

In a Moment

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⁶ While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to have the baby, ⁷ and she gave birth to her first son. Because there were no rooms left in the inn, she wrapped the baby with pieces of cloth and laid him in a feeding trough. (Luke 2-NCV)

This is one of those sermons that I have written, rewritten, scrapped and finally landed the plane so at least I had something for today. Although, identifying what to say has not been my problem.

It is selecting what to say out of the vast biblical and personal literary landscape I live in. It has not been difficult because of **volume**; it has been difficult because of **value**. Each word in the message has sat on a scale of value.

I trust God's Holy Spirit will do his work in you, as he has in me!

So, hurray and amen for the delete key!

And keep in mind, Jesus is our leader, he is the one we follow. Not a pastor. Not a church. Not a movement.

Father, I need your help today and it must go beyond the ordinary to the supernatural extraordinary.

We need the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to soften our hearts, open our eyes and heal our souls.

Father, each of us know all too well we are sinful, so today we cry out for mercy, cry out for understanding and cry out for healing in our life and in our land.

In the name that is above all names, Jesus Christ and everyone said, "Amen."

Our series is entitled **In A Moment**. The word moment is a noun. It conveys the idea of an indefinitely short period of time, an instant.

The word moment has produced some of the most memorable statements: Who has not said, "I'll call you back in a moment." See if you can finish these sentences...

With you kids, there is never a dull moment.

I don't believe that for a moment.

I'll just drink water for the moment.

I don't have a job at the moment.

I will be with you in a moment.

More important than those moments are these moments with God. See if you do not agree.

Your Heavenly Father can get you any place In A moment.

God can save you In A Moment.

Christ can transform you In A Moment.

The Holy Spirit can do a miracle In A Moment.

God's Word can deliver you In A Moment.

Prayer can be answered In A Moment.

Is it possible that a small moment in time can shape one's entire future?

Is it possible that behind every milestone, a catalytic moment led to the milestone?

Who has not stopped, paused and thought, this is no mere moment in history?

Who you have become is the succession of countless dull and destiny defining moments.

Delightful and depressive moments.

Outstanding and ordinary moments.

Pleasurable and painful moments.

You are quite a concoction of a variety of moments.

In 1980, In a moment, my life was changed in a church service like this. How quickly my life changed when I trusted Christ over 4 decades ago. I exchanged lust for unconditional love.

I exchanged addiction for adoration.

I exchanged rushing around for rest on the Sabbath.

I exchanged greed for generosity.

In a moment, Joseph in Gen 41:41, would experience a destiny defining moment. So, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "*I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt. (Gen 41:41-NIV)*

One moment Joseph was in prison, and the next moment he was riding in a chariot wearing bling, and the next moment he is soaking up adoration from his subjects. Living for Yahweh in the land of Egypt had turned out pretty good for the 11th son of Jacob.

In a moment, 120 disciples experienced the supernatural power of God in an upper room in Jerusalem as a fire was ignited that spread the gospel throughout the known world and that flame burns on today.

A mighty rushing wind. Tongues of fire. Speech in unknown languages. One moment, those first followers of Jesus sat in a prayer meeting, the next moment they were endued with power...all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit (vs 4)

² **Suddenly** *a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. (Acts 2-NIV)*

This is a moment when God surprisingly breaks into time and space, then does a "thy kingdom come, thy will be done moment."

In Acts 12:7, Peter has one of those sudden moments while in prison, *Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. (Acts 12:7-NIV)*

Let's go to Bethlehem. And look in on a moment in time, that changed the destiny for an innkeeper. Instead of having a picture hanging in his lobby, of the most famous couple and child who ever took up residence, the innkeeper failed to witness the birth of Jesus.

For a moment, the innkeeper had an opportunity to make history.

⁶ While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to have the baby, ⁷ and she gave birth to her first son. Because there were no rooms left in the inn, she wrapped the baby with pieces of cloth and laid him in a feeding trough. (Luke 2-NCV)

We know almost nothing about the inn and innkeeper in Bethlehem who turned away the most important baby of all time. What we do know is he did not invite them in.

If momma innkeeper had heard the knock, saw a nine-month pregnant mother, **husband innkeeper would have been on the couch.**

Instead, he was snuggled warm in his innkeeper suite. When the innkeeper crawled back in bed, his wife, half asleep asks, “who was it dear?” and Mr. innkeeper whispers...

