

John's Gospel - the Time of Your Life

by John Vissers

Jesus' example teaches us to resist the world's priorities and timing, and to seek to understand and follow God's timing in our lives.

Duration: 40:29

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 7:1-13

Topics: "Gospel Of John"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of discerning the times and understanding God's timing in our lives. He refers to a passage in 1 Chronicles 12 that mentions the sons of Issachar, who were known for their ability to discern the times. The speaker highlights how often we are driven by the desire for sensational experiences and for God to prove Himself to us. However, Jesus reminds us that true understanding of God's timing is necessary, and that doing things according to God's will is more important than immediate concerns. The sermon concludes by encouraging listeners to walk in the will of God and be sensitive to His timing in their lives.

Transcript

Tonight, returning to John's Gospel to chapter 7, and I invite you to turn there to the first 13 verses of John's Gospel, the 7th chapter. Let us hear the Word of God as we, as I read it and as you follow along. After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life.

But when the Jewish feast of tabernacles was near, Jesus' brother said to him, You ought to leave here and go to Judea so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.

For even his own brothers did not believe him. Therefore, Jesus told them, The right time for me has not yet come. For you, any time is right.

The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil. You go to the feast. I am not yet going up to this feast because for me the right time has not yet come.

Having said this, he stayed in Galilee. However, after his brothers had left for the feast, he went also, not publicly, but in secret. Now at the feast, the Jews were watching for him and asking, Where is that man?

Among the crowds, there was widespread whispering about him.

Some said he is a good man. Others replied, No. He deceives the people, but no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the Jews.

Amen, and may God bless to us this reading from his word tonight. Let's bow in prayer, shall we? Gracious God, our Father, we thank you tonight for your word, which is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. We thank you for the ways in which you teach us, the ways in which you speak to us from your word, and we pray tonight that you indeed would speak to us, that hearing your word we may also obey that word.

Indeed, through Jesus Christ we ask it. Amen. Amen.

Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things that matter least. Things that matter most must never be at the mercy of things that matter least. This is a quote, interestingly enough, from the German philosopher Goethe, and it's the quote with which Stephen Covey begins the chapter on priorities in his highly acclaimed book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.

And Covey argues in this chapter, this chapter in his book, that highly effective people put first things first. They know how to establish priorities. They know how to maintain the discipline so that those priorities will be met.

They know how to manage the time of their lives so that indeed they will fulfill their responsibilities and achieve their goals. A few years ago, InterVarsity Press published a little booklet called *The Tyranny of the Urgent*. And in this little booklet, which I remember reading a number of times, Christians were encouraged and exhorted to put priority on those things which were most important in life and not to allow the urgent concerns of daily life to overtake the priorities of Christian faith and Christian life, the importance of fellowship, the importance of worship, the importance of Bible study, the importance of family, the importance of concern to do the will of God.

And I think most of us can identify with these issues. Most of us struggle with time. All of us seem to be busy.

Most of the time. But we're not all sure. We're not all convinced that we're investing our time in things that ultimately matter, in things that ultimately make a difference, in things of eternal value.

We're driven by the immediate concerns of the world. And we often make decisions based on urgent needs and requests. But of course, the question we all have to ask in the midst of life is, are we walking in the will of God? Are we doing the things that are most important? Are we sensitive to God's timing in our lives? Do we see the Kingdom of God at work in our world and in our lives? Or do we indeed let the world squeeze us into its time, into its schedule, into its priorities? Are we pushed around by those around us, and the circumstances around us, and the priorities that so often seem to be imposed upon us? In John chapter 7, in this passage which we've read together this evening, I want to suggest to you that what we see fundamentally and basically is Jesus resisting this temptation.

The will of God His Father was Jesus' supreme concern. He was sensitive to the timing of God. He knew what He had come to do.

And nothing was going to prevent Him from following God's leading and God's timing to accomplish the purposes that His Father had for Him. He would not allow the world to turn Him into a timely miracle worker who had no ultimate eternal mission, rather than a suffering Savior. And so I want you to notice what Jesus says in verse 6. And three times, twice in this passage and once later in John chapter 7, there is language about time.

Verse 6, the right time, Jesus says, for me has not yet come. The right time for me has not yet come. Verse 8, the right time has not yet come.

