

Now is the Time

A homily preached by Jennifer A. Hudson at St. Paul's Episcopal Church on the Green, June 15, 2017.

Isaiah 41: 8-10; Matthew 6: 25-34

In the name of God: Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. Amen.

The animatronics and revolving theatre attraction known as the Carousel of Progress has an interesting history. It made its debut at the 1964 New York World's Fair, went on to Disneyland in California, then became a permanent fixture at Walt Disney World in the mid-70s. It was, and remains, an attraction that takes visitors on a journey through different historical periods and is accompanied by an optimistic tune about the future titled "There's a Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow." But when the attraction initially came to Florida, its original jingle was changed to an equally peppy one called "The Best Time of Your Life." Unlike its predecessor, which had boasted "There's a great big beautiful tomorrow, shining at the end of every day," the new song focused on the here and now, claiming "Now is the time. Now is the best time. Now is the best time of your life. Life is a prize, live every minute. Open your eyes and watch how you win it!"¹ It wasn't until the late 90s that the Carousel's theme song was changed back to its original forward-looking melody.

The Carousel of Progress illustrates humanity's curious preoccupation with time. We tend to either think ahead or look backward. Even in this present moment, our once-futuristic age of technology now realized, we're reliving memories on Facebook or tweeting our frets about the fate of the nation and world. We're seldom celebrating and singing "now is the time." How can we when we're agonizing over the knowns and unknowns ahead and whether or not there will indeed be "a great big beautiful tomorrow"? How can we enjoy the present if we're obsessing about deeds we've done and left undone, or what someone else has done or left undone?

Whether we're stuck in the past or anxiously gazing toward the future, God, the I AM, reminds us in tonight's passages not to worry or fear, for God *is* and God *is* with us in all things here and now. We first hear this in Isaiah, verse 10: "do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God." Jesus, too, reminds us not to worry about tomorrow "for tomorrow will bring worries of

its own. Today's trouble is enough for today" (Matthew 6: 34). Notice he doesn't say we won't experience anxieties or trials in life. But he is saying that if other creatures of God live every minute without worry and are provided for, then we humans need to have some faith that God does the same for us. We need to open our eyes to the fact that life is a prize we can win with God, that God gifts us with God's presence in the present. Jesus might not be singing "There's a Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow," but I do think he is singing "The Best Time of Your Life." Will we join him in that song? Now just might be the best time.

ⁱ Lyrics for *The Best Time of Your Life* (Carousel of Progress) by Richard M. Sherman feat. Robert B. Sherman.