...“simple strangers. Hoi Polloi.” There was only a knock. By a common couple. Late at night. When the inn was already crowded. Every room and hallway were taken. The innkeeper had placed someone in every bed, and he even rolled out a few cots. He lined the hallways with mats and rollways. So, the innkeeper turned away the most important customer that ever stood in front of him.

The innkeeper missed the opportunity. Missed the moment.

All the while Mary, Joseph and Jesus and their meager belongings and exhausted donkey **tried to stay warm out back.**

A Roman census turned sleepy Bethlehem into boomtown. Up and down the main street, there was nothing but a series of No Vacancy signs. The innkeeper missed a history-making moment, make sure YOU don't!

²⁰ Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. (Rev 3:20-NIV)

Ok, let's give Joseph and Mary their due. Why not tell their, In A Moment story? And each week this Christmas you will hear a portion of the, In A Moment story as told by Matthew and Luke.

God asked Joseph, in a moment, to be the recipient of an assignment that would *grow on him*. (Matt 1:22-23-NIV)

Joseph was completely caught off guard by a sudden (momentary) turn of events. All Joseph ever wanted was to honor God with his life. The gospels tell us Joseph honored God as a carpenter.

Matthew describes Jesus' earthly father as a carpenter. (Matt 13:55-NIV)

As a small-town carpenter, he was from a single camel town on the edge of boredom. Why Joseph? Why doesn't God select someone with more visibility? More fame? Perhaps, an eloquent priest from the temple or a legal scholar from the Pharisees?

Joseph seems so ordinary. And he is and that is the beauty of the story. The reason that Joseph is selected is not because of what he has, but because of what he will give up.

So many in life confuse God's purposes for what God is looking for. God is not looking for ability, but availability. (Matt 1:20-21-NIV)

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

In the end Joseph will give up his reputation, the most important feature in an ancient carpenter's life. He gives it up for Mary and Jesus. (Matt 1:18-19)

Joseph is a just man, a town elder. He has built a solid reputation in the community. He is a man of his word. All of this is jeopardized with Mary's announcement, **"I am pregnant."**

Mary is tarnished and blemished...Joseph is righteous and outstanding in reputation.

The law says, "stone her." Love says, "forgive her."

Joseph is in a no win, situation. Suddenly, in a moment an angel Gabriel arrives and tells Joseph, "do not be afraid of Mary's growing belly." The child she carries is the son of God in her womb.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1:20-NIV)

Gabriel has to convince Joseph he is a part of an eternal cosmic plan. A bead of sweat forms on Joseph's brow. He faces the challenge of a lifetime. Make up a lie and preserve his place in the community or tell the truth and kiss his reputation good-bye.

How do you handle life when it is unfair? What is your reaction when life is unfair? (2 Tim 4:5-NIV)

⁵ But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Gabriel helps Joseph with this simple reminder, "if you think too small, you will get in God's way." You will miss God's plan. **You will miss the knock at the door.**

Some of you need a word from heaven like Joseph that God is growing his plans in you. You too face big choices.

In the end Joseph placed God's plan ahead of his. Will YOU?

Mary is the most loved and iconic figure in Christianity. Around the world. Sweet, tender and caring Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ.

No woman is more adored and venerated than Mary of Nazareth.

For centuries, her face and figure has adorned the sanctuaries of churches across the globe as pilgrims gaze at her and even worship her.

In Nazareth is a church of the Basilica of the Annunciation that has pictures from countries all over the world telling the announcement to Mary of her pregnancy.

Ancient time and modern time, she still is a figure of significant historical and theological value. Mary's role in the narrative of Christianity and the birth of Jesus Christ cannot be overstated.

God asked Mary in a moment to be the recipient of a miracle that would *grow in her*. (Luke 1:34-35-NIV)

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called^[a] the Son of God.

Why did God take such a journey to become human? Jesus entered our world, not like a human. He was a human. Jesus became human down to his fingers and toes.

The one who created the stars, and everything else and was equal with God, created himself.

7 but ^[c]made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

Christ the creator became an embryo, fetus, baby, boy and a man. The incarnate God was human.

The one who made everything, made himself nothing. A servant. Jesus made himself dependent, hungry and thirsty and adolescent. Most of all he served us.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself

When people mocked him, it hurt.

