

TRUSTING GOD'S TIMING IN YOUR LIFE

Ecclesiastes 3:1; Gal. 4:3-5

Good morning! I hope you're all good this morning. As for me, I have an achy-braky body. I know some of you are, too. If you were there yesterday, you know what I mean. But it's worth it. That's what we do for a living, as Christians. We go out to help a brother or sister in need. I'm sure everyone of us does when our circumstances are right. Like Paul in Romans 5:2, I thank God that by his grace I'm able to stand here this morning, literally and figuratively.

Ok. Merry Christmas in advance. I know it's too early but we're already in one of the most exciting seasons of the year. I know the excitement is dampened somewhat by the difficulties we're all experiencing nowadays. But let's not forget. Christmas gives us hope. Christmas gives us comfort. Christmas gives us peace. And Christmas gives us the promise of a better future. God will make things better in his time. Amen?

This morning, we're starting a new series for this month called **"The Promise of Christmas"**. We're borrowing this series from Rick Warren who shared it with his church a while back. In this series, we'll look at ways in which God has moved and is moving in our lives. We'll look at the story of Christmas. We'll learn from the experiences of Mary and Joseph and all the characters involved in the first Christmas. Then, we'll know the promise that Christmas holds for each of us.

Today, I'd like to talk about **"Trusting God's Timing in Your Life"**. If you look at the Christmas story, you'll see that it's all about timing. And who else would know about time except God who is not bound by time? Kind of ironic, right? But I'll talk more about that later.

Anyway, you see, having the sense of timing, is important in so many areas of your life. Most of the stress in your life comes from poor timing. Either you're in a hurry or there's a delay, and both of those things can stress you out, being too fast or too slow. On the other hand, one of the keys to success in life is wise timing. And when you do the right thing at the right time, it just works.

Now, what does the birth of Jesus tell us about God's timing in your life? Well this is really important, so I want you to write down these five truths, great truths about God's timing in your life. It's going to lower your stress and it's going to raise your success if you understand how to cooperate with God's timing.

So, let's look at this. **What do we learn from Jesus' birth about God's timing?**

The first is,

1. God has a timetable for everything that happens.

He has a timetable. This is taught all through the Bible. In Ecclesiastes 3:1 it says this: ***"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens"***. It says there's a time for everything, there's an appointed time. Look here on the screen. In another translation, the Good News Translation, it says,

"Everything that happens in this world happens at the time God chooses."

God has a timetable for everything. And he even had a timetable for Christmas. Galatians 4:3-5 says: ***"But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship."***

That's what God sent Jesus to do. Show us what God's like, to save us from our sins, to adopt us into God's family. But notice the phrase *"when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son."* Christmas happened at a time set by God. Therefore, it was the right time according to God. What made it the right time? We don't know. God had been telling the world since the time of Adam and Eve, "I'm going to send a Savior". He set the time about 2000 years ago. Why not 100 years ago?

Why not 100 years from now? We don't know why it was the right time 2000 years ago, but God says it was the right time to send Jesus.

That leads us to the second truth, write this down:

2. God does not tell us the details in advance.

He has a timetable for your life, but he doesn't tell you the details in advance.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 says this: "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end."

We cannot understand God's timing. Why? Because God is God and you're not. For me to try to understand God's timetable is like an ant trying to understand the internet. I don't have the brain capacity. If you could understand why God does everything God does, you'd be God.

Now, it says that God has given us this desire to know the future. Have you noticed all the crazy things people do to try to figure out the future? Tarot cards, palm reading, tea leaves, astrology, Feng Shui (fung shway or fung suy), all kinds of crazy things trying to figure out the future. BTW, most Feng Shui experts in the Philippines predicted that 2020 would be a good year. Well, of course, the beginning of the year until now proved them wrong. That's why they took a lot of flakt. One of them reasoned that if COVID-19 didn't come, then it would have been a good year. What kind of reasoning is that? Their timing was really off. Why? Because they're not God. They don't know the future.

Anyway, the Bible says God doesn't let us know the timetable. Why? Why doesn't God just tell you everything that's gonna happen in your life right up front? Well, I think, first, it would overwhelm you. Probably scare you to death. Second, you'd probably abuse it. You might do things to change your future. But the real reason God doesn't want you to know his timetable is...he wants you to trust him.

He says, "Just live one day at a time. Trust me. Everything I do in your life is for love. But you've just got to trust me."

Folks, God has a timetable for your life, but he doesn't give you the details in advance. Also,

3. God is never early nor late.

He's always on time. His timing is perfect. Now the reason for this is because God is on a different wavelength than we are. God has a different view of time because God is timeless.

