

Delay or Destiny? God's Perfect Timing

"A message of trust in God's perfect timing"

John 11:1-44 NLT

We don't always like God's timing on things. We say, "*Lord, why? I don't understand.*" We don't *have* to understand, but we *do* have to make room for *mystery*. A lot of times when we're pressing in, praying, interceding, and believing, it doesn't appear that anything's happening. Is that a delay or is it destiny? The answer is *yes*, it is delay, but there is destiny involved. We're talking about God's perfect timing, and it's a message of *trust*. God's timing isn't about our convenience. It's about his glory and it's about our growth. When God seems to be late, he's actually setting something up that's greater than we could ever imagine.

Those of us who've walked with God for a long time have a history in God. That means we've probably been around the same mountain before. Maybe we've had things that we've prayed for, pressed in for, and we didn't see an immediate answer to. And as time goes by, one day we wake up and suddenly that prayer comes to fruition. Sometimes it's not an epic thing or not with fireworks going off to remind us of something we prayed for fifteen years ago. But when it happens, it's almost anticlimactic, and we say, "*Wow, God really came through!*"

So often when we pray, we'll pray a couple of times and then let it go. We walk away and we're off to other things and we think it's a "*No*". But when we pray in Christ and in alignment with his Word - which is alignment with his will - it's not a "*No*", it might just be a "*not now*." A lot of us are living in a "*not now*" but it *feels* like a "*no*". As we began to pray for people, nothing seemed to be happening at first. We can pray over and over, and even get tired, and wonder, "*Is anything really happening?*" But then one day, we get news that there's been a mega-shift. No announcement, no fireworks, no theatrics, no drama - just a shift.

It may have been years in the making, where it would have been so easy to give up. There might have been times that we wouldn't even think about it because we were so busy doing other things. Then it would dawn on us lying in bed at night and we would think, "*Oh, I need to pray. I need to press in.*"

Galatians 6:9 NIV84

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

This is where we get sometimes when we're in the "not now." It says that we will reap a harvest *if we do not give up*. How many times have we given up just before we crossed over the line, just before the breakthrough, just before we made it across, just before the answer was there, but we grew weary while doing good. It's so important because we need to understand there is a proper time. There's a proper time of reaping a harvest if we don't give up. We have to remind ourselves to pray and remind ourselves to continue to pray and not grow weary in doing good. Like a gardener, God knows when to plant and when to harvest, and he understands timing because he is a God of timing, sequence, and order. But he's *not* a God of *our* timing, *our* sequence, or *our* order.

Seed time and harvest

Genesis 8:22 NKJV

"While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease."

Seed time and harvest - that's actually a conjunction. We can separate those words and get seed - time - and then what? *Harvest*. There's a sequence and an order to this and it works like this - if we plant seed, we're going to reap a harvest. But the big issue is time. That's where a lot of us are living right now, in the in-between and the not-now. Don't think and assume that just because we didn't get our prayer answered right away that it was a "no." It may just be a "not now".

1] God's delays are not denials.

His delays are not denials - they're just not "*nows*." His delay is not a "*no*" necessarily. It may be a "*no*" only for our own good for the time being. The unholy trinity is "*me, myself, and I*." We pray a lot about our own stuff - *our* stuff - me, my calling, my career, my school, my scholarships. "*Please, Lord*." We should be thankful he didn't answer *every* prayer that we ever prayed. We should say, "*Lord, thank you for not answering every prayer I ever prayed. Thank you for not giving me what I wanted then. Oh, but you always gave me what I needed."*

John 11:6 NIV84

"Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days."

This is an amazing account in Scripture where Jesus is with his disciples doing what he does over in Jerusalem. But in Bethany, only eleven miles from Jerusalem, were his dear friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Jesus would often take his disciples and spend time with them. They were close friends. They did life together. They searched the scriptures together and they knew that Jesus was exactly who he said he was. They believed. Jesus got word that Lazarus has fallen ill and died, but he didn't immediately go to rescue him. And God doesn't always rescue *us* immediately from difficulty.

God uses waiting seasons to deepen our faith, to shape our hearts, and to test our patience. Remember, when it feels like he's waiting, God is working. That's what we've got to understand. God is not ignoring us. He's working on something. We don't know what he's doing, but somewhere behind the scenes like an undertoe at the beach or a riptide, he's working. He's moving. So when we pray, we have to trust that God is working on something. He's *moving* things and the system is going to work.

Exodus 14:14 NIV84

"The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

Nobody wants to be still. Nobody wants to wait. Nobody wants to trust that God's going to actually work on their behalf, that God's going to go before us, that God is going to be leading out front. No, it's got to be me doing it. *Me, myself, and I*. But he *will* fight for us, we only need to wait and to only be still - to just wait.

2] God's timing reveals his glory.

This is where Jesus said, *"Look, I know you're not going to understand this, Martha. I know you're not going to get this, but this is for God's glory. This is going to honor Him and it's going to glorify the Son. You're actually going to see something that's so outstanding and so miraculous."* God's timing reveals his glory. John 11:4 in that story says this, "When he heard this, Jesus said, *'This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.'*"

Can't we imagine hearing Jesus say that and thinking he's crazy? *"What is he thinking? Okay, I know about the lame guy. I know about the guy they let through the roof and yeah, that's amazing. Wow. And I know he fed a lot of people one time. I mean, just from a Long John Silver's two-piece fish dinner. But man, how is he going to do this? Lazarus is dead!"* And he says, *"Just wait. Just watch."* Jesus didn't just want to *heal* Lazarus. He wanted to resurrect him.

