

## The Appointed Time

Sunday, June 14, 2020 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

Genesis 18:14 "Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."

Introduction: Esther, born for such a time as this. Ephesians, to do the good work that is set forth before you.

The Old Testament Book of Esther is the story of a young Jewish woman who became queen of a nation just at a time when powerful, evil men were trying to kill every Jew in the nation. It should sound familiar because it has happened many times since. There's a famous portion in the story when Esther's Uncle Mordecai warns her of the plot and tells her she must use her power to help the people, even if it is dangerous. It's here in Esther 4:13-14 "And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: 'Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. *Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*'"

There's something of an echo of Mordecai's thought in another famous passage in Ephesians, in a passage that includes the classic formulation of salvation. It's Ephesians 2:8-10: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." We have been saved by grace through faith, that's the classic formulation, but we have been created for pre-prepared projects. Our lives, and the acts of them, are not random. I think that this is evidence that we, like Esther, were born for such a time as this, and there are divine appointments in our lives.

the appointed time

The word translated "appointed time" means an appointment, or a fixed time or season, a holy festival, a place or time for people to meet. Genesis 1:14: "Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years;...' "Seasons"-is the same as "appointed times". The Great Old Testament Feasts are appointments. I find it interesting to note that very major event in the life of Jesus happened during one of the Great Feasts. Sunday worship services are appointments. I think God has appointments great and small weaved into the fabric of our lives.

the appointed time for Sarah

The particular appointed time in our text for today involves Abraham and Sarah. We recall in Romans 4, God promised this couple a son, whose descendants would grow to be a great nation, and then they were made to wait into their elder years without seeing that son come into the world. At one point Abraham asked God about this and God had him look at the night sky, and then told him that his descendants would as numerous as the stars in the sky. Abraham and Sarah waited for years even after that event. Finally, when both are well beyond the years of parenthood, the Lord and two angels visited them and told them that the time of their appointment is drawing near and that they would have a child within the year. It may have been the only appointed time for

them, but it finally came. The Lord had made a promise, and the time to fulfill that promise had come.

the appointed time for us

The Scriptures mention little about appointed times in detail, but one is about the time of our death. But Hebrews adds a hopeful postscript to it when it says, " And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. (9:26-27). Paul in 2 Timothy adds that the rewards in heaven for us are also appointed (4:8) "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." The day we meet Jesus face to face is appointed, the rewards involved are appointed and in one way or another, every promise the Lord makes He will keep.

application

We have appointments both set in the schedule of the church life and in the plan for our life. They don't have to be notable events, and the significance of an appointment may very well not be apparent until later. The day we see Jesus face to face is an appointment, as is the reward that awaits the faithful servant in heaven. See every opportunity to invest in the life of someone else as a divine appointment.

conclusion

We don't know the timing or the number, but I believe that there are divine appointments in our lives. There's the time of worship, there are the Great Feasts, there is the time we meet the Lord. There are other times. I'd like to close with a story from the terrible 2004 Tsunami that cost the lives of countless thousands, that seems to be to a story of appointment. It is the experience of an elderly man caught in the tsunami, trapped against a stairwell outside of a building. The current was so fierce that he could not reach the stairs, but only hold onto the rail in order to avoid being swept out to sea. As he was clinging to the rail, he saw a young woman and her infant son being carried by the current. As she passed by him to the sea, she and the elderly man caught each other's attention and she handed him her baby as the current took her to certain death. She communicated that she knew that she would die, and she wanted him to try and save the baby. He communicated to her that he would save her baby or die trying. Could that have been an appointment? I think so.