**03102024 – Why He Speaks - His plans, His Timing**

**How many people came to church because someone personally invited them? Story of Mike and I getting to church…..invited, put off, someday**

ME: Do you remember as a child, a teenager, an early adult thinking about your life and how you thought it would go? For some of you you might say it has gone exactly as I thought it would or maybe as I planned it would. But for most of us it’s nothing like what we thought it would be like or just some things.

I have shared with you all before that I thought for sure I would be driving an 18 wheeler cross country. I always did think I would be married and have children. I never thought I would work in the insurance industry and then stay there for 30 years of my working career and absolutely never considered being a Pastor of a Church – nor do I think anyone close to me would have thought that I would become a Pastor either.

WE: When you look back - Has your life or even now, is your life going in the direction you thought it would or expect it to? Maybe its just different or maybe in your eyes you aren’t as successful as you thought you would be or maybe you are more successful than you every thought or dreamed. Maybe you are driving a truck and you always thought you would be a Pastor. Opposite of me. Maybe you thought you would be married and your still single or expected you would have 6 kids by now and you only have 2. Maybe you have a deep desire to have children and you haven’t been able to have any yet. Maybe you want to start a business or write a book and you just haven’t gotten started.

Last week we talked about Why God speaks and we discussed the fact that He speaks to reveal more about Himself to us and to allow us, to encourage us to actually experience Him intimately – not just knowledge of Him but a relationship with Him. Every time He speaks its for His Glory. And He will use the difficult circumstances in our lives to reveal His Glory, His power, His supernatural strength.

God is the Alpha and Omega, He knows the beginning and the end. He knows everything about us and all the decisions we will make. I was reading Psalm 139 – this week and just meditating on it. Listen carefully to the first few verses…

“Lord, you know everything there is to know about me. You perceive every movement of my heart and soul, and you understand my every thought before it even enters my mind. You are so intimately aware of me, Lord. You read my heart like an open book and you know all the words I’m about to speak before I even start a sentence! You know every step I will take before my journey even begins. You’ve gone into my future to prepare the way, and in kindness you follow behind me to spare me from the harm of my past. You have laid your hand on me!”

God invites us to be a part of the experiences that He has prepared long ago. He has plans and wants us to be a part of carrying them out.

Eph 2:10 “We are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” First of all -just digest the word masterpiece – a work of outstanding artistry, skill or workmanship. That’s you and that is me – His masterpiece! And in Jesus, we get to be brand new – Born again, our sins forgiven, free from our past, chains broken, a new life, eternity with Jesus. Somebody should be excited. But the second piece of that sentence…..Why? ….so we can do the good things HE planned for us long ago.

When we think of Jesus’ life here on earth we see that he did His Father’s will but look closely and we see He did His Father’s will and **nothing else.** Even as the Son of God, he didn’t come up with his own plan, new ideas – hmm I think I will die quickly by an arrow to the heart instead of this long suffering drawn out death by crucifixtion. I like my plan better Dad. Or I can resist the devil without going 40 days without eating Daddy – lets make it 5 instead. Or do this or that. Jesus understood that true success in anything only comes when the Father – God our Father has initiated it and invited our participation. He fully engaged in what God had asked of Him and one of the reasons He could fulfill that, and only that, was he didn’t expend all or any of his time, energy and effort in other things.

We have a mission here at Joy Church – God gave us the mission - To Impact our Communities with the Father’s love and raise up a body of believers committed in relationship with Jesus Christ and one another. Everything we do here is run by this mission to make sure we are staying in line with what God has asked us to do. There are so many great things we can all do but we need to keep all that we do in line with the vision God has given us. And no, we aren’t Jesus so we make mistakes, get off course at times, but we course correct. We have Elders and The Church Council that really do their best to make sure we stay the course and also that we shift as God directs. But, Jesus never got off course – ever.

We will be the most effective as a church and in our own lives – the most blessed, the most fulfilled when we do the things God has put us here on earth to do – when we follow His plans and not our own.

So one of the reasons He speaks is to invite us to participate in the plans He has already established for us. Those plans change in seasons too. He may have something for you to do right now but it might be different than what He has for you to do in 10 years from now or even a year ago.

