

# Right on Time

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Date: 20 September 2020

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'm reading John 7, verses 1 through 10.

After this, Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. Now the feast of Booths was at hand, so his brothers said to him, Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing.

For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world. For not even his brothers believed in him.

Jesus said to them, My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me, because I testify about it that its works are evil.

You go up to the feast. I am not going up to the feast. For my time has not yet fully come. After saying these things, he remained in Galilee.

[ 1 : 12 ] But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly, but in private. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? We lose track of time.

We are then pressed for time. We don't have enough time, which puts us in crunch time. Unable to give anyone the time of day as we hope to accomplish whatever we are trying to do and are pressed to complete in the nick of time.

Sometimes we are on time and ahead of time. We have time to waste or we have downtime and time to kill, especially if you are a prisoner in a prison cell who is in prison for having killed someone.

There is a right time and a wrong time. A next time or a third time, which is a charm. Some moments are frozen in time and other moments fly by.

One thing is for certain. Our culture values time. Time is something that people in our culture often make an idol of.

[ 2 : 27 ] There are those who make an idol of the past, who desire to return to the good old days or simpler days. There are those in our culture who make an idol out of the future, spending their present days, daydreaming about their, hopefully, future accomplishments, dreaming about that one day when they will finally become the better version of their current self.

It's interesting to me how young people want to speed up time. They desire the freedoms that they think adulthood will give them.

I remember as a kid, one of the games that me and my sister would play is we would dress up. In my father's clothes, I'd get an old briefcase and we would play like we were going to work.

And I thought, this is going to be exciting. I can't wait for the day when I get to go to work. And then you become an adult. And then you go to work, right? Amen? Okay?

Then we see conversely that older people in our society do the opposite. They want to slow time down. They, in fact, even want to, if they can, reverse time.

[ 3 : 43 ] Mothers dress like their teenage daughters. Fathers hit midlife crises and they spend more of their time in the gym trying to reclaim their former physical form.

They buy fast cars and motorcycles trying to recover the edge that has been softened over time. Older people in our culture spend millions of dollars on wrinkle creams and hair dyes and plastic surgeries in an attempt to reclaim their youthfulness and then not feel like they are so old.

We see this primarily with celebrities, don't we? Celebrities seem to have found the fountain of youth. We're always surprised when we find out that a celebrity who we think is pushing towards their 40s is actually in real life pushing more like towards their 60s.

They have the ability because of their fortunes to be able to erase decades from their faces. But they, like us, are unable ultimately to control time.

Each of us reaches the future at the same rate. 60 seconds a minute, 60 minutes an hour, time marches on.

[ 4 : 59 ] Except for God. God is different from us, obviously, and His time is different than ours.

In fact, it is questionable whether we can even use time in reference to God at all. Time is God's creation. He exists outside of time.

If God was imprisoned by time, then time would have power over him and time would be God. But that's not the case. God has created time. And the Bible says that God stands in eternity.

He's always been and he will forever be. Now, there's not any really great illustration that can help us fully wrap our minds around what it means that God is eternal because all of our illustrations have some kind of time limitations upon them. But still, I think some are helpful.

So imagine a river that winds across a countryside. It begins in a mountainous region and then passes down through evergreen forests, then courses through coastal plains before it empties out into the sea. Now imagine a man in a boat rowing down that river. He begins in the mountains on Monday. On Tuesday, he is among the forests. On Wednesday and Thursday, he rows amidst the plains.

[ 6 : 28 ] And then on Friday, he reaches the river's mouth, excuse me, which empties into the sea. He sees and encounters only one of those geographical features at a time. Now imagine, same illustration, a man in an airplane who's flying above that same region. From his vantage point, he is able to see the river in its entirety. He sees where it begins in the mountains and he sees where it flows out into the sea.

From God's vantage point, from his perspective, like that, he sees Adam and Eve. He sees Abraham and Isaac.

