

# “Time to Wake Up”

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Romans 13:8-14 Common English Bible

*Don't be in debt to anyone, except for the obligation to love each other. Whoever loves another person has fulfilled the Law. The commandments, Don't commit adultery, don't murder, don't steal, don't desire what others have, and any other commandments, are all summed up in one word: You must love your neighbour as yourself. Love doesn't do anything wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is what fulfills the Law.*

*As you do all this, you know what time it is. The hour has already come for you to wake up from your sleep. Now our salvation is nearer than when we first had faith. The night is almost over, and the day is near. So let's get rid of the actions that belong to the darkness and put on the weapons of light. Let's behave appropriately as people who live in the day, not in partying and getting drunk, not in sleeping around and obscene behaviour, not in fighting and obsession. Instead, dress yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ, and don't plan to indulge your selfish desires.*

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It's 2:30 in the morning and you are suddenly woken up by the telephone ringing — or maybe it's an Amber Alert breaking through your 'Do Not Disturb' setting! Before you even get to looking at your phone to see what the disturbance is all about, the first thing you blurt out is “What time is it?”

When the phone goes off in the middle of the day we don't respond “What time is it?” But when we are in the middle of a deep sleep and we are suddenly jarred out of it, we need something to ground us in reality, and time is what helps to ground us. After all, if it's a phone call at 2:30 am something must be wrong. But if it's a phone call at 8:30 am you probably overslept and someone is wondering where you are.

In our text for today, we use the words of Paul to prepare us for the Advent season. Paul says, “*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; the night is far gone, the day is near.*” (Romans 13:11-12)

Advent is a time of preparing. As Christians we are preparing for the birth of Jesus. But part of the purpose of Advent is to remember not just the first time Jesus came to earth, *but to remember that he will come again.* As we always say in our communion liturgy: “Christ has died. Christ is Risen. Christ will come again.” Part of Advent is reflecting on the time when Jesus will come again and restore all creation to the purpose of heaven.

But it's interesting that in Greek — the language that Paul wrote his letters in—when he used the word 'time' ("Besides this, you know what *time* it is!") instead of "chronos" he used the word "kairos". We only have one word for time in English, but in Greek *chronos* and *kairos* are very different.

Chronos is time like on a clock. When we wake up at 2 am in the morning and say "What time is it"? we want to know what the clock says.

Kairos on the other hand is God's time. Kairos is about the right time—the fullness of time. In Mark 1:15 it reads "The *time* (the Kairos) is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near."

Chronos is sequential and quantitative; Kairos is more about quality and being the appointed moment. God is always more interested in kairos than in chronos. I think we on the other hand tend to be more interested in chronos. We think "How long is the sermon going to be this morning?" instead of 'How will God meet me this morning'?

There is often a sense of urgency to the time/ the chronos we have left. You now have 28 days to get ready for Christmas. When it comes to the first Sunday of Advent, I sometimes feel like I have a stop watch in my brain with the words ringing in my ears: "On your mark. Get set. Go!" So that I can accomplish all the Christmas tasks that my work, my family and community place on my to-do list. I'm obsessed with Chronos right now, especially with the deadline of my thesis. But when we are focused on our plans and our schedule, chronos can make us miss the kairos. This Advent, I would like you to try as much as possible to live in God's time and to be ready and awake to meet with God to prepare for the arrival of Christ.

Tuning our hearts and spirits to God is what creates a different urgency, an importance to God's plans and God's work. The ways of God don't feel urgent, but they are. What is God doing inside you? What is God doing in the World and in your neighbour? The beginning of the passage focusses on love. What happens in God's time? Flowers bloom, the seasons change. I think of the need to make changes so that our grandchildren and great-grandchildren have a healthy planet to live on.

It's so hard to change our habits. Why? First, because it costs us. We actually have to change, and that hurts. Second, the scientists tell us it's urgent — but it doesn't *feel* urgent. Fixing the issues of climate change is just so big. But I think that we are beginning to wake up and realize the

night is far gone, and that we had better start making some changes even if it hurts us now.

Connecting to God and being open to the changes God wants us to make rarely feels urgent, but I believe it is. Friends, the need is so great in our community and in our world. There is so much poverty, there is so much loneliness, there are so many who fall through the cracks where we think the government is, or ought to be helping, but for whatever reason they are not.

A living and vibrant church that shines with the light and the love of God is desperately needed. If you won't connect to Jesus because you really do need more Jesus, and because it will change you and make you less irritable and help you to have more peace, joy and love; then do it for the community who needs you! Do it for your great-grandchildren who need the church to not just be a flickering light, but a bonfire of hope and life!

It seems that the key to living in God's time, to waking up to God's presence, is love. Paul says that "Love is what fulfills the law" – in other words, all of the teachings of God are summed up in the call to love one another. When we tune our hearts to others – our friends and neighbours and family, those we don't know — there are tangible ways of loving. (I love the Meaningful Gifts: OK Kids, Cooperative Care Center, United Welcome or Angel Tree this year!) Sometimes it means looking in painful places. Advent is not about just joy, joy, joy, it is also a willingness to look and see pain around us.

This past week I was reading about the devastating humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. I have a heart for Afghanistan. My husband befriended Sameer who went to law school with him on a special visa in the US. Alex helped to get his wife and young son to the U.S., and then this church sponsored his brothers and mother so that they could be in Canada. They were being targeted, and would not have survived if we had not gotten them out. We consider them family — so to hear of the horrors in Afghanistan where the economic collapse has caused a famine so severe that people are selling kidneys and some are even selling their own children, is beyond horrendous. When you enter into a relationship, others become family – and that love changes you and makes you want to do something. That is *kairos*. *God's time to be present*.

2000 years ago, God so loved us in our broken desperate state that he became human – Jesus, God in human form. The baby in a manger is the in-breaking of God's time with human time.

In this season of Advent, let *kairos* be born in your *chronos*. In our busy agenda and schedules, let's make room for the will and the love of God.

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*  
(Romans 15:13)

Thanks be to God,  
Amen.