

THE GOSPEL on BROADWAY

“HAMILTON: A Time for Courage” Pastor Charlie Berthoud

Sunday, June 29, 2025

“HAMILTON: A Time for Change” | Mark 1:14-18; Ephesians 5:15-17 | Pastor Charlie Berthoud

God is speaking... Are we listening?

Yes, God speaks to us in scripture, in prayer, in sacred songs. And God also speaks in our daily living. Sometimes we just miss it.

Last summer we listened for God in popular music with our PLAYLIST series, listening for God in the music of U2, Taylor Swift, Bruce Springsteen, and more.



Today, we launch our “Gospel on Broadway” series, with the hope that we will hear God’s words of comfort, inspiration, challenge, and hope through six different musicals over the next six Sundays.

As we listen for God, a good place for us as Christians to start is with the words of Jesus, right in the beginning of Mark’s gospel”

¹⁴ After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God’s good news, ¹⁵ saying, “Now is the time! Here comes God’s kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!”

¹⁶ As Jesus passed alongside the Galilee Sea, he saw two brothers, Simon and Andrew, throwing fishing nets into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ “Come, follow me,” he said, “and I’ll show you how to fish for people.” ¹⁸ Right away, they left their nets and followed him. Mark 1.14-18 CEB

Today we focus on the musical “Hamilton.”

Hamilton tells the story of Founding Father, Alexander Hamilton—an orphan, who valued education, and became deeply involved in the beginnings of our country. Written by Lin-Manuel Miranda, based on a book by Ron Chernow, Hamilton has won 11 Tony Awards, a Grammy, and a Pulitzer Prize. And it will be back at the Overture Center in January 2026.

I wonder how many of you have been lucky enough to see the show live?

We're going to start with a little Hamilton quiz, which I hope will be fun for those who have seen the show and be informative for those who haven't. It's a fill in the blank quiz.

I want to be in the room _____ **where it happens.**
Eliza, Angelica, and _____ **Peggy**
Immigrants, we _____ **get the job done**
Gotta start a new nation; _____ **gotta meet my son**
Hercules Mulligan falls down
Look around, look around at _____ **how lucky we are to be alive right now**
My name is Alexander Hamilton. **There's a million things I haven't done**

Speaking of a million things, there are close to a million angles a sermon on Hamilton could go.

Possible themes for a Hamilton sermon include: love and betrayal, parents and children, friendship, immigration, how much is enough, can we ever be satisfied, unimaginable suffering, finding God in sadness, and more, to say nothing of the history of the early days of our country, when people fought courageously for freedom against a monarchy. We could have an entire series on Hamilton!

Actually, a large church in New York City compiled dozens of sermons from most of the 46 different songs from Hamilton. So if you want more Hamilton sermon after today, check out Park Ave Christian Church website!

"There's a million things I haven't done." This phrase introduces one of the key themes in Hamilton, the theme of time.

Right from the beginning we get a sense of Hamilton's energy and his desire to make good use of the time that he has. The songs help us see the passage of time, specifically mentioning dates like 1776, 1789, and 1800. The staging involves a turntable which also reflects the passing of time.

I want to mention three songs in the show which invite reflection on time.

Early in the show Hamilton sings "My Shot" and the song and the idea echo through the show.

Facing the opportunity to be courageous in the tumultuous time of the American Revolution and the founding of the USA, he sings:

I am not throwin' away my shot
I am not throwin' away my shot
Hey, yo, I'm just like my country
I'm young, scrappy and hungry
And I'm not throwin' away my shot

In the song, he calls out the oppression of the king and brings together his friends Marquis de Lafayette, John Laurens, and Hercules Mulligan—and they each encourage each other to be courageous. He sings:

Scratch that, this is not a moment, it's the movement
Where all the hungriest brothers with something to prove went?
Foes oppose us, we take an honest stand
We roll like Moses, claimin' our promised land

The song also touches on the reality of death, with young Hamilton imagining what it is like and when death will get him, thinking he will never live to 20. This awareness of death leads him to sing about rising up, about living into the future with hope, and about taking a shot, taking a risk, and making the most of whatever time he has, living with courage in the face of tyranny.

If you've never seen "Hamilton" and you want to get a sense what it's like, go to your favorite music source and listen to "My Shot."

The second song I want to highlight is called Non-Stop. It's the last song of the first act, about halfway through the show, and it reflects Hamilton's relentless work ethic, which sometimes resulted in him neglecting his family and friends.

Just before the song, he finds out that his friend John Laurens has died, and in response, he tells his wife "I have so much work to do."

