

**SERMON FOR THE DIOCESE OF BUNBURY ADVENT 1: 31/11/2025:**

**Mtt 24:36-34:**

**GEOFF CHADWICK:**

**“THE UNEXPECTED MOMENT AT THE RIGHT TIME”**

**Matthew 24.36-44**

<sup>36</sup> ‘But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>37</sup> For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>40</sup> Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>42</sup> Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup> 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

Let me begin by talking about *Chronos* and *Chairos*. In the ancient Greek thinking world, a distinction was made between two types of time.

- 1) *Chronos*, which refers simply to *the passage of time*. This is where we get the word *chronometer* referring to a ship’s time keeping device.

And

- 2) *Chairos*, which refers to an *opportune moment for something to happen*. Some of us who remember Gough Whitlam’s 1972 election campaign will know the punchy jingle and slogan: *It’s time!*

I think this distinction between the two types of time can be helpful as we contemplate the season of Advent.

In a sense, I think we under-value the readings for Advent if we think of them only in terms of *Chronos*.

If we consider the words such as these from Isaiah:

*“4 He shall judge between the nations,  
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;  
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,  
and their spears into pruning-hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more. (Isa 2:4, NRSV)*

And these from Matthew:

*<sup>40</sup> Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>41</sup>Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left (Mtt 24:40, NRSV)*

as *Chronos*, then we can lose heart. We begin to wonder when these things might happen in terms of history and wonder why they haven't happened yet. Such a view may lead to wild speculation about the "end times", which are, in my view, not very helpful.

We must consider the words as *Chairos*; that is, *opportune moments*. Or putting it another way, rather than thinking of them as one-off historical events longed for in the future, we can think of them as multiple moments of precise timing in our lives. They are events that just seem to happen at the right time for us.

In teaching parlance, these are known as *teachable moments*. For example, teaching loan repayment calculations to secondary school students is of little interest to them until they turn 17 and attempt to buy their first car (unless, of course it comes from the bank of Mum and Dad!).

Teachable moments... *Chairos* moments ... let's call them Advent moments.

Have there been any Advent moments in world history?

Have you had any Advent moments in your life?

In terms of history I can think of at least 2.

- 1) How the religious reforms of the reformation coincided with the advent of mass-produced printing.
- 2) How the ability to map the genetic sequence of viruses pre-dated our need to create a Covid 19 vaccine in a hurry.

You may be able to think of others. Where exactly the right thing happened in exactly the right time in human history.

These are Advent moments!

Now in terms of our personal lives, I cannot know your own stories. But I think I'd be right to say that we've all had moments when just the exactly right thing happened at just exactly the right time. Or the exactly right person came along at exactly the right time!

Some of these things might seem trivial. Like the time I noticed a 4" by 2" (10cm by 5 cm) wooden beam by the side of the dirt road between Wyndham and Halls Creek, only to need it 1 minute later after my friend and I hit a pot-hole and broke the A-frame to the caravan!

Others are highly significant.

How is it that Gabby and I met each other at what seems to be exactly the right time?

And how is it that an initial call to ordination at the age of 8 was reawakened in me at the age of 24 by, what seemed like a series of unrelated events and conversations all in the same year?

For me, these are Advent moments. And there are many others.

Take a moment to think about your own life journey. Have there been any Advent moments?

Moments when time was *Chairos* – where just the right thing happened at just the right time.

Or the right person came along at exactly the right time?

Maybe you can share them with each other over morning tea after church?

Now back to the early church.

In the chaos and political turmoil of the first century world, the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus was, for the early church, an absolute Advent moment! Jesus had come into the world as the exactly right person at exactly the right time!

Yes, new Christians were to suffer for their faith. They knew what it was like under Roman persecution to lose their sister who had been grinding meal in the field with them.

Ans so, Yes Jesus' words would ring in their ears!

*<sup>42</sup>Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming*

*(Mtt 24: 42)*

But this was not just some wishful thinking for a hoped-for perfect future. This was being awake to the present moment.

Being awake in the *now*, because you never know that *now* might just be the moment!

The moment when some mysterious manifestation of God occurs at exactly the right time!

Adent is not so much about *when*, It's about *now*!

Or as one of my friends was fond of saying:

*Expect it when you least expect it!*

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**