

Knowing the Time

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's timing and responding faithfully to His call in our lives amidst the challenges of the world.

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3:1, Matthew 16:21, Matthew 17:1, Luke 12:49, Luke 19:41, John 9:1, John 12:20, John 15:20, Romans 13:11

Topics: "Gods Timing", "Spiritual Awakening"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches on the importance of understanding God's timing in our lives, using examples from Jesus' life to illustrate different seasons and purposes under heaven. He emphasizes the need for believers to be aware of the present time, to discern God's calling for them, and to align themselves with God's kingdom agenda. Bieber warns against impatience, vanity ambitions, and missing divine visitations due to distractions or sleepiness. He urges believers to wake up, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be prepared for the signs of the times, including increased confusion, people seeking God, the blind searching for answers, and the likelihood of persecution.

Transcript

For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born and a time to die;

a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted;

a time to kill and a time to heal;

a time to break down and a time to build up... Ecclesiasties 3:1-3

A time for every purpose under heaven...

Jesus was never in a hurry. He never got nervous and anxious about how he was going to get it all done. Yet he was extremely conscious of time.

-- There is a time to remain hidden---and so for thirty years no miracles, no sermons.

-- There is a time to come out in the open. So he arrived with this announcement:

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel!"

-- There is a time for his disciples to be shown who he is: the Messiah.

-- The exact time to learn about the cross.

"From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." Matthew 16:21

-- A time for him to be transfigured.

"After six days, Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain, and was transfigured before them." Matthew 17:1

--And a time to be baptized with fire:

"I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished!" Luke 12: 49-50

Likewise, when you and I enter into the kingdom, time takes on a different meaning.

It's no longer: Now I'm twenty, I should be just fine.

Now I'm thirty-five, I should have a good income.

Now I'm forty-five, what have I accomplished?

Now I'm sixty: in five years I retire. Do I have enough money?

If we're in the kingdom of God, we're in God's time.

Our job is to fit in, whether we're thirty-five or ninety-five. This means we must be able to know the meaning of each hour as it comes to us. So that if the hour brings a call from God for a change in our living, if it signals that the road now veers up toward Jerusalem and Calvary, we should be able to know it, and fit in.

Jesus expects his followers to know the hour - to recognize its meaning for themselves - not what Brother So-and-so said in his latest book on Bible prophecy; not what Sister So-and-so said on her last appearance on the 700 Club - but to know for ourselves what this hour means.

He also said to the multitudes, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once,

'A shower is coming'; and so it happens. When you see the south wind blowing, you say,

'There will be scorching heat'; and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to

interpret the appearance of earth and sky; but why do you not know how to interpret the present time."

God the Son, in human flesh, stands before them, and they see nothing.

The same God the Son is among us now in the Holy Spirit. And in the power of the Holy Spirit he leads us, shows us the things that are to come, manifests himself in the breaking of bread.

By means of his continuous imparting of life to our inmost beings, it is possible to look at the world around us and observe what's going on in the city where we live, in Afghanistan, Iran, Japan, China, Egypt, Palestine, Israel...

--To see what is taking place in the body of Christ,...

-- To discern the thirst for God in the multitudes across the earth.

To take all that we see, and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, interpret its meaning; and know what God is calling for from us.

Many of us are prone to jump ahead of what the present hour calls for; we get itchy, we want to make things happen, like the man who wants to get off the train before it stops. If the train is doing sixty miles an hour, he'll break his neck! And this is what happens to us when we get caught up in our prophecy fantasies, our vanity ambitions, impatient to make things happen.

Sometimes we sit on the sidelines and complain that everybody, including God, is behind schedule. "What's the matter with those dummies, can't they see what I see?" when what we "see" is a "vision" which did not come from God.

John the Baptist sitting in prison sends his messengers to Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come or do we look for another?" When are you going to start doing something significant? Satan loves to get behind us and push us with an unholy impatience, inspiring us to think it all hinges on our "vision." We're trying to make the kingdom of God come on our schedule. Dangerous!

Perhaps we're afflicted with the other extreme: we sleep through our time. The moment of redemptive opportunity comes, and the Lord says, "Wake up and act", and all he can get out of us is a couple of grunts as we roll over and continue our slumber.

And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it saying,

"Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace!" Luke 19:41

And in King James Version: "If thou hast known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes."

"For the days shall come upon you, when your enemies shall cast up

a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side,

and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, and

they will not leave one stone upon another in you; because you did

not know the time of your visitation." Luke 19:41-44

They slept through their divine visitation!

