

Kingdom Life: Delayed Inspiration

by Pastor Kurt Hoover

Kingdom Litany based on Psalm 145

Leader: All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord,

All: and all your saints shall bless you!

Leader: They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom

All: and tell of your power,

Leader: to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds,

All: and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

Leader: Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,

All: and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

Leader: We worship you, Lord, In the name of the Father and The Son and The Holy Spirit.

Ezekiel 18:25-32 ²⁵“Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? ²⁶When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die. ²⁷Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life. ²⁸Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ²⁹Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ O house of Israel, are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?

³⁰“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. ³¹Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³²For I have

no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live.”

Matthew 21:23-27 (28-32) ²³ And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” ²⁴ Jesus answered them, “I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?” And they discussed it among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ ²⁶ But if we say, ‘From man,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” ²⁷ So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

²⁸ “What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the **vineyard** today.’ ²⁹ And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

It was a cool night, late in the evening walking home from the Homecoming dance. All by myself as I walked just a couple of houses with their lights still on. No one but me and the sounds of crickets chirping... and I was skipping with excitement. A new heart and new Spirit in me. I did it. I had worked up the

courage to ask Jodi Steinhook, the homecoming queen, to dance.

A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹ And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. – Matthew 21:29

He changed his mind. What is it that causes us to change our minds? Whether it be the drudgery of work or the courage to take a leap of faith.

We continue our worship series – Kingdom life. How is it that the church family you have grown up in, that you are a part of now, changed you and yours?

67 of you... of our families have been a part of this church family for 26 years or more. How many smiles have been exchanged between you and your church families over those years. To say nothing of needed words and encouragement.

I mentioned some of our 4 generation families at Saturday's celebration ... I missed two of them sitting in the room. We had the Stier clan from Harold and Donna to Prime rose. Kirsten also represents the Dunbar's. And there was actually a family in the room with 4 generations (twice) that evening – the Knudsens. Arla, Angie, Megan and her kids, Stephaine and Ben...

How many times has this church family, your worship and conversations here been the direct or the delayed inspiration that inspired you to change your mind at a key moment in your life?

When Jesus talks about the vineyard he is talking about the way we live our daily lives. How we live in God's Kingdom.

God has expectations for us. A hope for how we might set ourselves aside for the sake of our family and friends or a stranger in need in lots of different ways. And how often is it the case that we find ourselves doing the things that matter only after having said at first, ‘I will not, I cannot, I’m too busy, Someone else can do it.’

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Can you relate? I can.

Walking through the hall of a building I may never be in again. The courthouse or a random store. I drop a gum wrapper. No one sees... and so I move along intent on my errand. Too busy to pick up my own trash. Only to have some pull in the back of my mind force me back through my steps to pick up my litter.

What is it that causes us to change our minds?

Have you done this? I am literally thinking to myself – the sooner I turn around the less time and effort it will take me. Sometimes it is a conscious effort. But a lot of the time, it is some other delayed inspiration. I wonder - did someone see me drop it? Or the picture the person that will have to pick it up later, what if it was my grandma? How would I feel if it was my job to sweep the floor?

Jesus is describing our reality. We are not the ideal human being who does what we say. We often come by the most rewarding experiences only after a delayed inspiration of some sort. You are not the only one who finds yourself begrudgingly taking on a task only after you have justified in your mind why it is not your responsibility. We all do this.

And what is more ... the best things in life. The real leaps of faith often play out this way.

As I said it was cool fall evening. Homecoming. I was walking home from the dance. It was late, just a couple of lights were still on. I have just left the campus walking past the tennis courts onto a street full of houses. Somewhere far off, out of sight you could hear the gentle thumps of toilet paper rolls falling to the ground as some teacher was getting teeped. Other than that is was just me alone with my thoughts and the sound of crickets, the smell of decaying leaves, the crisp air on my cheeks. And I am kicking myself for not having had the guts to ask the homecoming queen to dance.

I can't remember when the idea had sparked in my mind. The day before or during lunch. She wasn't dating anyone, neither was I, nothing stopping me, it wouldn't be awkward. And so I spent the whole night dancing with my closest friends, talking to people I knew. And after an hour of trying to will myself to make the request and missing 2 or 3 opportunities ... I gave up. With an hour left until the end of the dance I decided it was time to go home. My brother and most of our group had already left.

And so there I was walking by myself, defeated as I debated in my head all the reasons I had failed in my goal.

And then it happened. And I honestly have no clue what changed my mind. Did I realize I had nothing else to lose? I would never have this opportunity again. I think it was partly out of frustration. Is this who I am... Is this the type of guy I am going to be... The guy who can't even work up the courage to ask a friend. A childhood crush to dance??

I don't know what it was. But, for some reason I stopped. I turned around. A man on a mission. I walked 3 blocks back through the neighborhood and across the front of the high school. I walked back through the main entrance, down into the lunchroom straight to where the homecoming queen was standing as the song was about to begin. And I asked Jodi Steinhook to dance.

And the rest is history. We just had the one dance, I kept the conversation going. The song ended. I thanked her for the dance and I left. Skipping home with a new heart and new spirit.

What is it that causes us to change our minds. I don't know if you can narrow it down to one thing. It is a culmination of a thousand delayed influences... every word of encouragement, every hug from mom, each baby step before and even the failed leaps of faith that had led up to this one. The promises of God spoken into me in this place and my own church as a kid... wherever on or two are gathered in His name. Something as small as each and every smile we absentmindedly give to one another. A thousand delayed influences that lead to each moment of repentance of change.

I did the same thing on a 2-hour canoe ride on the Turkey River in Eastern Iowa. Working up the courage to ask Molly Edwards to go on a date. 10 Minutes left in the canoe ride. I asked a safer question... do you have a boyfriend. She turned and asked, "do you really want to know the answer to that." How different my life would be if I hadn't taken that leap of faith.

I don't know what is it that God is doing in us to change our minds in the life defining moments, or the daily drudgeries of setting yourself aside... I don't have control over it. I can't

always reproduce it... but I do know what it feels like. It feels like a new heart, a new spirit within me.

And I know that it has happened to me right when I needed it most. And I see it happening in me day in and day out as I respond to the needs of those around me.

This is how the Bible describes the work of God to change our minds. *[We] cast away from [us] all the transgressions [doubts and fears and excuses] that [we] have committed, and make ourselves a new heart and a new spirit! – Ezekiel 18:31*

