

Good News!

Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 52:7; Galatians 4:4-6; 2 Corinthians 6:2

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West Valley Church
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Isaiah 52:7; Galatians 4:4-6; 2 Corinthians 6:2¹

During this Advent season, we've been spending time on our Sundays exploring the Good News. Over 2700 years ago the Prophet Isaiah said:

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!” (Isaiah 52:7, nlt)

When Isaiah wrote that, of course, there was no email or texting, no postal service, no phones, no telegraphs – not even two cups and a string! The way that news was delivered was either from one person to another, or for long distances, via a messenger – a person who would carry the news, either in a scroll or word of mouth, often running from town to town; the more urgent the news, the faster the messenger needed to run. Isaiah poetically describes how wonderful it is to receive really good news by saying that it is as if the very feet of the runner were beautiful, since those feet were responsible to bring that good news down the mountains into the town so swiftly and with perfect timing.

For us, the good news that was delivered to us came carried upon the beautiful tiny feet of a baby boy, the Son of God, Immanuel – God with us. The Good News that Isaiah predicted was that God was going to bring peace and salvation to us. There would be no more conflict between us and God. God was willing to forgive our sins, our rebellion, our rejection of him, because he wanted to be in close relationship with us, with him as our father – a loving, caring, compassionate, father. This is the news that Isaiah meant when he said “the God of Israel reigns;” that God’s Kingdom has come and can be the rule of our lives. And this news could not come at a better time.

In the New Testament it says this:

“But when the time was right, God sent his Son, and a woman gave birth to him. His Son obeyed the Law, so he could set us free from the Law, and we could become God’s children. Now that we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts. And his Spirit tells us that God is our Father.” (Galatians 4:4-6, ceb)

“When the time was right...”

¹ Resources: Ken Shigematsu, “Connecting the Dots at Christmas,” Christopher Holdsworth, “Waiting for the Good News,” William Greathouse with George Lyons, “Romans 9-16: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition,” New Beacon Bible Commentary (Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2008), “Beacon Bible Commentary, Vol. 4,” (Beacon Hill, Kansas City, 1966)

What does this expression mean, "When the time was right, God sent his Son"? Well, the expression means literally, "fullness of time" or when the time was ripe, and when the time was perfect, God sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

Throughout history, God had been whispering, promising, and suggesting that he would send a Savior. In the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned and fell away from God, they experienced a sense of alienation between themselves and God, between one another, and even within their own hearts. God promised that he would send a Savior for them and for all humanity.

Many centuries later, God would approach a Middle Eastern nomad named Abraham and his wife Sarah. They were an elderly couple who had struggled for decades with infertility, and God said, "You will miraculously conceive and through your offspring will be a child that will bless the nations of the world," and that child would ultimately be fulfilled in Jesus Christ who would bless the whole world. God would approach one of Abraham's many times removed great grandsons, King David, and God told David that he would have an offspring in the future who would sit on the throne forever and ever, and *His* reign will know no end. God was referring to Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Throughout history and Scripture God promises a Savior, and then the Apostle Paul says when the time was right, in the perfect time, God sent into this world his Son, born of a woman.

Christ's coming was at the right time for many evident reasons. It was the right time *politically* because it was a time of relative peace. When Julius Caesar was assassinated, a civil war broke out in the Roman Empire, but in the year 25 BCE, when Caesar Augustus ascended to the throne, there was a time of relative peace for about 200 years. During the time of peace when Christ was born, roads were built. On those roads travelled the good news about Jesus Christ to all places in the civilized world, so it was the right time politically for Christ to be born.

It was also the right time *culturally* for Christ to be born. Alexander the Great had conquered the world into which Jesus had come, and with Alexander's victory spread Greek culture and Greek language. More people in Jesus' world had learned to read than ever before in history. Greek language was very precise, and the New Testament, including the Gospels, was written in Greek. This allowed the Good News to spread, and the good news of Jesus spread much more quickly than it would have otherwise.

So it was the right time politically and culturally and it was also the right time *spiritually*. For the Jews, they had waited centuries. Each year they rehearsed the Passover meal, reminding them that God delivered through the blood of a lamb before, so God could and would do it again. They were ready. For the Greeks, the great Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle had done a wonderful job raising questions about the meaning of life. Someone said that the Greek philosophers plowed the fields of the human heart, and Christ and his followers then sowed the seeds of meaning.

Politically, culturally, and spiritually it was the perfect time for Christ to be born. So God, through his angel Gabriel, came to Mary and said to her, "You will experience

the Holy Spirit coming upon you and you will miraculously conceive and give birth to the Savior of the World."

But let me ask you this: what if Mary would have said, "No." What if she would have said, "No thank you, God – I'd rather not be the person to deliver your Son into this world." If God had waited until *our* time to send his son, it is quite possible that today Mary could have chosen to abort the baby. Maybe that's another reason why the timing was right two thousand years ago. But did you ever consider that Mary *could have* derailed God's timing? Think what that would have done to the world today - to *our* lives. Aren't you thankful that Mary chose to agree to God's perfect timing?

But did you realize that *you*, too, can interrupt God's perfect timing? If you have not accepted what Jesus, God's Son, came into this world to do for you, so that you could live in God's kingdom of love and peace and be in a relationship with the God of the universe as your father, if you have not accepted God's Good News, you are messing up God's timing for your life! The Bible tells us that:

"God says, 'At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.' Indeed, the 'right time' is now. Today is the day of salvation."
(2 Corinthians 6:2, nlt)

Today, right now, is God's perfect timing to deliver the Good News of a new life to you if you will accept it. Or, you can choose to mess up God's timing for your life. What will you choose? If you are not a Christian, please know that right now is God's perfect timing.

If you *are* a Christian today, please know that God wants to do good things in your life because he loves you as if you were the only one in all the world to love. You can be obedient to God and allow him to work in and through your life. God wants to use you to deliver the Good News to your family, your friends, your neighbors and co-workers who don't know Jesus as God's Son and God as their Father. God has it timed perfectly for them to hear the Good News through YOU. Don't derail God's timing in your life for the sake of others. *You* can be the messenger who brings the Good News!

Pray