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Sermon Series: *Now, Wait Just a Minute, No. 5*

The Best Yet to Come

May 22, 2022

Luke 24:44-49, Acts 1:4-5 (NIV)

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

We're looking at two passages this morning, Luke 24 and Acts 1. You could turn to the Luke passage first, if you'd like—Luke 24. We'll get there in a couple minutes.

In the world of the internal combustion engine, which, lamentably, seems to be coming to an end, there is a concept that every engine builder needs to understand—and that is the concept of *timing*. Because of the very close working relationships between internal engine parts, in order to keep them from crashing into one another inside there, they have to move in a certain way and at certain times.

Their movements have to *coordinate* with each other. If they don't—well, it's like dancing, which is something I know nearly nothing about because I am a life-long Free Methodist. All that I know about dancing, besides being forced to square dance with a girl that I did not like in fifth grade, is that if you get out of sync with your partner, at best someone either winds up stepping on the other person's foot, or at worst, both people, and maybe several others, can potentially wind up on the floor.

Ask me how I know this.

That is what's important about *coordination* and *timing*.

With an engine, if the parts inside get out of sync with each other, they can *crash* into each other and *break* and *potentially ruin* the whole engine.

So, to keep everything moving as and when it should, engines have timing mechanisms: timing gears that are fitted with either timing chains (think a bicycle chain, but larger and stronger) or with a timing *belt* like this one right here. [Hold up timing belt.] These link the moving parts together to keep them coordinated or in sync with each other, so that when one moves *in*, another moves *out*, and when one moves *out*, the other moves *in*.

This is why a broken timing belt, or a stretched or broken timing chain, stops everything and sometimes breaks everything.

When the parts no longer pay attention to the timing mechanism (when a part that is supposed to be moving out moves in, or when parts that are designed to work in concert and in harmony with others decide to do their own thing or to sing their own song), that's when chaos and carnage happen:

- pistons and valves running into each other,
- valve stems breaking,
- rods crashing through the walls of engine blocks,
- mass hysteria!

Chaos happens without the proper timing.

This is what Luke is writing about, and it is what Jesus, in fact, is talking about in both of these passages: God's divine timing mechanism.

Think of the Church, the body of Christ, as an internal combustion engine.

Now I know some of you environmentalist-types are cringing at this, but hang with me here.

Think of the Church as an engine.

The timing mechanism for this engine is God's Holy Spirit. That is one of the Spirit's roles in our lives.

The Holy Spirit of God is very much like a timing chain.

A big part of His work in our world is to move God's people in such a way that tells them precisely *how* and *when* to go this way or that way (here or there, in and out), so they don't run into things (into each other, into other parts of the body—which is God's engine of work in the world), and so they don't wind up causing chaos and carnage and ruining something.

A few weeks ago, I mentioned the Greek words *chronos* and *kairos*, and how both have to do with time and timing.

Chronos has to do with the calendar and the clock. *Chronos* says, "it's 9 o'clock, so it's *time* to go to bed." At least my *chronos* says that.

Now, I realize that some of you, especially younger people, can't even imagine that, but many of you will indeed come to understand the beauty of that as you age.

Chronos says, "it's 9 o'clock, time to go to bed."

Kairos, however, is about the time being *right*. It's the appropriate season, the right moment, the opportune time. All the good TV shows are over; I'm tired; the kids are all home; so, it's *time* to go to bed—whatever *chronos* time that may happen to be.

You see the difference?

The Holy Spirit is God's *kairos* timing mechanism. He communicates God's *kairos* time to God's people, so that they know that this is the time to move in this way, or to say this or that (or to not say this or that), or to go here or there.

It's the Spirit's job to tell Christ-followers, "This is the time—the opportune moment—to take a stand or to step back."

"This is the time—to make this move or to stay where you are."

"This is the right time."

You see this in Scripture over and over. Acts 13:2 says, *While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy*

Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

"This is the time for these two to begin a special mission."

In Acts 16, we read how *the Spirit kept Paul and those traveling with him from entering into Bithynia, so they went another direction.*¹

"Now is not the time to go there."

In Acts 20, Paul followed what he called the *irresistible drawing of the Holy Spirit* to go to Jerusalem, and Paul was also warned by the Spirit about the hard things that he'd encounter there.²

That's *kairos* timing, you see, and it's the job of the Holy Spirit to keep *you* and *me* and *all Christ-followers* in *kairos* time. It's the Spirit's work to keep us moving and stopping and turning in ways that accomplish God's purposes while not crashing into each other.

Now, think of that, for just a minute – think of the complexity of that sort of coordination.

In an eight-cylinder engine, you have 8 pistons and at least two valves per cylinder. Some have more valves than that, but with just two (one intake and one exhaust), that's 16 valves plus 8 pistons moving. That's 24 pieces that have to move in perfect concert with each other, or you have metal parts crashing into each other at high speeds.