When I was first a part of a church and my children were 3, 8 and 13, (we have 6 children but I only gave birth to 3 and raised 3 of them day to day here in NH) God nudged me to serve in Children’s Ministry – I couldn’t come to a lot of the events and things outside of Sunday morning. It was the biggest blessing. And I chose to work in a room different from the kids age group that Jake was in. I didn’t grow up learning all the bible stories like some of you did, so I learned them along with the kids all while helping out and loving on them so their parents could sit in church for 45 mins and not be distracted. Hey - Let’s just give some love right now to all our Children’s ministry volunteers and you know what they can always use help. One Sunday a month maybe you could volunteer. Talk to Kelley Gaskin or me and I will get you connected.

 Then as my children got older I folded bulletins on Friday evenings ☺ It might not sound like much – anyone can sit and fold bulletins right but I felt so happy to be connected to a team and serving, contributing in a way that I could during that season. 1 Cor 12: 14-18 Message

My first leadership role in the church was overseeing the bulletin team! Make a schedule, recruit volunteers, make sure the bulletins were ready to be handed out Sunday morning. Another season I helped plan events and run bible studies for Women. God had different plans for me and invited me to join Him in different ways in different seasons of my life. He still is…but there also have been things I have started because I wanted to or things I have stopped doing because I wanted to stop and I never even asked God about it. Even good things! I remember when all 3 kids were living at home and it seemed like our house was just too small. We decided we didn’t want as much land and would like more house – more rooms etc. We started looking for a new house and we put ours on the market – I think only 1 family looked at it. We found another house we thought would be good for us but our offer fell through because we couldn’t sell our house. Our plans – not Gods. I look back and think we were so blessed with the home we had – the location and it was plenty big enough.

Contrast to 3 Years ago- praying and seeking God about downsizing and the timing. Our house went on the market and we sold it in a weekend and also found exactly the condo we wanted when there was really nothing much available.. God’s plans – we followed and He provided more than what we could have dreamed of.

How many times have you invited yourself to do something, to start something when YOU want to start it, to end it when you want to end it and to see it how YOU want to see it? I have moved forward many times in my life with my own plans rather than waiting for God’s invitation – so many things, plans, decisions have just fallen flat. They weren’t God’s, they were mine.

We can pray and should be praying – Lord – open my eyes to see where you are working and where you are inviting me to join in and get involved in what you are already doing and have planned for me.

John 7:17 – “Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know whether its His voice doing the leading or something else.” Hmm – sounds like a decision on our part. Will we give up our own plans and follow His? Will we leave room for Him to ask us to do something that is different that we anticipated or even wanted?

Last month I shared my journey to becoming a Pastor with you. It took me a while to get on board but God was persistent and didn’t give up on me.

God had established a plan and purpose for my life – He kept asking, “Would I join in with Him, with His purposes or would I keep going my own way?’ It seemed so crazy to me for so long, but I got there. God’s plan don’t always make sense to us.

Make no mistake – no one can stand in the way, no one is capable of standing in the way of God’s kingdom agenda but if we are unwilling to listen for His voice and submit to His direction, we can easily miss out on being a part of it. I pray a lot, we pray a lot here at Joy Church to stay in step with God, not jump ahead of him or fall behind. We want to see what He is doing, where He is inviting us to join Him and accept that invitation -not conjure up our own plan and ask Him to bless them.

When we see evidence that God is moving in circumstances and you feel his leading you in a certain direction, that’s our key to join Him. Sometimes we have to take risks and step out in what we think that direction is in order to get the confirmation. For example – we felt like it was God’s desire for us to have a kitchen here – some of you might not know this but there was a time, the first 5 years we were here that we had just a little area, where our couches are now with a table and we served coffee on Sunday mornings. Where the beautiful Kitchen now is, was just an old break room – nothing in it, run down, no serving cut out where we put all our yummy pastries etc now. From the beginning, we felt like one of the major needs in Pittsfield was food. People are hungry physically and until we meet that basic need, they might not be able to hear God’s voice calling them to Him spiritually. We felt God wanted us to have a kitchen where we could cook and feed people. There is zero doubt in my mind now that God had a plan for Joy Church to have a kitchen. He provided all the funds, if you didn’t know it, we are so blessed to have never had any debt. He provided the people with skills, who volunteered to build it and it all happened – get this during COVID. We accepted His invitation – took the risk - some of you took a risk by giving to help build the kitchen, our prayer and conference room, the 3 kids rooms. And are just getting started in all the ways He wants to use our church and this kitchen to bless others. When we started offering Community Breakfast in 2021 there was just a few people each month – mostly people from this church. Now we are feeding over 50, I heard almost 70 yesterday and mostly from our communities! God had a plan and He was inviting us to join Him, to trust Him, to work hard and to move forward 1 step at a time. And He still has plans for Joy Church. We believe God wants all the children’s classrooms full of children every Sunday and that some of you God has planned to volunteer with the kids. Will you join Him?