And then later in chapter 7, in verse 30, we read this. At this they tried to seize Him, but no one laid a hand on Him because His time had not yet come. Now the word that's used here in John chapter 7 for time is the word *kairos*.

And there are two words in Greek for time. One is *kairos* and one is *chronos*, from which we get our word *chronology*. *Chronology*, *chronos*, is just usual, regular time, the schedule of life, the unfolding of time according to the routines of life.

But *kairos* means the right time. It means the decisive moment. It means the appropriate time, the time originally planned, the time of opportunity.

And Jesus was concerned about the *kairos* of God's kingdom, the timing of God's kingdom, and nothing would dissuade Him from following that time in His own life. Now as we come to this passage tonight, what I'd like to do is look at two aspects. I want to just unfold two aspects of this passage that I think are here for us as we consider Jesus' action and His attitude.

The first thing I want us to consider is that Jesus is tempted in this passage by the world's timing. And then secondly, what I want us to notice and consider is that Jesus ultimately acts according to the time of the kingdom of God, the decisive moment, the *kairos* moment, which ultimately is going to take Him to the cross. And I'd like us to think and to consider, as we consider and think about these two aspects of Jesus' action and attitude, what they teach us about our faith in Christ and what they teach us about what it means for us to follow Jesus, what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, to follow in His footsteps in our time, in our day and age.

So first of all, Jesus is tempted by the world's timing. Now in this passage, what we discover, what we meet, who we meet, we meet Jesus with His brothers in Galilee. And we're told that Jesus avoided a return to Judea down in the south because the religious authorities in Jerusalem were plotting to kill Him.

But what we notice is that His brothers urge Him to go down to the Feast of Tabernacles or to the Feast of Booths, which was about to be celebrated in Jerusalem. And in fact, it almost seems as if they reproach Him. They reproach Him for staying in the relative obscurity of Galilee.

Presumably, they knew that Jesus' support was flagging in Galilee. Many of His disciples, as we've seen in John chapter 6, were growing disillusioned with this apparent Messiah. They were becoming discouraged with His teaching.

He was laying heavy teaching on them, and it wasn't altogether clear that they could continue to follow Him, and some turned away. And the mission of Jesus now in Galilee didn't seem, quite frankly, to be going anywhere. His popularity was waning.

But notice what happens here. His brothers, and the text is referring here to natural brothers of Jesus, they also saw an opportunity because, of course, they knew that Jesus could perform miracles. They knew that Jesus could easily draw a crowd, and what better place to perform some sensational miracles than at the Feast of Tabernacles down in Jerusalem? People would be there from all over.

It seems obvious to them that the festival, this celebration, this Feast of Tabernacles, this Feast of Booths, would be the absolute perfect place to achieve maximum publicity. And if you think about it a little bit, you begin to see that the brothers of Jesus at this point are not much different, really, than today's political advisors or today's market managers or spin doctors or those who give advice because the right place and the right time can give maximum exposure. Jesus, if he went down to Jerusalem, could impress the crowds.

He could show himself to the world, and after all, Jesus' brothers are assuming this is really what Jesus wants, after all, to draw attention to himself. He could regain a few percentage points in the polls. And then in verse 5, John the Gospel writer includes this very interesting observation.

Sad, really, but very interesting. It says, For even his own brothers did not believe in him. Even his own brothers did not believe in him.

They believed, presumably, that he could perform miracles. They believed, presumably, that he could attract the crowd. They believed, presumably, that he might even become successful.

Perhaps they even thought that he might be the Messiah. He might be the one who would lead the people of Israel out from under Roman oppression and domination. They believed that he could become a highly effective leader and perhaps even Messiah.

But John here, the Gospel writer, is reiterating that faith in Jesus, true faith, real faith, means more than accepting the ability of Jesus to do the spectacular. And again, we see this theme, which emerges in John chapter 6, reemerging now, that Jesus is more than a meal ticket and faith is more than getting something from Jesus. In fact, the brothers here are revealed as no different than the disciples who deserted Jesus at the end of chapter 6. They just don't get it.

They just don't really understand what Jesus' ministry and his mission is ultimately all about. Bruce Milne, in his book on the Gospel of John, I think puts it quite nicely. He says, His hunger for spectacular signs is the enemy of faith, since it leaves the fallen, self-centered heart untouched and unrebuked.

