

30 November 2025
Advent 1

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

Jesu Juva

“It’s Time!”

Text: Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 21:1-11

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

You know the time, St. Paul said to us today.

And that’s true, isn’t it? We know time. In fact, I think you could say we know time more than at any other time in history. Time that is measured by seasons and years, by days and months, by hours and seconds. If you’re an athlete, a split second may be the difference between winning and losing. If you’re a scientist, it’s microseconds and nanoseconds. We know time.

But what do you do with that knowledge? Some people live by the clock and let it rule their lives. But for others, and other cultures, an hour late may be right on time. You know when it’s time for bed, but might still stay up. And you know when it’s time to get up but might stay in bed. We countdown the days until Christmas break, we know how many hours of PTO we have. Sometimes we have too much time and sometimes too little. It can be time for action, or time to relax. Time we know! St. Paul couldn’t have imagined how well we do.

But of course, that’s not what Paul’s talking about here. His question really is: *what time is it for us as Christians?* And if you know what time it is, **what are you doing with that knowledge?**

Well, you heard what Paul said. He said: *It’s time to get up! To wake from sleep.* To stop being sleepy or sleepwalking Christians. Because ***salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.*** Because with each passing day, month, season, and year, we are one more day, month, season, and year closer to Jesus coming again in glory. And one of these days, months, seasons, or years, He will.

For the time of that coming again has been set, planned. God does nothing willy nilly. Just as Jesus’ first coming in the flesh, His birth, was prophesied and carefully planned and carried out at just the right time, and just as Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem that we heard about today in the Gospel was prophesied and carefully planned and carried out at just the right time, so too has His coming again been prophesied and

carefully planned and will be carried out at just the right time. The question for us today is: *What do we do with this knowledge of time?* The time of Jesus' coming again . . . Do we hit the snooze button and sleepily roll over? Or are we like a child on Christmas morning? Ready and eager for that day to begin!

The temptation is the snooze button, right? Even back in Paul's day. That's why he had to write to the Romans and tell them to get up and wake up! But it's hard. It's hard to keep top of mind. Our lives and minds are so filled with other stuff. So many demands on our time. So much other stuff to do. And there's only so much time . . .

So maybe this is a good time to stop and think about this a little . . . this first Sunday of a new Church year . . . that maybe we're not doing it right . . . maybe it's time to pay more attention . . . maybe it is time for us to wake up . . .

So how do we do that? Some things that are coming, we're good at preparing for - like Christmas and Easter. Other things, like Jesus coming again, maybe not so much. That's what our midweek services are about this Advent, though! So I invite you to come to those.

But we also heard some things today that can help us. That can help us prepare. That can help us be ready and awake. Like, ***Hosanna!*** We heard that in the Holy Gospel today. That's what the crowds shouted when Jesus came to Jerusalem and entered that city, humbly, on the donkey. With that word, ***hosanna***, they were both praising Him as Saviour and crying out for Him to save them. They were ready, and excited.

And so that we be ready and excited, we do the same. We take up their cry, ***Hosanna***, as part of our Communion liturgy, for here is Jesus entering His Church humbly in bread and wine with that very saving the crowds cried out for. So we acknowledge that. Here is our Saviour, in His same Body and Blood, with His forgiveness and life, His salvation for us. So every week, every time we come to the altar, every time we sing ***Hosanna*** for Jesus coming here and now in bread and wine, we are preparing and practicing for His coming again in glory. And receiving the forgiveness and life we need for that day. So we'll be ready. So this is one way.

Another is as Paul wrote to the Romans: ***cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light***. *Works of darkness* are those things we don't want anyone else to see us doing, we want to keep in the dark. Those things we don't want anyone else to know about us. Those words we would never speak, but so easily type anonymously online. Those thoughts and desires we condemn in others, but that live rent free in our hearts and minds. Works of darkness. Work we do in darkness. The working of the darkness in us. ***Cast that off***, Paul says.

And ***put on the armor of light***. Light seems like a funny kind of armor, but it is. It is because light works against the works of darkness by exposing them. I'm sure you've heard it said: light is the best disinfectant. Light makes the cockroaches scatter, and the sinners, too. Shine the light of day and truth on your sins - don't let them live on in the darkness and secrecy of your heart and mind. So to ***cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light*** is, in other words, to repent. To confess, to expose our sin, but not just that! **But to receive the healing forgiveness of Jesus**. Confession without forgiveness is humiliation. Forgiveness without confession is approval. But confession and forgiveness, confession and absolution, **is the way of Jesus**.