God has a plan for your life – much bigger than anything you can drum up or arrange even if your life has gone precisely as you’d always hoped it would. There is so much more.

Let’s stop spending our time wishing ourselves out of whatever situations God has placed us in.

Priscilla Shirer puts it this way in her book – Discerning the Voice of God - Instead of craving Marriage when you are single, instead of desiring to be upper rather than under class, instead of desiring a better church than the one you attend, lets ask God to open our eyes to the plans of His that are already right here and that are even better, the ones close to His heart.

So God has predestined plans for your life and for mine and He also has the perfect timing.

A man was praying to God. He said, "God!?"

God responded, "Yes?"

And the guy said, "Can I ask a question?"

"Go right ahead," God said.

"God, what is a million years to you?"

God said, "A million years to me is only a second."

"Hmmm," the man wondered. Then he asked, "God, what is a million dollars worth to you?"

God said, "A million dollars to me is as a penny."

So the man said, "God, can I have a penny?"

And God cheerfully said, "Sure!! Just a second."

Not only do God’s purposes have specific plans but they also involve specific timing. He has orchestrated the events of your life and the timing in which they will occur. Does your mind hurt thinking about this? Mine does sometimes. It’s so incredible.

When we hear God speak, when we accept the invitations to join him in His plans for us, it is also in the timing He has decided is best. And can I just say, this probably won’t be in line with your timing….true? Isn’t timing our biggest frustration? We want it now or sometimes its things we don’t want now? The pain, the suffering. We are no different than those that have gone before us. In the bible we read so many stories of peoples frustrations with God’s timing –

Think of Elizabeth and Zachariah – they prayed and prayed for a child but then when it appeared like there was no more hope,that they were too old physcially. They stopped. But God…..The two words that change everything.

One day an angel appeared to Zachariah who told him God had heard his request (God always hears) and the angel told him his wife would have a son and not only would he have a son but the angel told him his son would turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. He would go before and help people prepare for the Lord to come (Luke 1). God’s plan wasn’t just for them to have a child but God had a mission for him and the timing was so important. Elizabeth wasn’t too old to be a mother even though it looked that way in the natural. And God hadn’t spoken too late – He waited and He knew and He had everything in place for the birth of his son and then he gave notice and instruction. Perfect Timing to accomplish His GREAT plans not just for Elizabeth and Zachariah and John the Baptist, their son, but for the world and for ultimately for you and for me. Absolutely incredible.

I don’t know about you, but it hasn’t always seemed like God is operating with perfect timing in my own life. There are things I want to know, even feel like I need to know – if its going to be this direction Lord I need to start planning, if its going to be this decision. I remember when God prompted me to leave my career in the insurance industry, I needed him, begged him to show me how he would replace my income and benefits BEFORE I obeyed him and left that career………I didn’t want to obey His voice without more information and I thought my timing in knowing was very reasonable. I really wanted Him to answer my questions in my timing. If God had told me everything I wanted to know, I would have run so fast in the opposite direction.

John 16:12 “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now”.

There is a time for everything in your life and God alone knows what that is. Just like what I told you last week about God showing you the nuggets, the things He wants you to know right now, the things he wants you to take away from this message today. His Holy Spirit dwells within us and helps us experience everything He has for us.

We want God to paint the whole picture….to roll out the red carpet showing us exactly how things will play out. He knows that that isn’t the best for us and we will just mess things up so he waits until He knows we need the information and will be able to process and obey His voice. He knows the exact perfect timing that will be the absolute BEST for us.

**The timing of his messages to us is as important as the message itself.**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1** “ There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven.”

