

“IS IT TIME YET?”

November 30, 2025 Matthew 24:36-44

Do any of you remember first learning how to **tell time**? I was in grade school, and I distinctly remember the teacher sitting on a chair in front of the room. She held a large white clock with black minute and hour hands. The teacher explained that the big hand told us about the minutes in an hour. There were 60 minutes in an hour, and each number represented another 5 minutes. The little hand told us what hour we were on. Then she proceeded to move the hands around and called on students to tell her what time it was. Remember digital clocks weren't popular until the early 70's and the first digital wristwatch was invented in 1970.

But as children we didn't depend on a clock to tell us what time it was. When it was Labor Day, it was time to go back to school. When my belly was grumbling, it was time to eat. When the sun was going down it was time to get home for dinner. When it was Saturday morning it was time for morning cartoons and chores. When it was Thanksgiving Day it was time to go to my aunt and uncle's home for Thanksgiving dinner.

My point is that as children we didn't measure time by hands on a clock, but rather by events and activities. Nobody had to tell us on Christmas morning it was time to open presents. Our past experience told us what time it was. I sometimes wonder if that was a better way to live than by time on a clock. Of course, as we became adults we were given deadlines, appointments, daily planners set up in time increments. We punched in on time clocks and whoa to you if your boss caught you coming in 10 minutes late. We were taught that responsible people arrive to the meeting on time. We learned to live life by the clock.

I imagine Jesus was dealing with such people when speaking about the **Day of the Lord** and his second advent. **“But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”** Apparently, these followers wanted to get Jesus’ return on their calendars. Tell us the day and time so we will be ready for your arrival. Jesus tells them, **“Sorry boys and girls, but that information is not available.”** His underlying message is this, **“You can’t put God on the clock.”** God does not act according to our schedules and plans. But oh, don’t we want God too! Perhaps Advent begins when we start thinking differently about time.

I. WE ARE A PEOPLE OF THE PROMISE

Once Death paid a visit to a man named Jack. **“Jack,” he said, “Your time is up. I’ll take you now.”** Jack replied, **“Not today please, I have a lot more to do.”**

Death: **Oh no, you’re the first name on the list to die.**

Jack: **“Alright, I’ll finish what I’m doing first. Even better, I’ll make you some coffee while you wait. And after I’m done, we can leave.”** (Jack put sleeping pills in the coffee and when Death fell asleep, Jack erased his name from the top and placed it at the end of the list)

When Death awoke he said, **“Woah! My friend, I slept well. You’re a good person Jack; you treated me very well. Because of that, today I’ll just start with the last name on my list.”**

Jesus tells us **“For as the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and given in marriage, until the day **Noah entered the ark,** and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so, too, will be the coming of the Son of Man.”**

In the time of Noah, other people were going about life as normal, but Noah was building a boat. They assumed business as usual; that the world would continue as it always had. I'll bet his neighbors thought Noah was a nut case. **But Noah was clinging to a promise not a timetable.** He was counting on the reliability of the one who promised to save him and his family. So, he kept building.

Someone once said, **"If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans."** Truly, how many of our plans and dreams have worked out **exactly** the way we wanted them too? My bet is very few. There is nothing wrong with making goals and having plans, but life doesn't always go the way we imagine. People get sick, spouses pass away, jobs are lost, children get divorced, accidents happen, the Market drops, we hit detours and all those carefully laid out plans don't go according to schedule.

See, God works on a different schedule, and we aren't usually privy to God's Day Planner. All we are given is a **promise of Christ's return and asked to trust the promise is good.** We aren't people of the clock. We are a people of the promise and that promise binds us to a future. Noah acted on the Word of God and built a boat. When the flood came the people were swept away, but Noah entered the Ark.