He sees Christ on the cross. He sees you and he sees me simultaneously. He is not bound by time. He is eternal.

Time is his creation and time is under his sovereign direction. And he wants us to know that. He wants us to know that he is eternal. That he stands outside of time. That he is divine and sovereign over it for at least three reasons. One, so that we don't waste our present days trying to undo what has happened in the past. Two, that we don't live our present days fearing or stressing or being anxious about what our future holds. And third, because God wants you to know that time is under his divine control. That he is sovereign. He wants you then to trust in his will and his divine plan. The Bible declares that God is sovereign over time. That he controls time. That he has planned out each and every day. Look with me at what Scripture says.

[ 8 : 34 ] And I'm going to read a lot here. 2 Peter 3.8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. Again, giving us an idea of God's perspective and vantage point of time.

Isaiah 46, 9-10. There the Lord declares, remember the former things of old, for I am God and there is no other. I am God and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done. Saying, my counsel shall stand. I will accomplish all my purposes.

The Bible declares that God is sovereign over time and he is sovereign over your life. David understood this when inspired by the Holy Spirit. He wrote in Psalm 139, verse 16, Your eyes saw my unformed substance. In your book were written every one of them. The days that were yet formed for me. When as yet there was not one of them. None of them. In Psalm 31, 15, beginning of verse 15, he says, again, my times are in your hands. In other places, God declares that in Proverbs 16, 9, the heart of man plans his way, but the Lord is the one who establishes his steps. Ephesians 2, 10 says that there of Christians, we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. And in other places, God implores us not to waste our time, not to waste our lives, nor to take our time here on earth for granted by assuming that tomorrow is a guarantee and encourages us to maintain an eternal perspective as we live out our days here on earth. Proverbs 27, 1. It says, do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring. We don't know what God knows about tomorrow. James 4, 14 says, yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

Ephesians 5, 15 through 16, look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil. God's Word likewise has promised us that Jesus will return and that His return will come at an hour that we don't expect. So we are to live our

present days in preparation for that imminent hour. Mark 13, 32 through 33, our Lord says, but concerning that day or that hour when He returns, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son of Man, but only the Father. Be on your guard. Keep awake, for you do not know when the time will come. So here's the main idea for this morning's message. God wants you to make the most of your days, and you will make the most of your days when you view your time from God's perspective, from God's perspective and trust in His will. From the unbelieving world's point of view, history is an unexplained succession of seemingly random events, a meaningless chain of cause and effects. In contrast, the Bible portrays both the past, the present, and the future as the outworking of God's fixed and eternal plan. As He said, I have said and declared the end from the beginning. God is unchanging, the Bible says, and He is unchangeable.

[ 12 : 56 ] He decreed the end from the beginning. What He has declared will come to pass, and there is nothing that can frustrate that. As believers, this is something that we should take great delight in.

As our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God did, standing at the pinnacle of time is the birth and the life and the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here was God.

God, the inhabitant of eternity, now living in time. All of the events of Jesus' life, again, from His birth to His death to His resurrection, happened according to the fixed and eternal plan of God the Father.

We see that in Scripture. It says that Jesus was born when the fullness of time came, and God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law. In Revelation 13, 8, it reveals that in God's perfect timing, Christ was crucified as the lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. Paul said in 1 Timothy 2, 6, that at the right time, the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. And remember, and reminded, excuse me, Timothy, that the Lord will likewise return at the precise moment chosen by God when He says that the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will bring about at the proper time.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus was always conscious of doing the Father's will according to His divine timetable. A truth that is presented here within the first 15 verses of chapter 7.