John 16:13 we see how John paints the picture of the Holy Spirit as a guide – the one who gives us direction but on a need to know basis. “He will guide you into all truth”. The Holy Spirit doesn’t just give us direction upfront and then leave us to figure it all out either. He reveals what we need to know, right now and then updates us as we step out in faith and obedience. The hard time I talked about last week. The Holy Spirit was with me – He guided me to join Him in His plans and initially only revealed that first step. Every week, every month, maybe everyday I got a little more information. He allowed me to see a little more of the plan slowly as I could handle it and as I was stepping out in faith and obedience. I think we see it as God holding out and making our lives difficult but its actually a blessing.

What do we do in the waiting? We want the next step, the next thing….

First – we need to remember we have everything we need from God at this moment. He isn’t holding out on us. He isn’t ready for you to take the next step yet. Until he makes the next message, the next step clear to you, which He will do in the exact right moment – His perfect timing and knowledge…..while we are waiting we do whatever He has told us to do right now.

We don’t mope and sit around regretting the past, yesterdays, we don’t worry about tomorrow, the future, we do right now what He has asked us to do in this moment. The enemy will try to get you to focus on the past and to worry about the future – what might happen, what could go wrong, what will other people say? He will say things like “who do you think you are thinking you can do that?

Matt 4:19-20 says He said to them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

When we truly believe God will speak to us, and will speak to us in the perfect moment we don’t have to feel pressured and rushed. There is so much freedom in this. If we are asking Him to speak – remember I quoted John 7:17 – “Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know whether its His voice doing the leading or something else.” Do you want to do the will of God? If we are seeking to hear His voice – we will know when its Him speaking.

Have you ever tried to buy a car? Negotiating and finally it comes down to – Oh, we can give you this deal, but only if you sign right now. The concert Mike and I went to last week they had a beautiful time to help support children in other countries that have nothing and need everything. I love and totally want to help and give to that need BUT I do not like it when they say – you have to decide right now, tonight. They prick your emotions so you will give which is understandable but Mike and I try very hard to never make decisions on the spot like that without taking time to pray and ask God what He would have us do. I am sure I could contact that company or any that does this kind of work and they would accept my money today.

**Worship Team**

We can trust God – He is a good good father. He loves us. We can breath and know He has designed specific plans for us long ago and He will reveal things in His perfect timing. We can do the thing He has called us to do right now and we can have peace and confidence knowing this is His will. He is never wrong – he never is too early or too late.

Maybe He has called you to be a stay at home mom or dad – you have big dreams for ministry or a career but right now He has you taking care of your children – day in and day out. Investing in teaching and caring for them. Maybe you are in a job that you dislike but right now it provides for your family. Maybe you are a grandparent helping your children with childcare or just rides here and there. You are dreaming of being empty nesters but not yet…..do what He has you doing right now until you hear Him nudge you to move. If you feel rushed, its not from God. If you feel forced based on fear or intimidation its not God. God gently encourages and woos us. He is patient and persistent giving us clarity before requiring obedience.

God allows our spiritual eyes to be opened so that we see HIM here on earth – And Seeing God’s hand is hearing God’s voice.

Joy Church - Lets get busy doing the things God has called each one of us to do right now! Let’s not get caught up in our pasts or even what His future plans for us are or – what they might be but focus right now on what is before us – For Joy Church that is Impacting our Communities with His love and raising up a body of believers committed in relationship with Jesus and with one another. You play a huge part in that – making a difference in your life and in your families life and for the Kingdom and we love you all so much and there is nothing you can do about it!

Pray – Lord Jesus, thank you for the great plans you have for each one of us and for our church! Thank you for reminding us that not only do you have predestined plans for all of us but that you also have the perfect timing. Help us to be patient, to be brave and to see what you are doing and say Yes to join you in those things. Maybe you are here this morning or watching online and you haven’t said yes to following Jesus yet, you haven’t surrendered your life to Him, and you find yourself stumbling through life doing your own thing – He is speaking to you. He wants you to come to Him, to follow Him and to hear His voice. Today can be the start of a brand new life for you and for your family – pray with me, no one prays alone. Lord Jesus,

Forgive me of my sins

This life is hard

I am tired of doing it alone

Come into my life

Save me

Make me brand new

I surrender my life to you now

Be my Lord and Savior

Amen

Congratulations – be bold, tell someone. Find me and tell me or Mike, type it in the chat online or email us at info@joychurchnh.com.

Membership luncheon