You see, the brothers were no different than the crowds, who were no different than many of the disciples who were following Jesus. They wanted Jesus to do something sensational. They wanted Jesus to prove to them that he really was the Messiah.

They wanted him to dance to their tune. And isn't that, of course, so often the case even today? That we hunger and long for the sensational. We want God to prove himself.

We want Jesus to prove himself to us by doing something sensational. And so the attitude of the brothers here is revealed as the attitude of a rebellious world. And Jesus responds to them and says, For you, any time is right.

In other words, if you don't really understand the purposes of God, if you don't really understand who I am, then any time is right for doing things for those unconcerned with God's will. It doesn't really matter. They

are looking at things from the perspective of the world, from the world's timing.

This looks like a spectacular opportunity to the brothers of Jesus. But Jesus says you're looking at it from the perspective of the world's opportunity and the world's timing. Jesus says they don't really understand.

But he presses the point further because the point is that the rejection of Jesus is not simply a matter of bad timing or poor exposure or misunderstanding or poor communication strategy. That's not why Jesus is unpopular. It's not simply that people have misunderstood.

It's not simply that Jesus hasn't communicated somehow effectively what his mission is, but rather it's because the world is in the process of rejecting the Messiah. And the brothers don't understand this. It goes to the very core of who Jesus is.

The desertion of many of his disciples is only the beginning. And these brothers, Jesus looks at his own brothers and he says, you know nothing of the hatred of the world for me. You know nothing of the hatred of the world with which I have to grapple.

A hatred which is going to lead me to a cross. The world does not hate you because you belong to it. Because the world does not hate its own.

But the world does hate me because I do not belong to the world. You see, what Jesus is saying to them is that his appearance, his mission, his ministry creates a crisis for the world, a kairos moment. And what we in fact discover is that the hatred of Jesus, the rejection of Jesus, the marginalization and the absolute hatred heaped upon Jesus is used by God as the means, as the opportunity for the salvation of the world.

You see, everything is turned upside down. It's not the popularity of Jesus which is going to save the world. It is the fact that he is hated and ultimately rejected which is the means through which God is going to bring salvation.

And Jesus knows this and he is committed to staying the course. And he will not back away even though he could have gone this other route of greater popularity. And it's not the first time, of course, that Jesus is tempted to diverge from the path that God his Father has placed him on.

You remember at the very outset of his ministry, Jesus is tempted by the devil in the wilderness. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record the temptations of Jesus at the beginning of his ministry. Jesus is tempted to forsake the will of God, to forsake the plan of God.

He's tempted to turn stones into bread, to jump off the pinnacle of the temple, to worship Satan. He can have the kingdoms of the world. He can take a shortcut to glory if only he'll step off the path that God his Father has placed him on.

And throughout the ministry of Jesus we see this again and again and again. He will submit himself to the will of God his Father. He's tempted in John chapter 6 to secure the allegiance of the people by meeting their demand for food and for leadership according to their terms.

And later in the Garden of Gethsemane, he's tempted to get out from underneath the cup. He says, if only, Father, this cup can be taken from me, but not my will, Your will be done. You see, here we see the Messiah.

Here we see the eternal Son of God conforming His will to the will of God His Father. Now what does this mean for our faith? How does this really apply to your life and to my life as we seek to follow Jesus in our world today? Well, let me suggest two things. First of all, in terms of our faith, and this is one of the lessons we've been learning as we've been working our way through the Gospel of John, it means that our faith must be faith in the Jesus revealed to us in the pages of the New Testament.

The real Jesus who meets us there must be the object of our faith. You see, our faith must be conformed to the identity of Jesus, to who Jesus really is. And most of us, if we are honest with ourselves, operate the other way around.

We make Jesus conform to our faith. We try to squeeze Jesus into our mold. We try to make Jesus fit our schedules and our timing and our priorities.

We try, if we're honest, we try to turn Jesus into the kind of Messiah that we want Him to be. A Messiah that we're comfortable with. We try to make Him march to the timing of our tune, just like His brothers tried to do.

But what I want to tell you tonight is that Jesus, the real Jesus, revealed in the pages of the New Testament, does not and will not and cannot allow Himself to be used in this way. He is not influenced by the desires and the wishes and the will of others. Jesus is not a people pleaser.