[ 14 : 47 ] This chapter, along with chapter 8, though, usher in a new, more volatile section of John's gospel. As the smoldering resentment that Jesus encountered in the first six chapters now finally begins to burst into a blazing inferno of hatred directed at Him. This hatred we'll see reach its peak in John 11, 45, and 47 when finally the Jewish authorities collectively conspire together to kill Him, a plot which we know resulted with the crucifixion of our Lord. And so as chapter 7 opens, Jesus is still in Galilee, but He's preparing to return to Jerusalem at, though, the time predetermined by God. And so in this section, verses 1 through 10, which we've read, Jesus reveals to us His attitude and His approach to God's will and divine schedule, which we should copy, which we should follow. So why is this important?

Well, for a believer, one of the fruits of the Spirit is patience, isn't it? Patience. And sometimes we are guilty of praying for and seeking our will and wanting God to work according to our timetable, not our working according to His. Have you ever caught yourself in prayer basically telling God what you think He should do or what you think He should be doing? I'm guilty of that. In fact, that was one of the ways in which God convicted me this week as I prepared for this sermon. What we do is we're basically telling God how to do His job. And in a way, what we're saying is basically that, you know, I kind of think I could be doing a better job than you. You should do this, God. Why wouldn't you?

We can all see it. Just do it. And so when we do that, we are basically saying and we're doubting that God is able to be as good of a God as we are. Also, we're tempted to become fearful, aren't we?

And stressful and anxious about the future. And when we do so, again, what we're really doing is we're doubting that God is in control. You know, many in our world woke up this morning very anxious.

They went to bed very anxious. If they went to bed at all, filled with stress, fearful and concerned over who might win this coming election or who is going to or when is the Supreme Court seat going to be filled, right? And so you turn on the news this morning and you're going to hear a lot of anxious and stressed and angry people. But we should know as Christians that whoever wins this election will not do so apart from it being God's sovereign preordained plan. Now, not for Wes, but for some of you, that truth may be hard to swallow. It may be hard to swallow that. I want you to

look back with me in Isaiah 37 where there God declares that He was the one who was responsible for the rise of the Assyrian empire and was responsible for its soon destruction. Sennacherib, the Assyrian emperor, had proudly boasted that the conquests, including the conquest of Israel, came as a result of His strength and the might of their military. But here in Isaiah 37 verses 26 through 28, God reveals that Assyria's strength was not a result of their military might but was according to His divine and sovereign design.

[ 18 : 45 ] There He says, And you're raging against me. And you can read the rest of that chapter later on. I encourage you to do so.

Now, though, and why I can't continue to read it is that perhaps this is one of the longest introductions to a sermons that I think that I've ever had. But I feel like it's necessary because this message is timely. It's a timely message about time, especially considering the difficult times that we are experiencing in our country right now, these very strange days. That though they're strange and difficult, God is in control. God has us here, you and I, at this time, in this place, at this moment for a reason.

And so you and I, we don't need to be afraid. We don't need to fear. God wants you to make the most of your days and you will make the most of your days when you view your time from His perspective and trust in His will. As believers, we can possess a deep sense of comfort knowing that God, though we're timeless and eternal, is in time with us right now. He is not unreachably transcendent, but right here with us in our moments. He can respond to our needs in our prayers. While God is sovereign, the Bible says that we have also a responsibility to live obediently, to choose the right to share the gospel. This is a paradox. But Romans 11 says, who has known the mind of the Lord? Who has been His counselor? Our lives, our times are governed by God, but we are responsible and we will give an account for how we've lived our days here.

So the first lesson we have to learn here from this text is that God is not subject to your orders and deadlines. God is not subject to your orders and deadlines. Verse 1, after this, Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go out to Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. So the events that took place after chapter 6 happened around the Passover. Now we're in chapter 7, which opens with the Feast of Booths. So in between the close of chapter 6 and the opening of chapter 7, there's about a six-month interval. About six months has passed. And during that interval, Jesus spent most of His time with His 12 disciples. Now think about that. Jesus had just had a crowd of about 20,000 turned their back on Him. He only spent two days with that large crowd, but He spent six months with 12 of His disciples, which I think demonstrates that Jesus was much more concerned about discipleship than He was about mass meetings. The Lord did not commission the church to draw large crowds, but to go and make disciples. As we spoke last Sunday night about how a church should measure its success, here we see that according to the example of our Lord, our effectiveness is to be measured primarily by our, not by our large crowds, but by the depth of those who are in our congregations.

