

“For Such a Time as This”

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Folks, next Sunday we begin our journey through the Old Testament book of Esther. I think it is one of the more fascinating books in the Bible and I am confident the Lord has important things to say to us through it in the weeks ahead. The best known verse in Esther, one I hear quoted sometimes, **Esther 4:14 For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”**

Now, it will be some weeks before we explore that passage and focus on the choice Esther has to make and the lessons the Lord has for us through that text. Today, however, I want to focus on just that last phrase “for such a time as this.” I believe each of us needs to consider what that means for our lives, because... I believe not just Esther, but every single one of us exists in a particular time and place for a particular reason.

I believe that is a clear implication of what the Bible teaches. **Ephesians 1:11b** for example, tells us that God is the one **Who works our everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.** Every detail of our lives is under the umbrella of his sovereignty. That is true for individuals and for nations. **Acts 17:26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.**

Every day, each of us has multiple opportunities to make choices that are pleasing to the Lord, opportunities to do His will. As a song by Wayne Watson says, “For such a time as this, I was placed upon the earth, to hear the voice of God and do His will, whatever it is.” That, friends, is your assignment, each and every day.

Now, sometimes those assignments seem to be very weighty and significant. The choice we face seems like it may impact our life in a huge way or affect many different people. Maybe we are working on a cure for cancer. Yet, most of the time our choices seem rather mundane, ordinary, and insignificant.

Yet, every time we choose to do the will of God, whatever it is, *it matters.* It matters in ways we might never imagine. The ripple effects of your choices may extend far beyond what you can ever imagine. Ben Franklin, one of the most important figures at Independence Hall in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776, once noted,
“For the want of a nail the shoe was lost,
For the want of a shoe the horse was lost,
For the want of a horse the rider was lost,
For the want of a rider the battle was lost,
For the want of a battle the kingdom was lost,
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.”

Friends, the ripple of effects of choices made by Ben Franklin and others 246 years ago have an almost incredible impact on the history of our world. I am not suggesting any of us will make choices like that this week. In the vast majority of cases the loss of a horseshoe nail changes nothing. But not always. My point is that it is impossible for us to know the ripple effects of *any of our choices.* God alone knows the impact they will have. And His promise is that if we make the right choices, choices according to His will, they will be used for God’s glory and our ultimate good.

So, what choices do we need to be making? What choices do you need to be making for such a time as this? I cannot really answer that question that for you. Each of us has the responsibility to search the scriptures, study the Bible, learn what God says, and then prayerfully ponder how to apply it in specific situations we face in our lives.

Now, as your pastor, it is my job to help you understand what God does say to us in His word. I also want to help you think about how God’s word applies to our world in the time in which we live. I pray often that the Lord would give me wisdom, so that I would be like the men from the tribe of Issachar **1 Chronicles 12:32a Who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.** So, after decades of studying the Bible and after quite a bit of prayerful pondering, here are some things I believe God is calling all Christians, including every believer in this room, to do at such a time as this.

First, avoid sin that will discredit the gospel. An important part of the Physician’s Hippocratic oath

is to “do no harm.” That is a good goal of us as well. Don’t do things that will harm your testimony and have a negative impact on how people around you view Christianity. This is one of the goals the apostle Paul had... **2 Corinthians 6:3 We put no stumbling block in anyone’s path, so that our ministry will not be discredited.** What are you talking about Pastor Dan? Well, I am thinking about the recent abuse and cover up scandal in the Southern Baptist Convention. There are many dimensions to that story, but my point is this: When people learn that a church leader as abused a child, or when it comes out that a pastor knew another pastor had assaulted a woman but did nothing about it, the gospel, Christianity, will almost always be blamed or faulted in some way.

Now, our sin does not make the gospel any less true. If it were discovered that every pastor and deacon at Chisholm Baptist Church was involved in something horrible, like a sex trafficking ring, everything we have said about Jesus, about His death and resurrection, about the salvation found in Him, would still be true. Our sin would not change that fact at all. Yet, our sin would almost certainly stand in the way of folks seeing that truth. Yes, it is the evil one who uses these things to blind people to the gospel. But it would be our evil that is being used, and we are responsible for that evil. And this is true whether our evil involves sexual sin or dishonesty or racism or anger or addiction or selfishness or all sorts of other sins. Yes, your sin will certainly damage your own soul, but it can also discredit the gospel and damage the souls of many others.

