

The Right Time

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Christmas / Time; Son of God / Isaiah 61:10–62:3; Psalm 111; Galatians 4:4–7; Luke 2:22–40

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Newborn King. Amen.

Sometimes time can be so distracting. I am one that lives by time. I like having a schedule. I like to know when things are going to happen. I look at my watch far too often. It even gets me in trouble and people will think that I am not invested in them. Sometimes time can be so distracting.

We complain about the timing of things in this world. We use phrases such as “timing is always right” or “I was in the wrong place at the wrong time.” We live in time that’s why we sometimes struggle with timing.

God’s timing is always perfect it’s always right. The thing is we like to be in a hurry, we like to be constantly on the go. We want things to happen on our own time. Yet when it comes to time...Paul tells us that at the right time, God sent His Son. Actually he says in the “fullness of time.”

Yes, the time was right for Jesus to come. Just think about this with me for a moment. People had been looking for him for generations, for thousands and thousands of year. The promise first came to Adam and Eve so they looked for him. The Patriarchs were looking for the Messiah. The entire history of Israel is the history of people who were waiting, waiting for the time that the Messiah would come. Each book of the Old Testament you can see the anticipation. Yet, they did not know who He would be or when He was to come. Only God knew that detail.

What did God do for them while they waited? He set up feasts and festivals. He set up rites and rituals for them. He set up the sacrificial system for them. All of these was to point forward to the coming of the Messiah. One example of this is the Passover Celebration. This was set up to remind the people of their

salvation from Egypt but also to point forward to the Christ, the one who would save them from a slavery far more deadly than that of Egypt...and that was the slavery to sin. Frankly, some of them lost track of the forward looking of the Passover. That didn't change what it meant though. It still meant the time was coming.

There were even "Self-anointed" "messiah's" that arose in Israel. The Children of Israel wanted the Messiah so badly, that this ambitious unbeliever would pretend to be the "one" and some would follow because they were tired of wait. Part of the reason that they followed the so-called messiah is because they acted how they thought the Messiah should act. They told the people what they wanted to hear. The thing is none of these messiah's caught on...because they had not lasting power...and that was because none of them were the true Messiah. That is until Jesus came at the right time, the One that was promised in the Garden.

This Jesus, this Messiah has come. We celebrated his birth just two days ago. He came. He lived among us. He died for you in your place and for your sins and as they say, "the rest is history." So Paul writes to the Galatians and proclaims to them that Jesus came at the right time.

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But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, We can speculate on why the time was right. What was going on at the time? I've even been one to say that it could have something to do with the *Pax Romana*, the Peace of Rome imposed on the world at the time. I've even said it was the road system and the ease of travel. The message could travel quicker then it had in the past. Others speculate it could have been the psyche of man. I don't buy that one. The truth is we really don't know what made it "the fullness of time." It could have been one or all of those or none of them. What we do know is that the timing was right. Christ came as an infant born to the Virgin Mary at his perfect timing.

The people of Israel, the whole world, had been kept under the Law until that right time had come. Oh yes, they had the good news that a Savior was coming.

Really, the law had been the guardian. It helped mankind understand something of holiness and the will of God. It forced Israel to preserve the Word of God written down by the prophets. But when the time was right...God sent His Son to be our Savior...to be Your Savior.

The Father sent Jesus to be born of a woman so that he would be “born under the law.” That means that because Jesus was born of Mary, He was born obligated to keep the Law of God just as you and I are. The promises and curses applied to him as they do you and me. The promise of life without end for those who keep the law and those who break it well, “the wages of sin is death.”

You see if the Christ had not been born of Mary, born of a woman, He would not have been truly human. The promises and curse were given to mankind so he had to be genuinely human and to do that he had to be born like the rest of us! That way, when he kept the Law perfectly he would earn eternal life...and He could also become a substitute...He could trade His life for theirs. He could trade His life for yours.

The thing is before Jesus came, all mankind were slaves of sin. Because Jesus died and rose, all men are forgiven. The means appointed to receive this forgiveness and life, to lay hold of it and grasp it, if you will—is faith. John writes in the beginning of his gospel that you heard on Friday morning:

English Standard Version Chapter 1

12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Jesus became man and placed Himself under the law “to redeem those under the Law, that we might receive adoption as sons.” That is how you became a child of God. That Adoption took place in baptism. You are God’s Child.

Because You and I are God’s children, we are no slaves, but heirs, heirs of God. We inherit the rights to call him God, to come to Him and prayer. We inherit his blessings, his comfort, his grace. Since we are His children, He fills us with the Holy Spirit so that we might cry out, “Abba, Father.” He wants us to trust in him and come to him as children come to their loving father.

All of this is just at the right time. God's goodness to us should comfort us in each and every situation. His timing should help us face the uncertainties in this life. There are always things that we want right now. That list grows on a daily basis over the last number of months. We want blessings that God has chosen to give us when His time is right...not by our timing. He teaches us not to worry, but to trust in him and when the time is right He will give us what we need.

We will be tempted to wonder when some blessing will come or we might even worry when Christ is going to come back. God teaches us about his timing so that we will take comfort and not worry about it. God calls us to trust Him and live faithfully as His holy people. The time when things happen is not our decision. God will cause all things to happen just as He planned them when the time is right. I've been thinking about this timing, especially as it relates to the ministry here at Salem.

Our timing was to have children in our building this year...that wasn't God's timing. Why? We don't know that, but God does. God knows when the timing will be right and He will lead staff and children into our midst. Whether Salem grows and prospers is not for us either. What is ours to do is to be his faithful children - to love one another and stand firm on His Word and share our Hope in Him as he gives us an opportunity.

we look to the end, when Christ will return so that we can be together...even with those who are not here this Christmas in the body. We look for it, but it will happen at just the right time...it won't come too soon or too late. There will be temptations to give up on God. Things will be bad for a time, we might get uncomfortable waiting, but God's promises are sure. Jesus warned His disciples that we would hear people say, "Here is the Christ!" or "There is the Christ." He's not back yet in the flesh. His return will happen at just the right time.

We cannot force God's hands. God's timing is always right - and everything that He has promised to us in Jesus Christ is true - forgiveness, life, and salvation, protection from the evil one, resurrection from our graves and life everlasting. God calls us to be faithful to His Word and promise. He calls us to serve our

neighbor which ends up serving God, this doesn't hasten his return. This is what He calls us to be.

No matter what time we live in history, and the time that we do is the 21st century, his timing is always right. His timing for you now is to bless you with the forgiveness of sins since you are His child. He feeds you now in this time with the body and blood of Holy Communion. He feeds you with the Word of God read and preached. He does this for you now in this time. No matter how bad things might get or seem they are. Please don't panic. Please don't lose faith in God. Don't even try to look ahead too far. If Covid has taught me anything it's just that, don't look too far ahead into the future. God knows the future. God knows our times. God is in control of our times. Thank God for that. Thank God I don't have to be.

And when you stand in glory with the Lord Jesus Christ and with all of your brothers and sisters of all times and places who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, if you have any care about this time, my guess is you will be able to look back and see that everything happened as it should, because God's timing is perfect. And yes, God's timing is still perfect, just as it was when Christ was born in Bethlehem at the right time. And yes, he will you as His children now, and each blessing will come at just the right time...no matter whether its a physical or eternal blessing.

Rest assured this Christmas season that is full of uncertainty in time, that God is in control of time. Thank God that Christ Jesus came at the right time to save you from your sin.

In the name of Jesus Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.