

Timing is everything!

“To everything there is a season”

The minister who I followed in the States had decided to preach on the Ten commandments. He had reached “Thou shalt not commit adultery” for the upcoming Sunday.

On the Saturday night before, the Monica Lewinsky scandal broke. When he went into the pulpit everyone wondered whether he would mention the Bill Clinton scandal or leave it alone and preach as if nothing had happened. He did not mention a word about it in the sermon but this is how he began:

“They say timing is everything!” There was a lot of laughter.

I have a wonderful text for you today!

“When we pray, God hears more than we say, answers more than we ask, give’s more than we imagine In His own time and in His own way.”

Have you ever wondered whether Jesus would be a successful pastor today? If his first sermon is anything to go by, he would be a dismal failure, especially about keeping everybody happy all the time. He started well with everyone’s approval, but when he got launched into the sermon saying that a prophet is never accepted in his own country, and then went on to cite the facts, that in a time of famine, there were many widows in Israel, but Elijah was not sent to any of these, but only to a Sidonian widow, and in the time of Elisha there were many lepers in Israel, but only Naaman the Syrian was healed. The equivalent sermon today would argue that God was looking after the Palestinians and not

the Jews. Everyone in the synagogue was enraged and they took him to the brow of the hill in their town with intent to throw him down.

But then something happened quite unexpectedly. He slipped through the crowd and walked away! It was not his time to die, there was much left to do, much left to fulfill! What was at stake here?

When Jesus read the Isaiah passage it was one of several Messianic texts. There was another such text that encapsulated the truth that the synagogue crowd missed: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrata though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

This text was written 700 years before Jesus' first sermon, and the synagogue had no clue what he meant when he said: this is now fulfilled in your hearing. In other words, the Messiah, long prophesied had actually come!

They say timing is everything and the synagogue people had the timing all wrong. Much to their surprise God had other ideas for this Nazarene that did not include being pushed off a hill in a small town!

There was a much bigger picture. There was the world stage, and 2000 years of history at stake. It was not to end at Nazareth!

Have you ever planned something to find out that it is just not working out on your timeline? I have often spoken of my belief that God has three answers to us; No, Slow and Go!

In the Bible there is a great deal talked about or implied about God's timing which often appears to us to be SLOW. But often there is preparation needed before the timing is right.

Picture David, long before Goliath, practicing on the hillside with his sling shot until he was deadly accurate with it. Little did he know that he would use this weapon against the mighty Philistine. But there came a time when King Saul quaked in his boots and all Israel with him as Goliath challenged anyone to single combat. At that moment, David instantly knew that he could use his slingshot against the giant. The years of preparation had been hard and long but when the timing was right all Israel was saved from a bloody war.

Remember the story of Joseph? Sold into slavery in Egypt, imprisoned under a false accusation, there he was rotting in prison. He asked God in prayer for help, for he was a man of faith, but the timing was not right. But one night the Pharaoh dreamed a strange dream which no one could interpret. And then his wine steward remembered that Joseph the prisoner could interpret dreams, and he mentioned it to the Pharaoh and Joseph came before the mightiest monarch of the Middle East and interpreted the dreams. All those years of preparation! Suddenly the timing was right and Joseph was catapulted to become the most powerful man in Egypt after the Pharaoh, and Joseph said to his brothers about this timing: "I am in God's place. As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." Again, timing was everything.

Before the Second World War Churchill was always lampooned as an alarmist. He had reports coming to him out of Germany as to what exactly was going on. In fact, he had better information than the Prime Minister, because he made it his business to know. When he warned of what Nazi Germany was up to, the Nay Sayers all vilified him until it was almost too late for Britain to fight back.

Suddenly the handwriting was on the wall and Churchill, it became very clear, had been right all along. All that long preparation now became the gold on which the refiners fire was unleashed, and Churchill was ready for the challenge to become the leader of Britain in the darkest of days.

When given the challenge this is what he said: “Thus, then, on the night of the 10th of May, at the outset of this mighty battle, I acquired the chief power in the State. ... During these last crowded days of the political crisis my pulse had not quickened at any moment. I took it all as it came. But I cannot conceal from the reader of this truthful account that as I went to bed at about 3 a.m, I was conscious of a profound sense of relief. At last, I had the authority to give directions over the whole scene. **I felt as if I were walking with destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial.** Ten years in the political wilderness had freed me from ordinary party antagonisms. My warnings over the last six years had been so numerous, so detailed, and were now so terribly vindicated, that no one could gainsay me. I could not be reproached either for, making the war, or with want of preparation for it. I thought I knew a good deal about it all, and I was sure I should not fail. Therefore, although impatient for the morning, I slept soundly and had no need for cheering dreams. Facts are better than dreams.”