[ 22 : 57 ] How do we measure success? By the depth of the spiritual growth of the people within our churches. Then in verse 2, again chapter 7, it says there, John informs us that now the Jews' Feast of Booths or Tabernacles was at hand. This was a seven-day feast which culminated in a special festival on the eighth day.

During the feast, people built and lived in these shelters that they had made from branches and twigs as their ancestors had done after they were delivered from their slavery from the Egyptians as they lived in the wilderness. And so this feast was special. It was the most popular of the three feasts that the Jews celebrated. Now look at verses 3 and 5. It says, So here we understand these are Jesus' half-brothers. They are the children of both Mary and Joseph.

Matthew 13 lists their names. James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude. Although Acts 1.14 reveals that they would later come to faith and that two of them, James and Jude, would pen epistles in our New Testament that bear their names, and James would also go on to be the pastor of the Jerusalem church. But at this time, they did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. And so what they're doing here is they're issuing a challenge to him with a dual motivation. First, since John tells us that they didn't believe in him as the Messiah, they wanted some evidence. They wanted him to do some things to prove himself to them that he was the Messiah. Second, like the crowd Jesus had just encountered, they too were probably expecting some kind of a political Messiah. And if Jesus was the Messiah, they assumed that it was essential that they go to Judea, to Jerusalem, where the authorities, the movers and shakers were in that world so that they would endorse him. Their basic

thought was this, I believe.

Jesus has just experienced what the unbelieving world would have perceived as being a colossal failure, a colossal failure. The BOK Center downtown in Oklahoma, or in Tulsa, Tulsa, Oklahoma, has a capacity of 19,199. 19,199. We believe that the crowd that Jesus had just met with was at least around 20,000. It says 5,000 men, not including their wives and their children. So at least 20,000 people. So Jesus has just sold out the BOK Center. Wow, awesome. But by the end of his sermon, the crowd had dwindled massively, massively. So in the understanding of Jesus' brothers, if he would go to Jerusalem, perhaps he'd have a chance to regain that lost crowd, maybe even draw a larger one. And what better place for a religious leader to parade his wares than before large crowds gathered in Jerusalem in the presence of the most influential citizens of the country? If Jesus was interested in religious prominence, his brother's reason, sooner or later, he must prove to be the master of Jerusalem. Otherwise, they will always regard him or always be regarded by the upper echelon of that society as just a rustic, rural preacher. So in this way, they encouraged Jesus to show himself to the world by advancing on the capital and dazzling them with his miraculous power. But Jesus and the readers of John's gospel know that the world cannot truly receive him without first ceasing to be of the world, the way in which John uses that term. The world as John describes it refers to the unbelieving world who are amazed and captivated by the miracles of Jesus, but not the person behind the miracles, the person of Christ. We've seen that in John chapter 2 verses 23 through 25.

[ 28 : 01 ] Now when he was in Jerusalem, Jesus at the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man. And so we know this, and yet the reader of John's gospel who presses on through this book discovers that it is in Jerusalem where Jesus reveals himself most dramatically. Not in spectacular miracles like his brothers wanted to see, but in humiliation. The humiliation of the cross. The very cross by which Jesus draws people to himself and thereby becomes the savior of the world. John 12, 31 through 32. Jesus says, now is the judgment of the world. Now will the ruler of the world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. Jesus would not obey his brother's commands, nor would he fulfill the desires that they had according to their own time frames. And so what they were doing is seeking to put him to the test as Satan, when he tempted Jesus, sought to do the same.