Noe, there are many false and exaggerated accusations being made against Christian and churches today. This is not right, not fair. And often times we should speak up and clarify what has actually happened or is happening. However, we also are learning that when there is some truth to an accusation, even a little truth, the best thing to do is not hide it, but acknowledge it, deal with it, and seek forgiveness and reconciliation.

Yes, even better is to, by God’s grace, avoid the actions, words and attitudes that discredit the gospel. Yet, whenever we fail, as all of us will do at times, it is important to own that and remind others that you do not claim to be perfect, but are a sinner saved by grace.

Second, for such a time as this the Lord is calling us to be people who speak the truth with boldness and wisdom and love. Now, some of you are thinking, “I am not a pastor or even a first grade Sunday School teacher. I am just an ordinary person. I really don’t think God is calling me to be preaching anywhere.” That is probably true, but I do believe you, like every other Christian, is called to be His ambassador. **2 Corinthians 5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.**

I am convinced the apostle Paul is not just describing his own ministry, but that it is God’s desire, His will, that every Christian be an ambassador of Jesus Christ and will seek to be effective an ambassador, representing the Lord in was that it truly honoring to Him. Speaking the truth with boldness, wisdom and love is a big part of doing that. “But Pastor Dan, I am not a public speaker. I am not going to give a sermon or preach on a street corner or anything like that.” We, probably not. Yet, we all have opportunities to speak the truth and we never know how the Lord might use our words to accomplish His purposes. And we never know what the ripple effects might be.

So what are these opportunities? It might be a conversation with your grandson who asks, “Grandpa, don’t you think evolution and the Bible could both be right?” or “Don’t all religions basically teach the same thing?” or maybe it is talking with your daughter about the best way to parent a troubled child. It might be what you say during a discussion about same sex marriage in a sociology class at college. It could be talking with other students at your school about drug or alcohol abuse. It may be a conversation with your sister about why her marriage seems to be falling apart. It could be a discussion with your co-workers about why violence and murders plague our society, or about what racial justice really means or about why “freedom of religion” is such an important right.

I suspect almost everyone of us has the opportunity to speak the truth, God’s truth, biblical truth, in the week ahead. And friend, you need to do that. You need to do that with boldness, wisdom, and love.

To be an effective ambassador of Jesus we need to
A) speak the truth with boldness, because most of us like to be liked by other people, we sometimes keep our mouths shut when we should be speaking. Now, sometimes wisdom tells us to keep our mouths shut when we feel like speaking. Yet we should never be afraid to disagree with someone or express a thought that is not shared by others, if we believe it is truth that the Lord wants us to share. **2 Timothy 1:7 For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.** For such a time as this we need the courage to focus not on what other people will think of us, but on how we can speak words that glorify God and can help the people around us experience His grace. For many of us, the place to start is to pray and ask God to help us to have the courage to be bold in speaking the truth. In Ephesian 6:19 the apostle Paul asks his friends to pray he would have the boldness to do just that. We can ask our friends to do the same.

Yet, to be an effective ambassador of Jesus Christ at this time, we need more than boldness. **B)** We also need to speak the truth with wisdom we need God's spirit to fill us with a wisdom that will permeate all that we say. This involves many different things. I will mention two that are very important, for such a time as this.

1 – We need to avoid exaggerations and false statements. As Christians, followers of Jesus Christ, we must be committed to the truth. In a world full of so many different opinions, with so many people spinning and twisting facts, we need to make sure the things we say are indeed true. Christians don't always do this... Sometimes we are gullible and blindly trust people who are not trustworthy. Other times we believe things simply because we would like them to be true. Not a smart thing to do.

