

Sermon On the Occasion Of the Memorial Service
Of Remembrance and Celebration Of the Life Of
- JAMES B. TAYLOR -

By the Rev. Dr. Nancy S. Taylor (niece)

Saturday, January 25, 2003

Trinity Episcopal Church, Southport, Connecticut

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
And the love of God,
And the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Friends , family, Aunt Peggie, Taylor cousins: we have gathered here in the shelter of God's healing love. We gather as God's people, conscious of others who have died, and of the frailty of our own existence on earth.

We have gathered to celebrate the life of James B. Taylor and to give God thanks for Jim: for who he was, the life he lived, the contributions he made, and for his devotion to his family.

We have also gathered to say good-bye to Jim and to send him home to God. This is both difficult and simple. Difficult, because Jim was much loved and will be much missed. Simple, because Jim lived a good life and, by most measures a long life, and there is much to celebrate.

But, we have also gathered this morning, to face together the mystery of death and to affirm together the mystery of Christian faith. It is well to acknowledge from the start, that Jim Taylor wasn't often sited in places like this...and that the language of Christian faith was not a language with which he was particularly conversant. That, in itself, should be enough to tip us off to the fact that what we are about today is not of the ordinary, but mysterious and holy.

But, let me begin in a language Jim Taylor would appreciate. As Jim Taylor knew – by his own experience and world travel – the earth is divided into 28 time zones. Jim Taylor has been to, or flown through, most of those time zones at some time in his life. Today, however, we acknowledge that Jim has entered a different kind of time all together...not a different time zone, but a different kind of time. Let me explain.

In the New Testament there are two kinds of time. In Greek, one is called "chronos" (meaning chronological time, linear time, ordinary time...our time). But the Biblical writers are aware of another kind of time. In Greek, the word for this other kind of time is "kairos". Kairos is God's time; it is time that is open, deep, and pregnant. It is time that is ripe with possibility. It is this second sort of time – kairos time – that we step into when we face the mystery of death.

Indeed, it would be well for Christians to make a habit of wearing two difference watches, one on each wrist. One for our time: for ordinary, linear time. And a second watch, a kairos watch, to keep us ever mindful of God's time. (I think Jim would appreciate this concept. As a man who loved gadgets, this would have given him a chance to wear a second watch...a watch even cooler than his Rolex!)

In ordinary time – in chronos time – there is suffering.
In ordinary time there are terrible illnesses, like diabetes and cancer.

In ordinary time, younger brothers sometimes die before their older siblings.
In ordinary time, there is warfare and famine and terror...and all is not well with the world.

But in God's time, in kairos time:

The lion lies down with the lamb.

In God's time, swords shall be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks.

In God's time there is neither sickness, nor sorrow, nor death.

In God's time debts are forgiven, prisoners released, the lame are healed and the blind receive their sight.

In God's time, the dead shall rise from their sleep and you and Jim will meet again, and there shall be no more weeping and every tear shall be wiped away.

I believe in God's time.

I believe in that city not made with human hands, eternal in the heavens.

I believe we shall be united with those who have gone before us.

I believe that Jim Taylor is in the arms of God now, and that his love for his family, his self-effacing sense of humor, his natural goodness, and quiet strength... are all and more than what they ever were.

Jim Taylor rarely set foot into places like this. But, he must have had a hunch about God's time. After all, it was he who planned that we gather in this sacred space, this Christian sanctuary where we affirm an Easter faith and give witness to the hope that is in us: that death is overcome . . .that death is not the end, but a new beginning.

Jim Taylor has, indeed, stepped over into God's time. He is in God's care now. And so are we: Jim's family and friends.

We are in God's time. Thanks be to God. Amen.