

Sermon series: Experience the Miracle of Christmas

Sermon title: The Miracle of the Moment

Scriptures: Galatians 4

Editor's note: In this Christmas season sermon series, Greg Fine used clips from the movie, Miracle on 34th Street (1994 version) to illustrate the points of the messages. Their CVLI license (Christian Video Licensing International) covered the use of the clips.

Introduction

(Step to the pulpit, and then just look at your watch until 60 seconds have passed).

Exactly one minute has passed. Isn't that amazing? My watch tracks time. It has a second hand that moves every second. Sixty seconds moves the big hand one step forward to mark the passing of a minute. Isn't it absolutely amazing how long one minute of silence seems, but how short one minute seems when you are doing something you enjoy?

Did you know that there are only (insert number) days until Christmas? That means there are approximately (X) hours until we celebrate the birth of Christ. That translates into approximately (X) minutes left to do all the things we need to do before Christmas arrives. There are presents to purchase and wrap, parties to attend, people to visit, and we only have (X) minutes left. So, why did you just waste one precious moment sitting there doing nothing?

As we begin our Advent celebration, I want us to recognize not only the significance of one moment in time but also of the strategic nature of those moments. We would refer to the strategic nature of time as timing.

Have you ever stopped to consider how important timing is to everything that exists? Do you plant tomato plants in November? Do you paint the outside of your house in January? Do you go swimming in the pond during February? No? Why not? It's not the right time! There is a right time for such activities. I think we would all agree that December is not the best time to try starting a diet, right?

Think about the importance of timing in sports. If the timing is off, the quarterback won't connect with his receiver for a completion. It doesn't take a minute to throw off the timing in football. If the timing is off the basketball player will arrive at the spot before the ball or after the ball is already passed. Think about the importance of timing for our daily lives. If you have ever missed a flight because you arrived one minute after boarding, then you know the importance of timing. You are delayed at work, but because of the delay you missed a major accident on the interstate. If you are the parent of a preschooler, you know that if you turn your head for one minute, that preschooler can be long gone and into trouble.

Does one minute make a difference? Just ask those who made it out of the Twin Towers minutes before they collapsed. One moment, one sixty-second interval of time, placed in just the right location can make all the difference in the world.

Our theme this year for Advent is Experience the Miracle of Christmas. It is so easy to get all wrapped up (no pun intended) in the activity of the season that we miss the miracle of Christmas. This Christmas season, let's spend some moments reflecting on the significance of Christ's birth.

Galatians 4:4 is an incredible verse. It says, "When the time came to completion, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law" (HCSB) Did you hear that? God's Word says, "When the time came . . ." At just the right time God sent His Son. That represents the miracle of the moment.

I. He came at the right moment

One of my favorite Christmas movies is "Miracle on 34th Street." It is a wonderful, magical tale about an old man named Kris Kringle who believes he is Santa Claus and wants others to believe in him as well. We are going to use that movie as the backdrop to our sermon series this year. There are some important parallels from the movie to the Christmas story that I don't want you to miss. I want you to watch a clip from the movie where Kris is trying to instruct a department store Santa prior to the big Thanksgiving Day parade. (Show video clip of Kris demonstrating the whip and then being asked to be the department store Santa).

You were probably so engrossed in the developing story that you may have missed the miracle that took place in the video clip. If you did, don't feel bad, the characters in the movie didn't recognize it either. Was it just by chance or coincidence that Kris Kringle was there at the parade that day? No! That represents the miracle of the moment. At just the right time, Kris Kringle showed up at the parade and rescued not only the parade, but the jobs of Ms. Walker and countless others. Ms. Walker failed to recognize the miracle of the moment. She failed to realize the significance of hiring Kris Kringle to be the store Santa at the time.

The Bible says, "When the time came to completion, God sent His Son . . ." But the reality is, most people missed the miracle of the moment. Most people did not recognize the significance of Christ's birth at the time. People were much too busy to pay any attention to the young girl giving birth to her first child out in a stable there in Bethlehem.