Timing was everything! He was the only man in Britain ready for the grand scheme of things that resulted in the freedom we enjoy today.

Perhaps for you, you have a challenge. You want a better job, you want a relationship of love in your life, you are chronically short of money. Perhaps for you it is a health challenge and you want answers now. You pray but the heavens seem silent to your prayers and now your faith is

ebbing away. If only you could have an answer, if only it was now. You say what I want is a good thing, why doesn't it come?

When searching for a minister it can take a long time because Gospel calls are a two-way street. A congregation can get all excited about a candidate. They appear perfect and the search team is all ready to go when all of a sudden, the candidate takes another call instead. Knox has been there and done that and it is hard...

When I was Interim moderator at St. Andrews in Stratford some years ago now, the congregation got terribly excited about a candidate after we had spent months listening to sermons and interviewing candidates. We were all set to go when to our surprise he decided to go out to the West Coast. Yes, he was a big fish. He became Moderator of the national church.

But God had other plans for him. And so, we had to go back to the drawing board. It was not easy, but the timing was not right.

Sometimes under pressure, search teams, out of impatience or a congregation not being supportive of their efforts, they settle for less than the best. They just want to hire a minister and so they step out of God's timing and it becomes a secular hire, despite the language that surrounds it being God's call. We hear the pious words, but after awhile it becomes evident that it was not right either for the candidate or the congregation and a mistake had been made.

But if timing is everything, then there is God's time and all we have to do is be patient, prayerful and determined to claim the promise of being Divinely guided and protected. We need to relax into faith and stop the fear stuff in its tracks. It just doesn't help to be anxious!

Shannon and Mike Franklin met in a wheel chair race in Florida. They fell in love, he was a paraplegic and she was a quadriplegic. But those disabilities actually drew them together. They lived on different continents, but they were both people of faith, and they felt that God was drawing them together. They embarked on a long-distance relationship and survived the ups and downs of that. Eventually they got married and began to live in South Carolina together.

Shannon and Mike desperately wanted children. Mike was so good with kids. Why could he not be a dad, Shannon asked herself and why could I not be a mom?

They went to a doctor and he was receptive. He suggested that in vitro fertilization might be a way and he was willing to try for them. He suggested they find a surrogate mother to birth their child and Mike's sister in England was up for it.

She came over to the States and went through endless injections all to no avail. Months went by and eventually they all gave up.

But then one night Shannon had a dream of a little girl with green eyes just like Mike's. She told him of her dream and he just rolled his wheel chair away...

When Mike's sister Julie returned to England Shannon fell into a deep depression, unlike anything she had ever experienced. She was utterly desolate. Mike had confided to her the story of his greatest fear after his accident. His doctor has told him that he would never be a father.

Shannon talked to God about that and said "Lord he is such a loving man. Why would you deny him the opportunity to be a dad?"

For months Shannon fell asleep praying. She hated to ask Julie back from England to try again. It had been devastating for her.

Shannon turned the puzzle over in her mind again and again until an insight suddenly came. The doctor never said **she would be unable to bear a child- just advised against it.** What if she tried to carry the embryos?

She prayed and the answer came from her heart: “All you have to do is conquer your fears.”

She talked to her doctor about it. He cautiously agreed. She talked to Mike about it and they discussed the pros and cons until they decided to try it at least once.

Was now the right time?

Shannon and Mike were aware that God had given them miracle after miracle to bring them together against all the odds of injuries and a long-distance relationship. Why not try for another miracle? Could now be the timing that was so important? Could she be the actual mother, bond with her child through birthing, pass her immunities on? Was this the better plan God had in mind?

A few weeks later the phone rang and it was the doctor: “You are going to be parents,” he said.

The pregnancy went forward without complications and the months went by quickly.

The delivery room was like a party. Her family were all there. Mike’s Family had flown in from England. There was a team of doctors on hand there to help and learn. All around the room there were smiling faces. This was to be one loved child!

What was God's timing? 11:30 pm Kira Franklin came into the world. She was perfect with an uncanny resemblance to her Dad, with those foreseen green eyes.

She thought back to that dream, the sleepless night of anguish, and that moment in time when peace came over her, telling her not to be afraid.

Kira had come on God's timetable, and as Shannon was to say, she was God's best miracle yet.

Whatever it is you are waiting for, believe in your heart that all things work together for good and then relax into faith and wait for God's time.

“Whatsoever things you ask for in prayer believe that you have them already,” and in God's time they shall be yours:

For, “when we pray, God hears more than we say, answers more than we ask, give's more than we imagine In His own time and in His own way.”

Amen.