

Night Time, Right Time
Galatians 4:4-5, Luke 2:1-6

The story of Jesus' birth is a story about lives interrupted...and how!

I have learned over and over again that when God interrupts our plans, there is something He has in mind that I don't...and His plans are always better than mine.

- Sometimes it isn't easy to see and sometimes it just isn't easy, period.
- this is the time when trusting God is critical.
- It is easy to trust Him when He lets you continue with your plans.

Read Luke 2:1-7....(no slide)

-and the next verse commences to tell us about the activities that most holy of nights when Christ was born (**READ V8**)

Why do we have this night time account of the birth of Christ?

- why wasn't Jesus born at mid-afternoon? Or in the morning?
- there must be something about the night time...

Something special about night...with the moon and the stars...

When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars you set in place....what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them?^l Psalm 8:3-4 (NLT)

David would have had ample time to look up on the moon and stars as a shepherd...watching over his father's flock....

- there is something very special about being out in the flint hills and looking up at the night sky...
- it is simply amazing...

Something special about night and something very special about love as well....

"You know the night time, whoah, is the right time to be with the one you love..."
Ray Charles, Night Time Is The Right Time

If night time is the right time...and God loves us....why not send that love at night to be with us!

1 John 4:9-10 tells us....⁹ *This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

Romans 5:8 says that...*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

And, of course, we all know **John 3:16**...*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son*

His one and only Son who would be called....Immanuel – **God with us**

Isaiah 7:14 prophesied it would be so and in Matthew 1, the angel of the Lord appeared to

Joseph in a dream and confirmed what the prophecy said...that this child will be called "God with us!"

So on this night...whatever the exact date happened to be we can only begin to surmise...the Lord God, creator of all that is seen and unseen must have had a special feeling about this night...

You know what?

It must have been just the *right time*

But when the right time came, God sent his Son.... **Galatians 4:4 (NLT)**

Even a brief look at history provides great insight into the timing of Christ's birth.

Pax (packs) Romana (ro-main-uh)

- Christ was born during the era identified as Pax Romana which lasted from about 27 BC until about 180 AD
- some 20 years before Christ was born
- The rule of one government insured worldwide peace imposed by conquering armies.
- little military invasion going on so the armies patrolled the borders with little worry
- This peace extended over most of the civilized earth making travel and commerce possible in a ways that had never been experienced
- people could travel freely without fear of attacks which greatly benefited free trade and business
- people could pass easily between provinces

road system in Rome is widely regarded as one of the great accomplishments of the Roman government

- it is estimated that there were approximately 250,000 miles of roads in the Roman empire
- of that nearly quarter million miles, as much as 50,000 was paved!
- the laws were pretty specific about these roads
 - straight sections of road had to be 8' wide
 - curved sections were to be 16' wide
- walking, driving livestock, driving any kind of vehicle – wagon, chariot – was permitted

A universal language permeated the culture of the time.

- The Romans in all their previous conquests had completely wiped out the culture of the people they had conquered
- but the Romans respected the Greek culture and allowed it to thrive
- it became the language of travel and business everywhere, even with the Jews

What we see is a confluence of all the right factors at just the right time to create the right atmosphere for the spread of this King of Kings to come....

- a world at peace, with ease of travel and a language that was common to most
- the climate of the time could not be any better to facilitate the rise of Christianity

But, why should that surprise us?

- God had been bringing about His plan of salvation since the beginning of time
- why did he wait so stinking long to bring this all about?

2nd Peter 3:8-9...

*But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is **as** a thousand years, and a thousand years **as** one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

Two ways of looking at this verse...some say that one day for the Lord = 1000 days for man...in that case, it has only been about 2 yrs for God since prophecy of the Messiah to come... not such a long time in God's economy...

The other way is to make sure we consider the **as** in the verses above...

- think of it like this...suppose I was back coaching football or track and said, so-and-so is as slow as molasses....
- we cannot take that literally because an athlete running would be significantly faster than the drip of molasses
- but it implies some essence of time..

Either way, when we combine it with verse 9, what I think Paul is saying, it doesn't matter what we think, God will deliver on his promise no matter what because God is faithful....

- God waited until the right time because He knew that this time...the time period of Jesus' birth brought about the best opportunity for the Gospel to begin to spread so that all would have the possibility of hearing about the Savior of the world
- God's timing has always been and will always be perfect

Throughout history, God had proved His timing was right on time.

Abraham's servant & Rebekah (Gen. 24)

Abraham had sent his servant back to his homeland to find a bride for his son Isaac. When the servant arrived and saw the well from the city, he prayed that the woman he was sent for would offer him a drink and then offer to draw water for his camels as well.

Now this may not sound like a big deal but there are ten camels in the servant's entourage. It may have been weeks of journey and the camels may be tremendously thirsty. Camels who had not had a drink in days could easily drink 25 gallons of water. A typical water vessel of the day was somewhere between 2&4 gallons. That could have meant as many as 60-80 trips to the well to water the camels. That was above and beyond normal hospitality

This wasn't going to happen by chance....it had to be the right girl at the right time...

