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 1<sup>st</sup> Advent

***What Time Is It?***  
***Romans 13: 11-14***

Most of us wish we had ***more time*** in the day, more time to get things done. Going and going is truly American.

As one man put it, Efficiency is what makes the ***clock of capitalism*** tick. We are remarkably skilled at getting things done, at thinking "yes, we can," and then putting forth our best effort to accomplish many tasks in a short time. Often efficiency serves us well.....Time: we march against it, beat it, save it, manage it, spend it, and try not to kill it or waste it.

Gregory Spencer, *Awakening the Quieter Virtues* (IVP, 2010), pp. 170-171

Apparently ***Starbucks baristas*** have been a little too efficient, and now have been told to slow down and quit making several drinks at once. Instead they are supposed to focus on one or two at a time, to help make the customer and employee experience more satisfying. Of course, while baristas are taking time to smell the coffee, customers will surely start complaining now that they have to wait longer for their non-fat, no-whip, extra-shot pumpkin spice double latte (NPR Morning Edition, "Starbucks to Take Time to Smell the Coffee" 10-13-10).

Many of us live under a ***tyranny of time***.

Never feeling like we have enough of it, especially during the holidays. Christmas seems to start long before Thanksgiving, and is it just me or does it seem like it comes a little earlier every year?

There's no time to just give thanks, enjoy the moment, take a deep breath.

And all the latest greatest technology that enables us to be available 24/7, leaves many of us feeling like we ***should*** be available 24/7.

The ***digital age*** means that quite literally our minutes and seconds are disconnected one from another.

On a clock face you can see the past, present and future.

You have a sense of where you are in the day.

But look at a digital clock and all you have is that minute.

To me it's symbolic of our *world*, how disconnected we are---  
from one another, how the busier we are, the less time we have for others,  
and the less connected we are to anyone.

And could it be a symbol for *ourselves* too?  
Do you ever feel like we're losing our connection with ourselves,  
That connection between what we say and do---  
and our hearts, minds, and bodies?

Ever feel like you are *living too fast, but in a daze*?  
Hurrying through life, half asleep  
(sleep deprivation being a #1 problem in America today),  
gratifying all the *desires* that hit us—comfort food and drink, comfort  
shopping, comfort entertainment....  
whatever we can squeeze into the limited time we have?  
And do you ever find yourself, especially at the holidays, not really living,  
but just trying to *survive*?

When his daughters were young, writer Gregory Spencer too frequently  
bemoaned how little time he could give to writing.  
One friend said, "Your girls will only be toddlers once. Don't worry so much  
about being productive."  
Another friend gestured to his little daughters and said, "Spence, here are  
your publications!"  
These friends encouraged him to view time...by the *opportunity it  
presented*, time according to what the season calls for.

Time well used...is time that appropriately meets the needs of the moment,  
not...time measured by the demands of the clock.

Gregory Spencer, *Awakening the Quieter Virtues* (IVP, 2010), pp. 170-171

God wants us to use time for the *opportunities* it presents,  
Not the demands that it places upon us.  
God has an alternative to the crazy efficient frenzy of our lives.

***In Romans 13,***

***Paul*** says it's time for us to truly wake up to a new way of life,  
Because each day is that much closer to the day when Jesus returns and all  
things are made new.

And now that we know how the story of Time ends,  
 we should get out of darkness and just trying to survive,  
 stop satisfying every desire that hits us offering momentary comfort.  
 And instead let's start *really living* with honor—  
 in a way we can be proud of, with purpose and meaning.  
 How? By *letting Jesus live through us*—  
 by putting him on each morning just like you do your own clothes,  
 only letting him guide our lives is far more important.

Talk about *Good News!*

What Paul has to say to us is GREAT!  
 Move out of survival mode into something with purpose....  
 Put on this new life of letting Christ live through us!

The *worst news* would be that we have to keep spinning so fast,  
 That we are slaves to the clock, disconnected from everything and  
 everyone.....trapped in a frenetic world.

The *worst news* would be that what we do in life doesn't matter,  
 That the way we behave or treat one another has no consequence,  
 because nothing happens at the end of time.

The worst news would be akin to *famed atheist Stephen Hawking's*  
 answers to life's deepest questions,  
 That were definitely lacking in hope and meaning for human life.

In an article entitled "10 Questions for Stephen Hawking" people wrote in  
 questions, which included:

What do you believe happens to our consciousness after death? —Elliot  
 Giberson, SEATTLE

*I think the brain is essentially a computer and consciousness is like a  
 computer program. It will cease to run when the computer is turned off.  
 Theoretically, it could be re-created on a neural network, but that would be  
 very difficult, as it would require all one's memories.*

Does the universe end? If so, what is beyond it? —Paul Pearson, HULL,  
 ENGLAND

*Observations indicate that the universe is expanding at an ever increasing  
 rate. It will expand forever, getting emptier and darker. Although the*

*universe doesn't have an end, it had a beginning in the Big Bang. One might ask what is before that, but the answer is that there is nowhere before the Big Bang, just as there is nowhere south of the South Pole.*

By Stephen Hawking Monday, Nov. 15, 2010 Time Magazine.

Instead we have the **Good News** of the Gospel—  
that the new life we have now by following Jesus Christ  
will be complete when he returns again at the end of time.  
We believe he will come to bring a new heaven and earth.

What we do **does matter**—we are created to live lives that make a  
difference. We are created to love God and neighbor,  
and we ultimately have no need to worry or fear—  
because God is in charge, now and forever.  
Good has triumphed over evil and will for all eternity.

Because of this Good News we have **Hope!**  
In what God is doing now, and what God will do in the future  
We have hope in our eternal life with God—that new heaven and earth,  
a reunion with all the saints gone before us.

We are not computers that just shut down at the end.  
There is something beyond this life, this earth, this existence,  
And it is good.

We are called to **slow down for a reason!**  
To experience this new way of life...now and always.....  
And this is the **only way** we come to truly experience this special season,  
Known as **Advent**.

It's a simple little word that means coming.  
**He is coming**. And we are to get ready.  
But not by rushing around buying, wrapping, stressing, eating, and  
decorating.....or drowning ourselves in whatever feels right at the moment.  
We get ready by waking up to the new way of life offered to us,  
The possibilities and opportunities we have  
to let Christ live in us, and through us.  
To no longer rely upon ourselves.

You've heard it a million times before,  
Those famous words from Psalm 46.

***Be Still, and Know that I am God.***

That is the kind of preparation we need for Advent.  
To be still and know that God is God (and we are not).  
To be still and allow God to live in us and through us,  
Not to get so caught up trying to get everything done so fast and furiously  
ourselves.

Do you ever find that the things you are hurrying to do  
***don't even need to be done?***

Or that you are actually wasting time,  
By spending so much time being so busy?

Sometimes we are just occupying our hearts and minds  
so we don't have to face what's really hurting and trying to heal inside.

***Do not fear. The Lord is with you.***

***Be still and know that God is God.***

If we never stop long enough to realize this,  
We never really understand the reason for this season.  
For the meaning of Advent, and the power of Christmas, is not something  
that comes in loud sounds and bright lights and big plates of food.

It's something much deeper, and calmer, and quieter than that.  
Knowing ***Emmanuel***—God with us---  
means realizing that God is living in you, and through you---  
and allowing that to happen.

May we all slow down and let Jesus live through us,  
May we truly 'get ready' for him this Advent,  
And experience the real life awaiting us. Amen.