The way of Jesus that began with your Baptism. That's why I stand next to the Font for Confession and Absolution at the beginning of the service every week. That's where it all began. That's where you were born again, born from above, as a child of God. That old sinner in you who loves the darkness is no longer who you really are. He was drowned and put to death in those waters, so that a new child of God could emerge and arise. A child of God clothed with Christ - or as a Paul said, who has ***put on Christ***. And *He is armor even better than light*. So this is another way we prepare for Jesus' coming - and not just a Sunday way, but an every day way. To every day, repent and shed your sinful, snaky skin, and rise up again, clothed with Christ, and armed with His forgiveness and love.

Christ's love which, Paul also says, ***fulfills the law***. For as a baptized child of God, raised with Christ's forgiveness and clothed with Christ's love, we live a new life. A life of love that ***fulfills the law***. Paul went on to list some of the ways we do that, listing the commandments there and saying, ***love does no wrong to a neighbor***. Which is true. But equally true is this: ***love does good to our neighbor***. Love is active in doing good. For the commandments are not only about what not to do, but teach us about what to do. To help, encourage, serve, befriend, honor, cherish, support, and protect. And this is good for us because if we are busy with *these* things, we will not be busy with our sins and trying to gratify our sinful desires. And if we're not busy with these things . . . with doing good and serving our neighbor . . . that's when we start to wander off into the darkness . . . or as Paul put it, ***making provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires***.

So instead, as we see the Day of Christ's return approaching, we prepare for His return in the *future* by *now* not focusing on ourselves, but on the Christ in our neighbor. For as Jesus Himself said, *when we've done it to one of the least of these, we've done it unto Him* (Matthew 25:40). So we think of His coming *now*, here, in our neighbor, so we'll be ready for His coming *then*.

Now **what does this look like for you in your life?** Specifically. With *your*

temptations, *your* challenges, *your* busyness; what *you* do, how *you* live? I'm guessing that instead of doing all these things, you've rolled over and hit the snooze more than a few times. Me too. It's easier. We'll do it later. We do that with Christmas shopping, with projects at work, with cramming for exams, and have gotten away with it. And maybe you've gotten away with it in your Christian life, too. *So far*. The Roman Christians, too.

But while we **know the time**, that the signs that point to Jesus coming again are being fulfilled, at the same time we don't **know the time**. We don't know when Jesus will return. We don't know when the alarm is going to go off and the snooze isn't going to work this time . . . when time runs out.

So this season of Advent is to help us be ready. To prepare not just for Christmas, although we do. But so that we'll be as excited for the Last Day as we are for Christmas Day. That we'll prepare for the Last Day as much as we do for Christmas Day. That we'll connect the dots from the baby in the manger, to the man on the cross, to the Son coming again in glory. So that connected to Jesus, we die with Him, we rise with Him, and we live with Him. Not just later, but now. That His love be our love, and His forgiveness, our forgiveness, and His eternal life our eternal life. For that's one gift you don't want to miss! The gift Jesus is - *literally!* - dying to give you.

*So get up! Paul said. **Wake up from your sleep!** And that's why we prayed earlier: *Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come - advent!* . . . for that's what the word *advent* means: *come*, or *coming*. Advent and poke us! Wake us from our sleep! Advent with Your forgiveness, advent with Your Spirit, advent with Your life . . .*

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come. . . that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins . . . The protection of the armor of light, the armor of God's Word of truth. Protected by our Baptism as we put on Christ . . .

*Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come. . . that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins . . . and saved - **hosannaed!** - by Your mighty deliverance. Yes, *hosanna* us from the darkness and the darkness of sin in us. *Hosanna* us from our own sleepiness. *Hosanna* us with Your forgiveness and life. The forgiveness and life that was spoken to us earlier, and will soon be fed to us here.*

For *blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. **And blessed are we He comes for.*** Children of our heavenly *Father*, who leads us not into temptation, *but delivers us from evil. Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come **for us.** Savior of the Nations, Come!* (LSB #332) It's time.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.