

SERMON AND SERVICE OF THE WORD FOR 6TH JULY 2020

Song “The Blessing” (Symphonic Version)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrBLSBdL8J0>

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: We gather this day to worship!

P: But we bring with us heavy burdens which weigh us down.

L: We gather this day to praise God!

P: But our hearts ache inside us and we feel we can go no further.

L: Come all who are burdened and who feel weighed down. Come to Jesus.

P: Lord Jesus, take our burdens and heal our spirits.

L: Blessed are you, O God, creator of all that is.

Blessed are you, O God, creator of all that will be.

Blessed are you, O God, who made us in your image.

P: Praised be your name! Amen.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord of peace and hope, we open our hearts to you this day. Be with us as we hear your words of inspiration and healing. Guide our hearts and spirits as we seek to be witnesses to your redeeming and reconciling love. In Jesus' Name, we offer this prayer. AMEN.

SONG “Come Now is the Time to Worship”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivesRYcIPsQ&list=PLF983819E873F695C&index=5>

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful and loving God, we are so grateful for your redeeming love for each one of us. We confess that there have been times of doubt in our spirits. We

confess that when the times of difficulties are upon us, we don't always believe that you will take our burdens. We feel we have to always be in control, trying to demand the desired outcome. Help us to place our trust in you. Remind us that you surround us continually with your care, you never just let us go to drift aimlessly about. Open our hearts and spirits again to your healing powers. For we pray these things in the name of Jesus, the one who will take our burdens and give us peace. AMEN.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Hear the good news, dear friends! Jesus releases us from our burdens. Place your whole trust in his love. AMEN.

READINGS

Zechariah 9:9–12

Psalms 145:8–14

Romans 7:15–25a

Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30



SERMON: Habakkuk 2:3

“But these things I plan won't happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed.”

Joyce Meyer in her book “When God when?” writes: “Friends, God has perfect timing for everything in your life. Sometimes He answers prayers quickly. At other times He waits until He knows we are ready to use our gifts and calling wisely. The wait is not always easy. Impatience, frustration, and disappointment can build while you are waiting for God's plan to happen.

Sometimes we despair that God will ever reveal His plans and purposes for our lives.”

Others get anxious and frustrated...God is so slow in revealing His future that it might in fact be easier to give up on God altogether. We can spend our life frustrated, impatient and disappointed because we want God to reveal His purposes for our life immediately. But God does not work according to our timetable. The Bible tells us that God has perfect timing in everything He has planned for our lives. So if we think that God is going to sort out everything in life and in His church overnight we might need to think again.

Henry Blackaby in his book “Experiencing God” writes, “God is not our servant to make adjustments to our plans. We are His servants, and we adjust our lives to what He is about to do and the way He goes about doing it. If we will not submit, God will let us follow our own devices. In following them, however, we will never experience what God is waiting and wanting to do on our behalf or through us for others.”

Listen to what the Author of 2 Peter 3:9 says, *“The Lord isn’t really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.”*

From our perspective the Lord may seem slow but He is working everything out according to His perfect plan. As St Paul writes in his letter to the Church in Rome chapter 8 and verse 28, *“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”*

God works purposefully and slowly so that nothing is left to chance. When He brings it all together everything has a place and everything is in its place. Listen again to what Habakkuk said, *“But these things I plan won’t happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed.”*

In some cases the reason for the slowness has to do with our rebellion or disobedience. God has set the path for us. The trouble is we keep taking

detours. On many occasions God wants to use the seeming delay as a means to stretch and strengthen our faith in Him. God wants to grow us into mighty oaks of righteousness and you know, oaks take time to grow.

That plan or purpose God has for you won't happen overnight. Mushrooms come up overnight but one kick and they smash to pieces. Try kicking an oak tree that God has tended patiently through long years of growth and development and see what happens.

Joyce Meyer right states, "Fast and fragile or slow and solid, which do you want to be?"

