

God's Timing Is Always Perfect
Guest Speaker, Sheri Patrick
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When Michael asked me to “preach” this morning, I wondered – what am I going to say? I’m not a preacher, but thinking back at past experiences, and the directions I’ve taken, I realized how God’s timing was perfect in every situation. I usually did not see it that way at the time, but now I can see that if those challenging things had not happened, I would not have experienced the great things I’ve been blessed to receive, like moving to Nashville and being closer to my family, finding this church and making the wonderful friends that I have made. I realize now that I had to wait on God’s timing for the good things to come.

I have a tendency to think I need to “do it myself” when it comes to solving problems. This has not served me well on a number of occasions. I’ve made things more difficult by not stopping, taking a deep breath, and praying for God’s guidance. Sometimes fear stopped me from asking God and others for help. Maybe they would think less of me... maybe they won’t love me if they knew what was happening. I stayed in an unhappy marriage for 11 years because of that fear. When I think back now I think I knew after the first year it was not a good thing, but fear of being a failure and disappointing people kept me from sharing these feelings, with my family, even with God. But God is good and he kept guiding, even when I didn’t realize it. He led me to move to Nashville from California to begin my healing, in several ways. First my health... I worked full-time as a server for over six months when I came to Nashville before I found an office job, and again I couldn’t understand why it was taking so long, but I now know that there was a particular job God had in mind for me, and I had to wait until the position was open. I got a job at the Diabetes Center at Baptist Hospital, which put me with a special group of people, who loved me and took it upon themselves to help me solve my health issues with low blood sugar. They got me in to a doctor – who was not taking new patients – and after 7 months of numerous tests, the mystery was solved, I had surgery and my health was back to normal. That was the beginning of my understanding that I didn’t have to stay in unhappy situations and that it was okay to ask for help. I finally admitted to myself, my family, and to God the reality of my life, and that I needed their support. I felt like this gave me permission to move on and know they would still love me, no matter what mistakes I’d made.

God then led me to Glencliff Pres. I had visited almost a year earlier, but had not returned, I guess because I was so ashamed of the lie I was living I didn’t think God wanted me in his house. I decided to visit again after I’d made the decision to get a divorce, and the sermon that Michael gave was speaking right to me and made me feel that maybe there was hope for me. After a few talks with Michael, and his ability to listen and ask the right questions it helped me process what I needed to do to move forward. Michael... I will forever be grateful.

In line with God’s timing being perfect, a few days after I told Michael I would speak, my niece Shannon sent me a story titled “Understand that Things Happens For A

Reason”, and I think it confirms that no matter how long it takes, God’s timing is always perfect.

The brand new pastor and his wife, newly assigned to their first ministry, to reopen a church in suburban Brooklyn, arrived in early October excited about their opportunities. When they saw their church, it was very run down and needed much work. They set a goal to have everything done in time to have their first service on Christmas Eve.

They worked hard, repairing pews, plastering walls, painting, etc, and on December 18 were ahead of schedule and just about finished.

On December 19 a terrible tempest - a driving rainstorm hit the area and lasted for two days.

On the 21st, the pastor went over to the church. His heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster about 20 feet by 8 feet to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary just behind the pulpit, beginning about head high.

The pastor cleaned up the mess on the floor, and not knowing what else to do but postpone the Christmas Eve service, headed home. On the way he noticed that a local business was having a flea market type sale for charity, so he stopped in. One of the items was a beautiful, handmade, ivory colored, crocheted tablecloth with exquisite work, fine colors and a Cross embroidered right in the center. It was just the right size to cover the hole in the front wall. He bought it and headed back to the church.

By this time it had started to snow. An older woman running from the opposite direction was trying to catch the bus. She missed it. The pastor invited her to wait in the warm church for the next bus 45 minutes later. She sat in a pew and paid no attention to the pastor while he got a ladder, hangers, etc., to put up the tablecloth as a wall tapestry. The pastor could hardly believe how beautiful it looked and it covered up the entire problem area. Then he noticed the woman walking down the center aisle. Her face was like a sheet. "Pastor," she asked, "where did you get that tablecloth?" The pastor explained. The woman asked him to check the lower right corner to see if the initials, EBG were crocheted into it there. They were. These were the initials of the woman, and she had made this tablecloth 35 years before, in Austria. The woman could hardly believe it as the pastor told how he had just gotten "The Tablecloth". The woman explained that before the war she and her husband were well-to-do people in Austria. When the Nazis came, she was forced to leave. Her husband was going to follow her the next week. He was captured, sent to prison and she never saw her husband or her home again. The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth; but she made the pastor keep it for the church. The pastor insisted on driving her home. That was the least he could do. She lived on the other side of Staten Island and was only in Brooklyn for the day for a housecleaning job.

What a wonderful service they had on Christmas Eve. The church was almost full.

The music and the spirit were great. At the end of the service, the pastor and his wife greeted everyone at the door and many said that they would return. One older man, whom the pastor recognized from the neighborhood continued to sit in one of the pews and stare, and the pastor wondered why he wasn't leaving. The man asked him where he got the tablecloth on the front wall because it was identical to one that his wife had made years ago when they lived in Austria before the war and how could there be two tablecloths so much alike? He told the pastor how the Nazis came, how he forced his wife to flee for her safety and he was supposed to follow her, but he was arrested and put in a prison. He never saw his wife or his home again all the 35 years between. The pastor asked him if he would allow him to take him for a little ride. They drove to Staten Island and to the same house where the pastor had taken the woman three days earlier. He helped the man climb the three flights of stairs to the woman's apartment, knocked on the door and he saw the greatest Christmas reunion he could ever imagine.

True Story - submitted by Pastor Rob Reid who says God does work in mysterious ways. I ask the Lord to bless you today, to guide you and protect you as you go along your way. His love is always with you. His promises are true, and when we give Him all our cares we know He will see us through. When there is nothing left but God that is when you find out that God is all you need.

Father, God, bless all my friends and family in whatever it is that You know they may be needing this day! May their lives be full of Your peace, prosperity and power as they seek to have closer relationship with You. Amen.

I think I am a stronger person because of the struggles I've come through. Maybe that's way Michael asked me to speak today. Maybe I had something to share that someone here needed to hear today.

Thank you for letting me share today. This church is a special part of my life, and I appreciate your love and friendship.