

## Thoughts from the Rectory – April 2024

### “About time”

For several close members of my family, early April is birthday time. But I have to confess that for me, this time of year is also synonymous with something else – the changing of the clocks. Sometime either in late March or early April we move from Greenwich Mean Time to British Summer Time. No transient pleasure of the extra hour in bed in the springtime, but the loss of an hour instead – important when you are a Rector and the change happens on a Sunday morning with Church services to get up for, and especially this year as it falls on Easter Sunday! Doubly challenging for those of us that were up to greet the dawn for our Easter Sunday Sunrise service!!



When I was a child, I struggled to understand both how and why we changed the clocks twice a year. How could we alter time? Wasn't time – just time? How could we mess about with it, and decide that what one day was 8am was now 7am? And why did we bother? Did it really matter that in the summer it could be light until nearly 11pm – wouldn't 10pm do? The idea of time as something that could be manipulated and shifted baffled me. It wasn't until I was much older that I understood that the whole notion of measuring and naming 'time' was a human invention.

Calendars (for reckoning intervals of time) and clocks (for measuring its passage) have a long history. The first calendars were lunar, and there's evidence of them as long as 6,000 years ago. The first clocks were a form of sundial, found in Egypt so clearly humans have long felt the need to track the passage of time. From a human perspective, time is linear and goes in one direction and the concept of what could happen if we were freed from this constraint has long teased fiction writers' imaginations. There are many authors of novels and screen play who have delighted in exploring the idea of being able to travel back in time, or even jump about in it, and have explored the paradoxes that could result from people meeting their younger selves, or altering events that have already happened and there are some fabulous quotes from them. In an episode of 'Dr Who', the Doctor put it like this:

*'People assume that time is a strict progression of cause to effect, but actually from a non-linear, non-subjective viewpoint - it's more like a big ball of wibbly wobbly... time-y wimey... stuff.'*

So that's what time is like for human beings. But what about for God? This is a question that has exercised much bigger brains than mine! Christians believe that God stands outside time. There was never a time when God wasn't, and there will never be a time when God isn't. As creatures living in time and subject to it, this is incredibly difficult for us to get our heads around.

The early church was also concerned about time. Towards the end of the first century, there were many who believed that the risen and ascended Jesus would return during their lifetimes, to complete what he had started. When this didn't happen, they were puzzled, and some became disheartened. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter of Peter, the writer, addressing these concerns, puts it like this:

*'do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day.'*

From the perspective of God's realm of eternity, time looks very different.

But even though God exists outside time, and is not subject to it, God reveals chose to reveal himself within time, because humanity and creation **is**. Starting with Abraham, God promised that through his descendants, all creation would know God's blessing. Some thousands of years later, and 2,000 years distant from us, God revealed himself in human flesh, in the person of Jesus, a human being born in a specific place at a specific time.

The ancient Greeks had two words for time: *chronos*, referring to sequential time, and *kairos*, which signifies the proper or opportune moment for something. Somehow, when Jesus entered *chronos*, it was also *kairos*. Jesus was just what we needed, just when we needed him.

And now, with God, we have all the time in the world.

With every blessing for April

Rev Ruth