The leaders of Jerusalem were so busy criticizing, analyzing, and despising the One who had come to bring them life, that they missed their chance!

And the same thing happens to us if we don't stay awake.

Besides this you know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than it was when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly, as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. Romans 13:11-14

For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born and a time to die;

a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted;

There are four things taking place in the world around us right now that ought to be seen by the Body of Christ as time signals.

First: The world around us is boiling with more confusion, more danger---things are more out of control---than ever before in our lives.

So what are we to do?

You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, see that you are not alarmed. Matt 24:6

Look at the fig tree and all the trees as soon as they come out in leaf you see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all has taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Luke 21:29

But take heed to yourselves lest you be taken away with dissipation and drunkenness and that day come upon you suddenly like a snare. Luke 21:34

The more confusing, dangerous, out-of-control things become on the outside of our lives, the more imperative it is that we keep the inside of our lives clear, simple, and clean...that we put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh. Make sure that we get rid of the clutter, so that we can see clearly and think clearly.

--- Even if it means changing our daily routine, so that we have more time alone with God.

--- Even if it means cutting out some of our pastimes which make our minds flabby and our bodies lazy.

--- And even if it means repenting of the self-pampering and self-indulgence which dulls us.

The first signal of the world around us right now to believers is "Wake up!"

Another signal: People who never did so before are beginning to seek God.

They are troubled in conscience, their minds are disturbed, they are obsessed with the emptiness of life. And some of these troubled people are coming to us, crying out for a sign of hope. They're having a second look at the Jesus they ignored. They're thirsting for the love which only God can give them.

Among those who went up to worship at the Feast were some Greeks. So they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee (full of Greeks), "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew went with Philip and they went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified." John 12:20-23

Glorified at Calvary.

Jesus saw the coming of those Greeks as a time signal. And we should too. The hour has come for me to pick up my cross and follow the Master to whatever Calvary he has chosen for me.

When people start pressing in on us, crying out for evidence that the Reality of Jesus Christ; this is not a sign for us to convert their God-thirst into a religious success story for ourselves, this is a signal for us to draw near to the cross -- Jesus' cross and ours.

-- This is the hour for us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts.

-- This is the hour for us to reckon ourselves crucified with Jesus, to lay ourselves afresh on God's altar, to start spending ourselves in intercession, and every form of service to other people that the Spirit calls for.

Another signal: The blind are coming to us for sight.

In other words, people are coming to us wanting answers. "What does all this mean? Is this the End of the world?"

In the coming days we're going to see more of this than we've ever seen in our lives.

Old friends that we haven't seen for years will phone us in the middle of the night...people at work...people in our neighborhood...an old enemy from our past will be sitting in a bar drinking and call us..."What's happening?"

We have to understand what that means to us.

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Quit speculating, and get with the program! God is manifesting himself before your eyes!

Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifested in him. We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. As he said this, he spat on the ground and made clay out of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, and sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam.

The man went, washed and came back seeing. John 9:1-7

When we find ourselves sent to the blind, or when the blind come to us looking for answers, this is a signal from God that their darkness is moving in, and our hours of daylight are coming to an end.

We must work the works of him who sent me.

The night is coming when no one can work.

The work of him who sent Jesus is to proclaim his gospel in word and deed. This gospel of the kingdom will be preached to the whole world as a testimony to nations, then will the end come.

Night when no one can work. Night for this world. Daylight for the kingdom.

Never has the urgency of the call to proclaim the gospel rested more heavily upon the Body of Christ than it is right now. Open your mouth and speak, and the Spirit of God will anoint your tongue...people will hear and many will turn.

Finally: The final signal from God is persecution.

The disciples were delighted when these Greeks came looking for Jesus. Look, he has international importance now!

But to Jesus, this was simply a sign that his baptism of fire had arrived. And the hungering and thirsting for God that expresses itself as they draw near to us crying out for some hope, will be followed, not by thank you notes and bouquets, and more success....

...but by persecution.

There will be persecution, and we will experience it.

And it will be more than people laughing behind our back at the water cooler.

"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all this they will do to you on my account, because they do not know him who sent me." John 15:20-21

If there have ever been believers since the day of the apostles who could consider themselves privileged, it is we; we are privileged to be living in this hour.

And if there has ever been an hour when circumstances were calling for believers to turn their backs on the world's anxiety, lust, greed, and fit into God's kingdom program it's now.

May God give us eyes that can read the signs, and hearts that will respond.

"Besides this you know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than it was when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly, as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."

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