

A Few Thoughts for the Hunkered Down

Thursday, December 24, 2020

It's Time!

But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. —Galatians 4:3-4

How hard it has been for the children waiting for Christmas! Anyone who can remember childhood remembers the indisputably longest month of the year—December. As kids we ached for Christmas to finally arrive. Waiting is a very difficult task for a child, but if I am to be honest with myself, I must confess that the years have not helped me all that much in this matter. We learn a few tricks. We know that we should keep ourselves occupied and distracted in a time of waiting, and this helps tremendously. But truth be told, when we are waiting for something for which we dearly long, the waiting is so very difficult! I was reminded of this over the recent years as we waited for our grandchildren to arrive, and we were reminded of the times of waiting for our own children. You mothers of the world have all my sympathies for nine long months, and especially that last month which feels more like a year. God calls us to be patient, but waiting is so painful!

And then the time comes! And now the time is upon us as we prepare to celebrate the long-awaited birth of Jesus the Savior. The *long-expected Jesus* is soon to be among us! The Scriptures remind us that the day of Jesus' birth was not merely the ending of a nine-month gestation, but was the culmination of an eternal plan. *But when the time had fully come*. The moment was ripe. The time was right. Jesus came at just the right time, or so the Bible says. It can be hard to believe in "God's perfect timing," not only in our own lives and experience, but even as we read the biblical accounts. *But when the time had fully come*, sounds as though God waited until the time when mighty Israel had finally gotten their act together and was ready to embrace and exalt their King, but this was not the world into which Christ was born. Israel was living under a cruel subjection to the Romans, and not only were they a subject people, but they were also a badly divided people. If you think the present tensions between democrats and republicans is unbearable, you are apparently unfamiliar with the acrimonious divides between the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Essenes, and several other Jewish sects. In Jesus' day Israel was a mess. One might have thought that Jesus would have come to His people at a more unified and stronger period in their history, but such was not the case. One certainly would have expected Jesus' ministry to have gone more smoothly and for those people to have more fully

embraced the Good News. Instead, life in Jesus' day seemed something of a mess. You know—the way life seems for us!

But this was God's plan. God does not think, plan and direct like a Hollywood screenwriter might do, with an eye toward quick resolutions and harmonies. Jesus came at a messy time, lived a messy life, and through all the mess, trouble and sadness, God worked His perfect plan of salvation.

It can be hard to believe in God's perfect timing. How many of us will heartily affirm that the vaccine is far too late and that we have become old too soon? There are countless questions that we have of God's timing and plan, but on this holy evening we shall again be reminded that God knows what He is doing, in the life of His Son, and in our lives. The moment has finally arrived. The time has fully come, and we are saved!

Have a Joyous Christmas!

Pastor Jim

Almighty and everlasting God, you have stooped to raise fallen humanity by the child-bearing of blessed Mary; grant that we who have seen your glory revealed in our human nature, and your love made perfect in our weakness, may daily be renewed in your image, and conformed to the pattern of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. —David Silk