So, inside every engine there is this tremendous dance going on among all these parts that the timing mechanism orchestrates.

That's hard enough for me, anyway, to get my head around – but really that's a very small matter.

You who are newer to this area may not realize that not long ago Route 68, Harrodsburg Road, out here north of Wilmore was a two-lane road almost all the way to Brannon Road.

A few years ago, of course, they made all of it four lanes clear down to the "Y" out here (which is no longer a "Y" but a "T," and which people still don't seem to understand how to use). But that's another topic.

As the Kentucky Department of Transportation (or Allen Construction or whoever did that work on route 68), as they were building that four-lane highway, I remember driving up the old road and looking at all the earth moving equipment (the dozers and loaders and dump trucks), and then looking at the fencing and the stacks of big drainage pipes, and then seeing at all the power lines that had to be moved – and the gravel and concrete and asphalt.

All this stuff, and so much more, was involved – so many moving parts and so many different people. I was driving toward Lexington watching all that, thinking about it all...and I rear-ended someone because I wasn't paying attention.

No, I'm kidding.

I was thinking about all that, all the different components and elements and pieces of equipment and companies and people involved, and the fact hit me that somewhere there has to be someone who's in charge of the timing of all of this.

There has to be someone in an office somewhere who is telling the gravel trucks, "You come tomorrow to mile

marker X, so we have what we need for the drainage pipes to be installed there the day after."

There has to be someone who makes sure that the asphalt comes before the guardrails.

Someone has to make sure that the cones are set up so some random traveler doesn't hit the person installing the little reflectors in the middle of the lanes.

And on and on and on.

A project like that has to be timed so that everything happens when it should.

Imagine how complex that is.

And, you see, that is just in the building of a simple road out in the country.

Consider the construction of a twelve-lane freeway in some big city – with bridges, overpasses, rerouting of existing traffic, and utilities.

Or, how about building an 80-story building in New York?

The details of the timing involved in things like those are unbelievable.

And yet, here is the Holy Spirit organizing the timing of the millions and millions of followers of Jesus who are alive in the world today, so that the parts of the Church – the body of Christ – can continue to move forward in concert with one another to accomplish the work that God wants done.

Organizing and communicating all that movement of all those people – all those moving parts: that is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit.

And, of course, you know what would happen if the gravel truck drivers and the people painting the lines on the road just decided to do whatever they wanted whenever they chose, right?

You'd have asphalt going down on top of the grass in the field. Before the road has ever been cut or drained or leveled or graveled or compacted, you'd get a nice strip of asphalt laid down in between the cows standing there.

How about if the flaggers just decided, "You know, I think I'll let people just go ahead and drive on this section – it doesn't really matter that the bridge hasn't been built yet, does it?"

You see, without the right timing – if everyone's just left to do as they choose, you'd have people crashing into each other, hurting each other, destroying things, and making the whole project ineffective and chaotic.

That is why Jesus said, on these two occasions – in Luke 24 and again in Acts 1 – that *His followers must wait*. "*Do not do anything*," Jesus said, "*until the gift – until the Holy Spirit – is given to you*."

Why? Because He's the one essential part of the engine of the body of Christ:

Not only is He the one who empowers believers to do the work of God,

Not only is He the one who gives the gifts of God to His people,

He's the one who sets the *timing* – the *opportune, Kairos moments* – of everything we do.

When we get ahead of Him, when we lag behind Him, or when we don't pay any attention to Him and decide to just do it our way: that's when things get messed up.

That's when the church winds up painting lines on the grass of the field.

That's when the church let's traffic run over the edge of the unfinished bridge, you see?

¹ Acts 16:6-8

² Acts 20:22-26

So often we think we know best. We think we know how God wants it done, and in our well-intentioned but ignorant enthusiasm we refuse to wait on His timing, so we rush in and we do our thing. And we wind up making a mess that delays the project, hurts people – often including ourselves – and causes God to have to clean it up somehow.

A great example of this is back in Numbers 14. God told the Israelites, “It’s time. Go and take the land.” But they didn’t believe Him. They looked at the situation with only their human eyes and they decided, “No, it’s not time. We can’t do it.”

So, the Lord punished them by striking dead all those who explored the land and convinced the people *not* to do as God said.

And *then* when the people saw that, they said, “OK, we need to obey the Lord. Let’s go *now* and take the land.”

But the Lord said, “*No, it’s too late now. The moment has passed. You’ll have to wait.*”

But again, the people insisted upon doing it their way, so they disobeyed the Lord a second time. They went and tried to take the land, and were absolutely routed by Amalekites and Canaanites.

Why? They were out of time with God.

In those days, God talked to His people through leaders, prophets, judges, sometimes kings – Moses, in that case.

