

## Your Best Years

Scripture: Luke 1:5 – 20 and Isaiah 65:17 - 25

July 31, 2022

It has been said – ‘Timing is everything!’ Do you believe in that saying? I just finished watching a documentary on Paul Newman and Joann Woodward. In the documentary Paul Newman was ask ‘what was the key to his success in his acting career?’ Paul Newman said – TIMING! He explained that early in his career he was not getting good parts. James Dean and Marlon Brando were getting all the good parts but then James Dean died in a car crash and Marlon Brando took another part that allow him to star in ‘Someone Up There Likes Me!’. That movie was his BIG break!

Although there is some truth in that saying, it is good to remember that God’s timing may be different than ours. In fact, God’s timing maybe radically different than ours!

In our scripture reading from Luke’s Gospel when the angel Gabriel told Zechariah that his prayer had been heard, I wonder if Zechariah knew what prayer the angel Gabriel was speaking about. Zechariah probably wondered if the angel was talking about the prayers he said that morning or the prayers he said last night. He must have thought ‘What prayer are you speaking about?’ because I doubt that this old man was still praying for a baby boy. It is doubtful that the old man, Zechariah, and his wife, Elizabeth, were still praying for a baby when youth and middle age had slipped away so long ago! It could have been twenty years or more since Zechariah last prayed for a baby! The thought of praying for a baby at Zechariah’s age probably was not spoken by Zechariah for many years.

People in those days and people today probably believed that at a certain time in their lives they had their best years. And for Zechariah, those ‘best years’ were behind him. Zechariah probably thinks he is closer to the grave than to the womb. Do you think your best years are behind you?

I hope this message is for those who think their best years are behind them and those who think their best years are in front of them.

Zechariah who was in the temple working probably thought it would be downhill now in his life. He had passed his best years. The sand in the hour glass was running low for Zechariah. Too much water has gone under the bridge for Zechariah. His faucet of life was only dripping now. His clock of life was getting ready to strike midnight.

Here you sit in this temple worshipping and are you thinking it is downhill now in your life? Have your best years passed by? Is the sand in your hour glass running low? Has too much water gone under your bridge? Is your faucet of life only dripping now? Is the clock of your life in its last hours?

Well, here is the good news – God has a very good memory of all your prayers and dreams. They may or may not be fulfilled in the way we had hoped, but they were never written off by God. God does answer prayers and God is full of surprises!

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Zechariah laughed at the news from the angel Gabriel and he was struck silent for nine months. I am telling each of you here today – your best years are not behind you for our God does answer prayers and our God is full of surprises.

As you look around our church, you will not see many children. Do you remember the energy a youth has? I can get very tired just watching my grandson run around! I can get exhausted watching children play in the park right next to our church.

When I ask for people to get involved in our church activities, do you say to yourself – That is not for me because my best years are behind me? Do any of these things fit you?

Well, I have good news for you – God has a very good memory of all your prayers and dreams. They may or may not be fulfilled in the way you had hoped, but they were never written off by God. God does answer prayers and God is full of surprises!

If you do not feel that your best years have passed you by, God bless you and our church needs your involvement. We need your energy and strength so that we may continue to serve Christ.

So, for those who think their best years are behind them, for those who think their best years are now, and for those who think their best years are ahead of them; I guarantee that there will be many opportunities for you to get involved in our church life in this summer, fall, and winter. I hope and pray that you will say – Here I am, your servant, O’God, how can I help you and the ministry of this church!

On a popular home improvement show the host will often say to a couple renovating their home – ‘Imagine this!’ Then she unveils what their home could look like on a computer screen. Their drab walls and floors are moved or removed and painted and stained. At the end of each episode, the home owner sees their home after the renovation and they are overjoyed by what they see. The words the home owners usually says is ‘It is beautiful!’

One of the most stunning passages in the Bible is Isaiah 65:17 – 25 which was read for you. It is an ‘Imagine this’ passage. It includes a dazzling recreation scene! The future renovation of heaven and earth is in view in verse 17 and it is not merely cosmetic; it is deep and real! It is life altering and life preserving. Verse 21 says – *‘They will build houses and dwell in them. They will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.’* And verse 25 says – *‘Violence will be a thing of the past and they will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountains.’*

While this reversal will be realized in the future, the God who will orchestrate universal restoration is in the business of life changing events now!

Paul tells us – *‘If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone and the new is here!’*

Are you in need of restoration? Has your life been broken by doubt, disobedience, and pain? Life changing things can happen through Jesus Christ! This is real and beautiful and available to those who ask and believe!

So what changes can you imagine God can make in your life? And what keep you from those changes? What keeps you from believing in Jesus for life changing today?

Let us imagine!

Let us pray:

God of surprises, thank you for Jesus, our Savior. Thank you for let us hear that our best years are not behind us, but that are best years are before us. We know the ultimate answer to our prayers is your love. You are a God who answers prayers and you are a God full of surprises.

God of restoration and renovation, you know what changes are needed in our lives for us to look more like your most Holy Son. Please work in our hearts and life today. May these changes happen!           AMEN.