For example, for many years, even before the internet, reports circulated throughout evangelical churches claiming the well-known atheist Madelyn Murray O'Hare had filed a motion with the FCC to van all Christian broadcasting on radio and TV in the United States. I remember seeing people passing around petitions urging the FCC to reject O'Hare's motion. I maybe even signed a petition or two. Some petitions were submitted to the FCC with thousands of signatures. The only problem was the FCC was not even considering a motion to eliminate

religious broadcasting. They were not doing so because neither Madelyn Murray O'Hare or anyone else had made such a request. When I saw a petition being circulated in a church, not this one, (not one on the Iron Range) 10 years after Madelyn Murray O'Hare had died, I realized that not only can a lie often travel faster than the truth, but it can have a fairly long lifespan. Folks, whenever we are Christians believe and repeat hoaxes, we undermine our credibility and discredit the gospel. Wisdom demands we avoid exaggerations and false statements.

2 - Wisdom demands that we focus on the gospel. Friends, listen carefully. This is a tricky one. Because of what God has revealed to us through the Bible, I have opinions on a wide variety of current issues in our society. I believe abortion is a horrible practice, I am totally opposed to encouraging transgenderism in children, I don't want Darwinian Evolution to be taught as fact in our schools, I don't believe same-sex marriages are ordained by God. I think we are called to be good stewards of our environment, but we must never worship it. I am convinced the exercise of religious freedom is our most important right. I believe that critical race theory is incompatible with biblical justice, and will likely create more racial division and animosity, not less. And the list goes on....

These are not just random opinions I happen to have, but views I believe are rooted in what the Bible teaches. Thus, they are views I think everyone should have. And I think these are issues we should discuss however, none of these opinions, or all of them put together are nearly as important as my belief that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, who died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead to guarantee my salvation. And friends if you have different opinions on issues that I do, or if you have opinions of different issues that you think are important, none of those opinions are as important as what you, as a Christian, believe about Jesus Christ.

When people think of me, I don't want them to think of someone who has conservative political views, or even as Pastor Dan, the Packer fan. I want them to think of me as someone who believes in and follows Jesus, and who proclaims that salvation is by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ alone. For such a time as this wisdom

demands that we make and keep the gospel of Jesus Christ the focus in our individual lives and in our churches.

C) To be effective ambassadors of Jesus Christ we need to speak the truth with love. We need to care about the people we are talking to and communicate in such a way that they know we care about them. Paul tells us **Ephesians 4:15** **Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head into Christ.** Now this doesn't mean we should never speak firmly. Good parents and good political ambassadors know it is sometimes necessary to do that. But our firm words, should always be permeated with love.

Back in 1984, Franky Schaeffer wrote a book entitled, "A Time for Anger." There are some good things in that book. Schaeffer did a nice job of explaining how Christians must not be ambivalent or neutral toward the evil around us. There are things happening out there that should make us angry. Yet, what Schaeffer failed to clarify was that our anger is really not to be directed against the people who are believing, saying, or doing wrong things. You may be thinking, "but wasn't Jesus so angry at the money changers that He threw them out of the temple, and angry at the Pharisees sometimes." Yes, He was. And it may indeed be appropriate to be angry at religious leaders and teachers who are leading people astray. Though, I warn you, most of us will have a very difficult time replicating Jesus' righteous anger, being angry without sinning.

For such a time as this, I think we need to focus on understanding and practicing the instructions the Lord gives us through the apostle Paul in **2 Timothy 2:24-26** **And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.**

Again, that is the goal, that our opponents will leave the kingdom of darkness and join us in the kingdom of light. Ultimately it is God who enables people to do that. But at such a time as this, He desires to use us, our words, our actions, to

accomplish His purpose. And as we seek to determine the best way to do this, I suggest a far better model than Franky Schaeffer and his, "Time for Anger", is his father, Francis Schaeffer, who passed away in 1984, and always demonstrated compassion toward folks he knew had been captured by the devil to do his will. And while son, Franky, is now a rather confused man, describing himself as a Christian atheist, his father's legacy is one of always speaking the truth with boldness, wisdom, and love. For such a time as this, I am convinced we need to follow that model.

I close with the last verse of Wayne Watson's song, "for Such a Time as This,"

*We can't change what's happened till now
But we can change what will be
Buy living in holiness
That the world will see Jesus*

*For Such a time as this
I was places upon the earth
To hear the voice of God
And do His will, whatever it is
For such a time as this
For now and all the days He gives
I am here, I am her
And I am His, For such a time as this.*