Joseph, slavery, and Egypt (Gen. 50)

Remember, he was the favorite son of Jacob, & grandson of Isaac. He had a coat of many colors, & his brothers were all jealous of him. So one time when he went out to see them, they decided to strip off his coat, throw him into a cistern & let him die.

But at just the right time a caravan making its way to Egypt came by & they thought, "Why not make some money off this deal? Let's not leave him here to die, but let's sell him as a slave, instead." So they did.

At just the right time Joseph arrived in Egypt. At just the right time he was thrown into jail and met a couple of Pharaoh's staff there. And at just the right time he interpreted Pharaoh's dream. And at just the right time, Joseph rose to great power in Egypt.

And at just the right time the famine struck, & his brothers made their way to Egypt, & the family was reunited.

Moses & Pharaoh's daughter (Exodus 2)

- Moses is born at a time when all young boys are ordered to be killed by the midwives. Moses' mother happens to put him in a basket at just the right time, sending him down the river. Oh yeah, at just the right time he happened to cry and was discovered.
- Discovered by the Pharaoh's daughter who happened to come down to the river at...just the right time... takes him in, putting him in the household of Pharaoh.

At just the right time....

At just the right time David came to the battlefield & saw Goliath flexing his muscles, boasting of his power. At just the right time Esther was made queen when her people were about to be exterminated. And her Uncle Mordecai said to her, "Who knows but that God has made you queen for just such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14)

God's timing is perfect in our lives as well.

My times are in Your hand... Psalm 31:15 (NKJV)

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28 (NKJV)

I don't know about you but I think that this is one of the greatest promises in the Bible.

- things have happened in my life at just the right time...
- doors opened for me at just the right time...
- not because of anything I had done, that was for sure
- God keeps his promises!

You too can look back on your lives and see where doors opened or were closed at just the right time...

- opportunities came or went at just the right time
- help was received at just the right time
- somebody came into your life at just the right time...

Chuck Colson tells about going to Salem, OR, with his Prison Fellowship Ministry & preaching to prisoners there. Kathy Tracolie, a singer who went with him, sang the song, "My Life is in His Hands."

After the service was over, one of the inmates came up to Kathy & said, "I really want to thank you for singing that song. It ministered to me so much." He said, "My soul was dry."

She asked, "Why is that?" He answered, "Well, I'm here in prison, & I have a lot of time left to serve. I received a letter this past week from my wife asking for a divorce. Just when I thought things couldn't get any worse, they did, & I felt like there was nothing left for me. But now I realize that my life is in the hands of God, & that somehow it will be okay. I really want to thank you for singing that song."

Five days later, Chuck Colson & Kathy Tracolie were in Chicago, IL, more than 1,000 miles from Salem, OR. They were preaching & singing in a prison there, & Kathy sang that same song, "My Life is in Your Hands."

Afterwards, a woman who had never been to a Prison Fellowship meeting before came up to Kathy & said, "I really want to thank you for singing that song. My soul has been so dry." Almost the same exact words.

Again Kathy asked, "Why?" She said, "Well, my husband is in prison, too, & I felt like I couldn't put up with it anymore. So I wrote him last week & asked for a divorce. But I'm not at peace about it."

Her husband was the man they had met back in Salem, OR. Just a coincidence, I guess. Just a coincidence? Kathy was able to minister to her, & now God is healing the marriage & bringing them back together again.

It would be nice if it always happened that way.

- We don't always get the answers to our prayers instantly.
- Many of you have been waiting a long time for God to answer a prayer or two
- but take a minute to think about a few Bible characters...

Joseph – 13 years a slave and in prison

Moses – 40 years elapsed between fleeing Egypt and his return

David – as many as 25 years between anointing and assuming the throne

Their answers didn't come quickly or easily but they came at just the right time...

- at just the right time for God's will and plan for their lives and for the kingdom
- God will answer your prayers as well...at just the right time
- at just the right time according to God's plan and not ours...
- God has eternal plans on his mind while our plans often focus on making us more comfortable in the here and now...and have temporal designs

Conclusion

Friends, here is the real promise.

- No matter how difficult your life may be, no matter how tough your life may be, no matter how disappointing things might be in your life.....

God is in *control*.

Listen to this great verse from Acts 17....verse 26 in the New Contemporary Version...

God began by making one person, and from him came all the different people who live everywhere in the world. God decided exactly when and where they must live.

Paul was speaking here to a people who believed in many gods, they even had an altar marked to the Unknown God.

- but Paul tells them the one true God gives them life and decided exactly where they will live and when

God is in control...**You are here at just the right time.....I am here at just the right time...**

- Joseph & Mary had to wonder...I wonder what God has in store for us....