Now there are times as believers when we are faced with difficult decisions, aren't there? And we are experiencing hardships that drive us to our knees in prayer to the Lord to confirm or to plead with him to act soon on our behalf or on behalf of another. That's understandable and right in many cases. But you've probably heard, like I have, a popular Christian saying, which is this, that the Lord isn't always early, but he's never late. Have you ever heard that before? The Lord isn't always early, but he's never late. But truthfully, the Lord is always operating according to his divine schedule. He's always on time. He works all things together for the good, growing our faith by teaching us to be patient and trusting in his sovereignty and his divine plan.

Those time-sensitive moments are times where we should be in prayer, but the content of our prayer should not take the shape of orders, establishing deadlines and threatening to divorce ourselves from the Lord in his church if he doesn't deliver on our requests when we want him to. We shouldn't issue ultimatums to our God. As I said before, I still catch myself sometimes doing that, and I have to remember how the Lord taught us to pray. Remember, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

So again, whomever is elected president this November, however this strange year continues to unfold, no matter what happens in 2021, if we even get there, our Lord reigns. He reigns. He never panics.

[ 31 : 29 ] He's never surprised. He's never caught off guard. He's not behind the wheel in heaven and looking, well, I didn't think that was going to happen. What are we going to do now? Quick, you angels, go down and fix that, right? That's not what he does because he doesn't have to because he reigns and he's sovereign. Now, that doesn't mean that we should just give up and do nothing. The answer for the application for this sermon isn't, well, I'll just go home and I'll just sit in my recliner, right? God's got it under control. He doesn't need me to do anything. That's certainly not what Scripture says either. We are to be like what? Like the wise stewards whom God has entrusted His treasure with, His gospel to, and encourages us to take guaranteed risks that as we

live our lives obediently to Him, as we advance His kingdom on this earth, that there will be a return and we will have to give an account for how we've spent our days. Second lesson we need to learn from this Scripture is that Jesus followed God the Father's timetable perfectly, and those who are true followers of

Christ can do the same. Jesus followed God the Father's timetable perfectly, and those who are true followers of Christ can do the same. Look at verse 6. Jesus said to them, My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. There are three Greek words in John's gospel which translate as time in our English translations. I don't have the time this morning to go through that. Maybe we will tonight, but suffice to say that *kairos*, not *chronos* or *aura*, is used here by John.

And the way in which He uses that word indicates that the time that Jesus was referring to was not the time of His future crucifixion, but the time in which He Himself would go up to the Feast of Tabernacles. He would go according to the divine timetable of the Father, not according to theirs. For Jesus said to them, The time is always here in the ESV, or if you have the NASB, it translates it as saying, Your time is always opportune, or the NIV says, For you, any time will do, and the King James Version says, For you, your time is always ready. What does He mean when He says that to His brothers?

Well, again, at this point, they don't believe that their brother is the Christ. They don't believe that He is the Son of God. They are part of the unbelieving world, and as such, they are not concerned in the least with operating on God's time frame or according to His timetable. They knew nothing at that point of His plans and His purposes. In fact, they were indifferent to His providence, for them any time would do, because all times to them were alike. And so, Jesus' point in verse 7, that unlike Him, they would face no hostility in Jerusalem from the Jewish authorities. Verses 7-10, The world cannot hate you, Jesus says, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. You go up to the feast. I am not going up to the feast, for my time has not yet fully come.

[ 35 : 01 ] After saying this, He remained in Galilee, but after His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He also went up, not publicly, but in private. Jesus would not go with His brothers in the manner that they expected, nor would He allow the rulers of Jerusalem to take His life before the time had fully come. According to verse 14, Jesus arrived midday, or midway, excuse me, through the feast.

By the time that He left Galilee, after His brothers had departed, people would have already arrived in Jerusalem. The roads would have been relatively empty and deserted. So, doing so allowed Him to avoid any unnecessary fanfare and continue on His way, which would culminate in the cross, the predetermined plan of God the Father. So, we see this, we'll see this as we continue through John's Gospel. We see it through all the Gospels that Jesus followed God's timetable perfectly. He always performed God's will precisely.