When soldiers spat on him, he did not boomerang their spit.

When they called him crazy, he did not make them deaf or blind.

He could have, you know.

The One who created the universe and rolled out the galaxies nursed at Mary's breast.

Why all of the trouble and all of the fuss? God saw a world spinning out of control and could not bear the thought of living without us. So, Jesus came to live among us. Love amongst us. Live in us. And in the end die for each of us.

How is it possible that one single pregnancy could impact all of humanity for all of eternity?

Imagine if Mary came to show and tell. What a story she could tell. The teacher introduces Mary, and the kids start firing away questions:

Were you ever scared of not being a good mom?

What were the first words from Jesus' mouth?

Did Jesus misbehave?

How much hair did Jesus have when he was born?

Did he cry a lot?

Did Jesus have a pet?

All of these questions have answers because Jesus was human just like us.

Mary gave birth to an infant and to Immanuel.

Mary carried God in her womb. And it all happened for Mary in a moment.

Does Mary feed Jesus, or worship Jesus?

Does Mary change his diaper, or change her heart?

Mary's prayer might have sounded like this: "God, the Child is Yours, the plan is Yours and His future is Yours."

Because Jesus arrived by means of a human, Jesus can change your sin nature into His salvation nature. We will never be sinless, but we can sin less...Jesus not only died for us, but Jesus also lives for us. And when we sin, we have the confidence that grace can save us and preserves us.

We may lose our mind. Lose our temper. And lose our virginity. Lose our self-control. **We will never lose our Savior.**

Why, because Jesus Christ has a hold on us. Life is difficult and delightful. It is crowded and chaotic. God already knows you have a full plate. You have more than you can do. **And because of this Jesus does not come with a list of things for you to do, but a list of things he has already done.**

And a longer list of things he will do, In A Moment, if you let him.
Your death, the grave is defeated.
Your sickness, by his stripes you can be healed.
Your depression and anxiety, God's word offers relief.
Your fears, he will give you courage.
Your confusion, he will give you wisdom.
Your questions, he will give you answers.

Jesus is about lifting burdens, not adding to them.

You have some excuses to offer. It is too late, you say. No, it isn't. It is never too late for Jesus Christ. Joel 2 tells us this.

*13-14 Change your life, not just your clothes.
Come back to God, your God.
And here's why: God is kind and merciful.
He takes a deep breath, puts up with a lot,
This most patient God, extravagant in love,
always ready to cancel catastrophe.
Who knows? Maybe he'll do it now,
maybe he'll turn around and show pity.
Maybe, when all's said and done,
there'll be blessings full and robust for your God! (MSG)*

You are never too far gone, never too messed up, never too worn out. Elijah was depressed, God intervened.

Abraham was old, he could still hear and see God as work.

Jonah was on the run, but he could not out-run God.

Jacob cheated and lied, and God made him the father of 12 sons, whose names are etched in the New Jerusalem.

Peter betrayed Jesus. Saul persecuted Christ. Thomas doubted Jesus. All learned and leaned on the truth: It is never too late with Christ.

It is never too late to come to Jesus Christ and receive help!

I was called to the home of man who built his own plane but was now grounded permanently as he waited for death to come to his door.

He spent his life on himself, but as his health began to fail, his conscious began to awaken. When his wife told him it was time to get his life in order, she called me. He made a deathbed confession, I bought him a bible, I taught him the ways of God, served him communion and even made him an honorary member of my church.

While he made a deathbed confession, I need to make a pulpit confession of my own. I thought that is too easy. A guy like that deserves to be routed to purgatory on his way to paradise.

Those thoughts did not last long. And quickly heaven put me in my place. God did not call me to screen and vet applicants. I am just to offer them the good news of sins forgiven through Jesus Christ atoning death and profession of faith.

And as I read God's word, if any self-absorbed, self-made pilot is sincere about his repentance and trust in Christ, he will fly beyond the clouds he was soared through. For today he is walking the same streets of gold as the apostle Peter the betrayer, King David the adulterer, and Paul the murderer. And you and me, sinners in our own right.

Is there a knock at the door, that's Jesus? Don't miss the knock at the door, look carefully it might come at midnight, and the one knocking might look a little young, but look closer, under those winter garments is a soon-to-born the savior of the world.

And all you have to do is open the door.

²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,^[a] because he will save his people from their sins. (Matt 1:21)