But, God doesn't always rescue us from difficulty, and Jesus delayed not *one* but *two* days. The disciples were getting a little antsy, going, *"Wait a minute. Shouldn't we go? We just got word from Mary and Martha that Lazarus is ill and he's not doing well and we need to get there!"* In the disciples minds, maybe Jesus could pray for Lazarus and heal him and then they could have a great party and enjoy their time together. It was a "not now", but it wasn't a "no". It was a *delay*. But there was a destiny and an appointment. Jesus finally says, *"All right, it's time to go."*

By then it's a little late. Two days later, they took off, and were almost there, when Martha met them on the way. She appealed to Jesus saying, *"If y only you if you'd been here, you could have saved him."* When Jesus first heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. Jesus waited on purpose. He could have beaten a path there and got there. It wasn't that far, but he didn't. He waited. The delay was intentional. And what feels like God's *silence* is often God's *strategy*.

Where are *you* at right now? Are you at an in-between right now? Are you in a delayed moment? Are you in a situation where you've been praying and he's saying, *"no, not now"* or just *"not now?"* - not *"no"* necessarily. But it's just it's not happening like you thought it would. Have you grown weary in doing good? Have you given up? Then we need to re-dig some prayer wells. Because there's still water in those wells. There's still refreshment there. There's still *life* there. And it could be that we need to go back and re-dig some prayer wells and say, *"You know what? I haven't thought about that in a long time."* - and then pray.

This is our reminder to begin thinking again - to go back and say, *"Lord, I dropped that one. I let it go. I just assumed You weren't in it, but maybe it was just a delay. Maybe it was just a "not now."* God uses waiting seasons to deepen our faith and shape our hearts, but waiting can be painful. Patience, however, is not a fruit of the flesh. Galatians chapter five says that it's a fruit of the *Spirit*. That means we can lean into the Spirit, walk with the Spirit, be in the Spirit, and actually *experience* patience. And it's not even of *us*. It's of *him* working *through* us.

Sometimes God lets things die so he can show his resurrection power. What is it in our own life that needs to be resurrected? - a calling, a dream, maybe a career path that we just decided is just not going to work for us, but yet it was something that was in us that we couldn't shake. Maybe it's become a line of regret for our life right now. What is it that needs to be resurrected in our life? What dream? What project? What about God's bucket list - his calling on our life - what he's calling and directing us to do.

Our timing seeks relief. God's timing reveals his glory. Most people don't want to get completely healed and whole. They just want some relief because being healed and whole requires a lot of hard work and facing things that are hard and difficult. So, it's much easier to opt for relief instead of the full-meal resurrection, the full meal deal. Tim Story said, *"The delay or the setback sets the stage for the display, or the comeback. Your setback is a setup for a God-kind of comeback. That's when we have to wait on the Lord and be still and trust in the waiting."*

Isaiah 55:8 NIV84

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord."

We don't see what God is doing behind the scenes, behind the veil, on the other side of the curtain, or behind the stage. There's a lot going on that we know not of. As we're walking with the Lord, we need to make room for mystery, and get comfortable with not having to know everything. That flies against everything western and Greek in us, but we don't have to know everything when we trust. We just need to know him.

3] God is always working behind the scenes.

John 11:39 NIV84

"Take away the stone... Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

Jesus is saying, *"Look, trust me, something amazing's about to happen here."* What looked "too late" became the moment of a miracle. No one believed that he could actually resurrect somebody from the dead. He didn't *resuscitate* him. He's resurrected him. When we move the stone and think about what the stone represents, it can represent our fears, our doubts, our pride, our unbelief, or our impatience. The stone had to be rolled away, and whatever it represents for us, we may not be able to roll the stone away by ourself, because God has created us to be interdependent on one another.

Romans 8:28 NIV84

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him."

Habakkuk 2:3 NIV

"For the revelation awaits an appointed time... Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay."

There is an appointed time coming, and only God knows when it is. People are always trying to figure it out, but even Jesus said, *"I, as a son of man, don't even know the timing when God's going to bring this thing to a close. I don't know when. He' hasn't even let me in on it."* Why? Because *God* is the clock maker. He's the one who started this whole thing. He's the only one who knows. Wait, the revelation awaits for an appointed time. Though it linger for days, weeks, or months, or years, there's a moment in time that it will certainly come. It will not delay. The Bible says that a thousand years to us is just a blink to God. For him, it's nothing. It's just a drop in the bucket of time in eternity. And yet, for us, it seems like, *"My goodness, it's never going to happen."* But it will certainly come and will not delay.

Here's a simple question. What's one area where you felt like God was late? - when God didn't show up on time - that it wasn't happening? Picture it. Could it be that it wasn't a "no?" It was just a "not now" - because God is working on something and the system is still working. How could this season of waiting be part of his preparation? He was working. He was preparing everything for us. Everything we were experiencing in our "not now" season was boot camp and preparation and training for what was to come. Now, what stone might God be asking you to move by faith? What rock is blocking your exit out? When Lazarus came out of the grave, He was bound up. And Jesus said, *"Unbind him and loose him and let him go."*

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Word. Would You please show us whatever's keeping us bound, whatever's keeping us held back, or any rock is that needs to be moved in our life? Whatever might be keeping us from saying, "Wait a minute. Maybe that thing I prayed for and didn't see anything happen wasn't a 'no'. Maybe it's just a 'not now.'" Holy Spirit, what is it You want me to learn from this today? I receive it by faith. Give me grace to be okay in the waiting, in the in-between, in the not-now. Father, in Jesus' name, we seal all this by Your Spirit. Thank you that You are our Teacher. Holy Spirit, You're the Spirit of Truth who leads us and guides us into all Truth! In Jesus name. Amen