While Jesus was on earth physically, He set the timing for what His followers would do.

But He was only in one place at a time.

Today, we have this tremendous *gift* of God speaking to His people through His Holy Spirit.

That’s why Jesus talked here about the best yet to come. With the Holy Spirit, God can direct all His people in all places, in all instances, at any time of the day or night, all over the world!

That’s why Jesus said that those who follow Him will do even more than He Himself did for the sake of the Kingdom. Every Christ-follower can know God’s will and God’s timing, because of God’s Spirit in our world, speaking to us within us: setting the timing of the things we do and say, where we go, how we work, what we study, and on and on and on.

The very key, you see, to successfully doing the will of God is being able to hear the voice of His Spirit.

And then, of course, being willing to *obey* what the Holy Spirit says.

And those are the questions that every believer has to come to terms with:

Have you received the Spirit into your life?

Are you consciously tuned to His frequency?

Do you expect to hear from Him about what you do, where you go, what you say – and about the timing of it all?

You see, if we don’t believe that He exists, or if we aren’t living expecting to hear from Him – if we’re not waiting on Him and listening for His clear direction, then chances are we’re operating out of time with God, you see?

We may have random success here and there, but we will be far, far more productive, in the great scheme of the building of God’s Kingdom, if we’ll listen for His voice and follow His lead and do things His way.

We get on our backhoe and we dig a hole.

We may be very good, even gifted, at hole digging, and we may have dug a very nice hole. And well-meaning

people around us tell us how nice our hole is, and they make us feel really good about our hole.

And we sit on our backhoe and think we’ve done a great thing for God.

But what we don’t realize is that God didn’t want a hole there – not right now. Even one that’s very nice. It wasn’t time for a hole to be dug there. In fact, there were several things that should have been done before the digging of that hole.

So now, God has to do a bunch of remedial work and the whole thing is more complicated and takes far longer.

But we wouldn’t have known that since we weren’t listening to His Spirit’s plan and timing.

You see how it works?

Are you aware of the Spirit’s role in what we do, for the sake of the greater work of His Church?

And then, are you willing to listen to Jesus when He says wait for the Spirit and listen to the Spirit when He speaks?

You see, it’s one thing to be *unaware* of the way the Spirit works.

It’s *another* thing to be *aware* of the voice of the Spirit, but to not listen to Him.

When the Spirit says, “No,” or maybe, “Not yet,” He is saying that not only for *our* Good, but He’s saying that for the good of the *whole* of His *Kingdom*. He’s saying that because *other* people – far more than we know – are depending on our listening to Him, so the timing of *their* contributions and work can be right.

The Spirit is trying to coordinate the return of Jesus and all the work involved in bringing that to pass.

But He needs us to realize that, and He needs us to listen to Him, even when what He says may not make much sense to us.

Even when, in *our* assessment, we might think “Ah, the time is right.”

If that still, small voice deep within us says, “No, don’t do it. It may seem right in the world’s opinion – even in *chronos* time, but it’s not.”

When we hear that voice deep within us, God is hoping – He is wanting – for us to hear and obey Him, so that it will be *His* timing that prevails.

Do you know the voice of the Spirit?

Will you listen to His voice in your life: when He says to go, when He says to speak, and when He says to wait?

Jesus wasn’t exaggerating: the Spirit really was, at the time He spoke this, the best yet to come.

The Spirit’s coming was promised by the prophets.³

It was promised by John the Baptist.⁴

And His coming was promised by Jesus.

And now, the Holy Spirit has come! He’s here with us, and He’s the key to the accomplishment of God’s will in our world.

He enables us to understand God’s Word.

He gives and empowers our gifts and abilities.

And He coordinates the timing of Christ followers to do God’s work and will.

³ Isaiah 44:2-5, Ezekiel 39:28-29; Joel 2:28-29

⁴ Luke 3:16

So, follower of Christ, will you receive Him and His ministry?

Will you submit yourself to Him?

Will you wait for His direction and timing so as to work with Him accomplishing God's greater purposes for you and the world around you?

I think that's what God wants to know from each of us today.

Prayer

Closing Song: *He Leadeth Me*

Benediction:

Friends, 2000 years ago Jesus told those first disciples that the Holy Spirit of God is the best – yet to come.

Today, He's here in our midst, and He wants to be fully received into our hearts to enable us to understand God's Word, to empower divine gifts and witness, and to keep us in time with each other and God's use of us all.

Someone said that Scripture, the Church, and God's Spirit are a sort of trinity that together work out God's will in our world.

William Barclay said, "With regard to our involvement with the Holy Spirit, amidst life's surging activity there must be room for a wise passiveness. Amidst all the striving there must be time to wait, listen and receive from Him."

For our sake and the sake of Christ's Kingdom, may that conscious awareness of, and obedience to, God's Holy Spirit be true in all of our lives.