Now, this is kind of hard to understand. God is not bound by time. God can be in the past and the present and the future all at the same time. Our view of time is based on being on a planet called Earth that circles 24 hours. Every 24 hours it rotates and every 365 days it goes around the sun, so you have marked your life in 24-hour days and 365-day years. If you lived on Mars or Pluto, your concept of time would be very, very different. And God doesn't live on a planet, so God is timeless. Einstein wrote a lot about this, the space-time continuum and how it's very different than what we typically think about time.

Now, let me show you God's understanding of time. In. **2 Peter 3:8, the Bible says, "But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."**

Does that sound like the way you treat time? That's the way it feels when I'm waiting for a meal. It feels like a thousand years sometimes. But no, we don't think in those terms. God's timelessness that I'm talking about has big implications for your life. Let me explain.

When God created you, he put a dream in your heart. Most people start off with a dream, what they want to do with their life. They have a vision. It's the vision that drives their lives. But something happens along the way. They give up on the vision. They give up on their goal. Because it doesn't happen fast enough.

Some of you have had your dream battered or broken. You've been disappointed. You've given up on it. God doesn't want you to do that. If God gave you that dream for your life, it's gonna happen. It just has to happen in his timetable, not in yours.

Let me show you one of the great promises of the Bible. Habakkuk 2:3, God says this about your dream, about your vision, the one that he gives you: *“For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.”*

It's one of God's principles that you can apply in your dream. If it's a God-given dream, it will surely happen. Now, if it's your dream, you just made it up, then God's not obligated to do that. But if it's a dream that God has put in your heart, he says you just need to wait patiently. It will happen. It will not be late. Friend, God's timing is perfect; my timing is imperfect.

One of the things you have to learn is that God is never early in your life, God is never late in your life, God is always on time. It's a big lesson.

Now here's the fourth thing that we learn. Write this down. While God has a timetable, and it will happen at the right time...

4. God's timing is not always convenient.

God's plan for your life and God's timing for your life is a good plan. It's for your benefit. It's a loving plan. But it doesn't mean it's painless, and it doesn't mean that it'll always be easy. Because God's plan is not always convenient.

God's timing for your life is always for your best, but it's not the easiest. For instance, Jesus' birth. Jesus' birth was not convenient for Mary and Joseph. I mean, think about this. Here's a young couple, Jesus is going to be born. Mary and Joseph expects a normal delivery with friends and relatives around in Nazareth where they've been living. And then, all of a sudden, the Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, decides to throw a census.

And he says, "Everybody has to go back to the town that they were born in to be registered for this census of the Roman Empire."

They have no choice but to follow the edict of the emperor. So, a few weeks or a week before Mary delivers, Joseph goes, "Honey, I got to put you on a donkey and we've got to take a trip to Bethlehem." That's not convenient. Do you know how far it is from Nazareth to Bethlehem? **Look at this map.** It's about 3 hours by foot. Maybe a little faster by donkey. Not too, bad, right? But wait, you say. What is Walmart Super Center doing there? And Highway 78 in the bottom. That looks like PA. You're right. I thought you wouldn't notice. Just wanted to humor you. That's actually Nazareth PA and Bethlehem PA. It's interesting how they positioned those two towns because if you look at the real locations in Israel this is how it looks like. **(show map)** It says about 33 hours covering 90 miles by foot . Just a little more than a day. But that map shows modern Israel. In the time of Mary and Joseph, there was no direct route. Scholars say they must have travelled between 4 days and one-and-a-half weeks because of the hilly and treacherous roads. Quite inconvenient, right?

Yet, that was God's plan and God's timing because the Bible said Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. It was not convenient, but it was a bigger plan than Joseph and Mary had ever planned for their life and their baby, and it was a better plan.

You see, a lot of stuff God does in your life may not be convenient, but it is bigger and it is better. And I would say everything God has done in my life has been bigger and better than I ever imagined. So, God's timing is not always convenient.

The Bible tells us in **Luke 2:1-6, "In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world...So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David...He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to**

him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born.” None of that was convenient.

Now comes the fifth truth. We learned that God has a timetable for your life, that he doesn't tell you the details in advance, that he's always on time, he's never early nor late, that it's not always convenient, and then here's the fifth thing.

5. God can do anything instantly, at the right time.

At the right time, God can do anything instantly. So, he doesn't worry about time because he doesn't need time to accomplish what he wants to do. **In Isaiah 60:22**, God says this: *“The least of you will become a thousand, the smallest a mighty nation. I am the Lord; in its time I will do this (wha?t) swiftly.”* Quickly!

