

Sermon
First Sunday of Advent
November 30th, 2025
Church of the Ascension, Ottawa
The Reverend Victoria Scott
Readings: ISAIAH 2:1-5; PSALM 122; ROMANS 13:11-14; MATTHEW
24:36-44

I wonder if you have read or are at all familiar with Madeline L'Engle's novel "A Wrinkle In Time"? There have been various film adaptations of it, too.

This novel blends science, mystery, and wonder, using the "tesseract"—a wrinkle in time—to show that reality is far more complex than our usual logic allows.

Like much fantasy and science fiction, it doesn't offer tidy answers. Instead, it encourages us to embrace ambiguity, to stretch our imaginations, and to remain open to truths that lie beyond what we can fully understand. This book invites us to set aside certainty and enter a universe where the usual rules no longer hold.

What time is it? How much time do I have?

We ask these questions constantly. We live by the marking of *chronos time, clock time, human time*—seconds, minutes, hours, days. Our lives seem to move in a straight line: past → present → future. Tick, tock. Tick, tock.

Today we begin a new church year. Four Sundays, four candles, a steady march toward Bethlehem. It's not so straightforward though - it's not a straight line from here to Bethlehem.

We light candles for something that already happened: God entered our time and space in Jesus, more than 2000 years ago.

At the same time, though, we wait as though it is new: Jesus will come again.

Past and future.

And at still the same time, Jesus is born anew in our present moments.

Many of you will recall that the ancient Greeks spoke of *kairos* time—not clock time, but deep time. Moments, not minutes. Time measured not by the sweep of a second hand, but by the sweep of God's Spirit.

What if we approach Advent as a “wrinkle in time”? What if we approach it as an opportunity to set aside our certainties, to let our past certainties and our future longings “fold” into ambiguity, into the shadowy grey areas that are all around us in our world? What might we experience there?

What if we let Advent drop us into something stranger and more mysterious than the linear approach of a calendar. Christmas - the Incarnation - is where God stepped into chronos time in a kairos moment that changed time forever. What if Advent is where God folds our past and future together: a “wrinkle in time”? A wrinkle in time that frees us from a prison of certainty, that has us practice ambiguity? What if Advent is an invitation, just as Madeline L'Engle's novel was, to set aside certainty and enter a universe where the usual rules no longer hold. Isn't this what Jesus did in his ministry? The usual rules didn't hold in Jesus's ministry: love ruled, healing and wholeness ruled.

Our readings today circle around time:

- Isaiah imagines “*in days to come*,” when nations stream toward God’s light.
- Paul urges us to wake up because “*you know what time it is*.”
- Jesus reminds us that no one knows the day or the hour—only that we must “*keep awake*.”

If we encounter these readings with only *chronos* - clock - time in mind, as predictions on a timeline, they can leave us anxious or exhausted. Two thousand plus years is a long time to keep awake to the tick-tock of history!

Before our Gospel passage ends with its call to “keep awake”, Jesus gives a troubling image.

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

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

These lines have led to centuries of fear and speculation. They have been used to support the notion of “The Rapture” - a future moment where believers are suddenly taken up or “raptured” from the earth to be with Christ. This is a relatively recent notion - the word rapture isn’t scriptural.

Notice: this text, this example that Jesus gives never actually says whether being taken is good or being left is good.

What if the ambiguity is intentional? What if Jesus is intentionally unclear in the details because he is giving us a posture not a map? A perspective, not a checklist? What if Jesus is pointing us to the moments where ambiguity is the holiest place we can be?

What if these verses are not about predicting who goes where at the end of time? What if they are about the suddenness of God's presence? What if they are an invitation for us to keep awake to the sudden interruption of "God moments" in the middle of our minutes? What if these words are an invitation to be open to a "wrinkle in time" - to be open to a folding of past and future to create a present moment where we notice and feel God's presence, suddenly, without warning? A holy moment? A moment where we can participate with God's presence, God's movement, God's mission if we allow ourselves to be taken into it?

Jesus's example is two people doing the same task, in the same place, in the same ordinary moment - in the field, grinding wheat. One sees, one doesn't. One is awake, one is not. This isn't about moral superiority or divine favouritism! This is about attentiveness to God in the now.

What does "taken" mean? What if "taken" means drawn into God's reality - into God's vision and dream of the world? What if "left" means stuck in chronos time? Stuck in the tick tock of the clock? Chronos time can be full of distraction, full of fear. Full of checklists that leave us feeling unprepared - not ready. What if, "left" means so focussed on our fear, so intent on certainty, that we miss the moments of God with us?

God arrives in the middle of ordinary life—in fields, at grinding stones, at kitchen tables, in conversations, in grief, in joy. When time folds and God appears, there is no warning.

Kairos moments do not announce themselves - they simply arrive. And, if we are focussed on the tick-tock of the clock, on our certainties, we might miss them...

There will always be ambiguity around the timing of God's future - we cannot be certain of the day or hour, but we can be certain of this: we can be certain of Emmanuel, "God-with-us". God entered our time and space in Jesus and that kairos moment changed time forever. It changed *everything*, nothing will ever be the same. We are loved, beyond measure, and God is with us. In this moment. In every moment.

This Advent, may we all ask ourselves this: Are we ready to recognize Christ, not just when he comes at the end of all things, but when he comes quietly into the middle of our everyday things? Are we ready to be "taken" into a new perspective? A new reality? Or will we be left behind, held captive by our certainties, by the tick-tock of the clock?

This Advent, may we practice ambiguity: may we see shadows and grey areas not as a threat, not as something to be feared, but as places where God is with us. As places where we might experience a wrinkle in time, and be taken into transformation. May we keep awake to kairos moments, to God-with-us moments, this Advent season, and always. In Jesus name. Amen.

