainly is not!!

Though now over 30 years old, the late
 American psychiatrist Scott Peck wrote a book
 called People of the Lie. The Hope for Healing
 Human Evil.

This book grew out of his immensely popular The
 Road Less Travelled (1978) which had been
 published 5 years before People of the Lie.

I read "The Road" because everyone was telling me I should read it as an almost official minister I did and the first sentence in the book "Life is difficult" remains almost like a mantra for me.

But it was Peck's second book, People of the Lie that touched me deeply and has continued so to do.

For Peck was not a Christian when he started writing the book

By the end of the book, he was

How? Peck realized that the randomness and depth of evil in world was not accidental

Nor was evil just a made up church word.

Peck became exposed in case studies and patient after patient that there was a force that could not be explained away by any scientific term.

Not all cases and patients were possessed by the devil,

But there was something seriously out of whack in the lives of many that could only be explained or understood by the existence of some external force or being.

That conviction led Peck to see and accept that the message of God in Christ was the only hope for him and for his patients.

He speaks about this at the end of the People of the Lie and in every subsequent book he wrote before his death.

As we grow in the love and knowledge of
 God in Christ,
 Truths like those of Paul to the Ephesians resonate
 clearer and clearer do they not

¹²For our^[a] struggle is not against enemies of blood and
 flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against
 the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the
 spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (Eph. 6:12)

If we jump back to verse 13 – **you know him who
 was from the beginning.** – this aspect of the John’s
 “time out” is matched with the word ‘father – those
 who have had long experience and practice in the
 Christian life.

I love the way Eugene Peterson in the Message
 translates the first part of verse 13

**You veterans were on the ground floor, you know the
 One who started it all.**

A third foundational basic John does not want his
 readers to forget in all the things he will counsel
 them about – *modelling the way of Jesus will last all our
 worldly lives*

As we look back upon experience after experience
 of the personal touch of the Risen Lord in our
 lives – for healing, for provision, for grace, for
 illumination, for hope, for contentment in whatever
 circumstance we find ourselves,

We do find ourselves do we not – trusting in God
 more,

Realizing that we truly are in his hands.

And that everything, absolutely everything is a gift from a loving and lavishly giving and generous God.

Each of us will spend our lifetimes learning this to be so.

So says John do not be discouraged or in despair if the ways of Jesus are not being absorbed in your life as quickly and as seamlessly as you expected or might wish.

“Time out!!” calls John in these verses.

Okay team, let’s continue to remember

- ✓ Forgiveness of your sins is accomplished only by what God in Christ has done for you first. Okay? Got it?
- ✓ Evil is real, but again by the power and in the strength of God’s Holy Spirit, it need not overwhelm you or be the last word. Okay? Got it?
- ✓ Being a Christian is a lifetime modelling of Jesus’ way and teaching.
- ✓ Remember team – it takes about 60 days to grow a squash, many, many years to grow the cedars of Lebanon. Which sort of Christian do you want to be known as – a squash Christian or one resembling the cedars of Lebanon? Okay? Got it?

There is the whistle! The ball is about to go back into play.

Keep your focus on the Lord in all things and at all times. AMEN