

Have You Got the Time?

[Romans 13:11-14](#)

INTRO:

Christians are the ones who know that our time is not our own time. In Jesus, God has moved into our time and taken it as his own. Behind all the events of this moment, behind all the headlines of today's newspaper, God is busy, God has come to us. Knowing this encourages the question: How then should we live?

ME:

When I knew my parents were watching me, that they had their eyes on me, I behaved differently than I might if they were not around. When I knew they were going to be home from work soon, it affected the type of mischief I would get into. I would engage in time sensitive mischief! I did not always judge that time well, though. There were times when I did not have the time!

Once when I was a young teenager, I had found where my parents had hidden our Christmas presents in the attic. My younger brother was supposed to be keeping watch for mom and dad to get home from work. I was up there cutting the tape along where it lined up with the wrapping paper, because that is easily reversible. Well, I was rewrapping a present when all of a sudden the door to the attic closed! My little brother did not do a very good job of watching for mom and dad! He didn't have the time to let me know they were coming and let me out of the attic before they got into the house!

WE:

We have all been there haven't we? We thought we had the time but we didn't. That's not really such a big deal when it is just has to do with Christmas present mischief. But it is a big deal when it comes to dealing with our salvation.

Let's pray together and see what God has to say to us through the apostle Paul this morning...

GOD:

***Romans 13:11 Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; 12 the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; 13 let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.***

**“Wake up! Do you know what time it is?”** That is the idea behind this text. Paul thinks that Christians are the ones who have been given the gift of really knowing what’s going on in the present moment. **“Wake up. Your salvation is nearer than when you first believed,”** says Paul.

Paul moves from this sweeping claim about this present hour to topic of ethics.

**What are ethics?**

**How should we live, now that we know the time?**

Paul thinks we should live as members of a new age. In Advent we prepare for the coming of Christ.

*Christ has come, Christ is come, Christ will come!*

This means that our time has been commandeered by a living, seeking, pursuing God.

Paul writes to a waiting Church. It had been only forty years or so, since Jesus was raised from the dead when Paul wrote this letter. Just think about how exciting the

days right after the resurrection must have been! The risen Christ was popping up all over the place, miraculously intruding.

With time, the excitement may have cooled more than a little. Many thought that when Jesus said, **"I am coming again for you,"** that he meant right away. At least within a few years. But now, many years had passed. Jesus had not returned as soon as they thought he might.

Paul reminds the church that God doesn't do time like we do time.

***"Our salvation is nearer than when we first had faith."***

After you become a Christian, it doesn't take long to realize that the Church doesn't keep time the way the world keeps time. The church invites us to live under another calendar—this is Sunday, the first Sunday of Advent. The church changes our world-view by changing our sense of time.

The Gospel stories always locate themselves in a particular geography. The incarnation—God coming among us in Jesus—is located by Judea, Bethlehem, and Galilee as typical of a God who locates. But today I want you to notice how the Gospels also say that Jesus lived also in time. Think of how often Gospel writers will say things like, **"The next day . . ."; "It was about the third hour . . ."; "Immediately . . ."; "On the Sabbath . . ."; "It was night . . .";** The Bible says that in Jesus Christ, God takes time, our time.

Christians believe time begins and ends in God's own good time. We claim that God became flesh, entered time, and died. Then God raised Jesus from the dead. That victory is known as resurrection—or time's defeat. In the resurrection our comfortable normal was exposed and time ceased to be what we humans make of it; time became what God makes of it. And yet, what was the first act of the two apostles after they witnessed the aftermath of resurrection? They went back home. They attempted

to get back to normal. Whenever the culture's official, predictable, ordinary time is disrupted, immediately we move into action and try to "get back to normal." Homeostasis is, static time, uneventful time that tends to be the goal of most human undertakings, including the church. We want things to be predictable, tied down, fixed.

Against our deadly dance with the world's time in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, death was disarmed and time was taken by God. We thought we had time then time got commandeered by God. Time in the Gospels seems compressed, heated, fast-paced.

We read the Gospels in church to read ourselves into this peculiar, heated Gospel time. God is taking our time and making it God's time.

In exile, with no future, Israel had her end renamed as her beginning:

**"Don't remember the prior things . . . Look! I'm doing a new thing"** (Isa 43:18-19). God is taking back time. It is so tempting to believe that the present social order is more real, more normal, and more eternal than the reign of God.

One of the things that the modern world did, in order to get going, was to banish God from time. Many modern views of God render God into a detached, distant deity who is said to care about us but never actually shows up anywhere, never actually intrudes into our time.

We probably got this sort of God because we wanted to have time as our time, time that was sealed off and safe from the intrusions of God. **Isn't the nature of the miraculous to be a shocking disruption of the predictable flow of things? Is that why many of us modern people are so put off by the miracles in scripture?** We are disturbed that our time might not really be our time.

In Advent we prepare for and explore the significance of a God who not only loves us but also showed up among us, as one of us, as Jesus the Christ. Advent is a time when God disrupted our time and took it over as God's time.

When Jesus was born among us in Bethlehem, we realized that we were not left on our own, not as alone as much as we had been led to believe.

*God with us, God in our time, is Emmanuel.*

So perhaps Advent is a yearly reminder that at any moment, your time could become God's time. The time that you thought was your own, to live as you please, is in reality God's.

Maybe that's why we come to church on Sunday. In worship our sense of God's presence often becomes vivid and undeniable. Perhaps worship on Sunday is preparation for God's presence to become real and vivid on Monday too.

There we were, thinking we were just going through another ordinary, dull day and then Jesus shows up. Our time is transformed.

Strange that we tend to think of the story of Jesus as something that happened in time past. Odd, if you believe the resurrection to be true. If the resurrection of Jesus really happened then we have more future with Jesus than past, more tomorrows than yesterdays. Jesus is more of our present and future than our past.

YOU:

So now that you know the time, **what are you going to do about it?** Here are your action steps to try today or this week:

Make the most of your time, because your time is limited. Look around you and see who you can serve and who you can help see the light of Christ.

Schedule service times. Just like you make an appointment to get your car serviced and your oil changed, make an appointment to serve others daily, every other day, or weekly. Become a big brother or a big sister. Become a book buddy. Find a way to use your time for others.

Get creative and allow God to reveal a way you can put this into practice today!

THE BOTTOM LINE:

***When God came to the world as Jesus our time became his time, use it wisely.***

WE:

Imagine what this community would look like if we lived like our time was God's time... Dream of the difference this would make in the lives of others and us...

CLOSE:

Don't misjudge your time and get caught up in the attic rewrapping Christmas presents. I did get myself out of the attic. What my little brother lacked in look out skills he made up for it in stalling with my parents downstairs. I slowly lowered the ladder and extended it down and climbed down. I quietly closed it back up and went to my room like nothing ever happened!

*Let's pray together and then let's get busy using our time for God's glory...*