II. THERE IS A POSITIVE WORD IN THE UNKNOWNABLE.

Once a science teacher told his class, **"Oxygen is a must for breathing and life. It was discovered in 1773."** A snarky student responded, **"Thank God I was born after 1773! Otherwise, I would have died without it."**

It is humbling for us to admit, but even the brightest minds are limited in their knowledge. There is just some information we will never know because of the inability to perceive it. This doesn't stop us from exploring and speculating, but some aspects of reality might be fundamentally unknowable, as they exist beyond the scope of human experience or scientific instruments.

People have been breathing for ages without knowing about oxygen, not knowing how many moons Jupiter has, nor what the distance is between earth and the moon. It's not that knowledge is trivial, especially if you plan on flying to the moon, but rather life happens regardless of our knowing.

Our not knowing doesn't mean we don't appreciate life. I appreciate great work of art without knowing how the artist created it. I appreciate and love my children even though I don't understand everything about them. I still use my car, the coffee maker, the air conditioner, and my cell phone without knowing fully how each of them operates. And I still get up every morning without knowing a thousand bits of information, yet I can still function in the world. The good news is God never expects us to know all information.

However, God does expect us to keep **awake**. Jesus said, **“Keep awake, therefore, for you do not know what day your Lord is coming.”** The knowledge Jesus wants us to have is he will return and that knowledge is to influence our actions and what kind of people we are today.

The problem with our human knowledge is it doesn't necessarily make us better people, guarantee our character, nor make us more Christ like. Knowledgeable people have done terrible things. Knowing does not make us kinder, grateful, generous, or peaceful. Knowing or not knowing when Christ will return isn't important. What is important is knowing that he will and what we do with that knowledge matters.

III. BE READY ALWAYS

My niece is doing her residency in a Pittsburgh **emergency room**. She likes the action and the variety each day brings. In an ER one never knows what is going to come through the door. It could be an auto accident, a head injury, a broken bone, an infection, a stroke victim, a heart attack or any number of health issues. There is no

way for the emergency staff to predict what they will face the next day. So without knowing, what do they do? They prepare for as many possibilities as feasible. The staff stock up on supplies, form protocols and procedures, train for the most common injuries, learn to use specialized equipment, set up a communication network, train people with particular roles to receive, assess, diagnose, etc. The point is people in the emergency room are always ready to treat those who are in need, even if it means sending you on a little helicopter ride to another hospital.

Jesus ends this passage with this warning, **“Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”** Like the staff in the Emergency Room, our duty is not to speculate about the future, but to prepare for it. We aren’t here to calculate the number of days before Christ returns but rather concentrate on living a life worthy of his return. That is why we have a season of Advent.

Just in case we don’t know how to prepare Jesus tells us in Matthew chapter 25. Use the gifts and resources you have been given to welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty. Bear witness, make disciples, teach his commandments to love God and love others, have faith, and trust your lives to God.

I know that many of you are making **cookies** right now in preparation for the Church’s Cookie Walk. I am not the great cookie baker that many of you are, however, I know that making cookies takes much preparation. You need to purchase enough ingredients, mix them in proper proportions, preheat the oven, and dole out the correct amount of dough on the baking stones or pans. After that, one has to watch the cookies, so they don’t get overdone. I mean, who likes burnt cookies?

But we are not watching the cookies out of fear but with eager expectation. There is nothing like a freshly baked cookie and a cup of milk, except maybe two freshly baked cookies. My point is, we are not waiting for the Son of Man to return out of fear of being burnt up, but with eager expectation and joy! We look forward to the sweet eternal communion that is to come.

Advent reminds us that life is not about having more time but rather using the time we have to serve those around us. Advent is to act as though Christ is with you always then you will always be ready for his return. And quite frankly, what time it is won't really matter. Amen.

First Presbyterian Church in Hawley

Sunday, November 30, 2025

Second Scripture Lesson

Matthew 24:36-44

36 "But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

37 For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

38 For as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark,

39 and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so, too, will be the coming of the Son of Man.

40 Then two will be in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left.

41 Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken, and one will be left.

42 Keep awake, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

43 But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.

44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be To God.