### “My Hour Has Not Yet Come” Steve Finlan for The First Church, January 19, 2025

**Habakkuk 2:3–4**

3 There is a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. 4 Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.

**John 2:1–11**

1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” 4And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” 5His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” 6Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. 8He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. 9When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom 10and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” 11Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Welcome to everyone who has come today. We know the winter weather can be challenging, and so we appreciate seeing you today. As always, seek and you will find. Today we seek to offer both spiritual food and warm fellowship afterward.

Both of our passages have to do with something happening at the right time. The Habakkuk passage is a little mysterious. It takes place after Judah, the southern Israelite kingdom, was defeated by the Babylonians in the 6th century b.c. and after Judah’s ruling classes were deported to Babylon. The prophet is among those left in the land. He believes God has a message for the people. Part of the message is that the just shall live by faith, something that became very central to the teachings of the Apostle Paul nearly seven centuries later (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11). At this time, Habakkuk is seeking to provide teaching and hope to the downcast people of Judah. He is not setting up a contrast between Torah-obedience and faith, as Paul will later do. We don’t know what event he was anticipating to happen at its appointed time. Maybe it was some kind of apocalyptic judgment day; we don’t know. He sought to guide and comfort those left behind in Judah. Perhaps they were full of sorrow, missing their relatives, and maybe worried what would become of themselves in the partially abandoned homeland. I am sure many in L.A. today have similar concerns and are worried for their own future. Habakkuk wants to reassure the believers to stay strong and know that God cares for them, so they might keep the faith. Today we see loving-kindness poured out in donations to those surviving the fires.

Now, in our reading from John, Jesus is talking about his “hour”: an appointed time when he will commence his public ministry, becoming a prominent public teacher. In the Gospel of John, it happens right after the wedding at Cana. When his time does come, Jesus will reduce his involvement of supporting his family, will cease to live in Nazareth, will become a traveling preacher and teacher.

Apparently, Jesus was *very* involved with his family before his time came. Perhaps he had to replace Joseph as the head of the family. We hear nothing of Joseph after Jesus’ twelfth year. Joseph is out of the picture. Since divorce or separation are highly unlikely, Joseph probably died, and Jesus had to assume economic and social leadership of the family. But then, when he knew he was going to go public, he made plans to wean his family from dependence upon him. Once he began preaching, he found that his family did not understand him very well (Mark 3:21; John 7:5). Only after his death and Resurrection did two of his brothers, James and Jude, become leaders in the movement. *Their* hour had come to take on a new role.

This subject makes me think about occasions of “the right time” and how they might happen in *our* lives. There might be several “right times” or “opportune times” when you had to make a decision, which helped direct the future course of your life. Long after I had dropped out of college as a teenager, I made a decision to go back to college and study what I really wanted to study: theology.

Probably you made similar decisions, including who to marry. Probably you didn’t stand at the altar and announce “my hour has come,” because that would sound a bit dire. But you *could* have said it, *without* that implication.

But there are other ways that “my hour has come” could occur in your life. It could be after you’ve practiced and prepared for something for a long time, and the day finally arrives to take the test or make the speech, or whatever it was for which you were preparing. If you’re not ready yet, if the day has not arrived yet, you could say “my hour has not yet come.” You know it will be an important day when it *does* come, but it can’t be rushed.

You may still have some important goals ahead of you, for which the hour has not yet come. Trust that God has plans for you. Pray for guidance and serenity, in preparation for that hour. The preparation is important. It is a time when you think out your choices, when you decide what certain things you will *not* do, as well as what you *will* do. You are practicing to express the courage of your convictions.

Maybe this is another example of living by faith, and of getting the spirit right within you. Let’s think of it that way: get the spirit right within you, as you prepare for any change in life.

It took years for the Londoner John Newton to experience his full spiritual conversion. He had lived a reckless life as a young man and was known as a particularly foul-mouthed sailor. Some of the ships he sailed on were engaged in the slave-trade, which was considered a respectable profession in England at that time. On one trip, apparently not a slaving trip, in 1748, his ship was hit by a big storm, and a crew member next to Newton was swept overboard and drowned. Newton lashed himself to the ship’s pump and continued to pump out water. The ship survived the storm, and Newton began to think that God had saved him.

This became a turning point for him. He decided to stop his profanity, and to seek marriage to a woman he loved. He married her, and began reading spiritual books. And yet, he resumed involvement in the slave trade. Eventually he retired from sailing, stayed home with his wife and studied theology seriously. He sought to become a priest in the Church of England, but the archbishop turned him down because he was known to talk with Methodists. He wrote a book about his experiences as a slaver. Finally he was offered a church, and while there, he co-wrote many hymns with William Cowper. Together they wrote “Amazing Grace” in 1772.

Finally in the 1780s Newton became an abolitionist. His full conversion really took about 35 years. Sometimes the full change takes a long time. Newton’s hour came when he started believing in God; it came again when he reined in his behavior and got married; it came again when he became a pastor, and it finally came to fruition when he took a stand against slavery. Each of these moments began a new chapter in John’s life.

You could say he is a living testimony to the promise “my change will come” (Job 14:14 based on King James Version).

Our changes will come at the right time, hopefully some of them before 35 years. As Gandalf says to Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings,* “A wizard is never late. Nor is he early. He arrives precisely when he means to.” Thanks be to God, whom we trust in faith to be with us on our life’s journey, in every new chapter that starts.