God has perfect timing for everything in our lives. The scripture tells us that God's blessings come just at the right time. Listen to Galatians 6:9: *"So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up."*

Often you and I struggle with the experience that while God is never late he is generally never early either. That can make us impatient and frustrated with God. I had a sense of God's call on my life to be a pastor when I was 18 years old. The Lord waited another 15 years before He led me to attend Luther Seminary in Adelaide. I became a pastor shortly before my 40th birthday. Why did God wait so long? Looking back over the years I know now I would never have been ready to be a pastor any earlier.

Consider these two parables from Matthew 13.

Parable of the Mustard Seed

31 Here is another illustration Jesus used: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field. 32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches."

Parable of the Yeast

33 Jesus also used this illustration: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough."

Trees take a long time to grow. Yeast takes a long time to permeate dough. Sometimes when things are not moving as fast as we would like them too we need to stop and listen and take the Psalmists advice in Psalm 46:10a, *“Be still, and know that I am God!”*

Yes friends, we need to be still and know that our Lord is God. God works according to His timing and when He does everything fits together according to His plans and purpose. His plan for your life and His church will happen. Just be still and enjoy where the Lord has you at this moment.

Take a moment to read the story of Jacob. You will find it in Genesis 29:15-30. Jacob had to wait seven years for the girl of his dreams. Then work another seven years after he married her. There must have been times when Jacob wondered if God would ever fulfil the promises He made at Bethel. But Jacob trusted and waited, believing that God was still at work in his life. Years later he left Haran with four wives, 12 sons and many daughters, as well as many herds of livestock. And in the course of time he was even reconciled to his brother Esau and became Israel the patriarch of God’s chosen people.

Like the little seeds that God plants in your life you wonder if the flowers will ever bloom and the branches bear fruit. Sometimes it seems that it is taking forever for God to bring things to pass in your life. Friends, God often works slowly and purposefully so that nothing is left to chance. He is like a craftsman who seems to take forever to finish the piece he is working on, but when it is complete you can be sure that it is a masterpiece. That’s what it says in Ephesians 2:10, *“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”*

If you are waiting, continue to wait patiently. Trust in God. In due course His purposes for your life will unfold and everything will be as it should be. In the meantime enjoy being where you are while you’re waiting for God to get you where He wants you to be.

In her book “When God when?” Joyce Meyer says,

“God hears you and is working to answer your prayers. If you are willing to wait on his perfect timing, your God inspired dreams will be fulfilled with all the blessing of his love”

If you have the time, play the following song and contemplate its meaning for your life.

SONG “The God Who Sees”

Kathie Lee Gifford & Nicole C. Mullen's modern oratorio telling the stories of Hagar, Ruth, David, and Mary and the promises God made to them.

If you know how, turn on the “subtitles” so you can clearly hear what she is singing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sz81difwf4Y>

PRAYERS

Heavenly Father, you are gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. We thank you for your daily forgiveness of our sins, and your guidance and love in every struggle we face. Keep us open to learning from your son Jesus by listening to your word.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

We thank you for your church. Bless and protect your church throughout the world so that all people may find their rest in you. Equip all leaders, parents, and grandparents to carry out their callings with joy, strength and wisdom.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

Guide the leaders of the nations that they speak the truth. We thank you for ordering our country and society by means of our government and elected leaders. Bless those in positions of responsibility.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

Sustain all workers and business owners who suffer loss of livelihood due to shut-downs, quarantines, closed borders, and other restrictions. Protect and guard all those who must travel.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

Grant your healing and peace to all we know are unwell or undergoing medical treatment. Today we commit to you (insert names). Watch over them, give them confidence in your good and gracious will for them. Comfort those who are lonely and those who mourn the loss of loved ones.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

Heal our world, heal our bodies, strengthen our hearts and our minds, and in the midst of turmoil, give us hope and peace.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

Almighty and merciful Father, hear us, your children, as we bring our prayers to you. We ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Weary travellers; go now in peace with the love of Christ in your hearts. You are released from your burdens! Go with joy to serve God. AMEN.

SONG “His Life for Mine”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0F82pJrF9G0&list=PLF983819E873F695C&index=82>