Those who are true followers of Christ have the ability to follow God's revealed will because they have His Word and because they have His Spirit. His Word informs believers as to what His will is and His Spirit living inside of us empowers us to obey His Word and His will with gladness.

But for those who have yet to come to Christ, as His half-brothers had yet to come to faith in Him, at least at that point, Scripture implores us, we've seen, to go and implores you as an unbeliever in 2 Corinthians 6, 2. For He says, In a favorable time I listened to you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.

Behold, now is the favorable time. Behold, now is the day of salvation. If you don't know Christ as your Lord and Savior, now is the day. Now is the favorable time. Now is the day for you to see that Christ is the way.

[ 37 : 23 ] He is the truth. He is the life. Man, I couldn't imagine living in this world as it is without knowing that God reigns and His sovereignty is in control. I'd wake up anxious. I'd have trouble going to sleep. But I thank God for His Word and for His Spirit that teaches us, that shows us, that enables us to understand and follow His will and know that He is in complete control. There's been times in my life where I thought that I made a complete mess of it. I remember being in seminary and I didn't want to be a pastor, but I knew that I was called to ministry. I wanted to be a chaplain, but because of what I had done, everything was messed up, nobody would endorse me. Nobody would let me be a chaplain.

And I remember I was a semester away from graduating and I prayed in tears. It's just like, God, how could you let me mess this up? And I got a call from a church who was needing a youth pastor.

I'll give you the condensed version who eventually called me to be their pastor within a year. I had a chance to sit under a great pastor whom I learned so much from in a short period of time, a man whom I grew to love. And to be able to be here now and to look back on it, and hopefully, if you're a believer, you've been able to do the same. And just look back over your life and be like, man, I thought I had messed everything up.

But God was working. God was always there. God was the one who was moving. God was the one who was directing. God was the one who was guiding. And I encourage you to do that today if you haven't.

Just look over the course of your life as a believer and see how God has brought you through to where you are today. And that gives you faith for tomorrow, doesn't it? It does for me to think that, man, I could wake up tomorrow and think, man, you've messed it all up again.

[ 39 : 23 ] But to trust that God is in control, that God has prepared my steps, that God will cause me to walk in them. I take so much hope and joy from that verse because otherwise, people know me, I would make a horrible mess of my life. I thank God that He is the one who has been guiding my steps.

Let's look at some application questions as we close. I encourage you to, we're going to come back tonight and talk about these things. I encourage you to be a part of that.

If you can't make it for whatever reason, we meet at 630 here in the sanctuary. I encourage you to just put this in your Bible, put this in your pocket, come back to it later sometime this week, and really think about these questions in this text. The first question is this, examine your prayers. Are they in the form of orders or expressions of a desire to follow God's will? Examine your prayers. Just as you're praying, kind of think about what did I just say?

You know, was that in the form of an order? You know, that I was trying to give God and telling Him what to do, don't do that. Express instead a desire that you have to follow the will of God because you know that He is God and He does a better job of being God than you ever could. Second, when are you the most tempted to take matters into your own hands and doubt God's sovereignty? And then think about those in Scripture who have done the same. We'll talk about some of them tonight. How did things go for them when they decided to do that? When are you most tempted to take matters into your own hands and doubt God's sovereignty? And then finally, how should believers balance God's sovereignty with their responsibility to live obediently to Him? This is one that I think I encourage you to think about and will take a lot of thought. How should believers balance God's sovereignty with their responsibility to live obediently to Him? And in all things, believers, brothers and sisters in Christ, we know that God is in control. Our Lord reigns. We have no reason to fear, be stressful, or to have anxiety. God is in control. He always has been. He always will be.

[ 41 : 43 ] And we can take great hope and rest assured in that. .