And you can't use Jesus to satisfy your own desires. He will not allow Himself to be used in that way. And then secondly, in terms of our Christian lives, I suggest to you that this passage reminds us that as disciples of Jesus, we are called, as we place our feet in His footsteps, to resist the same temptations.

Every day the world confronts us with its priorities, with its schedules, with its timing. We're told what to think. We're told what to wear, how to live.

The media bombards us with information overload and shapes our thinking, our view of the world. And it's difficult to get back and to get some perspective on your own life and on what's happening in the world. But we are called, as disciples of Jesus, to take that step back, to discern the times, to understand the times in which we live according to the kairos, the timing of God's kingdom.

There's a wonderful passage in the Old Testament in 1 Chronicles 12, in verse 32, where there's a long list of some of David's fighting men. And in an almost sort of passing reference, it describes the sons of Issachar. And the sons of Issachar are described in this way.

They were men who knew the times, who understood the times, and knew what Israel ought to do. And my friends, God is looking for men and women and young people today in the church of Jesus Christ who understand the times and who know what God's people ought to do, who know that we're not marching just by the time of this world, but that we're in the kairos of God's kingdom, and that that brings a whole new perspective on time into our lives and into the life of the church. And so through prayer, and through the study of the Scriptures, and through reading solid Christian literature, and through spending time in fellowship together, whether it's in small groups or in other ways, we begin to find our bearings, that kairos, that sense of God's timing in the midst of our own Christian living.

But we need to press on here because I want you to notice that Jesus then does act here. In the first instance, the first movement is his resistance of the temptation. But now he does act.

In verse 9, the conversation between Jesus and his brothers draws to a conclusion. It says, having said this then, Jesus stayed in Galilee. But then in verse 10, the situation changes.

Notice what John the Gospel writer says. However, after his brothers had left for the feast, he went also, not publicly, but in secret. He went down to Jerusalem.

He went to the feast. He went to the feast of tabernacles. Now, the question here, of course, is did Jesus change his mind? Did Jesus decide, maybe after some thought, some sober second thought, that maybe his brothers really were right after all? Did he relent and go down to Jerusalem? Did he give in to their wishes? Did he plan to go to Jerusalem all along? Was he just playing games? There are those over the years who have found it difficult to reconcile the action of Jesus here with his initial resistance to his brothers' wishes.

Some of the translations, like the NIV, try to soften the blow by inserting the word yet in verse 8. Jesus says, you go to the feast. I am not yet going up to this feast because for me the right time has not yet come. Now, it's not an inappropriate translation, but in fact, the word yet may not be in the original text, but it does pick up something, I think, of the intention of what is being expressed here.

I think the point is quite obvious. Jesus didn't reject the exhortation or the invitation of his brothers because it was wrong to go to the feast. His brothers, rather, wanted him to go for all the wrong reasons.

They wanted him to go down publicly and in a wrong manner. The timing was all wrong. The purpose was all wrong.

Jesus will go to the feast, but it will be in his own time. It will be when the time is right. Jesus must wait for his Father's direction.

And Jesus will go only when God, his Father, signals that the time is right. And so what happens when Jesus sets out for the feast? How does he go? He goes in a manner which is the opposite of that recommended by his brothers. He goes in secret.

He tries not to draw attention to himself. He moves in the time of the kingdom of God. And what's going on here is he's not moving according to the chronos, the chronology of his brothers.

He's moving according to the kairos of God, his Father. And this is a theme which is developed throughout the Gospels. The revelation of Jesus as Savior and as Lord will take place in God's time.

Do you remember earlier in John's Gospel? In the second chapter when Jesus was at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, Jesus was asked to intervene in the crisis there because they had run out of wine. And his mother asks him to intervene. Do you remember what Jesus said? He said to his mother in what seemed almost like a rebuke, he said, My time, dear woman, my time has not yet come.

You see, even there, Jesus knows what it means to march according to the timing of God his Father. He knows that the cross is coming. He knows that God's redemptive purposes are being unfolded according to the sovereign plan of God.

He's being drawn to Jerusalem. He's being drawn toward Jerusalem, yes, but not for the purposes that his brothers want him to go. Not so that he can be popular.

Not so that he can perform sensational miracles. Not so that he can impress the crowds or court public opinion. He's going to Jerusalem because there, ultimately, he will face the condemnation and hatred of the world and finally be killed on the cross of Calvary.

