

Sermon  
4 Pentecost Proper 8-A  
St. Andrew's, Methuen  
June 28, 2020  
William Bradbury

Jeremiah 28:5-9  
Psalm 89:1-4,15-18  
Romans 6:12-23  
Matthew 10:40-42

I love movies! I love the experience of sitting in the dark, tuning out the voice in my head, and slipping into another world. For me it's a kind of meditation. If it's a movie that really grabs my attention, it takes me a while to reenter my ordinary life.

As a teenager after watching James Bond, I'd race my car through the parking lot, even though my it was not an Austen Martin, but a 1963 Ford Fairlane station wagon that belonged to my mother.

A good movie, like a good book, can also **open the imagination** to a better future, one we can work toward making a reality. That's what happens to many of us every Christmas, as we watch George Bailey imagine a better future in "It's a Wonderful Life."

-----  
**One significant problem today is our national lack of imagination.** In the face of pandemic, systemic racism, and political division some people can't imagine anything better than a return to the so-called "good old days", as it was portrayed in TV shows I watched in the late 1950s—like, "Leave It to Beaver", "The Ozzie and Harriet Show", and "Father Knows Best".

**With this lack of imagination, we stay stuck in old patterns of belief and behavior that keep us morally and spiritually inert.** Our opening hymn has a line that says Jesus is our "pattern and our king". But when we are stuck in old patterns, even Jesus looks tired and stale with nothing new to offer beyond obey your parents and be nice to your neighbors.

-----  
**So, let's look at a movie that can help us imagine Jesus in a new pattern that can wake us up to God's future.**

**Stay with me here: The movie is "Back to the Future."**

In 1985 teenager Marty McFly, played by Michael J. Fox, lives with his family in Hill Valley, California. He befriends eccentric Doc Brown who has built a time machine out of a DeLorean sports car. In escaping some terrorists in the DeLorean, Marty accidentally goes back to Hill Valley in 1955. His parents are high school students but they aren't dating each other. And because Marty's mother falls for Marty, the attractive new kid, it looks as if his parents will never start dating, and that means they won't kiss at the Under the Sea dance at school, they will never marry, and never have a son named Marty!

So, Marty and a 30-year younger Doc Brown hatch a plot to get his father and mother together at the dance. Of course, this means his father will finally have to deal with Biff, who also has designs on Marty's mother. Biff, the school bully, oppresses Marty's father and says ignorant things to his adoring minions like, "Let's make like a tree and get out of here."

I will not spoil what happens at the dance, but it involves an unforeseen problem and a great song by Chuck Barry.

**What I want us to consider is that Marty McFly can be seen as a symbol or a pattern of Jesus Christ.**

**Why?**

**Because Marty, like Jesus, comes from the future to liberate his folks from forces that want to keep them trapped in the past instead of moving into God's future.**

2000 years ago, Palestine is being oppressed by Caesar Augustus and his bullying minions. But Jesus comes from God's future to liberate them from the cruelty and ignorance of the forces that trap them in servitude, division, and violence.

**In the movie Marty not only liberates his parents from Biff, but he also gives them a better future they would never have had without him.**

When Marty leaves 1985 his mother, Lorraine, is a depressed alcoholic and his father, George, is still under Biff's control.

But after his intervention at the dance in 1955, Marty returns to 1985 to find his parents have undergone a transformation: his father is self-confident and successful, his mother is full of energy and life, while Biff washes their cars.

-----  
Tom Wright, Anglican Bishop and preeminent New Testament scholar, puts it this way, "The achievement of Jesus the Messiah had brought this 'age to come' forwards into the middle of the present age. Christians were **summoned to live in the present in light of the future, that future which had come to meet them in Jesus.**" Matthew for Everyone

If we think being a Christian is just about being a nice person, so when we die we'll go to heaven, then we miss what being a disciple is all about. A disciple responds to the summons of Christ Jesus **to live in the present in the light of the future.**

-----  
I'm sure you all know the difference in the New Testament between the Greek words "chronos" and "Kairos". Chronos is clock time, ordinary time, chronological time, whereas Kairos is "crisis time", in which decisions must be made that will impact the future.

At the beginning of his ministry Jesus says, "the Kairos", the time, is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is at hand, change your hearts and pledge your allegiance to the Gospel."

**You don't need me to tell you we are now living in Kairos time, a profound moment when everything depends on which vision of the future we are willing to imagine and give our lives to.**

Shall we succumb to the blind powers of the status quo with their offer of a dystopian future of inequality, racism, and violence, **or shall we imagine and make real the future brought to us by the suffering brown Jew from Nazareth?**

**Kairos moments present a decision that demands action.**

There's no sitting it out or phoning it in!

In "Back to the Future" Marty's dad, George, is presented with a dangerous moment of decision, as he encounters Biff at the dance. If he imagines it's just too dangerous to fight the bully and his minions, George will remain Biff's slave forever. But if he imagines a different future he can act on it to find new life.

**Kairos moments present a decision that demands action.**

Paul says in the Kairos moment that comes in Jesus, **"we must present ourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present our members to God as instruments of righteousness."**

Christ Jesus is here today...with you, with me, with St. Andrew's Church, with the whole world God loves....and in this Kairos moment, he says "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest for your souls as we go back to the future.