
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

October 19, 2014

God's Time

"But when the fulfillment of the time came..."

Galatians 4:4 (Common English Bible)

There are some passages in the Bible that are so central, so rich in meaning to the Christian faith that they require us to slow down and permit them to penetrate deeply into our hearts and minds. Such is this statement from the hand of the apostle Paul, "But when the fulfillment of the time came..." Careful consideration of it brings new discoveries and promises fresh insight for the daily struggle of being Christian in the present day.

With these words the apostle introduces the most decisive event our world has known – the self-revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. The entirety of the Old Testament points forward to this one moment in time and the New Testament speaks to its significance for life today. The birth of Christ, the life and ministry of Christ, the death of Christ and Christ's resurrection from the dead is one sweeping narrative that is introduced by Paul, "when the fulfillment of the time came..." Anyone familiar with television game shows or talk shows knows there is considerable anticipation and fanfare preceding the host of the show stepping before the cameras. This is what the apostle Paul is doing here.

The introduction is important. Paul announces that the beginning of the Christ story is on God's time. The moment of Christ's birth was not arbitrary. It did not occur at just anytime. Jesus Christ came to earth at, "the fulfillment of the time." God planned from the beginning of creation the precise time that Christ would be born. What's important is that we are simply told that Christ was born "on God's time." God's timing is not subject to our investigation, our concurrence or our understanding. It is God's time. It is as simple as that.

There is mystery behind every supreme and meaningful event. The birth of Jesus Christ is no exception. We may ask why God chose this particular moment in time for the birth of Jesus Christ. Yet, the question would be no different than why Abraham Lincoln rose to be one of the United States' finest presidents at a moment when our nation was nearly torn apart or Winston Churchill came to leadership in Great Britain at that moment when the British Empire was threatened by Germany. We cannot answer these questions. What we do know is that the course of the world was shaped, and shaped significantly, by these events.

The looming question that is left is, do we believe that the course of history, and our own history, is under some control or do we not. If we don't, then we are adrift in time and nothing makes sense. No event has more meaning than another. Yet, the witness of the apostle Paul – and of the Christian faith – is that there is someone that is orchestrating all of history. That one is Almighty God who determined that when the right time had arrived, he gave to us his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the same God that holds, even now, our future in his hand.

Prayer: *When I fail to understand why life unfolds for me as it does, when I am fearful of the future, remind me that you have purposed my life according to your most holy will. Amen.*

Doug Hood