At just the right time in history Jesus was born. The coming of Christ into the world was not a matter of chance or coincidence. His coming was part of God's divine plan established before the foundation of the world. "Historians tell us that the Roman world was in great expectation, waiting for a deliverer, at the time Jesus was born. The old religions were dying. The old philosophies were empty and powerless to change men's lives. Strange new mystery religions were invading the empire. Religious bankruptcy and spiritual hunger were everywhere. God was preparing the world for the arrival of His Son." (Warren Wiersbe, Be Free, p. 90)

From an historical perspective, the Roman Empire had helped prepare the world for the birth of Jesus. The Romans had constructed roads that connected city to city, making travel easier. All roads ultimately led to Rome. The world was at peace under Roman rule. Roman laws protected the citizens and Roman soldiers guarded the peace. Thanks to both the Greek and Roman conquests, Latin and Greek were known across the empire making communication possible with many from all over the world. The Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah were completed. At just the right time God sent His Son!

II. He provides at the right moment

Many people will be content to go through the motions. They will endure the busy activity of the season without ever experiencing the miracle of Christmas. But some this holiday season need nothing short of a miracle. The good news is that God comes to us at just the right time with just what we need for the moment.

Listen to these promises from God's Word to see His character reflected in these actions. Psalm 145:15 says, "All eyes look to You, and You give them their food at the proper time." Psalm 104:27 says, "All of them wait for You to give them their food at the right time." Deuteronomy 11:14: "I will provide rain for your land in the proper time, the autumn and spring rains, and you will harvest your grain, new wine, and oil." God knows exactly what you are going through. He knows exactly what you need. At just the right time He will come to you and provide what you need for the moment. His timing is always perfect.

God not only came at just the right time, He continues to come to us at just the right time. Just when we need Him most, He is there. Romans 5:6 says, "For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly." When do you need a miracle? When you have no more options and no more resources, you are in a position to receive a miracle from God. He has promised to come at just the right time and provide just what you need for the moment. When we are utterly helpless, Christ still comes to us today.

III. He says now is the right moment

It seems we are always waiting for just the right time to do something. We are waiting for just the right time to make that commitment of our life to Christ as Savior and Lord. Maybe you are waiting for just the right time to make that commitment to church membership. Maybe you are waiting for just the right time to commit to a closer walk with Christ. Maybe you've been waiting for just the right time to give up that bad habit. Second Corinthians 6:2 says, "I heard you in an acceptable time, and I helped you in the day of salvation. Look, now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation."

Now is the right time to make that commitment to Christ. Jesus said in Mark 1:15, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe in the good news!" Now is the right time to make that commitment to Christ and receive God's gift of salvation. Now is the time to join the church. Now is the time to recommit to your marriage and family. Now is the time to renew your commitment to walk in close fellowship with Christ. The right time is now to draw close to the Lord!

One moment in time can determine an eternal destiny. Right now is just such a moment. You don't have to live your life separated from God's love and blessing. Today is the right time to receive God's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. If you have never made a commitment of your life to Jesus Christ receiving Him as your Lord and Savior, then I want to invite you to make that commitment today. This moment can change your earthly direction as well as your eternal destiny. Choose Jesus and you are choosing an abundant life on earth and an eternal life with Christ in heaven. It is just what you need for just this exact moment. That represents the miracle of Christmas.

Will you recognize the moment for what it truly is - a miracle? Don't put off making that commitment you need to make today because now is the right time.

Prayer

If you want to make that commitment of your life to Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, then repeat this prayer quietly in your heart along with me as I pray.

Dear God, I don't want to live one more moment without you. I ask your forgiveness for my sins, for not recognizing your great love for me. I believe Jesus is your Son, who left heaven and came to earth to die on the cross for my sin. I believe He rose from the dead and is alive today. He came at just the right time just for me. Today, I want to receive Jesus as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin, cleanse me, and fill me with your Holy Spirit. I choose in this moment to receive the greatest gift ever given - the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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