

*What time is it?*

Text Romans 12:11-14

Reflection by Peggy Jensen

Prayer: Occupy our Calendars a prayer by Walter Bruggemann

Our times are in your hands:

But we count our times for us;  
We count our days and fill them with us;  
We count our weeks and fill them with our busyness;  
We count our years and fill them with our fears.

And then caught up short with your claim,

Our times are in your hands!

Take our times, times of love and times of weariness,

Take them all and bless them and break them,

Give them to us again,  
Slow paced and eager,  
Fixed in your readiness for *neighbour*.

Occupy our calendars,  
Flood us with itsy-bitsy, daily *kairos*,  
In the name of your fleshed Kairos. Amen

What time is it? **Cronos Time or Kairos Time?**

Cronos: means structured time, how we live by the clock, the calendar, the expectations we set for our daily routines.

Kairos described as liminal time, transcendent. I like to think it is God's time, no one knows "where or when" as we heard in the scripture. A moment of opportunity for transformation, or change. The moment when the unexpected can happen and we hope it is a blessing.

How do you know what time it is? This is the first Sunday of Advent, our time of preparation for the coming of the Christ Child. Here in the church we take four weeks to prepare ourselves. We slowly light the candles around the Advent wreath, taking time each week to ponder the words: HOPE; PEACE; JOY; LOVE and what they mean as we look forward to Christ birthing into our lives again. As the weeks go by we sing Advent hymns of preparation. We try not to sing the carols announcing the birth until it is time for the birth.

Is this a waste of time, trying to move through Advent slowly as we prepare spiritually for Christmas?

Why is the church the last place to look ready for Christmas?

Everywhere else Christmas is already here! We all have seen the signs-- Christmas is here in November! The Malls are decorated and Santa has arrived. Our culture has a definite time clock preparing for Christmas. We know that right after Hallowe'en, the Christmas decorations invade the stores. The Macy Thanksgiving Day parade and Black Friday are Cronos time keepers.

You **know** what time it is by looking around your neighbourhood?

Look for the signs --- the countdown to Christmas

- The outside lights and garden decorations appear
- The Christmas cards start arriving before you have composed your Christmas letter
- Christmas trees sparkle through the neighbours window, they go up earlier every year!
- Christmas bazaars and bake sales
- Christmas ads on television and newspaper flyers
- Christmas shopping and wrapping
- Planning all the schedules for family gatherings or travel
- A sense of panic to get everything done before it is too late

There is a lot of expectation and preparation to be ready for Christmas. Just thinking about it can be overwhelming if you choose to get caught up in this commercial Christmas.

I wonder what our secular society is really getting ready for? What are they looking for?

Probably not for something inspiring, uplifting and meaningful?

I want to stand on the corner and wave my arms shouting:

**“Come this way and see the true meaning of Christmas”**

I would love to introduce them to Advent, a time to prepare ourselves spiritually for Christmas. You are the ones who have come inside, taking time to think about the true meaning of this season. The message has been the same for over 2,000 years. You and I open our hearts and join other Christian pilgrims on the prayerful path of Advent to Christmas. The wonderful curtain of mystery folds back—sometimes just the familiar story and sometimes a marvelous expansion of our Spirit – and we see the manger and its ageless occupant as we have never seen before.

We look for the signs in scripture: Isaiah 2:1-5

- Isaiah invites people to: “ *Come, climb the mountain, come to the house of God. Let us walk in his paths, let us walk in the light of the LORD.*”
- This invitation is filled with hope. It points to the dreams and promises God has for the world.

In Paul's letter to the Romans: 13:11-14

- “*You know what time it is, now is the moment for you to wake up from sleep.*”
- This is the wake-up call for Advent. To pay attention and be alert to the imminent in-breaking of eternity “*within the flux of time*” as Karl Barth put it.
- The anticipation of what is coming is a sign for HOPE
- Paul really believes this and so do I. that the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus is God's sign that all of those promises about life and wholeness prevailing over brokenness and death are true, and that God can be trusted to do what God has promised.
- Paul was right to believe that every moment in time is rich with divine possibility. We need to be awake and attentive to what is happening all around us.

- Pay attention, wait and see what God will do next.

In the reading from Matthew: 22: 36-44

- *“But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven or the Son but only the Father. ... keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your LORD is coming.”*
- Here is the message again to keep awake, be attentive to opportunities to see God working in our world.
- we are not expected to know everything, but we are expected to do something. We are called to a life of wakefulness and activity here and now.

There have been some significant changes happening in the world lately, sometimes we wonder if God is there? Of course God is there aching when people ignore God’s ways.

We are people of the faith who hold onto hope. We hope for God’s inspiration and guidance as we live in these unfamiliar times. This is Kairos time a liminal time and an opportunity for transformation and change. We trust an unknown future to our known God.

As I write this I am wondering if the commercial excitement about Christmas is just a way to escape. It is one way to avoid reality. It is easy to get involved with the preparation of presents instead of the preparation for Christ’s presence.

Here in church, we enter Advent time, the time to prepare ourselves spiritually for Christ’s presence. We know that Christ’s birth is not just a one day event, but a life-long experience. We also know that when we make time to prepare ourselves, we are more open to the Spirit working in our lives. Advent calls us into a continuing relationship with Christ. Advent helps us to remember we are God’s people, living God’s story. We wait with hope because we remember God fulfills promises in God’s time, Kairos time. Amen

*Silent reflection*

**\*Hymn:**

***God of Still Waiting***

**MV # 20**