

**11th Sunday OT (B)**  
**June 14, 2015**  
**Father Tony Davis**

For many people, time is a negative thing. Time stands in the way of us and what we want. It's like a barrier or obstacle.

We say things like: I'm going on vacation in two weeks, but this upcoming week is in the way. I want to be a successful business person someday, but these years of being low person in the office are in the way. I have stuff to do today, but this time in Church is in the way. Time stands in between me and what I want. It holds me back from the goal. If this time would just disappear, everything would be great and all my problems would go away.

This raises the question: is time a negative thing? Is time "in the way"? Even for a Christian, isn't time keeping us from reaching our goal of heaven?

In answer to these questions, I think it's true to say that while for us, we tend to see time as a negative, but for God, time is not a negative thing at all. God created time. It is the atmosphere or environment in which God works. Time gives God room to reveal Himself. So, for Christians, time is not a curse, but a blessing. Time is a gift.

In today's Gospel from Mark, we hear a few parables of Jesus which deal with something sensitive to and appreciative of time: the growth of a plant. For plants, time is never a bad thing, but is an essential component of its wellbeing. It is just as important to the plant as water, sunlight, and soil. Plants instinctively know that they cannot go from a small seed to a large plant instantaneously. As the first parable in our Gospel reading today says, the sower sows the seed and then day and night watches it grow, implying that it takes time for the seed to grow. There are no leaps or jumps, but just a continuous movement from one stage to the next. So we could say that for the plant, time is not in the way, but is a great gift to the plant.

The same should be true for all of us. Time is a gift. Yet, there is often a temptation to forget this and see our faith lives as everything or nothing, all or none. We want to see things in their finished form. We want to have a perfect score card with God. Returning to the parables in the Gospel today, we want to see the huge plant, but we hardly ever turn our attention to the growth process. We skip the sprouting, the first blades breaking through the soil, the small branches, the development of the fruit, and the general growth of the plant. If, according to Jesus, the Kingdom of God is like a plant that grows and develops, we need to rethink our faith lives.

Faith is not something that we all of a sudden attain in all its fullness. Faith is something we grow into. At our baptism, it's not as if we reached perfect knowledge and love of God that day. At our baptism, we were indeed given the gift of faith, but it was in the form of a seed. Baptism was just the start. It initiated a lifelong friendship with Jesus. So we could say that being a Christian is ultimately about an ongoing process of growth.

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What matters most is not so much results, but that we are progressing in the growth process and appreciating the different stages of growth as we move through them. Faith is not all or nothing, it is something that grows and develops.

Returning to the topic of time, the point for this weekend's liturgy then is that for Christians, *time is not in the way of us reaching our goal, but is the way of us reaching our goal*. Time is a gift and is essential to our wellbeing, just as much as food, water, and shelter.

So what does all this mean practically for us? How does this message about time as a blessing impact my daily life?

I think it means that we need to be careful of getting too far ahead of ourselves in life. Sometimes, in our eagerness to be the best person or the best Christian we can be, we start skipping stages of growth and development and acting as if we are something we're not. We forget that time is on our side and we get impatient with ourselves.

Our Gospel this weekend asks us to pause and be grateful for whatever stage of growth we find ourselves in. To be pleased with who we are. We might not be living up to the standards which we or others impose on us. Yet, if we recall the image of a plant, as Jesus does so often in the Gospels, we can see ourselves as in the process of growing. We are not failures, but simply pilgrims on the way. Let us not use this as an excuse for not trying to do better, but as a means of knowing where we are and where our next step should be.