Now, this is hard for us to accept. The most difficult place for you to be in life is in God's waiting room. Some of you are in God's waiting room right now. What is God's waiting room? When you're in a hurry for something to happen and God isn't. That's God's waiting room. You're seeing the time getting shorter and shorter and you go, "God, there isn't a whole lot of time left. This has either got to happen or it's not going to." Especially during this pandemic. Somebody hit the pause button. And you're waiting for it to play again.

You see, God doesn't need a lot of time because he can do everything instantly. Quickly. He's not like, "I need two years to get this project done." He can do it, God can do more in a second than you can do in a year. And you say, "Well, if God can do everything quickly, then why do I have delays in life?" Well, God allows delays in your life for two reasons.

Number one, to test your faith, will you trust him; and second, to build your character. To test your faith and to build your character. You see, while you're working on your project, your goal, your dream, your vision, God's working on you.

And God's much more interested in you than in what you're trying to accomplish, because you're not taking your accomplishments to heaven, but you are taking your character.

A lot of times we think we're waiting on God for something to happen, like a prayer to be answered. God says, "You're not waiting on me. I'm waiting on you. I'm trying to prepare you. I'm testing your faith, will you trust me, but I'm also trying to grow you up, because the blessing I want to give you is so much bigger than you can handle right now."

Another thing you have to learn in life is that delay is not a denial. There's a big difference between no and not yet. Now, immature children don't know the difference. You tell a kid, "Not yet," they start crying because they think it means no. They don't understand a delay is not a denial. God is saying, "I intend to do these things in your life, but you're just not ready yet, and at the right time I will answer your prayer." God's often waiting on us.

So, what does God want you to do when you're in the waiting room of life? You do three things. And I want to spend the rest of our time just looking at that. God gives us in the Bible three phrases. These are old English phrases from the King James Version of the Bible, and they are these. He says, "Fear not, forget not, and faint not." **Fear not! Forget not! Faint not!**

Let me explain these to you, because this is what God wants you to do when things don't happen as fast or as slow as you want them to happen. Number one, write this down.

1. Fear not: trust God

When things don't happen in your timetable, fear not means trust God. The opposite of fear is faith. When you fill your life with faith, then you don't have to fear. Fear goes out the back door. So the more you trust God, the less you're going to be afraid. The less you trust God, the more you're going to be afraid.

In Mark 5:36 (TLB), Jesus says, *"Don't be afraid. Just trust me."*

Trusting God is the number one stress reliever in your life, and the more you trust God, the more your stress is going to go down. The less you trust God, the more your stress is going to go up. So what you want to do is pray a prayer like this, Psalm 31:14-15: *"But I trust in you, Lord...My times are in your hands"*.

Have you ever prayed a prayer like that? You might want to memorize that verse and pray it every morning. And you get up and go, *"I trust you, Lord. You're my God. My times are in your hands."* What does that mean? "God, I have more to do today than I've got time to get done. I have so many appointments, there's no way I'll get it all done. Help me start it all out, do what matters most, and not worry about the rest. My times are in your hands. I surrender my schedule. That means I'm not going to fear. I'm going to trust you."

Now, the second thing you want to do is

2. Forget not: study God's promises.

What does that mean? He says, "There are some things I don't want you to forget, that while you're in God's waiting room, you're waiting on me to do the fulfillment of this dream, I want you to focus on what I've told you in my Word. I don't want you to forget what I've already told you." So write this down. Forget not means study God's promises.

This book, the Bible, is God's Word to you. Did you know that in this book there are over 6,000 promises of God to you? God has got you covered in every aspect of your life.

So, this second thing you're to do while waiting is forget not, and that means you need to go study this Book and find out all those 6,000 promises of God to you. Let me show you a couple of verses. In Matthew 6:31-32, *"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one*

of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?" In line with that, another verse in **Phil. 4:19** says this, *"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus."* I did an exhaustive study of this verse, looked up what the meaning of the Greek word for "all" is and it means "all". Do you have a need in your life? God promises to meet that need. But you must make sure it's a need, not a want. There's a world of difference between a need and a want.

Now, you just don't study the word, you also remember it. That's the best way to not forget something. That means you memorize it. Have you ever memorized a single verse of the Bible? Because if you haven't, God can't call them to memory when you're stressed out. When you're stressed out, God can bring into your mind those verses you have already memorized. Then you'd be encouraged and you'd say, "My stress level just went down."