And we need to understand that in the life and in the ministry and in the death and in the resurrection of Jesus, a new time, God's time, confronts the time of this world. In Mark 1, verse 14, we read that Jesus proclaimed the good news of God, and this is what he said. The time has come.

The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news. And that time will be fully established through the death of Jesus when he goes up to Jerusalem to be lifted up on the cross.

You see, the cross is the place where the kronos, the time of our world, and the kairos, the time of God's kingdom, are going to meet. And they're going to meet in a deadly, a deadly final confrontation. And on the cross, the kingdom of God now intersects with the kingdoms of this world.

The moment of the cross is the moment of crisis. It is the decisive time. It is the event in which God's eternity breaks into our time to save us.

The great missionary theologian Leslie Newbigin puts it this way. He says, Here on the cross, precisely at the point where the righteousness and wisdom of God are veiled, in the figure of a condemned and excommunicated man, is the event of its decisive unveiling. The event which makes it possible to live in him in the new time, the time of the reign of God.

This new time is not meaningless because it looks to a real end of the glory of God. You see, my friends, the Gospel of Jesus Christ opens up a whole new world to us. A whole new way of looking at time and eternity.

A whole new way of understanding the time of your life, the events of your life. A way of understanding who you are and how your life is to be lived. And again, I want to suggest to you there are two applications of this.

One for our faith and one for our life of discipleship. In terms of our faith, we need to understand that the cross of Jesus is the decisive moment for us. That was the point at which God's time intersected with our time.

That is the kairos moment for all of us. That is where the decisive event took place. That's where our lives can be changed as we stand beneath the cross where the purposes of God are revealed.

And on the cross, the Son of God is not a wonder worker to be marveled at. He is a crucified Messiah at whose feet we bow. He is not a meal ticket on whose coattails we ride.

He is the Savior of the world whose name is sweet in a believer's ear. You see, true biblical Christianity, those who embrace true biblical faith not only recognize that they cannot manipulate Jesus, but they also recognize that the center of life, the center of human history, the center of salvation are all located in the cross of Calvary. It's that cross which intersects our history and our lives.

We cannot evade the cross. And then in terms of our own lives as disciples, we recognize that true disciples of Jesus live in this new time. There is a new kingdom inaugurated by the death and by the resurrection of Jesus.

Someone has said that the time of our world, the chronos, the chronology, is the time of appetite and appearance and ambition. And our lives follow a chronology, don't they? We all are born into this world. We grow up.

We go to school. We graduate from elementary school and we go to high school. We graduate from high school.

Some of us are fortunate enough to go to university. We graduate. We get jobs.

Some of us get married. We have families. We go through the cycles of life.

We grow older. We grow into middle age and then finally into old age. Then we retire, having saved up our money, and then finally we die.

That's the time of life. And in the Old Testament, the writer of Ecclesiastes says, what's it all worth? I mean, what's it all for? You're born to live. You're born to die.

It makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. It's the time of the world. That's what life consists of.

But you see, the good news of the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, is that that's not all there is. Because in Jesus Christ, the kairos of God's kingdom has broken into that chronology. And now that time of our lives, if we by faith embrace Christ, has a new framework and a new center and a new purpose and a new direction.

The center of that life is now Jesus Christ. The alpha and the omega of that time is Jesus Christ. The fullness of life is found in the fullness of time in the One who was born of a woman and who died for us.

And your life and my life are not meaningless, are not filled with lack of purpose when by faith we embrace Jesus Christ. Because the kairos of God's kingdom comes into our lives. And in the midst of our daily lives, the daily pressures, the priorities, the schedules, the day timers that are full, the emails that press in upon us, we always have this greater horizon, this broader horizon that God is at work, that God has come and God in His Son, Jesus Christ, has broken into our time and in our lives.

And therefore, we can do the right things, and we can do them in the right way, and we can do them at the right time, and we can do them for the right reasons. When by faith you enter into this sphere of existence, you are in for the time of your life. Let us pray.

Lord, we confess tonight that we don't fully understand the mysteries of Your kingdom and the ways in which You work in our lives and we confess that we are confused and burdened by life so often and we seem to struggle and just try to make our way forward somehow. But Lord, tonight we invite You to come, to come into our time, the time and space of our lives, and to change us. Kingdom of God, make that kingdom, O God, be real in our lives and come, Spirit of God, we pray through Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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