The fast paced song goes on to highlight how much work he does, especially with his pen, writing the vast majority of the Federalist papers, defending the new US Constitution.

Aaron Burr sings to Hamilton:

Why do you write like you're running out of time
Write day and night like you're running out of time

Then the cast sings:

How do you write like tomorrow won't arrive?
How do you write like you need it to survive?
How do you write every second you're alive
Every second you're alive, every second you're alive?

As I see it, Hamilton is using his gift of wisdom and writing to do everything he can for the sake of the new country, the Constitution, and the financial system. He knows that it's a precarious time and so he wants to do all that he can to help.

The third and final song I want to highlight is the final song of the show called, "Who Lives Who

Dies Who Tells Your Story” It is sung by Eliza, wife of Alexander Hamilton. Spoiler: Hamilton dies in a duel with Burr. We learned that in our high school history class, and we learned it in the first song of the show. So don’t get mad at me.

In the wake of his death, she sings poignantly about time:

I ask myself, what would you do if you had more time
The Lord, in his kindness
He gives me what you always wanted
He gives me more time

The song moves through time, apparently to the end of Eliza’s life, 50 years later. She sings about what she did with her time, including speaking out against slavery and establishing an orphanage, which helped hundreds of children.

And she asks the same question as Alexander:

And when my time is up
Have I done enough?

The song contrasts the sadness of Alexander’s untimely death with Eliza’s long life. When I hear that song it reminds me that we can’t take life for granted, that every day is a gift, that we ought to make the most of the time we have.

The apostle Paul felt the same way, writing in Ephesians:

Be careful, then, how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

In biblical Greek, there are two words for time: Chronos which is clock time, and Kairos, which is used here, which means a new opportunity, a special season, a moment of decision. You could call it God’s time.

The word used in Ephesians for time is Kairos. “Make good use of God’s time.”

The word Kairos also appeared in the gospel reading. John is arrested by the soldiers of a king—the king who wanted more power. Jesus comes along saying “Now is the time. Here comes God’s kingdom. Change your hearts and lives and trust this good news.”

In this proclamation of the good news, Jesus is saying now is the time to turn away from selfishness and foolishness. Instead, now is a time to live with purpose and meaning and courage, to serve God’s kingdom, not Herod’s.

Alexander Hamilton lived with purpose and meaning and courage in his time.

It was a violent and contentious time, when people were trying to establish democracy and make sure a king didn't have too much power. In our context today, there is violence, contentiousness, and concerns about the state of our democracy, which will celebrate 250 years next July 4th.

So I want to invite you to take inspiration from Hamilton—and do some writing. The ushers are now handing out a piece of paper with the names and addresses of several elected officials.

I encourage you to contact an elected official or two this week. You could call them, you could email them, or you could be like Alexander and get your quill pen out and write a handwritten note. I sent a few emails last week, which is easy to do online. I might write some hardcopy letters this week.

Speak up!
Contact your elected leaders



Be clear
Be concise
Be specific
Be polite

Maybe you could thank them. Maybe you could express your concerns to them. Whatever you do, be clear. Be concise. Be specific. Be polite.

It's not appropriate for me to tell you what to write, but I will tell you that writing is important, and given the way things are in our world, our voices need to be heard now as much as they ever have been.

This is one way we can live with courage and make good use of our time.

Last week, I saw an NPR interview with Michelle Obama, and NPR's Rachel Martin. Obama was asked "How often do you think about death?"

She spoke about her mother, who died last year, after a long and good life. She spoke about living with meaning and purpose.

Her mother had been saying that she was ready to die, but then near the end her mother said, "Wow, this went fast." Those words reinforced Michelle's desire to live with purpose.



My mother said,
"Wow, this went fast."

--Michelle Obama

Michelle Obama and her mother are right. Life is short. Our time is limited.

Alexander Hamilton is right. Life is short so we need to live with wisdom and courage, and when we get the chance, we should take our shot and make the most of our time.

And Elizabeth Schuyler is right when she sings amidst all the turmoil of her life and her world, “Look around look around at how lucky we are to be alive right now.”

Let us pray....

Dear God, thank you for the gift of life, the gift of today.

We are not Alexander Hamilton. We are not Michelle Obama. But each of us wherever we are, whoever we are can live with purpose, making the most of our time however each of us can do so— perhaps by being kind and decent, being people of hope in hard times, being people who speak the truth in love, being people who are patient and good listeners, being people who are generous, being people who are courageous in the face of tyranny and evil.

Thank you God for calling us in Jesus Christ to live with purpose. Grant us wisdom and courage, to serve your Kingdom now and always. Amen.