Also, you not only study and memorize. You also put it into action. Putting God's word into action makes it stick not only in your mind but also in your life as well. And you'll be blessed instead of stressed. So, friends, this next year, you've got a choice. You want to be stressed or you want to be blessed? It's your choice. What's the key to being blessed? You read, you study, you remember, and you do what this says. And he says the more you do it, the more you're gonna be blessed in all you do.

God says, "Fear not," and he says, "Forget not.," Then, he says, "Faint not."

That's an Old English phrase. It comes out of the King James Version of the Bible.

3. Faint not: Don't give up.

It means don't quit. Keep on keeping on. Look at this verse, **Galatians 6:9**, “*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*”

Question. This Christmas, what are you feeling like giving up on? I mean, if you're really gut-level honest, if you let us crawl inside your mind, what do you feel like giving up on? Some of you feel like giving up on your marriage, if truth be told. Some of you feel like giving up on your career. I have tried and tried and tried; it just isn't happening. Some of you feel like giving up on your dream. Some of you feel like giving up on yourself. You've thought about taking your life. And I want you to know that a thousand years before you were born, God knew that you would be watching online at Fil-Am Church this year, so God could have me say this to you as your spiritual coach: don't.

Don't. Don't, don't, don't, don't, don't, don't you dare. The light is at the end of the tunnel. You may be just round the corner. Don't, don't give up. “You will reap a harvest, you will receive a blessing, if you do not give up”. At the proper time, at just the right time, in God's time, it will come. I know this pandemic has really worsened your situation. But everything is happening according to God's time. You just have to trust him. The pandemic will end in his time. And he will make things beautiful again.

There are going to be a lot of times in your life you feel like giving up. I'm so glad I didn't give up on God, but I'm also glad that God didn't give up on me so many times in my life. You see, you need a family. Not only a physical family. You need a church family, too. Fil-Am can be that family. We're a close-knit family where everyone comes together to help one another. Like yesterday, several folks were there yesterday helping Ate Irene move. Despite the cold, despite some rain, despite big furniture, and despite covid. The church is your family.

Now, I want to close by talking to you about two times in your life where God says, "It's always the right time to do this." We can't say this about a lot of stuff, but there are two things in life that God says,

It is always the right time to do these two things:

And the first one is,

○ **It is always the right time to come to God in your time of need.**

Look at what the Bible says in Hebrews 4:16: *“Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”* What is your need today? Do you need healing? Do you need financial provision? Do you need guidance in your career? Do you need God to speak to you today? Do you need help with your marriage or your relationship with your children? Do you need peace, comfort, or assurance of God’s presence in your life? Know that you can approach God directly if you’re his child. And when you do, he’s merciful and gracious to meet that need. It may not come quickly but his delay is not denial. It will surely come. And it will come in a way that you don’t expect it and in a way that you’ll be more blessed and better.

This is not the end of the story. Now you may be in God's waiting room and you're still waiting for something to happen that just hasn't happened. You've dreamed of it, but it hasn't happened yet. But I told you there are two things it's always the right time for. Number one, it's always the right time to come to God in your time of need.

The second thing is this:

○ **It's always the right time to accept Jesus in your life.**

It's always the right time for you to accept Jesus Christ in your life. He wants to save you. That’s why he came at Christmas and died on the cross and rose again on Easter.

Once you understand it, it would be foolish to procrastinate the very thing you need to live for eternity and to be reconnected to the God who made you. So, you do it, like, right now. I mean, right now.

The Bible says in **2 Cor. 6:2**, *“For he says, ‘In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.’ I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.”*

There is no other day than today for you to be saved. Why do you need to be saved? It is because the Bible says that we are all sinners who have fallen short of God. That’s why we die. The Bible says, “For the wages of sin is death”. If Jesus is not in your heart, you face an eternity of separation from God. It’s all darkness and hopelessness. But in Jesus there is life, now and forever. That’s the reason he came to earth on Christmas Day, in order to die 33 years later for your salvation. He died in your place. You stand condemned before a holy God but God has acquitted you of your sins, whatever your sins are, because he loves you so much. The Bible says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

After he died and was buried, Jesus rose again from the grave on Easter Sunday. He has conquered sin and death forever. He wants you to conquer sin and death forever, too. How? Just by putting your faith in what Jesus has done for you. Not faith in your good works, not faith in your religion, not faith in your money or another person or whatever. Just faith in what Jesus Christ has done for you on the cross. You don’t need to do anything else.

Let’s now bow our heads and close our eyes.

- 1. God has a timetable for everything that happens.**
- 2. God does not tell us the details in advance.**
- 3. God is never early nor late.**
- 4. God's timing is not always convenient.**

5. God can do anything instantly, at the right time.

Fear not, Forget Not, Faint Not