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Those Days...and This Day
Luke 2:1-14

The most familiar Christmas story—the Luke one used in pageants, read by families, read by Linus in “A Charlie Brown Christmas, and words read in the “Sixth and Seventh” Lessons just earlier—begins with “In those days...” and concludes with “...but unto you is born *this day*....” It begins with “those days” and ends with “this day.”

Luke opens this part of the introduction to his gospel sounding a bit like a historian. He dates Jesus’ birth by referring to the reigning emperor and the local Roman ruler— Caesar Augustus and Syria’s, Quirinius (Kyrenios). We speak of that kind of time as chronology—how one thing fits in an arrangement of events. Remember that Luke wrote his gospel only a couple of years after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. He wrote his gospel during one of the worst times in Jewish history. When Jesus was born, 70 years earlier, Judah was suppressed by the Roman Empire. The Temple was controlled, for all practical purposes, by the Roman government. Into this time, among these events Jesus was born. “In those days...”

But, Luke’s tone changes as he begins to add descriptions about the birth: “For unto you is born *this day* a Savior...” No longer is the Caesar the Savior or Lord. A new savior and Lord has been born...*this day*. Luke has shifted to *kairos* time.

Kairos time is not concerned with placing an event among other events to determine location. It’s meaning has to do with the quality of the event itself. Things that happen in life that demand a decision. An event that serves as a nexus—an intersection—and the path we take at those points can change our lives forever.

Chronos—the timing of an event in relation to other events—and *kairos*—the quality of an event that has a life-changing potential.

When my first child, Kelly, was born, it changed my life forever. Now, the date on which she was born was April 3, 1970, an early Thursday morning. In

fact, it was the Thursday before Easter. Temperatures had dropped in Louisville, Kentucky, where I was in seminary. Just four days before, six inches of snow accumulated on the ground. That's the chronology of my first child's birth.

But if you want to know the bigger story, her life and birth changed my life forever. I never knew life could be so fragile or so determined. How perfectly formed she was gave a new sense to my understanding of creation...and sleep! Her pain created a more intense pain than I had ever felt before; her joy and excitement drove my own sense of pleasure and contentment to a level I had never fathomed. It was not just what happened on April 3, 1970 that made my life different. It was the impact of the life that came into my world on April 3, 1970 that became "a moment in time" like none other I had experienced before. And that experience kept unveiling itself, and keeps unveiling itself, as time goes by. I was confronted repeatedly with decisions as to how I would respond to this event, and my response affected both her and my life. In a sense, it affected the larger world to some small degree. That's *kairos* time.

According to ancient Greeks, Kairos was the god of the "fleeting moment," "a favorable opportunity opposing the fate of human." Such a moment must be grasped.

In Luke's story, he moves us along from *chronos* ("In those days...") to *kairos* ("...for unto you is born *this day*...a Savior who is Christ the Lord"). It was "good news of great joy for all the people."

The birth of Jesus has had an impact on people in our society, 2,000 years later, whether or not one believes in Jesus. People celebrate traditions that are associated with the life of this One and a date chosen arbitrarily to commemorate his birth, because his life is more than a simple event among other events in history. An encounter with his life becomes a junction—a point of decision, a moment that must be grasped, an opportunity that must be seized, a window of time though which one has the opportunity to pass. An opportunity that is life-changing.

On April 11, 2009, Scottish singer Susan Boyle, appeared as a contestant on the reality TV show, "Britain's Got Talent," singing "I Dream a Dream" from "Les Miserables." Within a few short days, the rest of the world knew who Susan Boyle was. The contrast between her powerful voice and her plain appearance on

stage was stark. Nine days after her debut, online videos of her had been watched over 100 million times—an online record. Despite coming in second in the contest, her first album was released just last month premiering as the number one best-selling CD on charts around the world.

Susan Boyle’s appearance on the reality show was more than a date on the calendar for her. It was a moment in time through which she chose to go. The radical change and fame created all sorts of problems for her. In interviews she was asked pointed questions about her clothing and plainness. The radical change even brought on severe depression through which she had to work. But it was a life-changing event that affirmed her and the world around her.

“In those days...” among other events of first century Judah, Jesus was born. But, “unto you is born *this day*” a new Savior whose presence can become a life-changing experience. It is an ongoing “moment in time,” an event that always demands a decision on our part. Amen.